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Editor’s Note

In a world where industries are constantly evolving and new opportunities are reshaping the way businesses grow, leadership is no longer just about navigating change—it is about recognising possibilities, embracing innovation, and having the courage to build what comes next.

Our **Edition 11 – September Issue** proudly features **Kartik Bhatt** on the cover, whose journey from regional retail leadership to building Kanaa reflects the evolving landscape of entrepreneurship and digital commerce. Through his story, From Regional Retail Leadership to Building Kanaa: Kartik Bhatt on Entrepreneurship, E-Commerce and What Comes Next," we explore the mindset behind building a business, navigating the e-commerce ecosystem, and turning industry experience into entrepreneurial opportunity.

This edition also brings together the inspiring journeys and perspectives of distinguished professionals including **Priya MK, Grace Asibi Asibrele, Jeanette Phillips, and Dr. Cécile Civiale Vuillier**. Representing diverse professional backgrounds and areas of expertise, their stories offer valuable insights into leadership, innovation, personal growth, and the importance of creating meaningful impact through one's work.

Across these pages, a common theme emerges: the future belongs to those who are willing to challenge conventional thinking, adapt to emerging opportunities, and translate their vision into purposeful action. Whether through entrepreneurship, professional excellence, or forward-thinking leadership, each featured personality demonstrates that lasting success is shaped not only by what we achieve, but also by the value we create along the way.

Wishing you an insightful read.



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COVER STORY

FROM REGIONAL RETAIL LEADERSHIP TO BUILDING KANAA

Kartik Bhatt on Entrepreneurship, E-Commerce and What Comes Next



Over the past two decades, Kartik Bhatt has built and transformed consumer businesses across the Middle East, working across retail, e-commerce, digital transformation and P&L leadership. His regional experience spans the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and other markets, giving him a front-row view of how consumer behaviour and commerce have evolved across the region.

Today, that experience has found a new expression through Kanaa, a Saudi-born digital commerce venture incubated by Al Nahla Group.

As e-commerce in Saudi Arabia continues to mature, Kanaa is evolving from its original toys-led proposition into a broader, multi-category lifestyle-commerce platform.

We spoke with Kartik about his experience in the region, what led him to entrepreneurship, and, almost as a point of curiosity, about the business he is now building with Kanaa.

> *You need a clear strategic framework, but you also need the ability to adapt quickly.*

Q: You have spent much of your career in the Middle East, leading businesses across retail, e-commerce and consumer sectors. How has that experience shaped your approach to leadership?

Kartik Bhatt: My experience in the Middle East has given me the opportunity to work across very different markets, business models and stages of transformation.

At Sharaf Retail, I worked across businesses including Forever 21, Adventure HQ and Cotton On, with responsibility spanning P&L, retail operations, e-commerce, consumer marketing, digital transformation and regional expansion. That gave me a strong understanding of how consumer businesses operate at scale across different GCC markets.

Later, at Modern Electronics, my focus shifted more heavily towards digital transformation and building the direct-to-consumer ecosystem. That experience reinforced how technology, customer acquisition, merchandising, fulfilment and data need to come together to build a sustainable digital business.

What the region has taught me most is that there is no single playbook. Consumer behaviour, category maturity and competitive dynamics can differ significantly from one market to another. You need a clear strategic framework, but you also need the ability to adapt quickly.

Q: Having spent years transforming and scaling established businesses, what attracted you to building something from the ground up?

Kartik Bhatt: There is a very different energy in building something from the ground up.

In an established business, you are often working with an existing brand, organisation, infrastructure and customer base. The challenge is to transform or scale what already exists.

Entrepreneurship gives you the opportunity to start with a thesis and build the entire system around it. From the business model and proposition to the technology, organisation, customer experience and go-to-market.

That combination of strategy and execution is something I have always enjoyed, so moving into a founder-led role felt like a natural progression.

Q: And then there is Kanaa. We happened to notice the startup and became curious, what exactly is Kanaa, and what made you want to build it?

Kartik Bhatt: Kanaa started with a clear opportunity in the Saudi market, but the ambition was always broader than creating another online store.

The idea was to build a digital-first lifestyle-commerce platform that could evolve with the consumer and become a meaningful Saudi Arabia marketplace for a wide range of lifestyle needs.

The business had an initial foundation in toys and children's products, but as we studied the market and customer behaviour, it became clear that there was an opportunity to build something much broader.

Today, Kanaa spans multiple lifestyle categories, including toys, baby products, books, puzzles, gaming, electronics, stationery and other lifestyle products.

The bigger idea is to create a platform where customers can discover products across different aspects of their everyday lives, rather than being restricted to a single category.

Q: Kanaa was initially associated with toys. What drove the decision to evolve beyond that proposition?

Kartik Bhatt: We recognised that the opportunity was not necessarily to build a very large business around one category. It was to build a broader consumer platform.

The toys category gave us a strong starting point and an understanding of the customer. From there, we looked at adjacent and high-potential categories where we could build meaningful assortment and create additional purchase occasions.

That led us towards a multi-category model.

But diversification was not simply about adding more products. We also wanted to improve the underlying economics of the business, category mix, pricing, margins, inventory efficiency and promotional dependency.

The objective was to create a business that could scale in a healthier and more sustainable way.

Q: Gaming and perfumes are two notable additions to Kanaa's portfolio. What drove the decision to enter these categories, and how do they fit into Kanaa's broader growth strategy?

Kartik Bhatt: Both categories represent different but compelling consumer opportunities.

Gaming is a natural fit for the digitally connected consumer we serve. It also gives us the opportunity to participate in a category with strong

engagement, from consoles and accessories to a wider gaming ecosystem.

Perfumes, on the other hand, allow us to enter another important lifestyle category with a very different purchase occasion and consumer profile.

