

Interview of Mr. Advit V. Sahdev, Head of Marketing, Infibeam (ex-CEO, ODigMa)
Interview conducted by Pratulya Chand.



Excerpts from the interview:

Dimensions Member: From a Project Manager to the CEO, how did your entrepreneurial journey start? What would be your advice to the entrepreneurs eyeing the advertising and/or branding sector?

Advit Sahdev: My entrepreneurial journey started after my last job at Infosys. I would give all the credit for this to Infosys. It was this company that actually taught me on how one could take end to end ownership and accountability of not just delivering projects, but managing resources, travel plans, financial approvals and anything else that is required to get the work done. After working in such an environment for over 2 years, I felt I was ready to be an entrepreneur and that's when I chose to start my own company.

My advice to young entrepreneurs is that in the advertising / branding industry, you will always (and I cannot stress enough on always) need to differentiate yourself from your competitors. This can be in terms of your services, your team, your delivery models, your past accolades, your unique customer management style, or anything else. The minute you stop projecting yourself as a unique organisation, your clients and the industry will lose respect for you and you will be treated as just another company doing the same old stuff.

DM: What are the changes you observed and underwent before and after the acquisition of ODigMa by Infibeam? How different is your role from a CEO of ODigMa to the Head of Marketing at Infibeam?

AS: Lot of changes. The very first one was change in location. I shifted to Ahmedabad for a couple of years to work with the top management of Infibeam. For ODigMa, this meant that we were all part of a large organisation and thus 2 of our biggest issues were solved overnight.

1) Cash flow issues as ODigMa was always bootstrapped

2) The entire support structure (from legal, tech, HR, finance etc.) to acquire large projects from large companies

Thus phase II for ODigMa started and we were able to acquire with a lot of international brands. In terms of my role, I was (and still am) completely focused on managing marketing for the entire organization. Infibeam as an organization has various brands under it and my role was to manage marketing for all the brands and projects which was and has been challenging and full of excitement.

DM: According to CMIE report, from January to August in last year - 7 lakh fifty thousand people lost their jobs, and it's expected that almost 40% jobs in the manufacturing sector will be cut before 2020. In this context, what is the future's employment scenario in the advertising industry?

AS: Advertising industry is still in the nascent stage in India and majority of the brands are not even active on digital. Large advertising budgets are still allocated to TV and Print and thus there is no expected downturn in the advertising industry in the near future.

DM: There are a lot of technological concepts coming into the picture from A.I. to Neuromarketing. Whether it is about technology, infrastructure or using resources effectively, what do you see in the near future that is going to be challenging for the industry or the industry professionals?

AS: Marketing as of this moment is becoming more and more dependent on tech. Today humans are interacting with robots/machines and machines are interacting with advertisers. All this is enabled by tech and thus in order to perform in this domain, a sound knowledge of tech and marketing is the biggest challenge for an industry professional