

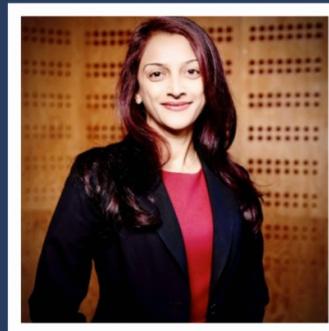
# EXCEPTIONAL WOMEN AWARDEES NEWSLETTER

BY LARRAINE SEGIL

January 26, 2022

*Featuring:*

*Tabassum Zalotrawala,  
Chief Development Officer,  
Chipotle Mexican Grill*



Ah, the joy of food! But during the pandemic, food also became a central point of concern. Would the basics be obtainable? When, and how, could we enjoy our restaurant favorites? We saw many in the food industry pivot quickly to the unusual circumstances and opportunities.

As Chief Development Officer for Chipotle Mexican Grill, **Tabassum Zalotrawala** has served on the front lines during these challenging and uncertain times. Today, we'll learn how Tabassum led with purpose and hear her insights for thriving in any business climate.

I'm thrilled that Tabassum is one of our Exceptional Women

Awardees (EWA). As the founder, chair and CEO of the EWA Foundation ([exceptionalwomenawardees.com](https://exceptionalwomenawardees.com)) it's my mission to enable high-level, high-potential women to reach their dreams by providing mentorship and coaching from a community of women business leaders, supporting and elevating each other.

With this newsletter, I hope to inspire you with the unique stories of our amazing awardees and help you add value to your own journey from the real-world lessons these women have to share.

Tabassum's experiences, and particularly those during the pandemic, have illuminated these key leadership strategies:

**Transparency and an abundance of communication are critical.**

"A lot has changed over the past two years, and some important themes around leadership have emerged for me during this uncertain time. Most important of which is transparency and an abundance of communication. Just giving clear, continuous, factual and candid communication—it's never been more important."

"During the first six months of the pandemic, our executive leadership team held weekly meetings for all employees, even though many answers weren't known. It meant a lot to our people to see Chipotle leadership owning up to the uncertainty and vulnerability we faced as restrictions change."

**Amp up your empathy.**

"Communicating with empathy and authenticity has never been more important. Leading with emotional intelligence—we all know it's important. But today it's not just a kind thing to do; it's required. An employee's mental health, their well-being, skills, development, all of that is of utmost importance to us at Chipotle."

"And it's critical to differentiate between empathy and sympathy. Empathy is not feeling sorry for someone; it's being authentic, being a good listener, being there for your employees. That may mean giving more time to sick employees. Or listening fully to what challenges employees are facing and resisting the temptation to interrupt with solutions."

**Keep your purpose central to all decision-making.**

"At Chipotle, we keep our purpose of cultivating a better world central to all decision-making, and I mean really **all** decision-making. Whether it was about people, or processes, supply chain, just keeping that purpose as our North Star has been key to Chipotle

thriving through these unsettling times.”

“For example, as we developed our new Hand-Crafted Quesadilla, we had the option to use less expensive equipment due to supply chain issues. To do so, however, would have compromised our product—and we do not compromise on quality.”

I find it particularly compelling hearing how Tabassum and Chipotle stayed centered on their purpose while their industry, and the entire world, spun into a whirlwind of uncertainty and change. That’s certainly a challenge for all of us at any time: **ensure that we clearly understand our purpose and that we use it as the anchor for all our decisions.**

Hear more from Tabassum by [watching the full EWA Live program](#) any time on our YouTube channel.

And we’d love to have you join our next EWA LinkedIn Live program on January 31, 2022. We’ll learn from leaders in the financial industry, Jane Marcus and Shruti Miyashiro, and take your questions. Hope to see you there!

Until next time,

*Lorraine*

Founder, Chair, & CEO  
Exceptional Women Awardees Foundation

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