

# Women In Automotive Interview Series

Part of Informa Tech Automotive Group's Summer Festival of Automotive.

In partnership with:



**Meet Karolina Chachulska, Director - Customer Experience, Growth & Digital Products at infoedge LLC**

## 1. Why did you get involved in automotive?

I have been interested in cars and automotive since I was 3 years old. It was not until I came to the US and saw the testing of the self-driving car when it hit me how much the industry is about to change, and I decided I'd like to play part in that change.

## 2. What are you most excited about that you are working on right now?

I've been mentoring and advising companies in the automotive space for several years now. A company I am advising is working on a solution for the transit agency that aims to improve the rider experience, driver experience, but also allows the transit agency to increase internal efficiency. Considering the importance of public transit in providing affordable and sustainable mobility for millions of people, I am really looking forward to seeing this company succeed.



## 3. What do you think is the greatest challenge facing the autonomous vehicle industry?

I see at least two groups of challenges: (1) The challenges with getting AVs on the roads, including further AV technology enhancements, regulations, liability, and connectivity. (2) The second group is related to ensuring the broader urban transportation system including AVs working optimally. This group covers curbside management and space (road) management. To be solved, they require an in-depth understanding of all user needs, data analytics, and specific and targeted community engagements.

## 4. What is the biggest opportunity in autotech right now?

More experimentation! During the pandemic, people were more inclined to try new forms of mobility (micro-mobility being one of the examples). It would be great to see larger and smaller players experimenting with business models and solutions to move around in a safe way.

## 5. How do you see today's global pandemic reshaping the AV industry?

This pandemic has already changed our approach to retail, right now the fastest growing cohort of online grocery shoppers are people 50+ years old. Experts predict those trends are here to stay. For e-commerce to flourish, there are 2 key success factors: (1) fulfillment and (2) delivery. (1) Micro-fulfillment centers (MFC) are starting to pop up. Due to the smaller size of MFC, it is cost-effective for retailers to locate them in the dense urban areas (as opposed to the large fulfillment centers which due to more expensive land/rent need to be placed far outside the cities). The automation and robotization of those centers are underway. Those centers can reduce the cost of last-mile delivery by cutting down the distance to customers. (2) Resultantly, the delivery will be short and done within the city/urban dense area. There is an opportunity for delivery bots to step in and take over this work and ensure contactless service. As of now, the delivery bots are still at a very early stage of development and none of the companies have the

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fleet large enough to make a significant impact. But I do see autonomous robots in the MFCs and contactless delivery bots as two important near-term AV use cases expedited by the pandemic.

### **6. Any predictions you want to make for 2020/2021?**

In broad brush strokes, I see 2 things happening: (1) we'll probably experience an increase in ridership of previously less common modes of transportation. We already observed a huge wave of e-bikes sales, as well as RVs sales and rentals. (2) We will see a continuation of partnerships and the industry consolidation both in mobility scape (Uber & Lime) and OEM space (PSA & FCA).

The COVID-related sharp drop in demand for all sorts of transportation options (ride-hailing, new and used car sales) only adds to the issues companies were facing previously, example: OEMs were forced to simultaneously cut jobs, reduce prices, invest in autonomy, work on electric vehicles as well as engage in new forms of mobility. Consolidation simply allows companies to open new markets and join forces on capital intensive projects.

### **7. Why does diversity matter in this field? Anything in particular that you are doing to promote diversity in your company and/or our industry?**

There is empirical evidence showing a strong correlation between diversity and positive financial performance. Yet, according to Deloitte, only 27% of the auto-manufacturing workforce are females. In other parts of broadly understood transportation space, the situation is not much better. By not addressing this issue, the transportation industry is missing out on a lot of opportunities. The biggest and obvious opportunity is that women's transportation needs aren't met as well as they could be. Take pre-COVID commuting in NYC as an example: due to childcare and safety issues, women spend up to \$1200 annually more on transportation than men, yet still fall prey to harassment and other safety issues, as well as frequently report foregoing gathering opportunities, citing safe transportation concerns. I'd argue that having more females in high positions at transit agencies and other mobility providers would alleviate this problem.

Personally, I am part of Women in Automotive Technology - a group that was established to connect, educate, and drive the future of the automotive industry by creating programs, community, and events for women in the space.

### **8. What advice do you have for rising women in this space?**

Find a mentor. In fact, try to find multiple mentors and stay open to opportunities for growth coming from all sorts of interactions with your peers and even from people more junior to you.

Studies show women tend to do better when feeling the support of the group. If you feel that's you, come join any of the women-focused groups operating in your area.

And finally, just say "Yes" to any great opportunity coming your way!

*Thanks, Karolina for taking the time to talk to us about your experience working in Automotive.*

For more insightful intelligence, please visit the [Summer Festival of Automotive](#).