

SURABHI AGRAWAL (MBA '16)

Industry: Consumer Goods & Retail

Where she works: Starbucks

Job Title: Senior Manager, Coffee Sustainability

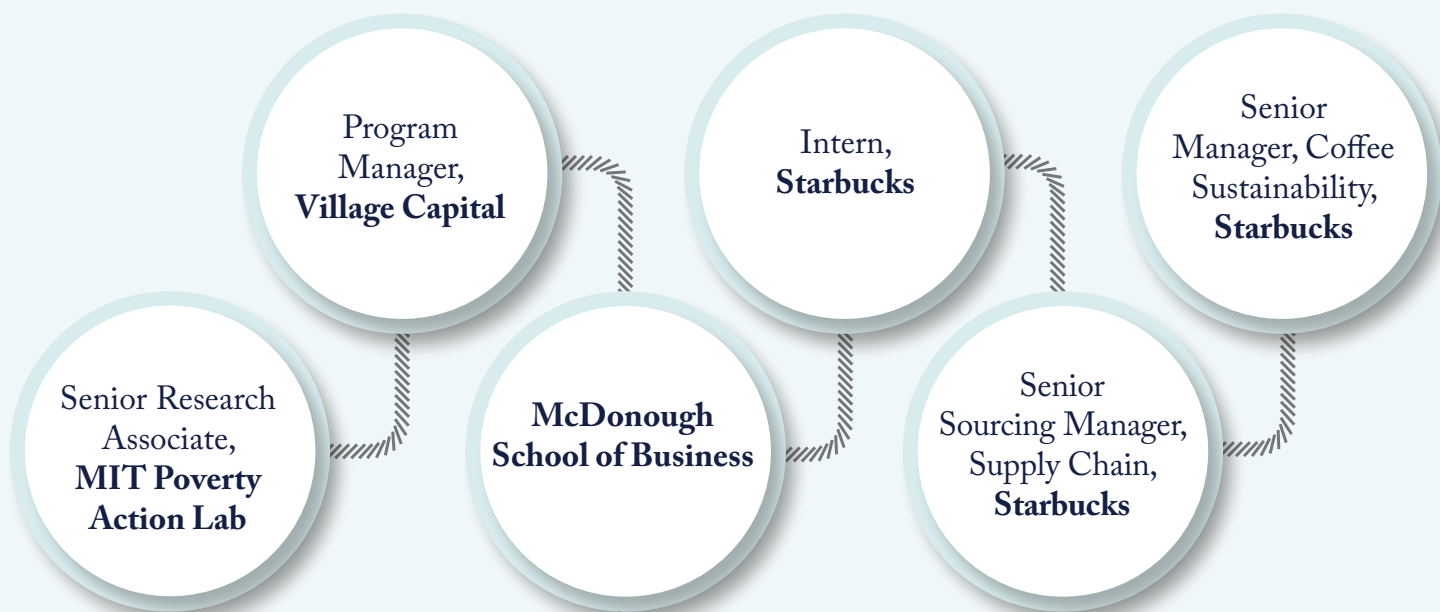
Starbucks has a goal to become resource positive and reduce their carbon, water, and waste footprint by 2030. As part of the coffee sustainability team, Agrawal is leading this effort in the coffee supply chain, focused on reducing the footprint of on-farm activities, improving the environmental ecosystem in farming communities, and piloting digital tools to improve farmer livelihoods.

Before this, she launched digital coffee traceability at Starbucks, using blockchain technology to link the data to share the information from bean to cup, with both customers and farmers. Agrawal has been working in Starbucks' supply chain since landing an internship as a McDonough student.

Job Functions: Strategy // Supply Chain // Marketing



AGRAWAL'S CAREER PATHWAY



“When I came to Georgetown I had a background in international development, working on microfinance and weather insurance. I was really interested in food systems and international supply chains, and I knew the impact companies could have if they analyzed their supply chain in an ethical and responsible manner.”

Useful classes:
Impact Investing
(Melissa Bradley, adjunct professor);
Supply Chain
(Ricardo Ernst, Baratta Chair in Global Business);
Data Analytics
(Volodymyr Babich, professor);
Marketing 100
(Prashant Malaviya, senior associate dean of MBA programs and professor)

“I met Starbucks at a Consortium conference. When I was hired full-time, they placed me in a position that surprised me: sourcing coffee equipment. I thought, ‘Wow, what am I doing here?’ as I didn’t have an engineer background. Ultimately, I was grateful because I became closer to the coffee team. I’ve been more productive in my current role after working in a core supply chain function like sourcing. Having that knowledge gave me the understanding that as we’re creating that system level change, it needs to be done through a business lens to have a sustained impact.”

CAREER ADVICE FOR MBAS:

There's value in gaining core business experience. "You can't do anything alone. You have to understand the business in order to effectively advocate for doing something different: What are other internal teams struggling with? What do your suppliers need? There's value in learning how the core business side of a corporation works before you work in sustainability. I've seen impact programs that are not as effective because they don't have a strong business case."

Check the date on a company's last social impact report. "Try to find a company that 'walks the talk' when it comes to impact. Lots of companies have language about people and purpose. But put that to the test. Check how often they update their social impact report: is the last version from 2014? Talk to employees at the company before making a decision — with alumni, you can ask the question directly."

Marketing is universal. "Marketing 101 was more useful than I expected. Whatever you do, if you're advocating for a product or a process, you'll have to think about how to connect with all the different groups and engage different stakeholders. In the end, you are dealing with people."

IN HER WORDS:

"I work in the core business group of Starbucks global coffee, tea, and cocoa, within the coffee sustainability team. I have had the privilege to travel to coffee farms and connect with farmers about the journey of their coffee and the challenges they face. Starbucks has a deep ethical sourcing commitment and we know the names of all the farmers that we buy our coffee from. Part of my work has been linking the data pieces using blockchain technology, to connect this information to the final bag of coffee for digital traceability.

Now, I have the privilege to work on coffee supply chain sustainability as it connects to the environment. This is a massive undertaking, and we know we cannot accomplish it alone. It is my role to connect the dots with potential partnerships in order to achieve the mission.

I love working at the intersection of supply chain and sustainability because there is space for innovation and I am constantly learning. I would have never imagined leading a project that is testing the potential of what blockchain has to offer in the supply chain. In the last month, I became a climate reality leader and am exploring the role of soil health on carbon sequestration. The ag-tech/precision-agronomy space is booming, and I am leading a workstream to learn from this data-driven space. This is my dream role as I am connected to the core business of Starbucks – coffee supply chain – while driving impact on the ground."

THE IMPACT SPECTRUM: Starbucks

