

## **Farhad Reyazat**

### **Profile of a Fintech Entrepreneur and Academic**

#### **Early Life and Academic Background**

Dr. Farhad Reyazat is originally from Iran and has been in London since June 2000. He boasts a robust academic foundation in finance and risk management. He earned first-class honours in both his undergraduate and master's studies in finance (B.Sc. and M.Sc.) before pursuing an MPhil and doctoral degree. Farhad completed his Ph.D. in Risk Management at the University of Southampton, where his dissertation committee was chaired by an Oxford University (Linacre College) member and included an external supervisory board from the Cambridge Centre for Economics and Public Policy at the University of Cambridge. He also undertook corporate finance professional training at London Business School to augment his expertise. He completed an executive CPD Applied AI in Financial Technology (FinTech) at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. This formal education and executive training blend honed Farhad's knowledge in banking risk, financial systems, and emerging fintech innovations.

In the academic realm, Dr. Reyazat has actively contributed as a lecturer and mentor. He has served as a senior lecturer in various programs in different universities in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia, notably including the Central Banking executive course at Oxford's Linacre College. He has been involved with the Centre of Risk Research and mentor scheme at the University of Southampton, sharing insights from his research in systemic risk and network theory in finance. Since 2017, Farhad has held the position of FinTech & AI Programs Director at the London School of Banking & Finance, reflecting his commitment to education in banking and fintech. Notably, in 2005, Bloomberg recognized him as a "senior certified professional" in equity and fixed-income instruments, underscoring his early expertise in financial markets. Around the same time, he became approved by the UK Financial Services Authority (now FCA) to perform risk management functions for financial institutions, credentialing him as a qualified risk professional.

#### **Entrepreneurial Ventures and Business Leadership**

Farhad Reyazat is a serial entrepreneur who founded and led multiple finance, technology, and consulting companies. His entrepreneurial journey began in the mid-2000s, capitalizing on his deep banking and risk expertise:

- **B&F Services** (est. 2005): 2005 Farhad founded B&F Services, a business consulting and investment advisory firm. As CEO and Head of Investment at B&F Services, he has helped thousands of entrepreneurs develop their business models, secure funding, and grow their ventures in the UK. B&F was notably involved under his leadership in assisting Central European entrepreneurs to expand their businesses in the European Union and the UK. Under his leadership, B&F Services has provided incubation, acceleration, and advisory support to startups across various industries, fulfilling Farhad's mission to assist SMEs and overseas entrepreneurs in establishing and expanding businesses in the UK.
- **Zebra Capital** (est. 2007): In 2007, he launched Zebra Capital, an investment firm focused on financing small and micro enterprises. Zebra Capital is a venture investment vehicle that provides

capital and mentorship in finance, IT, and marketing to nurture young businesses. Farhad's role in Zebra Capital underlines his commitment to supporting SME growth—many companies that received Zebra's backing might not have thrived without its investments and guidance.

- **Providence Asset Management** (est. 2016): 2016 Dr. Reyazat acquired Providence Asset Management, an FCA-authorised financial firm offering regulated investment products and services. Farhad and other founders guided the firm in managing assets and advising investors, leveraging their risk management acumen. (According to recent profiles, Farhad currently serves as a Senior Associate at Providence Asset Management.)

- **Other Financial Ventures** (2000s): Alongside the above, Farhad Reyazat's early career included leading or chairing several niche investment companies. For example, he was involved in Blue Chip Investment, which was created to provide financing solutions for SMEs, and Global Risk Management Group, reflecting his specialization in risk analysis. He also had roles in firms like Global Investment & Finance Trust and an International Investment Company, broadening his experience in global finance. Many of these ventures were part of his early portfolio and learning experience running financial companies.

- **Metropolia** In the mid-2010s, Farhad contributed to a fintech startup initiative called Metropolia for Polish Businesses. Metropolia was incorporated in February 2007 in London with a vision to innovate in final technology. Its brief existence nonetheless underscores Farhad's willingness to experiment with new fintech ideas and platforms, even if some ventures did not continue long-term.

- **Smarty Software** (founded 2013): One of Farhad Reyazat's flagship ventures is Smarty Software, a software-as-a-service platform for small businesses. He founded Smarty in 2013 with Agnes Gradzewicz, aiming to streamline micro-business management through an all-in-one cloud software. Under Farhad's leadership as CEO, Smarty Software developed a suite of tools combining accounting, CRM, invoicing, email marketing, web design, and more into a single affordable platform. After its official product launch in late 2016, Smarty Software gained traction in the London tech scene, earning recognition as one of the "Top 50 Disruptive Companies" by Real Business magazine and accolades from software reviewers. Farhad has often cited his motivation for Smarty as filling a gap for entrepreneurs who need to save time via automation and manage their business digitally, especially in the era of GDPR and Making Tax Digital reforms. Smarty's innovative approach led The Silicon Review to honor Dr Farhad Reyazat in its "50 Most Trustworthy Companies of 2018" issue, highlighting him as a trustworthy CEO driving innovation.

