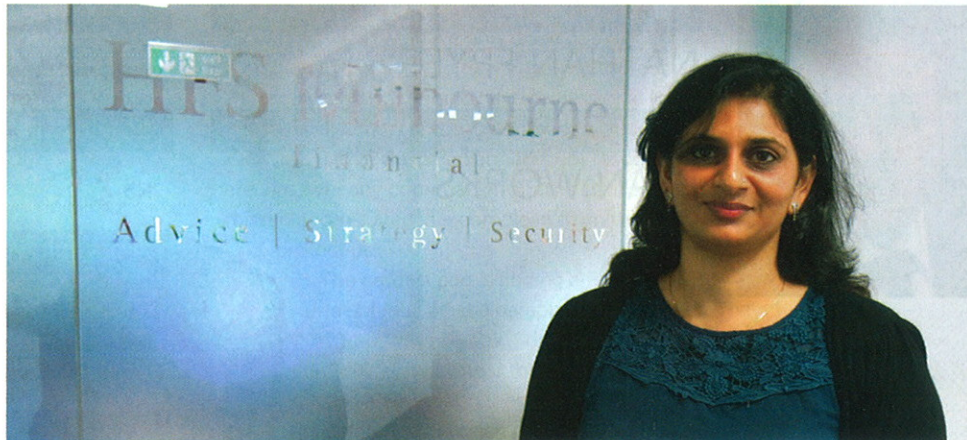


MEET SONAL SHAH, HFS MILBOURNE'S DATA QUEEN AND OFFICE WHIRLWIND

Sonal Shah has gone from corner shop owner to finance director at HFS Milbourne in Guildford, rising up the ranks at the IFA firm over the past 13 years.

'I've worked my way up,' says Shah. 'When I first started, I was a part-time accounts assistant, then became finance manager in 2007, and finally finance director in 2011. So I went from part-time to overtime!'

Before Shah joined the firm, she owned a convenience store, which she later sold. 'Then I became the bookkeeper for an insurance broker,' she says. 'But I knew the business was going down the drain, so when I saw the job advert for HFS Milbourne, I applied and got it.'



Multi-tasker

Already familiar with bookkeeping, Shah excelled in her first few years at the firm, and as the business grew she was able to take on more duties. 'I help wherever I can,' she says.

'Looking after the company finances, I am also much more involved in HR, compliance reporting and business management matters these days. I'm not giving financial advice, but I help where I can.'

Rod Milne, co-director at HFS Milbourne, says Shah is 'the whirlwind of the office'. This is not surprising considering her interest in dissecting data and her aptitude for getting things done.

In the past 13 years, Shah has acquired two master's level qualifications (one from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and

Development and one from the Chartered Management Institute), and is a fellow of the Association of Accounting Technicians.

'It all started when I used to phone up insurance companies and did not understand the terminology they were using,' she says.

Further education

Shah plans to acquire another qualification, this time from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, which will take four years and require 15 more exams.

She says she is happy to continue cementing her place in the HSF Milbourne team: 'I love this place, I love my Excel spreadsheets and I love presenting data.'

I started as a part-time accounts assistant, became finance manager in 2007 and finance director in 2011. So I went from part-time to overtime!

Sonal Shah HFS Milbourne

CHARITY WORK

Untiring Shah has taken on two long-term charity roles.

'I am the chair of a small local community school where I help to apply for funding, and make sure the people working for the charity are approved to work with children,' she says. She is a committee member of another organisation which she is helping to gain charity status.

She has taken part in fund raising events at HFS Milbourne, including Jeans for Genes.



FIRST JOB

'When I was a student, I worked at the check-out at Tesco,' says Shah.

'There was a board in the back room which was used to keep track of who was scanning the fastest. I usually stayed at the top, although there was one other employee I competed with. It was fun.'



RETIREMENT PLANS

Shah says: 'I'd love to travel around the world and be able to help people. I wish I had a magic wand that could get rid of poverty and help poor children.'

'I am not sure how I will make a difference but when the time is right it will come to me. Retirement is still a while away for me, so I have plenty of time to think about it.'

