

AlumSpeaks

In conversation with Mr. Jaikishin Chhaproo

Head - Media & PR, ITC

SIMSR Alum Batch 1995-97



Q. You have worked with so many established brands over the years, there must have been numerous cherishable moments, which one stands out the most?

A. Each role has had its own share of highs, so choosing one of them is quite difficult. For example, one of the high points during my term at Wipro was that I was the brand custodian for the launch of the new Sunflower logo in 1999, managing the entire TV and outdoor media and the final roll out had its own share of joy and excitement. Then with Unilever, there is one instance I remember when we made a Guinness record for organizing the largest World's Tea Party in India, where we served Brooke Bond Red Label tea to 32,000 people.

Now currently with ITC, there have been a lot of joyous moments. One of them was when we won 7 Lions at Cannes last year for our brand Savlon. Last year we also won the Global PR SABRE, which felicitates the best 40 PR campaigns of the world, and we were one of them. And now recently, two of my colleagues have won the Young Lions Silver at Cannes.

Q. Can you please enlighten us on the roles and responsibilities of a Media and PR head and what qualities should one possess to make a career in this field?

A. Most of the skills you need, you will acquire while you work. But in my opinion, you need to be very sharp with numbers, because if you are handling media you need to be on top of the numbers – whether it is viewership or the expenses you will incur. For any organization, the Media department is always the biggest cost centre, so you cannot afford to go wrong with your numbers.

Another skill which you need is the ability to take a gut call in terms of sensing good opportunities and how even the smallest of ideas could be scaled up, amplified and made appealing to the people.

You should also have that acumen to be able to identify winning ideas, for some ideas may have a very good media translation, but the idea that would actually make a difference could be the one you never thought of initially.

Q. You were associated with Snapdeal and it was often in news for its talks with Flipkart for a potential merger, constant layoffs of employees or delivering wrong or damaged products, as a media manager how challenging was it to handle such situations?

A. Situations like these do not directly affect the Media manager of the company, there are many different layers and departments who handle such functions, and normally it is the CEO or the COO who come under the public's scanner. Also there are multiple ways to handle such situations, first is to protect the company's information and be careful as to not give out information which could cause panic amongst the employees or media broadcasters, and secondly you should maintain a strong face in front of the world.

Q. Success can be overwhelming and one can easily lose the plot, how do you manage to keep yourself level headed and focused, we can surely take a cue and implement it in our lives.

A. It completely boils down to the fact about the aspirations have you set for yourself and by when do you plan to

achieve them. So during my time at Unilever, I came upon this realization that we are amongst a peer set where everyone is either exceptional or really good, but there will be only one person who will climb to the top position. So when we see the passion and hunger to grow never died down for our senior executives even when one of their peers advance to the top position, we realize that if you are happy and content with what you are doing, your designation does not matter.

Q. If at all there is a conflict of ideas between you and your superiors/colleagues, how do you handle them?

A. Such situations always tend to happen in the corporate world, because it is a matter of perspectives. So the solution is quite simple, that either I should be able to convince others or they should be able to convince me. And there are times when you are unable to convince your peers, so when we are implementing the idea, we set up milestones or checkpoints and test the responses at the pilot stage before scaling the idea at pan India level.

Q. We all know that it is important to maintain a work-life balance but how difficult does it get to do it when you reach a point of leadership role?

A. This absolutely depends on an individual's way of handling things. There are times when there is so much work that you are stuck in office for long hours or are travelling for weeks at a stretch. So in my case, the way we strike balance is to plan 2 to 3 small breaks in a year. There could be 2 long weekends when we plan to travel and then there is one annual vacation too, and these are the times when my phone is switched off.

Q. If you had to relive your SIMSR life all over again, would you do anything differently?

A. During that time and era, and the peer group which I had, I would want to relive those days once again without any changes. We had a good time at SIMSR.

Q. What are the significant learnings you had at your two years with SIMSR?

A. The kind of bonding which we all had as a team, besides making projects and presentations, was really outstanding. We had some great professors, and the basics which we needed to propel ourselves into the corporate world, I would say they were some of the most significant learnings I have received at SIMSR.

Q. What would be your advice for the students/young alumni who are starting their careers?

A. To highlight a few things, I would say that you should follow your passion, do not get affected or biased by what is happening with others. Always set a clear milestone for yourself, but do not chase it relentlessly like it is a pie in the sky. Set achievable targets and learn to be content and cherish special moments.

Rapid Fire

A mantra you always believe on and try to go by

in life – Some people are born lucky, and the others are Jaikishin Chhaproo

Role model – Richard Branson

Favorite cuisine – Vada Pav

Favorite city - Dubai

Favorite holiday destination - Germany

Favorite book – Outliers

Favorite movie – Ferris Bueller's Day Off

A hangout spot in college you loved the most –

The water tank behind the canteen

A subject you hated the most - Accounting

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