"Technology alone cannot make a successful venture; business knowledge is a must-have"

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A veteran of more than 25 years in the IT industry, Omnitech's Co-founder and Managing Director, Mr. Avinash Pitale has been there and done that. He worked with HCL for the early part of his career but his entrepreneurial thirst made him leave his comfortable career and thrust into the thorns of entrepreneurship. Techgig caught up with Mr.Pitale to know about Omnitech's journey from his father's garage to being a premier technology service provider and his trials and tribulations.

We want to time travel to know the story behind Omnitech Infosolutions. What thought or idea lead to Omnitech Infosolutions? How did you come to be part of it?

I and my colleague Atul are engineering graduates from Mumbai University. Both of us worked for HCL for a short span of time and decided to plunge early into the business, way back in 1987. We started as a partnership firm in a garage that was owned by my father in Thane. We started as a third party maintenance services provider to being PC assemblers, system integrators and network integrators. Ultimately, now we are known as one of the premier technology service providers. If I were to define ourselves in one line then I would say that we are IT technology service providers in the area of Business Availability consisting of three towers including Infrastructure Management Services, Application Management Services and Performance Management Services and Business Continuity.

We are the first company to start managed recovery centre in Mumbai and today, we are the country's only service provider with multi-city centres, in Mumbai and Hyderabad.

Venturing into such a domain, what were the challenges that came forth and how did you turn them into opportunities?

Every growing IT company's biggest challenge is retention of dedicated and skilful Human Resources. Working capital requirements were always a great task to take care of growth. We had entered into a phase where we started getting competition from small players as well as large IT service players.

However, we overcame that situation by implementing best of HR processes, creating extra funding through bank borrowings and implementing ISO 9001:2008 processes and we now have a very stable platform. Omnitech believes in complete human development and that is why we have a separate learning and development department for our employees. These measures have completely helped us in retaining our core team and our mid-management team.
Do you think that you achieved what you had aimed for or did the aims change, modify as the journey of building Omnitech progressed?

Frankly, the goals of the organisation kept on changing with every achievement. Yes, we did achieve our goal today by being an institute which enrolls 1200 employees; but have we achieved our entire goal? Not really. We have many more peaks planned for the future which are yet to be conquered.

Being an entrepreneur, a Joint Managing Director, what have been your toughest moments and how did you maneuver out of them?

As a co-founder and Joint Managing Director, toughest movement was to have controlled growth and manage profitability of the organisation. To take care of these tough moments, we planned our growth charter with clear strategy and execution plan. Implementation of strong MIS system and defined rule book helped to maintain our expenses under control.

Soon we understood that to catalyze the growth, broad basing the management team is very essential and that is where we started planning for acquisition of organisation and invited ready C level team in the management. By now, we already have one acquisition done in India and one more in Europe.

In an interview you stated that “Government will be the largest buyer of IT in the country.” Do you plan to cater to this sector and how?

We had been doing it but in the last couple of years we have consciously not focused on this space very much. But, now we are once again planning to get aggressive in this area as well.

We know this market is growing and currently we are working through a joint go-to-market model. We plan to penetrate deeper into the Government segment.

Mergers and Acquisitions have been the buzzword for the Indian IT. Do you think they can play a crucial role in Indian IT SMEs growth?

Indian IT companies are looking at more and more acquisitions in the international market and outbound deals to sustain their growth and acquire assets in the US and Europe as IT market is currently in consolidation mode. With more and more companies looking at global market and with technology change taking place, M&A in India IT SME’s are important for their growth.

What is your vision for Omnitech in the long run? Where does India figure in the scheme of things for Omnitech?

I envisage Omnitech as a global leader in providing technology related services in the area of Business Availability, Continuity Services enabling organizations to derive higher Productivity, Predictability & Profitability for their competitive business advantage.

Omnitech right from the beginning has been an India focused company. Even though we are expanding our global footprints, India still remains as a focus area and it plays a vital role in Omnitech’s growth story. Currently, we are mainly western India focused, but will be moving towards having a pan India presence. We feel that going forward India would still be the highest revenue contributor. Going forward Omnitech believes that understanding the customer’s needs and providing vertical domain services is equally important as a value add. The next migration from here would be the cloud computing services.
In your professional journey, what have been your most satisfying / rewarding and inspiring moment? What made them most satisfying and inspiring?

Well to rattle of the ones that are at the tip of my tongue:

- Creating a corporate office in Andheri,
- Two time Forbes award as under a billion organization in Asia,
- Being a listed company on BSE with over subscription by 60 times and
- Acquiring Netherland based company

These are a few of the most satisfying and inspiring moments that I can think of for a career spanning more than 20 years.

What made all these moments worth it was that we could create an entity which became bigger than individuals leading to great confidence in investors to invest their hard earned money in Omnitech. Acquisition of Europe based organization was extra special as it greatly satisfied our patriotic spirit.

What have been your golden learnings during your professional odyssey that have guided you thus far?

- Customers and employees are the two most important pillar of the organisation who can build or break the organisation.
- Ethical practices of the business are a key to create confidence in customers.
- Element of dissatisfaction is the way towards continuous growth
- Attitude to play for the win is way to succeed against the competition

You are actively involved in various CSR initiatives. Would you like to throw some light on some of the causes that you are most passionate about? How do you plan to contribute more towards them?

Omnitech as an organisation has been involved in various CSR initiatives. Looking into the calamity that Mumbai witnessed on 26th March, Omnitech created a Disaster Management awareness program to generate awareness in general public about how to deal with such calamities. We have been driving BCI disaster recovery awards to felicitate all the organisations and individuals who have been contributing towards saving lives during emergencies. At Omnitech, we collect funds out of various initiatives to contribute to societies dedicated to old age homes and spastics as well as organize blood camps for helping blood banks.

What is your outlook of today’s young IT professionals in India? How different are they from IT professionals of earlier years?

Today’s young IT professionals are more informed, intelligent and have a more objective oriented outlook towards the business and have a no emotions approach towards decision making. However, there is a greater tendency of being a bigwig in a shorter time period which may prove to be calamitous at times. This generation has a global outlook while planning any business and focuses its eye on the bigger picture in whatever they do.

What is your advice to the budding crop of Indian tech professionals aspiring to stand out in the milieu?

- Get into entrepreneurship at an early stage in life but do not over look the fact that knowledge of business administration and finance management is very essential.
- Always keep quantified goals and keep them updating as you achieve your first peak.
- Entrepreneurship is about taking risk for your passion and has no guaranteed results. But well defined strategy with right execution plan shall help in reaching to goal definitely.
- Enter into a venture at which you are best, and venture cannot be run by being dependent on others.
- Innovation is an integral part of business as learning new techniques is a way to deal with competition.
- Additionally, a degree of dissatisfaction is a way to growth; do not stop at one success but plan for the new peak while you are succeeding.
- Business knowledge other than technology is must and venture without defined vision is like flying a plane in simulator. Hence start the venture with vision “think big, do big”.
- Time is an essence between deciding the action and completing it, reduce it as best as possible