

Kerala

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The young achiever who dreamed big

NASSCOM rates Mobme among one of the 50 emerging IT companies in the country.



Sanjay Vijayakumar, co-founder and CEO of Mobme.

Six months and he would have been an engineering graduate. Only, he was not ready to curb his entrepreneurial urge even for six days. He simply quit. So while his batchmates at the College of Engineering in Thiruvananthapuram were writing university exams in December 2006, he went on and registered his company.

A little more than three years after that streak of audacity, 25-year-old Sanjay Vijayakumar now hands out a visiting card that introduces him as the co-founder and CEO of Mobme, a firm providing technology solution to telecom players. Sceptic parents, who were aghast at their son chucking the multiple offers from MNCs, had long been taken care of.

Early this year, NASSCOM rated Mobme among one of the 50 emerging IT companies in the country. And a year before, the prestigious *Wall Street Journal* ranked it among the 10 promising start-ups in India.

The genesis of Sanjay's idea came up during a casual chat with his friend who was running a company. "More than the fact that he was running a company, what struck me was that he came from very similar backgrounds as mine. I decided then and there that if he could do it, I can also do it," he says.

Later in 2005, he along with his friends did a marketing activity for a service provider by bringing out a unique connection with attractive features for college students. Three months and sale of 14,000 connections after, Sanjay and friends were sitting pretty with almost Rs. 8 lakh. Rs 4 lakh disappeared in a month when the group had the fun of their lifetime. The remaining Rs. 4 lakh became the seed money for their dream project.

"The next one year was spent on collecting and absorbing information on the way telecom industry was run. By the time we launched the company, we had a clear idea about what we want to do and where we will be going in 10 years' time," says Sanjay. The core group of five friends is still with him in running the company.

He holds the theory that there are two ages to start a company. Either at the age of 40 when one has a wealth of experience to bank on or at the age of 20 when there is no experience whatsoever except that bubbling energy and that fire in the belly.

Sanjay realises that the initial success is fickle. "Uncertainty and risk are constant companions in entrepreneurship no matter at what level you have reached," he says. But that doesn't mean that he repents the decision to quit studies.

With offices in Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Mumbai, and Delhi and 60-odd employees working for him in about 16 cities across the country, he has no reason to regret. And then there are the likes of Infosys CEO Kris Gopalakrishnan to guide and mentor him. He realises that without the advice of pioneers from the industry it would be difficult to survive.

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The choice, he feels, before anyone is either to settle for the security of a job or to snatch the opportunity. "There is the possibility that you may fail by taking that one opportunity that comes your way. But there is also the possibility of creating an enterprise," he says.

For him, the life as an entrepreneur has been an extreme one. One day he was out in the streets of Mumbai penniless and then there he was in the jazziest of clubs in Dubai another day.

But still, he has the humility to say that the story was not about his success. "It's about the 100 innovative guys out there waiting to emerge. It's about creating the right eco system for them to come up," he says.

That's why he is dreaming about the day 10 or 15 years from now when the sun would set on the Silicon Valley and rise over the Silicon coast in India.

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