The common thread is that we don't want to add categories simply for the sake of expanding the catalogue. We look at the size of the opportunity, customer relevance, economics, supply ecosystem and our ability to build a differentiated proposition.

Q: Does that mean we should expect more category pivots from Kanaa?

Kartik Bhatt: I would call them evolutions rather than pivots. The consumer is changing continuously, so the platform has to evolve as well.

We will continue looking at categories where we believe Kanaa can add genuine value. That could mean expanding within existing verticals, entering new lifestyle categories, developing partnerships or exploring new formats of commerce.

But we will remain disciplined. Scale for the sake of scale is not the objective.

We want each new category to strengthen the overall platform rather than simply increase the number of SKUs.

Q: How do you see the broader opportunity for a business like Kanaa in Saudi Arabia?

Kartik Bhatt: The opportunity is significant because Saudi Arabia has a digitally sophisticated and increasing demanding consumer base.

The conversation around e-commerce in Saudi Arabia has moved well beyond whether consumers are willing to shop online. The market is now about experience, trust, convenience, assortment and value.

That creates substantial Saudi Arabia business opportunities for companies that understand the consumer and can build sustainable business models around their needs.

There is also significant potential for an online business in Saudi Arabia as digital adoption continues to reshape how consumers discover, evaluate and purchase products.

More broadly, the transformation taking place under Saudi Vision 2030 is creating an increasingly supportive environment for digital businesses, entrepreneurship, private-sector participation and economic diversification. For companies like Kanaa, that creates an opportunity to build businesses that are digitally native while contributing to the broader evolution of the Kingdom's consumer economy.

For Kanaa, the opportunity is to participate in that evolution by building a platform that is locally relevant but capable of scaling regionally.

Q: How important is Al Nahla Group to Kanaa's story?

Kartik Bhatt: Very important.

Kanaa is incubated by Al Nahla Group, and that gives us a valuable combination of entrepreneurial speed and institutional backing.

> “ The consumer is changing continuously, so the platform has to evolve as well.

The ambition is to build a modern digital business while benefiting from the experience, governance and long-term perspective of an established Saudi business group.

For me, that creates an interesting environment. We can operate with the speed and agility required of a startup while also thinking about the business with the discipline and long-term orientation required to build an enduring enterprise.

Q: Your experience has included building and expanding businesses across several regional markets. How does that influence Kanaa's growth plans?

Kartik Bhatt: It makes us very conscious that regional expansion needs to be thoughtful.
I've worked across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and other markets, and one thing you learn is that you cannot simply copy and paste a business model from one country into another.

The consumer, logistics environment, category dynamics and competitive landscape can all be different.
Saudi Arabia is the foundation for Kanaa, but we are building with a broader GCC opportunity in mind.
Expansion will come when we believe the operating model, category proposition and economics are strong enough to support it.

The objective is sustainable regional growth rather than expansion purely for geographic presence.

Q: What would ultimately drive Kanaa's success?

Kartik Bhatt: I would say five things: customer trust, relevant assortment, technology, disciplined economics and execution.

First, you need customer trust. Without that, there is no long-term e-commerce business.

Second, assortment needs to be relevant. Having a large number of

Second, assortment needs to be relevant. Having a large number of products doesn't automatically create value. Customers need the right products at the right price and with a good discovery experience.

Third is technology. It needs to make the customer journey simpler and allow the business to operate efficiently at scale.

Fourth is economics. Growth cannot depend indefinitely on heavy promotions or inefficient customer acquisition. We need a model where category mix, pricing and acquisition economics work together.

And finally, execution. Strategy only matters if the organisation can deliver it consistently.

That's where my experience operating large and complex businesses becomes useful. You learn that sustainable growth is ultimately an organisational capability, not just a marketing objective.

Q: What are the biggest lessons from your previous regional roles that you are applying to Kanaa?

Kartik Bhatt: One is that growth and profitability have to be considered together.

Another is the importance of building the organisation alongside the business. Technology, operations, merchandising, finance, customer experience and marketing cannot operate as separate islands.

And perhaps most importantly, you have to remain close to the customer.

Markets move quickly. What worked two years ago may not work today. The ability to identify those changes and respond without losing sight of the long-term strategy is critical.

Q: What does the next chapter of Kanaa look like?

Kartik Bhatt: The next chapter is about building depth as much as breadth.



We want to strengthen our existing categories, continue expanding selectively, improve the customer experience and build the technology and operating infrastructure required to scale.

There are opportunities around new categories, strategic partnerships, personalisation, data and potentially new commerce formats.

Geographically, we see the wider GCC as a natural opportunity over time.

But the underlying objective remains the same: build a scalable, trusted and culturally relevant Saudi digital business that can grow beyond its original category and market.

Q: Finally, after everything you've experienced as an operator and now as a Co-Founder, what would make you say Kanaa has truly succeeded?

Kartik Bhatt: Success would be much more than reaching a particular revenue number.

It would mean building a brand that customers trust, an organisation that can execute, a technology platform that can scale and an economic model that is sustainable.

If we can build that from Saudi Arabia and take it successfully into the wider region, while remaining relevant to the customer and disciplined as a business, that would be a meaningful outcome.

The exciting part is that we are still early in that journey.

INSIDE STORY

FROM CURIOSITY TO IMPACT

Priya MK on Science, Innovation and Building Ideas That Matter

From the discipline of pharmaceutical quality to the frontier of evidence-based natural innovation, Priya MK's journey is a compelling story of curiosity, courage and the relentless pursuit of meaningful impact.

For Priya MK, innovation has never been about chasing the next big idea—it is about finding the right idea, interrogating it through science, and having the persistence to transform it into something that genuinely improves lives.

