



What would you give up to see your dreams come true? What would you put at stake for a vision? A lot of people would forsake a lot of things, but how about a whole future complete with a stellar career that would set you up for life, would you give that up? Not many would have the daring or the self belief to be able to do that.

That is however, exactly what our Young Entrepreneur Rajesh Panda did...He came back to India to set up "Corporate Gurukul" in 2008, and he told us more about his dream company saying "Corporate Gurukul trains undergraduates to be industry-ready by training them on industry-specific and company-specific skill sets in soft-skills, technical and business domains. We liaise with corporates to understand their desired TALENT, SKILL and KNOWLEDGE levels in potential engineering undergraduate recruits based on which we design INDUSTRY and COMPANY SPECIFIC curriculum. The curriculum is typically a blend of management skills, industry-specific domain skills, company-specific skills, soft skills, elements of technology and functional areas."

"Thereafter, we engage with students in engineering colleges to assess and develop talent with the objective of imparting necessary KNOWLEDGE and SKILLS for making them corporate-ready day-one on job while also grooming them to be responsible corporate citizens of tomorrow. The objective is to provide holistic education in the field of technology, management and behavioral science to groom a well-rounded personality."

"Our vision is to train the entire undergraduate community across the globe on industry-readiness –obviously with customization for each country/ region. We believe the entire undergraduate community can use and benefit from our services for their employability and industry-readiness goals."

Their business is a combination of brick-and-mortar model and online / retail models. The ready endorsement of their curriculum by Industry leaders like Infosys, TCS, L&T, etc has enhanced their cause. Rajesh has already started aiming at expansion; he says "We already train in India, Singapore, China and Australia. We just test marketed on our first set of 1000 CDs on industry-readiness which sold like hot cakes."

Most of his fervor is aimed at sparing students the anguish of being rookies in a certain industry. He also laid bare his thoughts behind becoming an entrepreneur. He says "It was not a conscious decision to be an entrepreneur. It was the desire and passion to address the needs of the student community in the area of employability and industry-readiness. INDUSTRY-READINESS IS NOT BEING TRAINED TO CRACK YOUR FIRST JOB. In the absence of guidance and training, I myself suffered a lot as a student and I still believe students have the notion that they are industry-ready if they can make good presentations or are good in GD/PI or C/C++."

"The biggest challenge was to leave a cushy job as Regional Manager (Asia Pacific) of a top IT company (based in Singapore) and move back to Orissa, India (while family was based in Singapore) all alone to start off with my dream project.

When I started, my younger daughter was just 3-months old and the elder one was 5 years old. My wife was hard-pressed to manage family all alone in Singapore with a demanding job @ P&G, Singapore. I stay 2-3 months in a row away from family and that really takes a toll emotionally. Managing family and business emotionally was the biggest challenge.”

He also suffered a set back early on that opened his eyes to reality. He told us about his moment of truth saying “I completely goofed up cash flows in the first 3 months of operations before I got a hang of it. All my B-School learning went for a toss in those first three months. I tried to build my second line too early. I easily trusted people to deliver and that back-fired.”

The company is self-funded as Rajesh does not believe in VC funding. Their Seed Capital was Rs 4 lacs and they have come a long way since their commencement. Rajesh says “We are targeting to train 15000 undergraduates in the next 3 years on industry-readiness. We intend to extend our reach to 10 centers across 4 countries (India, China, Australia, and Singapore) in the next 3 years.”

By 2010 Corporate Gurukul plans to Train 6000 undergraduates, and achieve Rs 2.0 crores in turnover. This should not be too great a task for India’s 4th Best NCC Cadet. Rajesh particularly regards this as a great personal experience and achievement as he was felicitated by the Prime Minister of India – Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi. He also cherishes his memory of being judged the Best All-Rounder and Gold-Medalist @ REC (now NIT), Rourkela for an all-round performance in the field of academics, games and sports, cultural and literary, social services, etc. during his four years of study in the institute.

His success is evident from the many big names that subscribe to Corporate Gurukul. Rajesh lists his feats saying “We have partnership with Infosys for eastern India and with TCS for entire Asia-Pacific. These two alliances have been the biggest achievements till date. We also train undergraduates in 6 of the top 10 engineering colleges across Eastern India. We have also partnered with India’s #1 Assessment Company to do assessments on industry-readiness across Eastern India.”

“Our customers matter to us the most and they have recognized our efforts and quality of delivery, by giving repeat orders this year. We haven’t gone for a lot of marketing or brand building for recognition since we are not focused on funding.”

He had a gut check early in his attempt to set up shop. His past success haunted him in unexpected ways. Rajesh recalls his period of inner discord which made him want to go back to his previous job saying “Umpteen number of times in the first 6 months when people questioned “Are you in India because you lost your job in Singapore?” or “Are you in India because of some personal or family problems?” Most Indians find it difficult to digest the fact that someone can leave a great-going corporate career as Regional Manager (Asia Pacific) of a top IT company (based in Singapore) to train undergraduates in Orissa and West Bengal.”

“It hurts when we find that most Indians don’t believe in themselves and want association with a top company or overseas country to feel good about them.”

However he rallied back and prepared for the long haul of entrepreneurship. He attributes his steadfastness to - "Passion for education and training and improve the quality of life by good education in the not-so-developed – eastern India."

To entrepreneurs future and present he advises "If you have the passion for anything goes after it. Listen to your heart for the heart is mostly right. You have one life- make the most of it and contribute whole-heartedly to the social cause along with business."

Yourstory commends and applauds Rajesh Panda and Corporate Gurukul for their fine work and hopes to see them triumph in their aims.

An Update on Rajesh's Entrepreneurial Journey

Corporate Gurukul has trained around 5000 undergraduates and graduates on industry-readiness for the year ending June 2009, Plan is to hit 8000 participants this year.They assessed close to 50,000 participants on employability and industry-readiness for Govt. of Orissa.