*Alum*Speaks

In conversation with Ms. Shivani Gupta

SIMSR Alum Batch 1992-94

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Q. What was your key learning at SIMSR?

A. At SIMSR there is a lot of diversity in terms of people, background and culture and we learn to work with all of them together, understand everybody's strengths and weaknesses. It's about accepting different kinds of people.

Q. What were your most memorable moments at SIMSR?

A. My most memorable moments would not be related to studies. (laughs)!

Q. You were at Covansys and then switched to Capgemini after 8 long years. It must have been a tough decision at that point of time. What was your key learning from this experience?

A. In my entire career I have only switched jobs twice. Previously I was with Covansys and then Capgemini. I quit Capgemini on 31st December 2016. It's always a tough decision to move out of any company whether it is 3 years or 9 years, but I believe there should be good reasons to move out or to join in. Being a part of a system for too long, you familiarise yourself with all the processes and one tends to feel that one is not growing enough. This feeling may be true or untrue. It was a tough decision as I was associated with Capgemini for 9.5 years, but I feel it is for the good.

Q. At this stage, you chose to move to social service from corporate life. What was the driving factor behind this move?

A. Pratham is basically a non-profit organisation and I would be working on the vocational skills aspect. It is primarily into primary education. They have a business division which looks into vocational skills. It's not that I have joined the organisation completely, but want to volunteer for a few months and see how things are moving. My reasons for joining were three in particular:

- I am at an age where I feel I need to give back to the society in some form or shape, which differs from person to person.
- I have spent a lot of time in corporate, and wanted to take a break. Not that I was fed up of my job, but just wanted a break.

- Lastly when you have been working for 20 years, you kind of have a secure feeling with a salary and stability in life in terms of finance and job. So I wanted to rock the boat a bit and try out something different and understand how it feels to live in a not-so-secure financial environment. We always have an option of coming back. It's not like it's the end of it.

Q. From finance to IT to HR and now being associated with an NGO, you have held various positions across diverse industries and sectors in your career. What were the turning points that led you to make these shifts?

A. I have primarily been into Consulting and IT. I have practically played all the roles in that segment. I prefer change. Hence I have always changed my profile every 2-3 years within an organisation. It's because you want to keep learning new things and move ahead and also because I have had excellent bosses to work with and they made my transition from one project to another very easy. I have done ERP, non-ERP, HR, Operations. It's not just important to join the right organisation, but also the right profile, because you would want people to come and approach you. I never thought I would get into HR but my boss insisted that I should as I have the right potential for it. It's about making a place for oneself in the organisation, especially as we move ahead in the career as it gives us respect.

Q. Companies usually focus on hiring individuals that are like-minded and passionate to create a positive workplace environment. However, big companies today are shifting their focus on diversity, which means *reducing* hires who are like-minded to create an inclusive culture. Do you think this shift is a challenge or an opportunity for HR as a profession?

A. HR as a profession is not going to last according to me. Because I feel HR has to be in the DNA of every person in an organisation. HR as a workforce management is a much larger topic than a set of people driving it. It is going to be very operational in nature and for survival they have to move with times. Workforce is going to become very mobile and shorter. In 5-10 years from now, from lifetime employment it will move to short time employment and then to contract basis to finally project basis. Regarding, diversity in the hiring of the workforce, I am not really assured if that is happening. While a lot of companies say that they are diversifying, but it is very restrictive like inclusion of differently-abled people. So if an organisation really wants to expand, one needs to hire giants. Giants are people who think differently. Like in the US, workforce consists of people with ethnic diversity. In India also we have ethnic diversity in terms of south, north, east, west.

Q. Our generation, the millennials, are considered to be 'job-hoppers'. Do you think that the number of years spent in an organization is a sign of stability and competence? Would you advise to stick to one organization for long?

A. I do not have a firm view about whether you should stick or not stick. But until short time hiring or contract manufacturing becomes a norm, longevity is fairly regarded as a sign of positivity, especially as one move up the ladder. But personally if somebody is good & has the right knowledge & doesn't move every 6 months or 1 year and has had a very good grounding in the first job, then longevity doesn't have much importance. A bigger issue I face with millennials is their level of knowledge & passion.

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