Over a career spanning pharmaceutical quality, analytical science, product development, process innovation, patents, scientific publications, brand building and international commercialization, Priya has built a professional philosophy a nchored in curiosity, scientific rigour and commercial relevance.

In this exclusive conversation with **Corporate World**, she reflects on the decisions that changed the trajectory of her career, the innovation that helped transform business growth, her nomination for an Honorary Doctorate, the enormous scientific potential she sees in Ayurveda and natural products, and why the leaders of tomorrow must learn to embrace technology without surrendering their

> *Innovation is not about chasing ideas. It is about asking better questions, finding the right answers and creating impact that lasts.*

Q: Your professional journey has undoubtedly been shaped by a series of experiences, challenges, and achievements. Could you take us through the key milestones that have defined your career and brought you to where you are today?

My professional journey has always been driven by one constant force—curiosity. I began in the pharmaceutical industry as a Quality Assurance and Documentation Chemist, where I built a strong foundation in quality systems, regulatory discipline and scientific precision. It was an invaluable beginning, but I soon realized that routine alone would never fully satisfy my desire to question, explore and create.

That curiosity led me into Quality Control, where I gained deeper experience in analytical science. Yet after nearly four years, I found myself wanting to move beyond analysing what already existed and step into a space where I could create what did not yet exist. That defining opportunity came when a former mentor introduced me to product development and innovation—and it became the turning point of my career.

For the first time, science, creativity and commercial thinking converged. I was developing new products, solving complex scientific challenges and transforming laboratory ideas into commercially viable solutions. What followed was an extraordinary 25-year journey spanning product development, successful market launches, brand building, patents and research published in peer-reviewed journals.

Looking back, I have learned that the most meaningful careers are not always perfectly planned; sometimes, they unfold when we have the courage to outgrow the familiar and explore what lies beyond it. What began as a desire to escape monotony became a lifelong pursuit of innovation. Even today, that same curiosity continues to drive me—because for me, innovation is ultimately about turning scientific possibility into meaningful impact.

Q. Every successful leader has a unique approach to inspiring people. How would you describe your leadership philosophy, and how do you keep your team motivated, focused, and resilient during periods of uncertainty or change?

My leadership philosophy is rooted in knowledge-sharing, clarity of purpose and empowerment. I have always been a curious learner, and I find equal fulfilment in mentoring others and sharing that curiosity with my team. For me, leadership is not simply about assigning responsibilities—it is about helping people understand the science, purpose and larger vision behind what they do.

I strongly believe people perform at their best when they understand not only what they are doing, but why it matters. That is why I give my team a complete perspective on every project—from its scientific rationale to its commercial relevance. I encourage them to look beyond academic success and ask whether an innovation is viable, cost-effective, scalable, reproducible and capable of creating real value.

Once the direction is clear, I give people the freedom to execute without micromanagement, while remaining available to guide, challenge and refine whenever needed. To me, empowerment is about creating enough trust for others to step forward with confidence.

This balance of knowledge, purpose, trust and accountability has been central to keeping my teams motivated and resilient. Especially during uncertainty, a clear sense of purpose and open communication can turn challenges into opportunities for stronger thinking, greater ownership and meaningful results.

Q. Looking back at your leadership journey, what is one decision that significantly transformed your organization, and what valuable lessons did that experience teach you about leadership and growth?

One of the most transformative moments in my leadership journey came when we committed to commercializing an innovation backed by promising clinical research.
Midway through, significant challenges made the original path commercially unviable, bringing understandable questions and criticism. Yet I have always believed that there is rarely only one path to a destination. Through persistence, focused thinking and the courage to explore alternatives, we identified a new approach and successfully brought the vision forward. The project ultimately helped triple the company's revenue and strengthened our recognition in international markets.

More importantly, it reinforced a defining lesson for me: leadership is not about having every answer from the beginning—it is about having the conviction to pursue the vision, resilience to navigate uncertainty and agility to create a new path when the old one closes. Often, sustainable growth begins by seeing possibility where others see obstacles.

Q. You have been conferred with an Honorary Doctorate in Nutraceutical Science & Innovation. What does this recognition mean to you personally, and how does it reflect the journey and impact you have built over the years?

Receiving the Honorary Doctorate in Nutraceutical Science & Innovation is an incredibly meaningful milestone for me, both personally and professionally. I had once aspired to pursue a conventional PhD, but circumstances led my journey in a different direction. What never changed, however, was my passion for science, research and innovation.

Over the years, I remained committed to developing new processes and products, building scientific evidence, contributing to research publications, and transforming ideas from the laboratory into commercially successful solutions that reached global markets. For me, innovation achieves its true purpose when it moves beyond research and creates tangible value for people and society.

This recognition therefore feels particularly special—it honours not simply an academic aspiration, but decades of perseverance, scientific curiosity and real-world contribution. I receive it with immense gratitude and humility, as a powerful affirmation of my lifelong commitment to nutraceutical science, innovation and human wellness.

Q. Success often comes from making difficult choices. Can you share a pivotal moment when you had to make a bold or unconventional decision for your organization, and how that decision influenced its future direction?

One of the defining moments of my career was choosing to leave the security of a well-established organization and join what was then almost a start-up. My role in quality analysis had given me valuable experience, but I increasingly felt drawn towards creativity, innovation and scientific problem-solving. At the time, opportunities to enter innovation were often closely tied to formal academic credentials, and I realized that staying within a narrowly defined role could limit the potential I knew I had. Moving to a smaller organization meant exchanging certainty for possibility—but it became one of the most rewarding decisions of my life. I was given the freedom to experiment, challenge conventions and transform scientific ideas into commercially successful products.

Over the next 25 years, that journey expanded across product development, process innovation, patents, scientific publications, brand building and international commercialization. It taught me a lesson I continue to value deeply: meaningful growth often begins when we have the courage to leave what is comfortable and choose what is possible. Choosing potential over predictability transformed my career and allowed me to grow alongside the organization while contributing meaningfully to its evolution.

