

Mastercard ceo: ajay  
banga



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Ajay Banga was born, raised, and educated in India. He received his bachelor's degree in economics from Delhi University (Diversity leadership: Ajay Banga, MasterCard worldwide, n. d.). Banga has had a very diverse career where he held many senior management roles simultaneously. He began his career with Nestle' in India. During his thirteen years with the company, he worked on assignments to expand sales, marketing and general management (Banga, BIO: Ajay Banga, MasterCard president and CEO, 2013). Afterwards, he worked with Citigroup where he had the opportunity to be the CEO and to travel to London, Brussels, Hong Kong, and New York (Diversity leadership: Ajay Banga, MasterCard worldwide, n. d.). Banga was appointed CEO of MasterCard in 2009 where he currently remains. (Banga, BIO: Ajay Banga, MasterCard president and CEO, 2013). He has served as a member of the U. S. Presidents Advisory Committee for Trade Policy and Negotiations as well as a member on the Commission on

Enhancing National Cybersecurity under the Obama administration (Our people, n. d.).

Banga has had the pleasure to have a very diverse and distinguished career and continues to share his experiences and knowledge with others. As leader of a top ten most diverse company, Banga says that being different helps to build a global workforce (Banga, What does global mean for MasterCard?, 2015). His passion for diversity came from the fact that he himself is diverse, in the sense that he is of Indian decent, runs a global company, and wears a beard and turban; something that is not common in his position (Groysberg & Connolly, 2013).

## **Status1**

MasterCard has continually been considered a diverse company. This can be contributed to the fact that MasterCard is a global company that operates in more than 210 different countries and employs over 7, 500 employees. The company believes that having diversity will allow a better understanding and greater access to new markets (Our Story, n. d.). In 2001, the company had launched the Supplier Diversity Program so that businesses that were owned by women, veterans, and minorities would have more of an equal opportunity to participate in the procurement process (Our Story, n. d.). However, the roles of diversity and inclusion would not be a main focus for a few years, until the appointment of Ajay Banga. The proof can be seen in the ranking of MasterCard by Diversity Inc. Magazine where MasterCard didn't hit the top 50 until 2005 at rank #49 (DiversityInc top 50 list since 2001, n. d.).

Celebration, however, would be premature for the company, as it took an additional four years until it would reach the top 50 again in 2009 at rank #41. It wasn't until 2011 that the company would see momentum taking them up the list where it went from rank #31 on the list in 2011, to rank #15 in 2012, and then to the top ten in 2013 at rank #5 (DiversityInc top 50 list since 2001, n. d.). Much of the success could be associated with the introduction of MasterCard's innovative creation of its Business Resource Groups (BRG) (Leading our diversity efforts, n. d.).

## **Philosophy**

Ajay Banga has a philosophy of global diversity and inclusion. His passion for diversity comes from the fact that he himself is diverse as an Indian immigrant. Banga promotes his vision of "a world beyond cash" (MasterCard diversity and inclusion, n. d.). This means that his workings of diversity and inclusion go beyond the simple fact of making money, and spread farther to helping others grow as well. The company has been involved in philanthropy as well as programs that assist others in personal and professional growth (MasterCard diversity and inclusion, n. d.). He has a passion to inform others of the importance of diversity in multiple aspects of the global market. This is seen in his speeches at IIM-A class of 2015 (Banga, MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga's six lessons on leadership - as told to the IIM-A class of 2015, 2015) and to the NYU Stern graduates (Equality, diversity anchors MasterCard CEO message to NYU Stern graduates, n. d.). Here he speaks about "doing well and doing good" as the highest form of leadership (Banga, MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga's six lessons on leadership - as told to the IIM-A class of 2015,

2015). He feels that a company that is successful has a responsibility to help others succeed as well.

Banga said, “ As a company, we believe diversity sits at the root of innovation. Diversity of culture, experience, and thought all drive innovative thinking. That’s why we encourage employees to express their diverse opinions and ideas.” (MasterCard diversity and inclusion, n. d.). During his speech to NYU Stern graduates, Banga pokes fun at himself by saying that one of his hobbies is to be randomly searched by TSA in airports (Equality, diversity anchor MasterCard CEO message to NYU Stern graduates, n. d.). This goes along with his philosophy that people should not be focused on where they come from or what they look like and more on what they do and how they do it. That acceptance of all cultures and development of those cultures can benefit business. Banga has said many times that “ a group of similar people tend to think in similar ways, reach similar conclusions, and have similar blind spots.” (Equality, diversity anchor MasterCard CEO message to NYU Stern graduates, n. d.).

Banga suggests that a company should try to increase its connectivity to the rest of the world by looking outside its own borders and to get involved in other organizations, but also with the ones that connect back to it (Banga, MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga’s six lessons on leadership - as told to the IIM-A class of 2015, 2015). This is what gives MasterCard its success as a global company. Banga tells of four important attributes that defines a great leadership culture of diversity. The first is a sense of urgency to solve problems and implement solutions that can be solved easier from having a

diverse culture. Second is a sense of balance, third is to have the courage to take thoughtful risks.

To explain this, Ajay takes a quote from Winston Churchill, “ Success is not final, failure is not fatal, it’s the courage to continue, that really counts.” (Equality, diversity anchore MasterCard CEO message to NYU Stern gradates, n. d.). This means that a person must be willing to take a chance to change for the better and innovate solutions to be better. One of his attributes is to be competitively paranoid, where a person must constantly ask themselves if they are missing anything to the problem, if there is something else that can be done, or a better way to do it. We must “ harness the collective uniqueness of people to widen your field of vision.” (Equality, diversity anchore MasterCard CEO message to NYU Stern gradates, n. d.). The bigger the window is that you have to view the world, the more you can see what works and what doesn’t. This boils down to having a diverse culture in multiple locations around the world that will allow insight as to how to conduct smart business decisions.

## **Strategy**

Banga has implemented his philosophy of diversity and inclusion to grow the company even stronger as a global competitor by creating innovative solutions. He states that, “ Diversity of thought is at the heart of innovation.” (MasterCard diversity and inclusion, n. d.). To accomplish this, Banga had to be able to tap into the diverse cultures of the world and to gain their involvement so that the information can be collected and used. This was done by creating Business Resource Groups (BRG). These are similar to Affinity groups that other companies have, except for that they are more

than just focused on the business of things. Each of the eight BRG's that MasterCard has focuses on a specific part of the global culture to gain valuable insight as well as to be able to assist in the development of these groups.

These groups include Salute, which assists active military and veterans in transitioning to MasterCard's culture, WLN (Women's Leadership Network), where help in advancing the careers of women through mentoring and coaching is available, Pride, where a culture of inclusiveness and acceptance regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or expression is accepted, and YoPros, where the company utilizes innovative skills of young professionals to aid in the advancement of the new world of technology such as teaching the ropes of social media (MasterCard diversity and inclusion, n. d.).

The Center for Inclusive Growth was created to advance more sustainable economic growth and financial inclusion globally (MasterCard diversity and inclusion, n. d.). Its focus is in two areas, research and global philanthropy, where multiple programs are in place to help the world's poor and financially excluded to gain more control over their financial future (MasterCard diversity and inclusion, n. d.). One of the most important strategies that has been implemented would be the EDGE program. Employees Driving the Global Edge follows the philosophy that MasterCard is a company that exists beyond boundaries and must think beyond them as well (Johnson, n. d.).

The EDGE allows employees of all levels and from all over the globe to connect, communicate, and socialize on an intellectual level that enables

them to share their experiences on what they have learned and essentially become advocates for MasterCard (Johnson, n. d.). It has become part of one of the cornerstones of MasterCard which is education and as such has now set the foundation for education on payments and products desired by the diverse cultures around the world (Johnson, n. d.).

## Goals

Bangas' goals were to create a diverse environment with diverse people in a diverse world culture. Often referred to as a world beyond cash in the MasterCard family. This goal was the platform for many of the innovations that were created. For Banga, owning a global company meant looking past what was only good for his company, and beyond where it was centrally located. By helping other businesses succeed, Banga knew that MasterCard would succeed with them. Banga said, " It's only lonely at the top when you don't bring other people along with you." (Banga, MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga's six lessons on leadership - as told to the IIM-A class of 2015, 2015). He has put forward an increased focus on the companies eight resource groups to help extend relationships with current and potential partnerships. In doing so, BRG chapters have expanded worldwide with the addition of twelve new chapters created in 2015. MasterCard has also made further commitments with support to the LGBT community and with the help of other firms has created the Open for Business coalition (No. 7 / MasterCard/ DiversityInc Top 50, n. d.).

Bangas future goals are to continue to be diverse and to continue MasterCard's innovative culture and to help other businesses succeed. He has succeeded in bringing the company to the forefront of diversity

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leadership. Going along with his lessons on leadership, *being competitively paranoid* means to keep questioning the ways things are being done and to challenge yourself to do them better (Banga, MasterCard CEO Ajay Banga's six lessons on leadership - as told to the IIM-A class of 2015, 2015). He believes that being different helps in building a global workforce (Banga, What does global mean for MasterCard?, 2015).

## **Current Status**

MasterCard currently holds onto its position in the top ten most diverse companies (DiversityInc top 50 list since 2001, n. d.). The company has been in the top ten for four years in a row. A major factor that many companies face in the fight for diversity is the amount of diversity in leadership positions. A company can be diverse, but if there aren't any diverse leaders, then the message gets lost. MasterCard has accepted this challenge and has 80.6% more Asians in senior leadership than the rest of the top ten companies, and 25.4% more blacks, Latinos, and Asians total than that of the top ten, which is 76.7% higher than the national average (No. 7 / MasterCard/ DiversityInc Top 50, n. d.).

## **Critical Claim**

My original idea of diversity was that it mainly involved the direct culture of businesses. I understood the value of having a diverse workforce to further the thinking of a business in regards to growth and marketing strategies and even to the point of social acceptance. After researching and learning more about Ajay Banga, I feel that I had much more to learn than I thought.

Diversity on a global level means that a company must have the capability to understand different economic and social cultures. Only then, can the

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company be able to involve itself to benefit not only itself, but also everyone they do business with. MasterCard has taken upon itself to help these companies gain control over their financial future so that they can grow with the rest of the world. Business operations need to be just as diverse as the company performing them. We see today a more diverse society than ever before as it has grown far beyond the demographics of age, sex, race, and religion. Today we have identities that people claim, races have become intertwined.

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