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“

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PERSONAL**Who is your biggest professional mentor?**

My biggest mentor is not one person, it's a group. It is branded as DECADERS. It refers to the Cadbury Marketing community that was created in the period between 2000 and 2010. I belonged to this community; we learnt from each other and mentored each other towards marketing excellence. The key to the community was its leader Sanjay Purohit (now in Samara Capital).

If not a brand marketer, what would you be?

A chef.

Name a brand (other than your own) you admire. Why?

Apple. Nike. I'm a fanboy of these two brands. I admire their products and what they stand for.

CATEGORY**What are the big challenges you see coming your way in the next 12 months?**

Keeping Gen-Z/The Centennials interested in our category and our brands is our biggest challenge. If we get them right, all other cohorts will fall in line automatically.

What's the biggest change in the way consumers approach your segment today, versus a year back? To what do you attribute this?

They are far more open to experimentation, and are trying out many new and different snacks. This is because the barriers to reach them have dropped dramatically.

Which product segment impacts your category the most?

Premium-end and new innovations. Today's consumer is seeking new experiences and is willing to pay for it.

In what way/s does your marketing strategy change from Tier I to Tier II and III markets?

Fundamentals do not change. Consumers across markets consume snacks for similar reasons, and are well aware of the brands and choices available in large cities — thanks to media exposure. The only important task for us is to enable availability — mental availability (through advertising and brand presence where they live and shop), physical availability (through distribution and quality) and drop size availability (through price pack innovation).

MARKETING**What's the toughest part of being a brand marketer?**

Ability to mount large scale activations while being agile. In other words, to be cutting-edge while delivering ROI.

Name the biggest professional hurdle you faced recently. How did you tide over it?

Balancing global scale while delivering local insight — I faced this challenge as I was launching 5 Star across multiple markets. In some cases, we met with success immediately (example, Brazil) and in some cases, it's still a work in progress. The only way to tide over this challenge is to build a 'One Team' approach and get your hands dirty with the local marketing teams.

As a marketer, what is your biggest nightmare?

Falling prey to trolls and the whole thing snowballing into a media disaster.

ADVERTISING**What is your lead medium of communication today?****Which medium do you use least?**

We focus on storytelling across mediums. We chase where the consumer cohort is. Television remains the largest scale medium for our consumers, and now s/he is spending more time on digital. Thus, these two have become our lead mediums. We use all other media selectively depending on the brand task and the consumer target.

Are the best creative minds still in advertising?

You are talking to one! Jokes apart, advertising continues to be a training ground for creative minds interested in storytelling. Retaining talent has become a big challenge as 'Content Creation' as an industry has exploded with the advent of digital and OTT.

How has your relationship with your agency partners - creative and media planning/buying - changed of late?**What's the one must-have quality for an agency today?**

It has not changed. If at all, has become stronger. One must-have quality is agility, of all kinds — change, results, people and strategic. Another must-have quality is collaboration — the ability to work with myriad partners while playing the role of 'Brand Evangelists'.

Do you wish you could work with just one full-service creative agency instead of multiple creative minds?

The wish is to work with the best creative minds in the industry. We believe our agencies have these creative minds. So all is well.



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