Q. As someone who continues to push boundaries in your field, what are the most important goals and priorities you hope to achieve over the next five years?

The next chapter of my journey is about taking everything I have learned in one specialized field and using it to address a much broader spectrum of human wellness. While lutein and eye health have been central to my career, my curiosity is now leading me towards new frontiers in women's health, healthy ageing, geriatric care, and mental & cognitive well-being. My ambition is not simply to develop new products, but to create scientifically validated, evidence-based natural solutions supported by rigorous research and designed for real-world impact. Over the next five years, I hope to build a broader platform of natural innovation—one that advances preventive healthcare, strengthens my organization's growth, and ultimately contributes to healthier lives and a more meaningful future for human wellness.

Q. The future belongs to those who help shape it. As you look ahead, what vision are you working toward, and what changes or innovations do you believe are necessary for your industry to evolve and thrive alongside that vision?

I believe some of the most exciting innovations of tomorrow may emerge from wisdom that has existed for centuries. My vision is to bridge the extraordinary heritage of Ayurveda with the precision and rigour of modern science, transforming traditional knowledge into credible, evidence-based solutions for global wellness. For the nutraceutical industry to truly evolve, we must move beyond tradition and broad claims towards standardization, mechanism-based research, rigorous clinical validation, transparent evidence and consistent quality. I do not see nutraceuticals replacing pharmaceuticals; I see them complementing conventional healthcare, particularly in preventive health and wellness. My aspiration is to help unlock the scientific potential of India's traditional knowledge and translate it into trusted, globally relevant innovations that improve health and quality of life.

Q. Beyond your professional achievements and leadership journey, is there a message, belief, or personal insight you would like to share with our readers that reflects who you are and what drives you every day?

Before becoming a successful professional or leader, I believe we must first become good human beings. That simple principle has been my compass throughout life and has shaped the relationships I have built with colleagues, partners, friends and family. To me, success is not defined solely by what we achieve, but by how we achieve it and the trust we earn along the way.

Opportunities may open doors, but it is integrity, consistency and loyalty that keep them open. My philosophy is simple: pursue ambition without compromising humanity, create value without sacrificing integrity, and build a legacy measured not only in success, but in trust, respect and positive impact.

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Q. If you could leave one lasting piece of advice for aspiring professionals and future leaders, what would it be, and why do you believe it matters in today's rapidly changing world?

My advice to aspiring professionals and future leaders is simple: embrace technology, but never surrender your mind, attention or purpose to it. We live in an extraordinary age where technology can accomplish in moments what once required years, but speed should never be mistaken for depth, nor information for wisdom. Meaningful success still demands curiosity, patience, critical thinking, sound judgement and consistent effort—qualities no technology can replace.

I believe technology should amplify human potential, not diminish human judgement. Use it to expand your capabilities and open new possibilities, but never at the cost of your ability to think independently, reflect deeply or build genuine relationships. The leaders who truly stand apart will not necessarily be those who adopt every innovation first, but those who understand when to use it, why to use it and where to draw the line. Keep pace with technology, but remain firmly in command of your direction, values and humanity. Technology should be a powerful tool in your journey—never the master of your purpose.

Q. When your professional legacy is discussed years from now, what impact would you hope people remember you for most?

I would hope to be remembered as someone who transformed curiosity into focused innovation, and innovation into meaningful impact. My career has taught me that ideas are never in short supply; the real discipline lies in recognizing which ones truly matter and having the focus to pursue them with purpose. Lasting achievement is not about chasing every exciting possibility—it is about setting clear priorities, remaining open to new thinking, and turning the right ideas into sustained action. For me, legacy is not defined only by the products, patents, processes, brands or research I may leave behind, but by the mindset that made them possible: remain curious, yet focused; ambitious, yet disciplined; open to possibilities, yet purposeful in execution. If my journey encourages future professionals to think boldly, act with clarity and create innovations that genuinely improve people's lives, I would consider that the most meaningful legacy of all.



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INSIDE STORY

ROOTED IN AFRICA, BUILT FOR THE WORLD



Grace Asibi Asibrele

CEO & Founder,
Einstein Royalty Company Limited, Ghana
Einstein Royalty Corporation, New York, USA

began with no investors, no established roadmap and no guarantee that the doors would open. What Grace Asibi Asibrele did have was faith, an unmistakable sense of purpose and the courage to build anyway. From Ghana to New York, her journey is one of transforming African identity into global ambition—and personal resilience into a platform for empowering others.

PEOPLE
IDEAS
OPPORTUNITY
GLOBAL IMPACT

Some entrepreneurs build companies. Others build a story powerful enough to make people reconsider what is possible. Grace Asibi Asibrele is determined to do both.

Her journey began in Ghana with a vision that was ambitious from the outset: to create something meaningful at the intersection of fashion, elegance, entrepreneurship and impact. In 2014, she registered Einstein Royalty Company Limited—not with the comfort of major investors or a perfectly mapped path, but with conviction in an idea and the resilience to pursue it through uncertainty. What followed was not a conventional rise. It was a journey shaped by rejection, reinvention, faith and an unwavering belief in the power of identity. Rather than allowing established definitions of luxury to dictate her creative direction, Grace gradually discovered that her greatest distinction lay in embracing the very thing she once felt pressured to adapt—her African heritage and authentic voice. That conviction would eventually travel beyond Ghana.

With the establishment of Einstein Royalty Corporation in New York, USA, Grace transformed a homegrown ambition into a global statement: that African creativity, leadership and entrepreneurship belong confidently on the international stage. Yet the most compelling dimension of her story may not be how far the brand has travelled, but what she wants that journey to represent. For Grace, success carries a responsibility—to create opportunities, champion women, support artisans and show the next generation of African entrepreneurs that their beginnings need not determine their boundaries.

