

How to build Successful Personal Brand

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Success is defined as the attainment or accomplishment of something aspired, planned or endeavoured. Sustaining success involves multiple factors, primarily hard work, smartness and right attitude. Many successful people who have risen to mighty heights have often stumbled and their ability to survive was a result of their enduring commitment to perseverance and values. These morals form the basic mantras for a successful life or career and their importance is emphasized in this article through the success story of Mr. Venkat Changavalli. Mr. Venkat's deep rooted principles have propelled him to rise from a simple back ground and reach heights in his career, which he has sustained over decades across many obstacles.

Born in a small village in Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Venkat was raised in a frugal background as one of the eight children born to a school teacher father and mother who was a home maker. After completing his primary schooling, Mr. Venkat pursued secondary education in a small town and higher education in the city and went on to graduate as an engineer from the National Institute of Technology (REC) Warangal, and as a post-graduate in management from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A). Mr. Venkat started his career in 1977 in Mumbai as a Management Trainee at Lupin Pharma and went on to achieve a total of 36 years career experience that included his role as the CEO of Symrise and EMRI (Emergency Management and Research Institute). After fifteen years of overall multi-functional experience in finance, planning and marketing.

His career spans across multiple industries ranging from pharmaceutical to textiles to fragrance and flavours and to emergency management. These career moves have exposed Mr. Venkat to multi-city cultures ranging from that of Mumbai to Bangalore to Chennai and Hyderabad and he has worked under multiple ownerships ranging from the family-owned Lupin to publicly owned MNC (CIBA-GEIGY) the family-owned multinational, Dragoco (later named Symrise), to the

non-profit organisation, EMRI (108 Ambulance Service), which operates as a public (Government)-private partnership. None of these changes ever daunted Mr. Venkat, who though thoroughly bred in a small town, never feared to explore new places and take on new challenges.

The bold career moves he made early in his career prompted him to experiment newer roles in the following years and have enabled him to understand varying perspectives that have made him more mature, more broadminded and more respectful towards other cultures and people.

One of the principles that Mr. Venkat strongly advocates to everyone is that no individual should ever be scared to rise up to any kind of challenge at any stage in their life or career. His first major challenge arose when he considered applying to IIM-A despite his low proficiency in English, a drawback he felt would be an obstacle in his quest for higher education in a reputed institution. So what motivated him during such moments of low confidence? His strong academic record especially in mathematics and the confidence and faith that some of his seniors and elders had in him. They encouraged him to apply as they felt that this opportunity would help him nurture his leadership qualities. This instigated a surge of confidence in Mr. Venkat and he completely overcame his fear and decided to fight his weakness by dedicating time reading newspapers to improve his vocabulary. And the result? He was offered an opportunity to pursue Post Graduation in Management at IIM-A and the resulting experience laid a strong foundation for his future endeavors.

Another important turn in Mr. Venkat's career was in the year 1992 when he decided to quit the Dragoco Ltd, as he found his boss to be corrupt and incompetent. He did not want to work with a senior whose values clashed with his values. A year later after his boss was removed, he was asked to rejoin the company as the CEO and transform the failed joint venture company into a

Note: This article is based on Experience of Mr. Venkat Changavalli, Management Consultant and Leadership Mentor.

profitable one. The reasons quoted for his reinstatement at a higher post were purely his competency and integrity. Mr. Venkat accepted the offer and successfully led the company for 11 years to a significant position in the fragrances and flavours industry. To achieve this milestone, Mr. Venkat worked very diligently to build a strong infrastructure of processes and people. He also successfully managed the company during trying times that included the transition of Dragoco from an India managed joint venture to a purely German managed company.

In 2005, a new chapter began in Mr. Venkat's career when he took up the role as the CEO of EMRI. It was a complete surprise to him when the former Chairman of Satyam, Mr. Ramalinga Raju, approached him with this offer. This was going to pronounce as an entirely novel experience for him as he had to break away from the corporate business world he was used to and adapt to a totally new system. An opportunity to take up yet another challenge and prove success in a totally different field motivated Mr. Venkat to accept the offer. He invented the emergency helpline number 108, conceptualized the set up of the emergency call centre and helped devise new information technology to help locate the victims, hospitals and ambulances in order to shorten response times. The emergency service was launched on 15th August 2005 at Hyderabad with 15 ambulances in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Six years later, EMRI operated in 12 different states and accoladed a record of saving approximately 520,000 lives. However, in 2009, things went amiss when the Satyam Computers-Ramalinga Raju crisis threw Mr. Venkat in complete dilemma. After parting ownership, Raju requested Mr. Venkat to continue to lead EMRI. Mr. Venkat resolved to stand up and fight for EMRI and save the unique project. He promptly took appropriate steps that prevented EMRI from collapsing. His main agenda was to establish EMRI as an entity completely outside of Raju and Satyam and to scout aggressively for a new funder. Despite facing intense criticism from media, Mr. Venkat boldly embraced the situation and remained focused on obtaining financial support for EMRI and take care of his employees. Amidst all the confusion, EMRI continued to operate and provide uninterrupted

services to people. Mr. Venkat mobilized support from stakeholders (bank, governments, technology partner, society members) and continued to empathise and motivate his employees. A few months later, EMRI successfully got a new owner and Mr. Venkat emerged more positive, more humble, more self confident, armed with more commitment and passion to save lives.

Crisis struck again on 10 January 2011 when the new EMRI management wanted Mr. Venkat to separate from EMRI. This was yet another unexpected turn for Mr. Venkat but as usual, he did not lose his resolve. Since April 2011, he has been practicing as a leadership mentor, management consultant, trainer and inspirational speaker. He is providing Management Consultancy including Leadership Mentoring to large organizations in Health Care and Self Care sectors, conducting corporate training programmes in the areas of strategic thinking, leadership, innovation, execution, human resources, marketing, public-private partnerships, life and self-management skills etcetera. He also mentors professional entrepreneurs for business, partnership and leadership development through Innovation. Mr. Venkat also serves on the board of State Bank of Hyderabad and is a visiting faculty at IIMA, Indian School of Business (ISB), IIMI, ASCI and London Business School (LBS).

In his role as a mentor, Mr. Venkat emphasises that adversity is like walking through fire and one should stick to good values and ethics and maintain positive attitude and energy during difficult times. He firmly believes that if one lasts this phase, they emerge more self confident, more positive, more humble, more humane and overall more successful. Mr. Venkat, till date, continues to implement and advocate the same principles and values he has been practising for decades that have helped him stand the test of time and continue to spell success in his life and career.

Nithiya Anil Changavalli, has over eight years of experience across diverse industries such as pharmaceutical, information technology and consulting. She has specialization in biotechnology and biochemistry from the University of Madras.