

AlumSpeaks

In conversation with Mr. Sanjay Podder
Managing Director - Accenture Labs in India
Global R&D Head - Software Engineering and Tech4Good
SIMSR Alum Batch 1997-00



- Q. In an illustrious work experience of over 20 years, what has been your most memorable moment so far?**
- A. In different roles that I have played, there have been certain which had a direct impact on society. We used AI for projects where it was used to feed children and give vision to people who were blind. These things were appreciated all over the world as; I am the Global R&D Head and gave me a lot of happiness and satisfaction.
- Q. With high attrition rate in IT companies on one side, you have been working with an organization for around 16 years now, what has been the reason?**
- A. To work in my present organization was my dream job. We have presence across the world. I have been involved in projects across the spectrum. I believe I have lived my life in different companies but stayed with the same. I value companies who give importance to talent and have strong core values as that helps them to survive in the long run. Individuals stop contributing if you stop respecting them and the thing I love the most about my organization is we believe all are leaders. If you are not able to tap into the talent you are hiring, why are you hiring them at all.
- Q. Technology transforms rapidly and the contemporary ones can become obsolete in no time, how challenging is it for a Global R&D lead like you, to constantly churn out new ideas and processes?**
- A. Technologies becoming obsolete is a good thing. Earlier you had to be dependent on railways for travelling, now airlines are much more accessible, in future we might transport digitally. Technologies becoming obsolete are replaced by newer and better ones. Look at the business aspirations and expectations, they are sky rocketing and are evolving at a huge speed, to meet them we need older ones to disappear. At the end of the day, everything is driven by human needs.
- Q. You have seen Indian IT Industry from its very nascent stage, what do you think is the way forward for it in coming years?**
- A. The Indian IT industry like any other has been surviving because it possesses the right values. I recall the year 2000 where I was doing a lot of Y2K projects and all my peers said that Indian IT industry will not survive after Y2K projects get over. But we all saw a different and more evolved IT industry post that. All these reports came from people who had only peripheral knowledge of the industry and did not have much hands on. I think we have still not used our full potential and being an R&D head that is very exciting for me and I feel that the best time of Indian IT industry is yet to come and hopefully we can do justice to the talent we have.

Q. Entry level job opportunities in IT industry may soon be taken up by automation. Is it a reason of worry for young professionals in the industry?

A. If you look back at our history, we have always evolved. I will be very concerned if our world does not change. When I was passing out of SIMSR, we were witnessing revolutionary changes in Retail and IT sectors. We don't want people with good qualifications doing a lower level job. These jobs will get better and will be replaced by high level jobs which also resonate with Maslow's hierarchy of needs; humans tend to move to the next level of need. Things are changing for better and will surely open better opportunities for people.

Q. We often talk about the successes and overlook the failures and the effort gone behind to overcome them, how do you deal with setbacks or failures?

A. There is a school of thought that says failures are the stepping stone to success. I think it depends upon what kind of organization you are working for. For example, if you are a surgeon there is absolutely no space for failure. Even in IT we develop soft wares that are used to run airlines. So, we have to do enough simulations, testing, fail over and many more things. Both the aspects are very important. On one hand don't be afraid of failures and take good calculated risks to follow your passion. Best thing about my generation was we were naïve, we were into the moment but current generation thinks a lot and wants to see it all. It is conditioned that everybody should follow their passion, but not everyone knows what their passion is at the beginning, it evolves. Hence it is important to move on if you don't like something.

Q. Holding a leadership role must be meticulous and exhaustive, how do you unwind yourself after a hectic day or week?

A. I don't think one can truly sign out of stress. It has both positives and negatives. A little bit of stress is good but if you thrive on a negative kind of stress, its not going to help you. Nobody wants to work with a stressed-out guy. I try to do a lot of wildlife photography, social innovation, like to network and speak at conferences on weekends.

Q. What is the significant learning you had in your three years at SIMSR?

A. I had a lot of learnings at SIMSR. We are in a world where we have to constantly learn. Part – time MBA is very useful in that sense. I didn't have the privilege of taking out time and do it full time. We learnt to change the tyres of a car while its moving, symbolically. That is the best thing about a part time MBA course.

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

A. It is very important to be open to experiences, don't always follow a herd mentality, be open to try out new things. I keep telling my daughter that don't follow what everybody is doing, you guys have so many options. Try to think out of the box and maintain a habit of continuously learning and unlearning things. If you have the advantage of not working for a salary, make the most out of it.

Rapid Fire:

Mantra – Be chilled out

Role model – Elon Musk

Cuisine that you love the most - Konkani

Favorite faculty at SIMSR – Prof. Arya

Books v/s Movies – Books

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