Through these ventures, Dr. Reyazat effectively built a holding group of businesses (sometimes informally referred to as Reyazat Holdings) encompassing consulting services, investment arms, and technology startups. This collection of companies under his chairmanship illustrates his multidisciplinary approach: from finance and risk management consulting to direct investment and software development. Reyazat often plays multiple roles – founder, investor, and strategic advisor – within his enterprises, indicating hands-on leadership.

### **Investments, Portfolio Companies, and Roles**

Beyond the firms he founded, Farhad Reyazat is an active angel investor and advisor in the fintech and technology ecosystem. Over the past two decades, he has built up a diverse investment portfolio, backing numerous early-stage companies in the UK and abroad. He typically invests in startups, aligning with his interests in fintech, AI, and innovative consumer services. Some notable companies that Dr. Reyazat has supported include:

- **Academy of Robotics** – a UK-based artificial intelligence and robotics company. Farhad is a Senior Advisor and professional investor at the Academy of Robotics. His involvement provides strategic guidance for this cutting-edge tech venture.
- **Plum Fintech** – a fintech startup offering an AI-powered savings and investment app. Farhad invested in Plum, recognizing its potential in personal finance automation.
- **Graphene Composites** – an advanced materials startup (known for graphene-based composites with applications like lightweight armor). He became an early investor, helping the company take its innovative materials to market.
- **Money Dashboard** is a financial analytics and budgeting app. Reyazat's backing of this fintech platform reflects his enthusiasm for personal finance management solutions.
- **The Market Mogul** is a digital financial news and insights platform. Farhad invested in The Market Mogul, which aligns with his advocacy for informed economic and financial discourse.
- **Pepper Software** – a technology venture (likely in software or AI; publicly described as one of his supported companies).
- **Mr & Mrs Smith (Hotels)** – a luxury travel and hotel booking platform. Farhad's investment and support of this company show the breadth of his interests beyond core fintech, extending into hospitality tech.
- **York Cocoa House** – an artisanal chocolate and café business in York, UK. This investment highlights Farhad's support for unique small businesses and perhaps community-oriented enterprises.
- **Ultramed/Altramed** is a health-tech company (the sources mention "Altramed," likely referring to Ultramed, a digital health platform). He has invested in this venture to diversify into healthcare technology.
- **Polysolar** specializes in solar technologies (mentioned in external profiles). Farhad's portfolio in this industry indicates an interest in clean energy tech and sustainability.

Farhad often takes on advisory roles in the companies he invests in. His broad expertise in risk management, AI applications, and business strategy makes him a valuable mentor to startups aiming to scale. This aligns with his philosophy of providing capital and "looking after all business functions" to build successful ventures together.

Farhad Reyazat's website, [www.Reyazat.com](http://www.Reyazat.com), serves as a hub unifying his ventures and insights. The site brands itself as "an online resource for the latest developments in AI, Fintech, Banking, Risk Management, and the economy," reflecting how his brand spans multiple domains in finance and tech. In essence, Farhad plays the role of an academic person who is an entrepreneur, a leader of companies, and an investor-incubator, through which he nurtures other entrepreneurs.

### **Publications and Thought Leadership**

In addition to his business activities, Dr. Farhad Reyazat has contributed thought leadership in academic and professional circles, particularly on banking risk, fintech innovation, and economic policy. His research and publications include both scholarly works and industry commentary:

• **Doctoral Research:** As part of his first Ph.D., Reyazat focused on banking sector risks. He explored concepts like operational risk modelling under the supervision of Professor **Professor Johnnie Johnson** at Centre of Risk Research, University of Southampton and Systemic Risk within the global financial architecture with Daren Acemoglu, professor of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Professor Richard Werner from University of Oxford and Professor Philip Arestis, Director of Research of the Cambridge Centre for Economics and Public Policy, University of Cambridge. Number of research studies on Risk Analysis within Southampton Business School, systemic risk in interbank networks, and “ultra-small world” network theory in finance. His doctoral work culminated in contributions to academic journals. Farhad’s work contributed to risk management; for example, he authored several papers on the risk management framework in Islamic banking, Basel II and III, challenges and implications in the banking system, stress testing, and operational risk modelling.