In this conversation, Grace Asibi Asibrele speaks candidly about choosing faith over fear, redefining luxury through African identity, leading with empathy, building beyond borders and creating a legacy measured not simply by what she achieves—but by how many others rise with her.

Q. Could you take us through the key milestones that have defined your career?

My journey was not built on open doors—it was built on the courage to keep moving when there were none. In 2014, I registered Einstein Royalty Company Limited in Ghana with no investors or established roadmap, only a deep passion for fashion and hospitality and a determination to create something meaningful. One of my earliest milestones was learning to turn rejection into resilience and doubt into fuel. Taking that Ghanaian dream beyond borders and establishing Einstein Royalty Corporation in the United States marked another defining chapter; for me, it was a declaration that an African woman could build locally, think globally and lead confidently on the world stage. Being named Groundbreaker of the Year in Dubai in 2023 was another deeply meaningful moment, because it showed me that the story behind the business—of faith, perseverance and possibility—could inspire people far beyond the company itself.

Q. How would you describe your leadership philosophy, and what has shaped the way you lead people?

I believe the most powerful leadership begins with empathy, not authority. I lead as a woman who has experienced challenges personally, so my philosophy is deeply purpose-driven, compassionate and nurturing. I do not simply want to manage people; I want to build people. Teams do not need a leader who pretends to be perfect—they need someone who is present, listens and helps them connect their work to a greater sense of dignity and purpose. During uncertainty, I draw strength from the challenges I have already overcome and remind my team that struggling does not mean we are failing. We may encounter difficult seasons, but we must never lose sight of the vision. My compassion is not separate from my leadership; it is one of its greatest strengths.

Q. What is one decision that significantly transformed your organization, and what did it teach you about leadership?

The transformation began when I stopped trying to fit someone else's definition of luxury and started defining it through my own identity. For years, I felt the pressure to measure success against Western standards of elegance. Everything changed when I chose to embrace my African heritage, voice and perspective unapologetically. I realized that our identity should never be something we dilute in order to gain acceptance—it can be our greatest distinction. That decision reshaped both my leadership and the brand. It taught me one of the most powerful lessons of my journey: authenticity is not a limitation; it is an advantage. The moment I stopped trying to become someone else's version of success, I began building more confidently from my own.

Q. What does receiving an Honorary Doctorate recognition represent for you personally?

For me, this recognition carries the weight of a journey that very few people ever saw in full. It represents the sleepless nights, the sacrifices, the tears and every moment I heard "you cannot" but chose to answer with "I will." It is more than a title to me; it feels like a moment of healing for the young woman who began with a dream but no roadmap. Most importantly, it carries a message I hope reaches young African women everywhere: your beginning does not determine the magnitude of your future. Your struggles can shape strength, your story has value, and your contribution deserves to be seen. I receive this recognition with gratitude, not simply as validation of achievement, but as an affirmation that a life committed to purpose and empowering others can leave a meaningful imprint.

Q. Can you share a pivotal moment when you had to make a bold decision that changed the direction of your journey?

There are moments in leadership when the safest decision can also become the greatest limitation. One of mine came when I decided to take



the business beyond Ghana at a time when remaining small would have been far more comfortable. I was told it was too risky, too expensive and too soon—and, truthfully, I felt that fear too. But I had to choose between allowing fear to define my boundaries or allowing faith to expand them. I chose faith. I invested in establishing the business in the United States, developing new production partnerships and positioning the brand on a broader stage. That decision taught me that some of our greatest opportunities are waiting just beyond the decisions that frighten us most.

Q. What are the most important goals you hope to achieve over the next five years?

The next chapter of my journey is not simply about building a bigger business—it is about building a bigger impact. Over the next five years, I want to evolve from entrepreneur into a global impact leader and mentor, using my experience to help young African women build sustainable, purpose-led businesses. I also want to deepen my philanthropic work by creating training opportunities and hubs for rural women, enabling them to develop skills, earn with dignity and build greater independence. Ultimately, I want my success to be measured not only by the company I have built, but by the leaders, entrepreneurs and women I helped rise along the way.

Q. As you look toward the future, what larger vision are you working to create?

My vision is for African women to be seen as global leaders in luxury, business and innovation—not as exceptions, but as part of the new global standard. I want to see African culture celebrated with confidence, sustainability treated as a responsibility rather than a marketing phrase, and more women occupying the spaces where important decisions are made. Most importantly, I want young girls in Ghana and across Africa to see journeys like mine and recognize possibility in their own. If a young woman can look at my story and say, "If Grace could build beyond her circumstances, perhaps I can too," then the vision becomes larger than one company or one career—it becomes a pathway for others.

Q. Beyond business and leadership, what personal belief continues to drive you every day?

I carry one belief very close to my heart: your beginning does not define your ending. I have experienced doubt, financial challenges and the loneliness that can accompany leadership, but none of those experiences has been powerful enough to erase my sense of purpose. What drives me is not fame, recognition or awards; it is the belief that the gifts God has given me should become a vessel for lifting others.

When I see a rural artisan experience the pride of knowing her craftsmanship is valued beyond her immediate community, that means more to me than any headline. Purpose is my true measure of success—and people are at the heart of that purpose.

Q. What lasting piece of advice would you give aspiring professionals and future leaders?

Do not spend your life waiting to be chosen—have the courage to choose yourself. For a long time, I looked for validation from others, but the trajectory of my journey changed when I began believing in my own voice and potential. Stay rooted in who you are, remain consistent when progress feels slow, and develop the resilience to continue when recognition does not come immediately. Above all, be kind to yourself along the way. In a world that changes constantly, authenticity, character and faith can become your strongest anchors. Build your character before you build your company, because success may attract attention, but character determines what you do with it.

