

# SAHM Interview with Visala Goswitz by Cass Dottridge

1. Hi! Please could you introduce yourself (name and IP role)?

My name is Visala Goswitz, and I'm a Patent Agent at Cargill in Minneapolis, MN.

2. This month is South Asian Heritage Month. What does that mean to you?

In the US, South Asians are a more recent and smaller immigrant group than in the UK. As a result, the US celebrates Asian history in May, but not South Asian history month. When I was growing up, there were very few South Asians in the Twin Cities so few role models for me to look up to, other than my parents and their friends. My parents valued education very highly, and scientific education in particular. The Indian community views "science" as a path to success, and a first step towards an esteemed career, like becoming a doctor. While I chose not to pursue a career in medicine, my parents' values were pervasive as I was growing up and influenced the path I chose.

3. Has your cultural heritage influenced who you are as an IP professional and if so, in what ways?

My choice of career is a more non-traditional application of my scientific training. However, the value of education and hard work drove me to push myself, to take on difficult challenges, and made me want to be successful – they made me ambitious. My heritage is a part of who I am and therefore played a role in my life and career, but it is my life experiences as a whole that define who I am as an IP professional.

4. Is representation in the IP profession important to you and why?

Absolutely. Having people who have gone before, and are willing to share their experiences, is important. We all occasionally have to navigate tricky social or cultural situations. One example for me having parents who had very traditional expectations that weren't always well suited to the very different environment I was growing up in. It's helpful to hear personal stories of how others, with similar cultural experiences, have navigated similar situations.

5. Did you have anyone to look up to as you were entering the profession (you can name them but you don't have to)? How did that influence you?

There wasn't anyone specifically with a South Asian heritage in the IP field. However, I did work with a female partner in a law firm and she was a role model for me. She was highly

respected professionally but still had high emotional intelligence and was able to navigate some of the drama from the law firm and help me to manage professional situations. She inspired me to believe you could be true to yourself and highly respected as a professional.

6. If you could go back to the beginning of your career, what advice would you give yourself (or what advice would you give new entrants into the IP profession)?

The best advice I could give is to not be too picky: try to get as large breadth of experience as early as you can – that will build a strong foundation, help one be more agile, and a great professional.

7. What's the best advice you've ever been given?

[laughing] Be nice to the Examiner – don't think of them as adversaries!

8. What do you love most about your job and what would be one thing you would change?

I love the range of technologies I get to work on and that I never stop learning . I'm also fascinated by the latest innovation trends and love being able to work at the cutting edge of that – seeing and helping to protect all the cool innovations! The one thing I would love to change is being able to reduce the prosecution time of an application, especially towards the later stages. There are times when we expend so much additional time and energy when a resolution is close. Some Examiners are more willing than others to come to a resolution.

9. What's your proudest achievement (work related or not)?

My proudest profession achievement is the first time I received a favorable decision on an Appeal on one of the patent applications I had written and prosecuted.

10. And last but not least: can you share one resource (book, website, organization, tool) that you think everyone should consider?

One of my favorite authors is Jhumpa Lahiri. She won a Pulitzer prize for "The Interpreter of Maladies", a collection of short stories. Her novel, "The Namesake", is fantastic and speaks to growing up in the US in an Indian family. It was also adapted into a film of the same name.