• **Conferences, Articles, and Blogs:** Dr. Reyazat actively writes and speaks about emerging trends in Risk Management, fintech, and AI in Paris, London, Oxford, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Tehran, and Tokyo. He has been a guest speaker at high-profile forums – for instance, presenting “Risk management in central banks” at Oxford’s Central Banking Senior Executive Programme in 2017. After that talk, he published an article on LinkedIn titled “Banking structure hasn’t changed enough to stop another crisis like 2008” (July 2017), arguing that the structural vulnerabilities in the banking system remain a systemic risk.

On his website, [www.Reyazat.com](http://www.Reyazat.com), Farhad regularly posts insightful articles and commentary. Recent posts (2024–2025) cover a range of forward-looking topics: for example, the societal impact of artificial intelligence (“Power, Progress, and the Future of AI”), summaries from global economic forums (“Davos 2025: Addressing Global Challenges...”), and analysis of trends in sustainable banking and entrepreneurship. He also delves into risk management and financial stability issues in his blog. This content is aimed at industry professionals and the general public, positioning Dr. Reyazat as a thought leader bridging academia and industry. His writings have appeared on platforms like LinkedIn Pulse and are frequently shared in fintech circles for their depth of analysis.

• **Academic Supervision & Advisory Board:** Farhad has also served as a member of supervisory boards and as an academic advisor for various universities. He has acted as an external examiner and thesis supervisor for numerous Master’s and PhD dissertations, particularly in Banking Risk, Fintech, and corporate finance.

• **Editorial and Professional Affiliations:** Dr. Reyazat has also served in editorial capacities. Notably, he was the editor-in-chief of Global Islamic Finance Magazine in Europe, Global Islamic Finance Magazine 2009. He was listed as a guest editor for the Iranian Journal of Finance (a quarterly publication), identified as “Fintech & AI Programs Director, London School of Banking & Finance, London”. This role suggests he contributes to international research dialogues, helping shape the discourse on fintech and artificial intelligence in finance. Additionally, he is a member of professional bodies and conference committees. For example, he has been associated with the Association for Research on Banking and the Economy (ARBE) and has spoken on topics like risk in interbank networks at ARBE events.

Through these publications and roles, Farhad Reyazat advocates for modernizing financial systems using technology while maintaining rigorous risk oversight. He frequently highlights the importance of community-focused banking and advocates for developing community banking models in the UK and Europe to promote equitable growth. His blend of academic rigor and entrepreneurial pragmatism gives him a unique voice on sustainable finance, AI ethics in banking, and fintech’s role in financial inclusion.

## Awards and Recognitions

Dr. Reyazat's contributions have earned him several awards and honors over the years:

- **Bloomberg Certified Expert (2005):** As mentioned, Bloomberg recognized him in 2005 as a certified expert in equity and fixed-income instruments. This early honor acknowledged his skill in financial analysis and was a testament to his firm grasp of investment products, just as he transitioned from academia into professional practice.
- **Network Computing Inspiration Awards (2018):** Farhad Reyazat was a finalist for the "Network Computing Inspiration Award" in 2018. This award, part of the Network Computing Awards, highlights individuals who lead inspiring projects in the tech and computing space. Reyazat's finalist position likely stemmed from the innovative impact of Smarty Software on small business productivity and his broader thought leadership in fintech.
- **The Silicon Review – 50 Most Trustworthy Companies (2018):** In 2018, The Silicon Review magazine featured Smarty Software (with Dr. Reyazat as CEO) as one of its "50 Most Trustworthy Companies of the Year." Reyazat himself was honored by the magazine for his trustworthy leadership as a CEO. In an interview with The Silicon Review, he was profiled as an entrepreneur with a strong banking background who had launched and chaired numerous businesses before Smarty. This recognition underscored the success of Smarty's platform and Reyazat's reputation for integrity and vision in business.
- **Other Accolades:** Farhad Reyazat's companies have garnered industry awards. For example, Smarty Software was selected among the Top 50 Disruptive Companies by Real Business Magazine and cited by Capterra as one of the Top 10 cheapest accounting software solutions for SMEs. These indirect honors reflect on Reyazat's leadership in creating award-winning products. Furthermore, Reyazat's role as a thought leader has been bolstered by media appearances – he has been interviewed about topics like Brexit's impact on SMEs (as a CEO in 2016). He frequently appears in fintech panels and webinars to share his expertise.

These recognitions mark Farhad Reyazat's 20+ years of experience in finance and tech, painting a picture of an individual who is accomplished on paper and respected by peers and industry observers. His ability to straddle the worlds of academia, industry innovation, and investment has made him a notable figure in fintech circles, both in the UK and internationally.

