

Citi: like a tech company with a banking licence

As a young person, indeed as a young woman, Shirene Madani felt comfortable, welcomed and valued when she started work in Toronto last year at Citi Canada, a subsidiary of Citibank, one of the world's largest and most powerful financial institutions. "We have a very good gender balance here," says Madani, a senior corporate banking analyst. "It's not male-dominated like some other financial institutions. I'm included in all work and social settings."

Even more so, Madani, an Ivey Business School graduate, feels empowered at Citi. "We are encouraged early on to work directly with our own clients and attend client meetings with very senior people," she says.

Nourishing and encouraging new employees is a critical Citi corporate strategy. "From our global CEO on down, we are committed to attracting, developing and retaining the best university-sourced talent," says Christine Di Scola, who heads Citi's HR operations in Canada.

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Christine Di Scola
Director and Country Human Resources Officer

Since the 2008 global recession, Di Scola says many business graduates have gravitated to start-ups and technology companies. "We intend to make Citi the employer of choice," she says.

To that end, Citi works closely with some dozen Canadian universities across the country to first seek out leading



CITI EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATE IN A HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE FOR SEVA FOOD BANK

candidates and then make them feel at home as soon as they join the bank. People like Madani first interacted with Citi through its extensive summer intern program while, for his part, University of Waterloo computer engineering grad Pawan Bhatla came aboard in 2014 directly after graduation.

Bhatla experienced two co-op assignments at other financial institutions before joining Citi, where he now works in fixed-income electronic trading support out of Mississauga, Ont. "Citi differs from other Canadian banks in two significant ways," he says. "First, it is a truly global institution, which presents many opportunities for development. Every day, I am talking to people from Singapore to London, solving problems and learning new skills.

"Second, we may be a large organization, but it's very accessible. My access to higher management is pretty unparalleled."

Di Scola describes Citi as a non-hierarchical technology company with a banking licence. "We are an innovation leader," she says. "That is why we have survived and prospered for more than two centuries. If you are open to lightning-speed change and transformation, then this is the place for you."

Bhatla agrees. "New codes that could take more than a year to be adopted by most companies can be put in place here in just a few weeks," he says. "That's largely because management listens and is responsive to sound new ideas, even if they come from someone under 30."

As a result, Bhatla says he is motivated to take on even more responsibilities. "Having your ideas accepted makes you want to work harder and perform even better," he adds.

All new graduate hires undergo an intensive six-week training period,

most of them in Citibank's New York headquarters. "It's pretty exciting to meet and work with head office people just as you're starting," says Madani. For Bhatla, the training was a chance to build a network and make workplace friends. "It beats just being dropped at a desk on Day One," he says.

Citi shows its concern for young hires in other ways. "Millennials want to make a difference and are looking for opportunities to give back," Di Scola says. To that end, Citi allows graduating students to take a year off to volunteer before they start their jobs. Once they begin, they can sign up for a four-week Citi-sponsored volunteer program in Kenya, aimed at helping local entrepreneurs.

With offices in more than 100 countries, Citi offers other opportunities for young people to develop professionally and personally abroad. Madani is considering a one-year overseas assignment, while Di Scola encourages all staff to look beyond Canada's borders. Declares Di Scola: "With our global footprint and programs, our early career development opportunities are second to none." ■



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