



# Monetising human connection

## Cheryl Sandberg: Silicon Valley Pioneer

Digital advertising guru, businesswoman, Harvard graduate, author, philanthropist, billionaire, Silicon Valley pioneer. There is not much missing from the CV of Sheryl Sandberg, former COO of Meta and one of the most well-known women in corporate America. Since graduating from Harvard with a masters in business administration in 1995, Sandberg has drawn on confidence and leadership skills to push through glass ceilings. She has become one of the dominant faces of female corporate achievement, starting her career promisingly with positions at the World Bank, McKinsey and the US Treasury. Upon moving to Silicon Valley in 2001, she was instrumental in the development of Google's advertising, growing her business unit from four to 4,000.

In the workplace, she is known for her interpersonal skills as much as her fierce business acumen. In 2008 Sandberg joined tech giant Meta, formerly Facebook, and showed incredible savvy at monetising human connection. Her legendary energy and problem-solving skills helped grow the social network into the advertising giant that it has become. The company surpassed an annual turnover of \$100 billion last year. As

Facebook's number two, she was pivotal in developing a business model which centred around leveraging personal data for economic value, a role that earned her detractors as well as devotees. Personal achievement is not Sandberg's only benchmark. Woven into her own success story is a drive to make a difference for more women. In 2010 her online Ted Talk titled *Why We Have Too Few Women Leaders*, was an attempt to spark debate around issues of gender bias at the top. Three years later she published *Lean In, Women, Work and the Will to Lead*, a manifesto for those tackling the inequalities of the corporate working world. Today, Sandberg's *Lean In* community works to foster leadership.

There is family life too. Sandberg has two children from her marriage to the late Dave Goldberg. Processing her grief following his sudden tragic death at 47, Sandberg published *Option B*, a primer for resilience in the face of adversity and set up *Option B*, a foundation that helps people suffering grief and hardship. As she steps down from Meta this year, Sandberg is further aligning herself with social justice causes and focusing on philanthropy.

@sherylsandberg ■

*“In the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders. In this moment, ‘female leaders’ are a thing because women have not had the ability or opportunity to rise to such positions. Someday we will be able to just say leaders because being female leader will no longer be a novelty.”*

*Cheryl Sandberg*



# From rags to riches

## Jack Ma: e-commerce billionaire

In 2014, when Forbes' China Rich List put a net worth of \$19.5bn on Jack Ma, the internet pioneer earned the accolade of richest man in China. It was a rags-to-riches story for Ma, the son of traditional theatre performers, who finished university to become an English teacher earning \$12 a month.

Born in the historical city of Hangzhou in South-eastern China, Ma's route to wealthy e-commerce magnate was through an innovative vision for a data-driven business. When he started the – now world famous - Alibaba Group in 1999, along with friends including his wife Cathy Zhang, his knowledge of the internet and technology was minimal: he once described himself as “a blind man riding on the back of blind tigers”.

Jack Ma and the Alibaba group, now one of the world's biggest e-commerce companies, are household names. The group includes Taobao, an e-commerce behemoth which lists over a billion products. Also, Tmall, which is the largest B2C retail platform in China and gives consumers access to both Chinese and International brand names. Affiliated to Alibaba is payment app Alipay, which serves over 1.3 billion users who use it to pay for everything from coffee to utility bills. Although he stepped down as CEO of Alibaba in 2019, the charismatic Ma remains

an influential business presence in the country. Embodying the entrepreneurial spirit that fuels the economic growth of contemporary China, Ma is a national success story on a grand scale.

However, it is not all plain sailing. In recent times regulators in China have blocked financial technology firm Ant Group, of which he owned a significant stake, from floating on the Shanghai and Hong Kong stock exchange. During the two-years that have followed the cancellation of the planned \$35 billion listing, Ma has stepped out of the business limelight.

Philanthropy is now playing a leading role for Ma. During the Covid pandemic he made headlines donating millions of facemasks and thousands of ventilators to countries around the world. He also has a long-standing interest in environmental challenges and is trustee of the Nature Conservancy's China Program. Active and influential in a range of business and charitable sectors, Ma remains on a mission. There are no blind tigers in sight.

@jackma ■



*“A leader should incentivize, but not with money. You give trust, respect, appreciation, and correct, heartfelt advice... I know nothing about technology, I know nothing about marketing, I know nothing about (the legal) stuff. I only know about people.”*

*Jack Ma*