Q. When your legacy is discussed years from now, what would you hope people remember you for most?

I hope my legacy is remembered not by how high I rose, but by how many people I helped rise with me. I would like to be remembered as a woman of grace, strength and impact—someone who dared to dream beyond her circumstances, remained deeply connected to her African roots and used success to create opportunities for other women. I do not want my story to end with being known as a CEO who created beautiful suits; I want it to represent something far greater.

For me, true royalty has never been about what you wear, the title you carry or the position you hold—it is about the lives you touch, the doors you open and the people you empower to walk through them. That is the legacy I hope to leave behind.



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COVER STORY

LEADING WITH COMPASSION

Reimagining Social Care Through Innovation and Wellbeing



Corporate World magazine speaks with Jeanette Phillips about her inspiring journey across nursing, entrepreneurship, and public-sector leadership.

True leadership is measured not only by professional achievements but also by the lives one touches and the positive change one inspires.

With a career spanning nursing, elderly care, entrepreneurship, and public-sector leadership, this inspiring leader has consistently championed compassion, innovation, and a people-first approach.

From establishing Flexicare UK Ltd and introducing the pioneering "Hubs and Hublets" model to envisioning a more proactive future for social care through the Healing Hut concept, the journey reflects a determination to challenge convention and create meaningful impact. In this exclusive conversation with Corporate World Magazine, Jeanette shares valuable insights into authentic leadership, lifelong learning, overcoming challenges, and building a future where wellbeing and compassionate care remain at the heart of progress.

Q1. Your professional journey has undoubtedly been shaped by a series of experiences, challenges, and achievements. Could you take us through the key milestones that have defined your career and brought you to where you are today?

My professional journey has been shaped by a commitment to compassionate care, continuous learning, and innovative thinking. I began by qualifying as a Registered Nurse, followed by an Orthopaedic Nursing Certificate and specialisation in elderly care. One of my most significant milestones was establishing Flexicare UK Ltd from scratch, with our very first client being a dog! At the age of 52, I secured a place at the University of Birmingham to study Public Sector Commissioning, which opened doors to voluntary leadership initiatives and opportunities to contribute to the future of social care.

I was also privileged to work alongside Lord Blunkett and the Leaders Council of Great Britain during the pandemic, while volunteering as a vaccinator. These experiences reinforced my belief in purposeful leadership and community service. Throughout my career, I have remained focused on the future, learning from every experience and treating setbacks as temporary bumps in the road rather than barriers to progress.

Q2. Every successful leader has a unique approach to inspiring people. How would you describe your leadership philosophy, and how do you keep your team motivated, focused, and resilient during periods of uncertainty or change?

My leadership philosophy is rooted in authenticity, compassion, and a genuine concern for the people I work with. I believe in expecting the best from individuals while creating a supportive culture in which they feel valued, empowered, and encouraged to grow. A clear and sustainable vision is essential, but it must be supported by measurable progress, open communication, and a shared understanding of our goals.

During periods of uncertainty, trust and a strong sense of purpose become even more important. I strive to keep everyone involved in the journey, ensuring they understand their contribution and feel confident in their abilities. Ultimately, my goal is to create an environment where people can thrive, overcome challenges, and become the best version of themselves every day.

Q3. Looking back at your leadership journey, what is one decision that significantly transformed your organization, and what valuable lessons did that experience teach you about leadership and growth?

One of the most transformative decisions in my life was applying to university at the age of 52. I had always wanted to experience university life, and taking that step proved to be a turning point. I met an inspiring mentor, built relationships with remarkable people, and was invited to contribute to public-sector discussions on reimagining social care. I also wrote papers on the subject, making it an intellectually stimulating and professionally rewarding experience.

This journey taught me that learning has no age limit and that growth often begins when we step outside our comfort zones. Most importantly, I discovered the power of shared belief, collaboration, and compassion in creating a better future. When people unite around a common purpose, meaningful and lasting change becomes possible.

Q4. You have been nominated for the Honorary Doctorate Recognition from Dunster Business School. What does this recognition represent for you personally, and how does it reflect the impact you have worked to create throughout your career?

I am truly grateful, honoured, and humbled by my nomination for the Honorary Doctorate Recognition from Dunster Business School. This recognition is particularly meaningful as I prepare to launch a wellness centre and ecosystem in the United Kingdom. It comes at an important stage in my journey, encouraging me to continue pursuing a vision centred on compassionate care, wellbeing, and empowering people to live healthier, more fulfilling lives.

> *A people-first approach, grounded in compassion and innovation, can transform social care for generations to come.*

I hope this recognition will bring greater visibility to my vision and encourage further conversations about the future of social care and community wellbeing. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone involved in the nomination and receive this opportunity with humility and a renewed commitment to making a positive difference.

Q5. Success often comes from making difficult choices. Can you share a pivotal moment when you had to make a bold or unconventional decision for your organization, and how that decision influenced its future direction?

One of the boldest decisions I made was to move Flexicare UK Ltd away from a traditional franchising model towards an approach we called "Hubs and Hublets." At the time, this was an unfamiliar concept within our industry, and introducing it required people to reconsider established

practices and embrace a different way of working. Although it was challenging to communicate the model and its potential, I believed it offered a more flexible and forward-thinking approach.

We also became early adopters of technology in 2012, recognising its potential to improve operations and strengthen our competitive position. Together, the Hubs and Hublets model and our early investment in technology helped shape the company's direction. This experience taught me that innovation requires conviction, patience, and the courage to pursue new ideas before others fully recognise their value.

Q6. As someone who continues to push boundaries in your field, what are the most important goals and priorities you hope to achieve over the next five years?