## Chronological Timeline of Key Milestones

- **1995:** Completes advanced studies in finance – earns a B.A. and M.S. in Finance
- **1997: Deputy Chairman – Bank of Industry & Mine.** Oversaw strategic lending operations to accelerate industrial and mining development in Iran; contributed to shaping national financing priorities during a critical phase of economic modernization.
- **1998: Chairman – Credit Committee for SME, Bank of Industry & Mine.** Chaired the committee responsible for SME credit policy, where he developed sector-specific lending criteria that improved access to finance for small and mid-sized enterprises across Iran.
- **1999: Chairman – Industry & Mine Investment Co.** Directed investment initiatives in heavy industry and mining sectors; instrumental in structuring large-scale public-private partnerships and equity placements during Iran's post-war industrial recovery.

- **1999: Chairman- Arya Leasing** . Led one of Iran’s pioneering leasing companies, expanding access to capital equipment financing for SMEs and industrial clients; introduced modern risk assessment frameworks into leasing structures.
- **2000: Board Member – the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (ADFIAP), Philippines**, Board Member of Asia’s largest development finance network, helping coordinate cross-border initiatives and knowledge exchange on infrastructure and SME development financing.
- **2000:** Relocates to London, UK, establishing the base for his career in finance and entrepreneurship.
- **Early 2000s:** Complete advanced studies in risk management, earn an MPhil, and then get a Ph.D. in risk management. Also attended professional courses at London Business School in the early 2000s.
- **2005:** Achieves Bloomberg certification as a Senior Professional in Equities & Fixed Income (demonstrating expertise in financial instruments). In the same year, he founded B&F Services, a consulting and business services firm aimed at helping startups and investors in the UK.
- **2007:** Launches Zebra Capital, an investment firm funds small and micro-businesses. Also in 2007, he became director of Global Investment & Finance Trust, expanding his involvement in global finance.
- **2008:** Founder & Editor-in-Chief – Global Islamic Finance Magazine: Established the first independent magazine focused on Islamic finance globally; positioned the publication as a key platform for regulators, scholars, and practitioners in Shari’ah-compliant banking. In the same year, I created a globally recognized awards platform celebrating innovation and excellence in Islamic finance; the awards became a benchmark of credibility for banks and financial institutions in the Muslim world.
- **2009–2010:** (Approx.) He completed his first Ph.D. research in banking risk at Southampton and began lecturing/mentoring roles.
- **2011:** Diversifies his portfolio by creating several niche investment companies
- **2013:** founding Smarty Software. Begins development of the all-in-one SME management platform. Also co-founded other ventures or initiatives around this time under “Reyazat Holdings” (an informal term for his group of companies and investments).
- **2016** Acquired Providence Asset Management, obtaining authorization from the UK financial regulator (FCA/FSA) to offer regulated investment products. This marks his entry into the asset management arena.
- **2017:** Joins the London School of Banking & Finance (LSBF) as Director of AI & FinTech Programs, bringing his industry experience to executive education. In July, presents at Oxford’s Central Banking Executive Programme and publishes a well-received article on systemic risk in banking. This year also marks his role as an investor/advisor in new startups like the Academy of Robotics.
- **2018:** Receives significant recognition: The Silicon Review names him among the top trustworthy CEOs and profiles Smarty Software in its “50 Best Companies 2018” issue. Smarty is also a finalist for the 2018 Network Computing Awards (Inspiration category). Under Farhad, Smarty Software garners industry awards (e.g., listed among top disruptive startups in the UK).

- 2019–2020: Continues expanding his investment portfolio. In 2020, Dr. Reyazat took on the directorship of International Investment Co. Ltd (an investment company active in the UK). By this time, he also becomes a Senior Associate at Providence Asset Management (indicating a semi-formal return to his finance firm).
- 2021: Serves as Guest Editor for a special Iranian Journal of Finance issue focusing on fintech and AI in banking. This reflects his ongoing engagement with international academic and professional communities during the fintech boom.
- 2022–2023: Farhad Reyazat’s businesses adapt and thrive despite global challenges (e.g., pandemic). He continues to mentor startups and participate in webinars on entrepreneurship (such as coaching sessions on building winning investment profiles for startups). On his website, he publishes analyses on AI ethics, sustainable finance, and recaps of major economic events (like Davos 2025).
- 2024–Present: Dr. Reyazat remains a prominent figure at the intersection of finance and technology. As of 2024/2025, he is actively involved in executive education at Oxford (Fintech Executive Education programmes) and leading FinTech seminars through LSBF. His consulting firm, B&F Services, now two decades old, continues to assist new businesses. He is frequently cited in discussions on AI in banking and works on initiatives to promote community banking in the UK and Europe. Farhad’s current focus includes leveraging his 20+ years of experience to foster purpose-driven, inclusive financial innovations while managing risk, carrying forward his dual legacy as an entrepreneur and a thought leader in fintech and AI.