

arifa batool

This March, P@SHA brings to light the women making the world brighter with their hardwork, determination and persistence.



Arifa is from Khairpur, a small town close to Sukkur in interior Sindh. During her intermediate in 2007, she earned a scholarship from the Ministry of IT & Telecom which motivated her to pursue the undergraduate degree in Computer Science at FAST National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences, Karachi. After finishing her degree, Arifa worked as Quality Assurance Engineer in Gameview Studios, home to top grossing mobile game apps in 2011 and then served at Folio-3 for nearly 4 years. Arifa is currently working as a Software Developer at Atlassian in Sydney, Australia and considers this her biggest break yet in terms of personal and professional growth which has helped her overcome her comfort zone.

Q. *How do you describe the shift from working in Pakistan and then working in a billion-dollar company?*

I think the best thing about working in the Software industry is the fact that it's universal, the nature of work across oceans is more or less the same. The thing that makes difference is the working culture itself. But If I have to highlight one thing that I learned from this transition is the importance of having a great line manager. I think it's very crucial for your growth and I think this is something that gets overlooked in our software industry locally. A manager is not your 'judge', they are your support to help you grow. Another important thing is to have a blame free work culture, which really brings out people's innovative mindsets into play. The way we work here at Atlassian, when a problem happens, the focus is always on how to solve it and how to avoid happening again rather than who introduced it.

What practice differences do you see in Quality Management, Team Alignment as well as in inclusion and diversity between local companies and your current employer?

Here we have mostly self organised teams and no one micromanages you, which I love the most. There is a lot of focus on upskill-ing each other within the teams. As for Diversity & Inclusion, Atlassian pays keen focus on them and that reflects in our hiring strategies as well. I remember there being a strong advocacy about having a female engineer as part of an interview panel whenever there's a female interviewee. There are mentor groups within Atlassian who provide mentor-ship to people with less representation. I think locally we could pay more attention to how we represent ourselves as a company or our values when interviewing potential hires, because that's where you make your first impression.

Do you have any advice for people who want to take a leap of faith similar to yours?

Give your 100%. Even if you do not succeed, you'll have no regrets. Be prepared for what you want to achieve. I was also lucky to have great mentors while working at Folio3; their professional guidance really helped me achieve my goals. When I got an interview call from Atlassian, the first thing I did was reading about Atlassian's work culture, their practices, their values, people who worked there and their technical blogs which really helped me stand out in the interview.

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What are the most important milestones in your career?

First would be my move to Australia to working at Atlassian and second would be my transition here from being a Quality Engineer a Software Developer.

What are the best lessons you've learned, both personally and professionally?

There's only one thing that I have learned which has affected me both personally and professionally; God helps those who help themselves.

Do you think Pakistan has changed as a society, in terms of accepting women's careers and professional aspirations? What are your observations?

I wouldn't say that Pakistan has "changed" as a society in that sense. I think we have only just begun. We have certainly started moving in that desired direction but there's still a long way to go. I talk to a lot of career oriented working women in the tech industry and from other fields as well in Pakistan and it still looks like having careers or career aspirations is a privilege "given" to us. I would say that we have 'changed' once this becomes as obvious as any other basic right we have. So, we have to continue working on changing that mindset from grass root level, starting from within our families and our working places. I would love to be part of it in any and every capacity I can.