

# sophia hasnain

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



Sophia works for Linked Things, a company she founded in 2016 to lead IoT implementations in the emerging markets. Linked Things focuses on specific problems faced by businesses in emerging markets and has developed IoT and Big Data based products to solve specific challenges. Sophia is a Computer Systems Engineer from NED University and is also an Electrical Engineer from the University of Michigan.

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**Q.** • *What led you to Linked Things?*

It was after 18 years of experience that I had both time and resources to explore what I really wanted to do, the way I wanted to. I have a unique and unparalleled cross-continent, cross-industry and cross-department experience to know what wouldn't or doesn't work. Secondly I love tech, this space gives one so much creative power that it is unbelievable. I started my career as an embedded systems engineer, and technology has improved so much that the ideas that were difficult to execute then have now become quite easy to implement. So, the first driver in setting up Linked Things was to build something based on my own experience and second was my love for the electronics.

*Tell us about your philosophy towards innovation management and how can we use it to reach the un-tapped local potential?*

Well, "innovation management" is a theory of economics more than a philosophy, therefore it is linked to real performance indicators. I am a follower of fundamental theory developed by Joseph Schumpeter. So, in 2012 when I came back to Pakistan, I worked with three locally successful tech product based businesses as an innovation management consultant for two years. That was more of a learning experience for me as I realized how badly development processes are managed. The challenge is that in a market that still doesn't pay its human resources well, we do not value capital spent on programming and development. Thus, the companies and their customers are trigger-happy in starting any development from scratch. In these companies, the quality processes are from the 90's and we see a lot of poor quality products being developed from tech perspective.

Linked Things is a product based company and we have focused on building quality software and hardware. We have balanced customer requirements and quality as a priority from day one. Our organization has a flat structure and everyone contributes in defining the requirements for development. We encourage employees to own the development process and experiment. Where I bring experience, my team is young brings the understanding of latest technology. I trust them when they design a solution and there is no penalty for failures.

**"Our media continues to portray working women negatively despite the large number of successful women balancing work and life beautifully!"**

*What kind of opportunities are available for people who want to create products for the local market in Emerging Tech?*

I think there are amazing opportunities for technology based solutions in the emerging markets just because of demand and supply perspective. However there are two challenges; the products have to be geared towards the emerging market realities and they don't have to compromise quality. We at Linked Things are quite fortunate that we understand both the realities and quality. I myself have worked in Germany and developed appreciation for quality.

*What are the most important milestones in your career?*

I have gotten some really amazing opportunities in my career to explore, learn and deliver. It has been a ladder type of a career than a roller-coaster type. I have enjoyed all the positions that I have had, they brought the best out of me and gave me a possibility to prove myself.

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

First, do not pay attention to every advice, comment, and suggestion that comes your way. Trust your wisdom, judgement and inner self. Pursue what you believe in.

Second, I think as women we have an opportunity to carve out our careers and accept various challenges. We can take different roles and experiment with our career, much more than men actually.

Third, you need to have support in the form of family and friends. Always surround yourself with people who believe in your progress. One should always take their hobbies and/or activities seriously too.

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

In my opinion, it is time that men enter the 21st century and accept women in equal or superior roles. We also need to change how we classify professional success and failures to accommodate men and women on equal basis. Of course there are more women in the workforce now but that doesn't mean that we have been able to counter issues such as respect for our work, freedom from skepticism, equal pay for equal work. I am personally fatigued by having to prove myself all the time in front of men who are less intellectually equipped to understand my work. Our media continues to portray working women negatively despite the large number of successful women that are balancing work and life beautifully!

**Disclaimer**

Any views or opinions represented in this interview solely belong to the interviewee and do not reflect the opinion of Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA).