

EXCLUSIVE BY CNBC-TV18

I'm only partly ready for role in HCL: Roshni Nadar

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Roshni Nadar, daughter of HCL Technologies Ltd chairman Shiv Nadar, took over as chief executive officer of parent HCL Corp. in July. Roshni Nadar said in an interview that she is only partly ready for new roles and responsibilities. Edited excerpts:

You are only in your 20s. Do you feel ready for this sort of role and responsibility?

Partly yes, partly no.

What is the part you feel ready for?

I graduated from Kellogg. I studied social enterprise. We just rolled out Vidyagyan on 13 July, which is our school, and I have literally been involved from the beginning. Now I've given it to the principal and teachers. They have to see our vision through. It has been so exciting.

In a lot of ways, I've gotten to apply what I have read about or learnt about. So, from that perspective, I feel like I am sort of ready.

The not-so-ready part is that I have my parents kind of guiding it and helping me.

Although you are responsible for strategic direction for only HCL Corp., it is still the holding company for the two listed entities (HCL Infosystems Ltd and HCL Technologies).

I know. It is the holding company but in terms of strategic decision, one thing is investment and the other thing is the portfolio, which in a lot of ways is a family portfolio. So the strategic direction regarding that and where we want to take it in terms of our education initiative, and (whether) I look at that as an investment opportunity or other things. I have been thrown into the ocean and now I have to swim.

Was there no apprehension that how people were going to respond to this? Were you intimidated by



In the spotlight: HCL Corp. chief executive officer Roshni Nadar.

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the fact that you are going to come in as chief executive without having worked for the company at all?

As far as HCL Corp. goes, the only person I was actually working with is my father. I hadn't worked in the operating companies or had any exposure. But that bit I was prepared for, that I would come back and get involved with the corporation. Of course, I have my father guiding me and I have people who I have actually grown up with and who advise me.

What is the experience like? You are working now with a former cabinet secretary (T.S.R. Subramanian) and so on, people who you've probably called uncle and now you are across the boardroom table talking decisions?

It is phenomenal. Look at the exposure I am getting and look at what I am learning from people at literally an arms length. I am truly privileged to have that experience, and even sitting and working

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with people who I have grown up with. You learn a lot from their experiences.

I sit across them in the boardroom but it is really my time to listen and learn. I observe, I learn, I interact a lot. Even through this Vidyagyan process, working with T.S.R. Subramanian, how we have handled permissions from the UP (Uttar Pradesh) government or even when I have travelled with him to Lucknow, it is fascinating to learn. The exposure you get and the amount you learn, it is just great.

What about the formal induction or initiation into the business?

Was there a conversation that you

actually had with your dad or was it planned or was it like when you finish with Kellogg School of Management you come back and become part of HCL Corp.? How did it actually work?

That conversation actually happened while I was working with Sky News in London. I was loving it. It was just at one point I was sitting with my dad when he came to visit me in London and the time we found between our schedules because I would leave at four in the morning and come back at five in the evening. He'd come back later and by that time I was in bed. But the one or two hours we had together, he said what do you want to do. Do you want to come back to India because there is a huge responsibility back home? It took me a while and I thought about it and said it is a huge responsibility and I am kind of privileged to have that platform. So I'd like to come back. But I don't feel prepared enough.

At that point, the discussion of business school came about. I did film and television, not having worked in banking or consulting, a very different stream. So I said I'll go to business school and it will help me decide more on what I want to do. In 1996, we had already founded the SSN College of Engineering in Chennai. So, there was already an arm in education.

To me, I just felt that HCL has been here for 30 years and it is led by amazing people. You have Vineet (Nayar), you have Ajai (Chowdhry) uncle and people I have grown up with and it is led by amazing people.

I said, when I do come back I will have to learn and learn very fast and even without me it is going great. This is my time that after business school if I come back and if you give me a project that I can own, which I can say is my own entrepreneurship kind of project then I'll feel like my contribution would be a lot more and I'll learn a lot more.

So, that is Vidyagyan and now Shiv Nadar University, which we have acquired the land for, and this is also in UP, in Dadri. These are projects that I am doing. I feel like I am involved, I am guiding them. It is exciting.

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