

An insight into what it takes to be a student entrepreneur and how to use time wisely

STUDENTS CASH IN

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A chill out session after exams led to the idea that is *Insight.com*. Nitin Agarwal along with Kanishka Prakash wanted to do something that would make life easier for people like them — bridge the gap between the corporate and social life. Final-year students of engineering at Manipal Institute of Technology, Manipal, they are in the hub of an aspiring student community. “Most students here spend their leisure time online. We thought, why not give both the corporate — to sell their products, and the society — to be aware of the happenings in Manipal and Udupi, a platform to remain connected? This was the motivation for our start up. Well we started working on it in June-July 2011 and launched it on October 2, 2011,” begins Agarwal.

Insight is an advertising medium for businesses and also the go-to place for students. The online platform lists people according to their membership though basic information is listed for all. Under their new brand, Identity, they design and print customised T-shirts and hoodies for colleges and corporates too. “Since this is an online business, its true that we didn’t require much monetary support since we wanted only a web-space and a domain name to start the website.” The website was designed by co-founder Kanishka and coded by Mohammad Shabaz. And manpower, ie, their physical investment, was provided by other team members - Piyush Kumar Sinha, Rakshit Shrivastava and Harsh Jain.

All the credit for designing the T-shirts go to Prakash. Harsh Jain also worked closely with Prakash. Most of the times the design went undisputed in a single go. Other team members include Manuj Rai, Shaswat Srivastava,

Soumyadeep Ghosh, Shivangi Dubey and Shaikh Manzoor.

Agarwal continues, “We told people why we believed in what we believed, and if they are convinced, they will join us. We also tell them how important advertising is for their business. Students would view this website because we had a daily quiz in which we gave out a free burger to one lucky winner! Many people participated in this quiz, which helped both parties. Manipal and the nearby areas, is technically very sound — most have an internet connection. This is what we cashed

in on. We have four sections - Basic Info, Flash Ads, Daily Updates and Banners. So any customer who enrolls on the website paying the joining fees would get basic info for free for the first month and he has the full freedom to join any of the four choices thereafter. So it was a monthly system and if anyone was interested with any agreement of six months, we did that too,” explains Agarwal.

Where does this spirit to work come while they’re already busy with studies, you may ask. Agarwal and Prakash have wanted to do something more than academics for a while. They would attend business lectures and talks by entrepreneurs. They’ve always wanted to have their own startup.

“In college, we had a lot of free time. Instead of being idle, we thought of keeping ourselves busy,” says Agarwal. While he thinks there is a lot of scope for improvement, the greatest challenge is to convince people about your idea. They would like to expand this service to other

states as well. Having made around 20 per cent profits in the first year of launch, they think they’re off to a good start. With no mentors, they relied on the gurus of management, talks with several entrepreneurs and advice from family members to get this far. Listening to customers has helped them to a great extent.

He believes that while there isn’t an age limit to becoming an entrepreneur, it’s best to start at the earliest. If you start at an age of 15, and for some reason, your idea doesn’t work, you will always have the backup of joining college and waiting till you hit another idea. “Entrepreneurs have some things in common — risk-taking ability, decision making, and belief in whatever he/she does. As a part of Manipal, I am very happy to be a part of the startup revolution. One should never run after the money. Allan Border once said to young cricketers in Australia and this is what I strongly agree: ‘Take care of runs and dollars will take care of themselves’.”

Money is the result. If your idea is innovative and unique enough, you will get the money. He also thinks that an MBA is not a prerequisite to becoming an entrepreneur. It is just an add-on, like a cherry on the cake. “Your intuition, your zeal is what matters.” A huge fan of APJ Abdul Kalam, he quotes, “A leader should know how to manage failures rather than success.”

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FRIENDLY COACH

R KALPANA

CHENNAI

She is the founder of The Academy for Communication and Learning



GO FOR GOLD!

The proliferation of training institutes which prepare students from Class XI for competitive exams is a phenomenon to reckon with. This trend has caught up in a big way with parents who push students to appear for the entrance exams, compete and get admission into an engineering or medical college which seem to be the destination.

SIMPLE SURESH

Suresh has completed his Class X and wants to pursue history, literature, and be part of the theatre group in the city. Maths and science are not the subjects he wants to study for the rest of his life. When he expresses this interest to his parents and friends, they are completely disappointed. His parents argue that he cannot make a livelihood by pursuing these subjects. He gives them path-breaking examples of many eminent authors, people in film and theatre who have made it big. His father says, “They have god fathers and have been lucky. You are from a family of service people, forget all your passion for the time being.” His friends almost ridicule him. Bugged down by parental and peer pressure, he succumbs. Their aspirations are driven not by their interests and their aptitude; it is a tragedy that it is driven by their parents and friends.

DON'T SUCCUMB TO PRESSURE

There are innumerable career options which make a lot of economic and professional sense. Suresh has to explore these options and pursue the course of his aptitude to realise his dream.

CHANGING ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents have to listen to their children. They have to understand that they cannot push their children to do something which will pamper their ego and status in society. Every child in India does not have to work for an IT company or become a doctor. Different courses and professional degrees which are equally or even more lucrative than the conventional courses can be pursued.

GUIDING ROLE OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

School and college authorities can organise career counselling fairs invite people from different walks of life who have made it big despite not pursuing engineering and medicine. This will be truly inspiring to students like Suresh.

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Nitin Agarwal and Kanishka Prakash