

## **The Human Behind the Algorithm: Rashmi Sheel on AI, Purpose, and Putting People First**

There is a phrase heard constantly in the technology world today: “AI-first.” Rashmi Sheel hears it too. Yet every time she does, something about it feels incomplete.

“For some reason, it doesn’t resonate with me,” she says. “AI should support people, not replace judgment.”

It is a distinction that may sound subtle, but for Sheel, it represents the difference between technology that genuinely serves humanity and technology that merely impresses it. That philosophy has shaped her entire career.

### **From Fortune 500 to Fort Bend**

Sheel spent nearly two decades in corporate IT, working behind the scenes on systems most people never see. At Oracle’s retail division, she helped build predictive algorithms and supply chain engines that enabled retail giants such as Best Buy, Macy’s, and Kohl’s to make data-driven decisions at scale.

“I loved the problem-solving part,” she says. “Working with data and building systems that helped businesses run better.”

When her family relocated from Atlanta to Houston in 2018, Sheel used the transition intentionally, enrolling in AI and machine learning programs through Stanford and Udacity. After a brief stint with HPE in Houston, she made a move many professionals quietly dream about: she went out on her own.

In 2019, she launched a franchise with CMIT Solutions of Sugar Land, providing IT support and cybersecurity services to small businesses across the region. Alongside it, she built MyAssistant365.ai for AI automation consulting and later launched FlowGrant.ai — a platform that helps students, nonprofits, and small businesses discover and apply for scholarships and grants using AI-guided tools.

Three businesses. One common thread: the belief that small businesses deserve access to the same sophisticated technology that Fortune 500 companies have relied on for years.

### **AI That Knows Its Place**

Sheel’s human-first philosophy is not just a tagline — it is an operating principle.

When designing AI automations, her first question is never, “What can the technology do?” Instead, she asks, “Where are people overloaded?”

She uses a simple but powerful analogy to explain AI’s role in the workplace.

“When email came in, we didn’t wait two weeks for a letter anymore,” she says. “Work got done faster. Expectations changed. People adapted.”

AI, she believes, represents a similar shift — not a displacement of people, but an acceleration of productivity.

“What we’re delivering in months today will be delivered in weeks or even days,” she says. “That will become the new normal.”

One of the clearest examples of this philosophy in action is her work with Fort Bend Family Promise, a nonprofit that supports families experiencing housing instability, especially those with school-age children.

As a board member, Sheel saw firsthand how overwhelmed the organization’s staff had become managing intake calls, paperwork, and follow-ups — time that could have been spent directly helping families.

She introduced an AI receptionist, a website chatbot, and a fully digitized intake portal, transforming a process that once required families to attend two-hour in-person appointments into a streamlined digital experience.

“The staff now spends time actually supporting families instead of managing spreadsheets,” she says.

Since implementing the system, staff members have reported reduced burnout, faster response times, and greater capacity for the kind of relationship-building no algorithm can replace.

### **Advice for Business Owners**

For small business owners curious about AI but unsure where to begin, Sheel’s advice is refreshingly practical: start with bottlenecks, not the technology.

She encourages leaders to talk openly with their staff and reassure them from the outset.

“The first thing is to assure your staff that AI is not there to take their jobs,” she says. “Tell them we’re bringing AI in so they don’t have to spend time on repetitive, boring tasks anymore.”

She recommends beginning with a single painful workflow, testing before scaling, and evaluating whether existing tools — CRM platforms, accounting software, or point-of-sale systems — already include AI capabilities.

“You don’t have to revamp your entire tech stack,” she says. “Start where the pain is.”

As a new member of the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH), Sheel is eager to share her experience with fellow entrepreneurs navigating the rapidly evolving technology landscape — not as someone speaking from a distance, but as someone who has lived the journey herself.

“AI is a tool for growth and efficiency,” she says. “Not a threat. Not a mystery. Just a very powerful assistant — if you keep the human in charge.”

**Connect with Rashmi Sheel:**

- CMIT Solutions Sugar Land <https://cmitsolutions.com/sugarland/>
- MyAssistant365.ai <https://myassistant365.ai/>