

In conversation with
Mr. Arvind Sharmaa
HR Director, India - Black & Veatch
SIMSR Alum Batch 1994-96



Q. In your rich work experience, what has been your most memorable moment?

A. Pat on the back by the Chairman of Keystone Solutions in the early part of my career for my significant contributions to the Consulting Division of the organization within two months' of joining the organization. Getting that recognition from the toughest leader I have ever worked with in my career is one memory which I will always cherish throughout my life since recognition from that leader was like an impossible task and in my heart I knew I had made a big difference that had laid the foundations of a solid career for me.

Q. Having worked in the HR domain for so many years, what developments have you noticed in the field of Human Resource Management and how has it evolved over the years?

A. Over the last two decades, HR has evolved from a Compliance function to a Business Partner role. In the past, HR performed the role of a Coordinator for Recruitment, Training, Performance Management and Statutory compliances. Today, HR has an equal or even bigger say in building and developing talent capability of an organization. In short, in the past HR worked for the business leaders whereas now HR works with business leaders to grow the business.

Q. What do you look for in a person during recruitments? Academics or Attitude, what is given more importance?

A. Knowledge, skills (experience) without the right attitude is a wrong cultural fit. On the other hand, just a great attitude without knowledge and skills results in a lengthy learning cycle and could also result in performance gaps. Thus, you need the right mix of everything and cannot compromise of any of these aspects.

Q. The resilience & dedication of the employees at Taj Hotel during the 26/11 attacks depicts the importance of Human Resource Management, what is your take on this incident?

A. Just as courage of a person gets tested in difficult times, the culture and values of an organization get tested in such heart-breaking moments as experienced by the professionals of Taj Hotel. The resilience and dedication of those professionals is a true reflection of the great values that got ingrained in them during their at Taj Hotel which in a way is a reflection of the people capabilities of a great place to work.

Q. HR executives are a link between the top management and the employees, how do you ensure that you are approachable and the go to person for the employees?

A. Frankly speaking, I have never tried being like anybody or anything. I just ensure that I am my true self wherever and with whomsoever I am. My simplicity and genuineness make me the person I am and I guess people like that.

Q. How do you get the best out of an employee? How do you understand their psychology and way of working?

A. Just as organizations and leaders have expectations from professionals in an organization, the professionals also have their own expectations from the leaders and the organizations. It is the leader's role to understand and align these two sets of expectations and bridge the gap as much as possible. That is what I keep doing on a day-to-day basis. Though this is a very challenging task and is easier said than done but with experience you keep getting better at it.

Q. Do you think the advancement in Artificial Intelligence will have an impact on the functioning of HR managers?

A. HR will move up the value chain but that will not happen overnight. That will be a gradual shift but HR professionals will have to develop significantly on business acumen and understanding talent better rather than just focussing on processes and systems. Also, HR will have to enhance capabilities related to data and analytics. These capabilities will become the key differentiators for HR professionals in future.

Q. In such a long career there are bound to be failures, how do you handle them?

A. It is completely human to get frustrated and disappointed with failures. My way of handling them has been to just take them as they come, accept them as a fact of life, learn whatever I can from them and then start working again with much more focus and hard work in order to move ahead. I have always believed in giving my best in whatever I did and then trusting the almighty for the results. That way even if I failed in something, I knew that I did my best and learnt whatever I could from the outcome for a better result next time.

Q. What keeps you motivated?

A. My long-term vision and my passion to keep learning and becoming better.

Q. What are some of the significant learning you had in your two years at SIMSR?

- i. True understanding of what "Management" is all about.
- ii. Knowledge of Human Resources and the role of HR as a function in organizations.
- iii. Ability to apply HR capabilities in an organizational set-up.
- iv. Importance of soft-skills and interpersonal capabilities in an organization.

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

A. Develop a long-term career goal (vision) and then work hard to achieve it. Never ever give up. Have a strong purpose and give a meaning to your life. This has to be done by you and you cannot delegate this to anyone else. Success requires lot of hard work but if you have a dream and believe very strongly in it, you are bound to achieve it one day with your hard work.

RAPID FIRE QUESTIONS:

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| a) Your success mantra: Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve. | e) Your Favourite hobby: Watching inspirational and entertaining movies |
| b) Who/What inspires you the most: My belief in myself and my long-term vision. | f) Your favourite cuisine: Crispy samosas |
| c) One word to describe yourself: Inspirational | g) If not HR, then what: Without any doubt "Acting" |
| d) Favourite getaway destination: Brussels | |

-Interviewed and Drafted by: Shreyas Bhaskare, Neel Bhide