

In conversation with Mr. Mehul Kapadia
SIMSR Alum Batch 1996-98
Vice President - Global Marketing, MD - F1 Business at Tata
Communications



Q. Not many people in India are aware that an Indian Company, Tata Communications is behind the technological advancement like connectivity, hosting, and content delivery network of Formula 1®, and you are the head this domain of TC, what has been your experience heading the project?

A. Tata Communications global network includes one of the most advanced and largest submarine cable networks with connectivity to over 240 countries and territories. About 25% of the world's internet routes are on the Tata Communications' network. F1 is one of the world's most popular sports and we like to say that "if we can do it for Formula 1, we can do it for anyone!". Tata Communications gave me opportunities across different customer segments like retail, small and medium enterprise and large enterprise and also across different functions like sales, marketing, product management and strategy. The combination of sales and marketing was critical to give me a thorough understanding of the industry and these experiences helped me gain the knowledge required to head the project.

Q. What were the challenges you faced during implementation of your strategies and how did you overcome them?

A. I have been with Tata Communications for quite some time and it has grown significantly over the last 15 years; from starting by acquiring VSNL to now being one of the leading enterprise service providers globally. The challenges and thus the opportunities are always about finding the right customer to target with the right service at the right location. The basics of marketing remain the same! Just that with the new digital technologies, the way to do it has changed dramatically.

Q. What have been the turning points in your life?

A. Getting the opportunity to set up our F1 operations has been a turning point in my life. F1 is a hugely demanding global operation and requires a very high degree of innovation, consistency and an always on mentality. It has helped shape my work culture. And helped me develop a truly global perspective.

Q. While we see most people switching companies today, you have been constant with Tata Communications for quite some time. What made you stick to it and how did your association with Tata Communications made you grow as a person?

A. I joined Tata Communications as Assistant Manager and grew with the organization. The kind of experience that Tata Communications provided me is unparalleled. In my tenure with Tata Communications I got different roles where I had to target different customer segments and also different functions. I genuinely feel that working across various profiles helped me get better at business. It gave me practical knowledge to what I had been taught in SIMSR!

Q. How do you see the future of F1 Sport evolving? What role would Tata Communications play in taking the popularity of this sport to the next level in India?

A. The world is undergoing a digital transformation. The target segment of a live and full-of-energy sports like F1 is the younger generation, but unlike the older generation that used to sit and watch the sports throughout, these millennials do not have that much time and are always on the move. This generation is also engaged to a lot of activities that are associated with the internet. Now as a company we need to leverage this digital transformation and have to engage the younger crowd through digital means.

Q. You have great experience in the wireless communication industry. What are your views on Internet of Things? Does it have the great potential that it is projected to have?

A. Yes. Everything is going to be interconnected. Our alarm, AC, TV etc are interconnected already. Big data is emerging as one of the most crucial aspects of this time. This has also created an opportunity, to keep creating better customer experience. Customer ease and comfort will be the drivers for the IoT industry to flourish.

Q. If not a marketer, what would you have been?

A. Some sort of a numbers guy!

Q.What are the significant learnings you had in your two years in the campus?

A. SIMSR played a phenomenal role in my life. If I look back, every day, all the projects and all the friendships have added value to my life in some or the other way. We all want to join the Harvard's and IIMs of the world, but the culture of openness in our institute really help shape my personality and confidence. I am very thankful to the institute and the staff for the role that it has played in my life.

Q. What would your advice be for young alumni/students willing to seek a career of marketing in sports?

A. Be open to opportunities and challenges, be an experience collector. Do lot of projects in college, be flexible enough and try to gain as much knowledge as possible in the 2 years in college.

Rapid fire questions:

- a. Favourite movie-** Lion King
- b. Favourite book-** The Alchemist
- c. Favourite holiday destination-** San Francisco
- d. Favourite Quote-** By a public speaker, the attitude of perseverance. Even if it is a bad day, think of it as a character building day
- e. Favourite car-** Range Rover Sports
- f. Favourite F1® Team-** Mercedes AMG F1
- g. Favourite F1®Racer-** Ayrton Senna
- f. Role Model-** Mahatma Gandhi
- h. One word/line you say the most-** Do good, be good
- i. If you ever wrote an autobiography, what would you name it-** What I shouldn't have done

Interviewed by:
Tulika Singh