

AlumSpeaks

In conversation with

Mr. Shyam Motwani

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SIMSR Alum Batch 1984-86



- Q. You have been a veteran of the industry, working for more than 30 years, handling so many avenues of business majorly for Godrej, what have been some of your memorable moments so far?**
- A. Right from getting placed on campus to my current assignment, it has been a wonderful journey of over 32 years. All these years have passed like a breeze, I have handled a dozen assignments and there have been several memorable moments rather than a particular one, because I believe that people should be responsible towards all roles and responsibilities coming their way. Each moment when I have achieved stiff targets and adapted to new roles, it has been quite memorable. In fact, I am one of the few employees to have worked on both the consumer and the engineering front for the Godrej Group and that has left an indelible mark on me.
- Q. Godrej Locking Solutions have been a major player in changing the mind-set of common people in India towards home security solutions, how difficult was it to create this category among Indian consumers?**
- A. Indians have been pretty casual about their locking solutions and systems. As per a recent research, less than 20% Indians have changed the locks after moving in to a new house. So that leaves us with plenty of scope to create awareness. We have launched two campaigns ‘#HowSafeAreYou’ and ‘#HarGharSurakshit’ to promote awareness about locking systems in the public interest. People do care about digital safety but when it comes to physical safety, they are not as careful. They treat locks as merely a piece of hardware, but in reality locks should be treated as sophisticated security systems.
- Q. You have handled international business development for Godrej as well. How different was it from the domestic market development and how did you prepare yourself for it?**
- A. International Business is a tough domain under the ambit of locking systems because standards of security vary differently in different countries. Doing B2C in international market becomes quite challenging as the locking systems need to be customized for different cultures. E.g. in Japan the locking ecosystem is not as advanced as in America because Japanese society has relatively lower levels of crime and/or theft. On the other hand, America has a technologically sound and fairly advanced locking solutions and systems. As a result, Godrej has limited itself to B2B business in African and Asian markets, where we have developed customized locking solutions for different business enterprises.

- Q. Current workforce looks for job opportunities which provide them immediate growth and positive outputs and hence switches the company quite often, you on the other hand have been associated with a brand for most part of your career, how do you see this difference in approach of two different generations?**
- A. We live in a time of instant gratification and much of it has got to do with the millennials. Organizations these days are willing to give time to their employees and adjust to their needs and expectations, but the onus lies upon the employees to give time to their employer so as to understand the culture and values of the organization and for both the sides to figure out how they can be a better fit for each other. On the other hand, if an employee keeps on changing organizations, it becomes difficult to ascertain as to which industry he will be able to lead well. These days while recruiting apart from technical fit, cultural fit is also taken into consideration.
- Q. What are your thoughts on millennials? How are they different from other generations?**
- A. Millennials are lucky people. They are living in times of technological advancement like never before- a time where every moment seems like mankind is at the cusp of discovering something new. They believe in instant gratification and hence are lacking in patience as compared to my generation. All the quintessential resources are available at the click of a button. My generation was devoid of Google and hence every research was organic and required manual effort but that was what I considered key to the success of my generation. That is what developed patience and perseverance in us.
- Q. What should be the approach of a marketing student to become a future strategy and branding expert like you?**
- A. To succeed in life, one needs to have a vision which will lay the foundation for goals that have to be defined and met. The aspiration to achieve these goals is what will act as a catalyst for the moves one makes in life to move ahead and set him/her apart from the rest. One has to learn the art of evolving by multiple iterations in one's skills and attitude. Also to succeed in the long run, ethics and values play a pivotal role.
- Q. From your professional career, if you were given a chance to do things differently-what would that be?**
- A. I do not carry any regrets since the past is already done and dusted. There has been an incredible amount of learning from the previous assignments and I have applied those key learnings in my future roles. I was always looked upon as a pool of managerial talent to be groomed.
- Q. How should the gap between industry and academia be overcome?**
- A. The onus here lies upon the academic institutes to take initiative that ensures it is in sync with industry trends. Also, I believe that to pursue management, it is imperative to have a work experience so that one can understand management concepts with practical implications. The primary focus of any management student should be on developing business acumen and implementation of academic research. If emphasis is given only on theoretical knowledge, it shall serve the sole purpose of winning academic laurels rather than serving a greater good for society.
- Q. What were the significant learnings you learnt during the 2 years at SIMSR?**
- A. Those 2 years were crucial to my success in professional career. The pivotal thing that I learnt was balancing academics with the fun of developing social interactions. After-class meetings to solve the assignments and college fests were the platforms where we used to interact a lot and get to know more of each other. Also we used to have a marketing fair at that time which really helped us in connecting with the industry trends of that time.
- Q. What would be your advice for the students/young alumni who are starting their careers?**
- A. One has to show trust in the employer, possess desire to learn and have the audacity to think big. They should be diligent towards their tasks, sincere to their work and always look to put their best foot forward. They should give themselves adequate time to carve a niche for themselves. Development is iterative in nature and to succeed professionally requires years of persistent efforts and dedication. In fact, all the business leaders that I see nowadays have toiled hard for so many years to reach the pinnacle of their careers.

RAPID FIRE QUESTIONS:

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| a) Your role model: Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda | e) Your Favourite hobby: Cooking |
| b) Favourite Destination: Goa | f) Your favourite cuisine: Indian |
| c) Quote you always go by: "Look for passion more than perfection" | g) Books / Movies: Movies |
| d) Favourite hangout place in SIMSR: The Cafeteria | h) Biggest Source of learning: My achievements |

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