



Support Professional of the Year (Vendor)

Meena Jeenarain, Abacus Group

Meena Jeenarain, director of client services and winner of the support professional of the year (vendor) category in this year's Women in Technology & Data Awards, believes one of the necessary qualities of an effective project manager is to be open to ideas. Jeenarain joined Abacus Group in 2014 with the goal of shaping how projects were being managed. One of the challenges was to bridge the gap between the engineering team and the support organization when onboarding clients. Once an engineer had completed the project there was no clear definition regarding how they were going to support it. The result was that the support team would come up with its own processes and procedures.

Jeenarain had to take a step back to look at any gaps in the process and develop new workflows. As the organization grew in size, it began to segregate its project teams. This meant separating the project managers from the engineers and later bringing them together during the onboarding phase. "We didn't only focus on how to implement a project, but looked at the problems and the experience—that was an important thing for us," Jeenarain explain. "What were the client experiences throughout the phases of the project? How do we take requirements? How do we not be intrusive on their day-to-day [activities]? How do we onboard them, and if they already have an existing IT organization, how do we recognize that they still need to work and trade, and how do we make sure there is minimum downtime for them?"

One standout project Jeenarain was involved in was onboarding a large client during 2018 that had a complex infrastructure and global offices. The aim was to have minimum downtime during the cutover. "At the end of the day, it was challenging," Jeenarain recalls. "We planned and planned and re-planned. We looked at the risks and planned for those risks, but it was very fulfilling when it was done. The project management team learned so many lessons from that project that we went back and re-invented our process to accommodate for big clients like that and various time zones."

Jeenarain says she would like to see more women working in technology. "I don't know if many women realize how exciting and fulfilling the technology field is," she says. "You get exposed to all the new software that is coming out and you learn how impactful technology is on a day-to-day basis. You can't do anything anymore without understanding technology."

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