Over the next five years, my primary ambition is to help reimagine social care as a proactive, wellbeing-focused service that enables people to remain safely and comfortably in their own homes. Through the expansion of the Healing Hut concept, I hope to establish a physical wellbeing centre in the United Kingdom and develop a wider ecosystem offering accessible health and wellbeing guidance. My vision is to help people make informed choices, reduce preventable risks, and maintain their independence for as long as possible.

This ambition extends beyond establishing a single centre; it is about encouraging a cultural shift towards prevention, education, and community support. I want to develop a sustainable model that brings together knowledge, compassionate guidance, and accessible resources, with the potential to benefit communities on a much wider scale.

Q7. The future belongs to those who help shape it. As you look ahead, what vision are you working toward, and what changes or innovations do you believe are necessary for your industry to evolve and thrive alongside that vision?

My father always said, "The future belongs to those who plan for it." Having served in the NHS from its earliest days in 1948, he inspired my belief in building systems that genuinely serve people. I believe we already have much of the technology needed to transform social care; the real opportunity lies in creating an integrated ecosystem that promotes hope, joy, movement, and wellbeing through preventative care, accessible advice, and community support. Alongside developing the Healing Hut concept, I also aspire to establish a Reiki school to train practitioners from across the country. I believe meaningful transformation requires patience and perseverance because, as the saying goes, life is a marathon, not a sprint.

Q8. Beyond your professional achievements and leadership journey, is there a message, belief, or personal insight you would like to share with our readers that reflects who you are and what drives you every day?

Beyond my professional achievements, I am driven by love and compassion for my family. I want them to enjoy a fulfilling life enriched by wellbeing, meaningful relationships, community spirit, volunteering, and travel. I believe these experiences broaden our perspectives and help us appreciate the world around us.

Compassion also guides my professional life. I believe in leading from the heart and try to perform at least one random act of kindness every day whenever possible. Even the

> **"Every experience, whether a success or a setback, has shaped me into a more purposeful leader.**

Q9. If you could leave one lasting piece of advice for aspiring professionals and future leaders, what would it be, and why do you believe it matters in today's rapidly changing world?

My advice to aspiring leaders is simple: "Be yourself, as everyone else is taken," and "Be the change you want to see." Authenticity, continuous learning, and the courage to follow your values are essential in a rapidly changing world. I also believe kindness is a powerful leadership strength, never a weakness. Leading with empathy, integrity, and respect can achieve far more than ego or force. True leadership is about inspiring others through our actions and creating an environment where people can thrive.

10. When your professional legacy is discussed years from now, what impact would you hope people remember you for most?

I hope to be remembered for demonstrating that kindness can accomplish more than force. This belief has guided my approach since the early days of Flexicare, whose values were established in 1997. I want my legacy to reflect compassion, innovation, and a genuine commitment to improving people's lives.

Above all, I hope to inspire others to lead with authenticity, treat people with dignity, and recognise the power of a compassionate heart. And I would leave readers with one final reminder: keep smiling, because a smile can travel a million miles.





INSIDE STORY

LEADING WITH VISION, BUILT ON TRUST

Dr. Cécile Civiale Vuillier

TEP, Founding Partner and CEO of META OCTAV GROUP

From Swiss fiduciary leadership to building an international wealth advisory group, Dr. Cécile Civiale Vuillier is shaping a future where global expertise meets personalised service, innovation is guided by integrity, and lasting success is measured by the relationships that matter most.

Private Wealth
Cross-Border Strategies
Succession Planning

In a rapidly evolving wealth management landscape, Dr. Cécile Civiale Vuillier, TEP, Founding Partner and CEO of META OCTAV GROUP, is redefining leadership through global vision, strategic foresight, and a client-centric approach. Connecting Switzerland and Asia, she champions a forward-looking model of private wealth advisory that blends cross-border expertise, digital innovation, and personalised service.

In a conversation with Corporate World, Dr. Civiale Vuillier shares insights into her entrepreneurial journey, emerging AI-driven opportunities, and the future of global wealth management —revealing why trust, agility, and human connection remain the true cornerstones of sustainable success.

> ***Trust, agility and human connection remain the cornerstones of sustainable success.***

Q1. Your professional journey has undoubtedly been shaped by a series of experiences, challenges, and achievements. Could you take us through the key milestones that have defined your career and brought you to where you are today?

My professional journey spans years of experience in private wealth and fiduciary services, advising international families, entrepreneurs, and private clients on wealth structuring, succession planning, and cross-border strategies. Progressing into senior leadership roles, including Partner, Head of Private Clients, and CEO of a Swiss trust company, I learned that lasting success is built not only on expertise but also on trust, integrity, and meaningful relationships.

My leadership journey also includes serving as Chair of STEP Geneva and STEP Swiss & Liechtenstein, contributing to the evolution of the industry and strengthening my global network. In 2025, I embraced entrepreneurship by founding META OCTAV GROUP, where I serve as CEO, with a vision to deliver independent, bespoke, and forward-thinking fiduciary solutions, particularly connecting Switzerland and Hong Kong. Receiving an Honorary Doctorate in Financial Excellence was another proud milestone. Ultimately, my journey reflects a simple belief: true leadership lies in building trust, embracing change, and creating lasting value.

Q2. Every successful leader has a unique approach to inspiring people. How would you describe your leadership philosophy, and how do you keep your team motivated, focused, and resilient during periods of uncertainty or change?

My leadership philosophy is rooted in trust, transparency, and leading by example. I believe people thrive when they feel valued, empowered, and aligned with a shared vision. My approach is to encourage autonomy and initiative while remaining accessible for guidance and support. Open communication is especially vital during periods of change, fostering clarity, confidence, and collective ownership. I encourage fresh perspectives, innovative thinking, and a culture where mistakes become opportunities for growth. Above all, I believe resilient leadership is about building a united team, navigating challenges with confidence, and turning shared ambition into meaningful results.

Q3. Looking back at your leadership journey, what is one decision that significantly transformed your organization, and what valuable lessons did that experience teach you about leadership and growth?

One of the defining decisions of my career was stepping away from an established corporate environment to found META OCTAV GROUP. Transitioning from senior leadership to entrepreneurship was both exhilarating and challenging, offering the freedom to build an organisation grounded in independence, personalised client service, and global expertise.

The journey reinforced my belief that meaningful progress demands courage, adaptability, and the willingness to embrace uncertainty. It also taught me the value of trusting my instincts and building the right team. For me, true growth is not simply about scale; it is about creating a sustainable legacy, staying authentic to your values, and building an organisation where both people and clients can flourish.

Q4. You have been nominated for the Honorary Doctorate Recognition from Dunster Business School. What does this recognition represent for you personally, and how does it reflect the impact you have worked to create throughout your career?

Receiving an Honorary Doctorate from Dunster Business School is a deeply meaningful milestone in my professional journey. I see it not merely as recognition of my achievements, but as a tribute to the experiences, challenges, and relationships that have shaped my career.

Throughout my journey, I have strived to create a positive impact by supporting clients and teams, sharing knowledge, and contributing to the wider professional community. For me, true success extends beyond titles and business achievements; it lies in the values we uphold, the lives we influence, and the legacy we leave behind. I am sincerely grateful for



> *"True leadership lies in building trust, embracing change, and creating lasting value.*

this honour and see it as renewed inspiration to keep learning, growing, and making a meaningful difference.

Q5. Success often comes from making difficult choices. Can you share a pivotal moment when you had to make a bold or unconventional decision for your organization, and how that decision influenced its future direction?

One of my boldest decisions was to build META OCTAV GROUP with an international outlook from day one, establishing a presence in both Geneva and Hong Kong to bridge Europe and Asia. While this required significant early investment and commitment, I recognised that clients increasingly needed seamless access to cross-border expertise and solutions tailored to their global interests.

For a young organisation, navigating diverse cultures, regulatory frameworks, and business environments was an ambitious undertaking. However, this decision has become central to our identity, embedding a global mindset into our DNA. Our vision is to remain agile, internationally connected, and deeply attuned to the evolving needs of the families we serve.

Q6. As someone who continues to push boundaries in your field, what are the most important goals and priorities you hope to achieve over the next five years?

Over the next five years, my vision is to position META OCTAV GROUP as a respected international player while preserving the independence, personal touch, and client-centric philosophy that define us. Our priorities include strengthening our presence across Switzerland and Asia, expanding our global network, and developing forward-thinking solutions for the evolving needs of families and entrepreneurs.

Equally important is nurturing exceptional talent and empowering the next generation of professionals to grow and lead. As we expand, maintaining close client relationships, responsiveness, and trust will remain non-negotiable. Ultimately, success is not simply about building a larger organisation, but creating a resilient, values-driven business with a lasting reputation and a sustainable future.

Q7. The future belongs to those who help shape it. As you look ahead, what vision are you working toward, and what changes or innovations do you believe are necessary for your industry to evolve and thrive alongside that vision?

My vision for the private wealth industry is one that embraces global connectivity, transparency, and innovation without losing its personal touch. As clients become increasingly international and their needs more complex, the industry must evolve through greater collaboration, cross-border expertise, and a more client-centric approach.

Emerging technologies, particularly AI, will play a transformative role in enhancing efficiency and elevating client service. However, technology should complement—not replace—professional judgement and human insight. At META OCTAV GROUP, our philosophy is to blend innovation with timeless values: discretion, independence, and trusted relationships. Ultimately, the future belongs to those who can bridge technology with human intelligence, global ambition with personalised service, and innovation with integrity.

Q8. Beyond your professional achievements and leadership journey, is there a message, belief, or personal insight you would like to share with our readers that reflects who you are and what drives you every day?

I believe success is defined not only by what we achieve, but by the values we uphold and the relationships we build along the way. Curiosity, continuous learning, and the opportunity to connect with people inspire me every day. I have also learned that resilience is essential; sometimes, the most challenging chapters become the catalysts for our greatest transformations.

My philosophy is simple: work with purpose, stay authentic to your values, treat others with respect, and never hesitate to embrace a new beginning. Above all, enjoy the journey. True fulfilment lies in balancing professional ambition with the things that matter most—family, friendship, health, and happiness. After all, a successful life is about more than a career; it is about creating a life worth celebrating.

Q9. If you could leave one lasting piece of advice for aspiring professionals and future leaders, what would it be, and why do you believe it matters in today's rapidly changing world?

My advice to aspiring leaders is simple: stay curious, embrace change, and never stop learning. In an ever-evolving world, tomorrow's leaders must welcome innovation, explore new perspectives, and remain grounded in their core values.
Never be afraid to take calculated risks or pursue a new direction; some of the greatest opportunities emerge from unexpected challenges. Equally important is surrounding yourself with the right people, nurturing authentic relationships, and sharing knowledge generously. While skills and experience can open doors, integrity, resilience, and adaptability are what build a truly lasting legacy.



10. When your professional legacy is discussed years from now, what impact would you hope people remember you for most?

I hope to be remembered not only for what I built, but for the positive impact I made on the lives of others. While I would be proud to see META OCTAV GROUP continue to thrive for generations, my true legacy would lie in the values that shaped its journey: trust, integrity, and meaningful relationships.

I hope my clients remember me as someone they could rely on, and that colleagues and emerging professionals see me as someone who shared knowledge, created opportunities, and inspired growth. Ultimately, titles and achievements may fade, but the difference we make in people's lives endures. For me, the greatest legacy is not what we leave behind, but the lasting impact we create in others.


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