



# SAUMITRA PRASAD

Chief Marketing Officer | Kokuyo Camlin

“

As a marketer my biggest nightmare is: what if everyone switches to digital for communication?

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

One of my biggest mentors has been CK Ranganathan, founder of CavinKare. I had the privilege of working at CavinKare for 11 years; during the last three years of this stint, I worked with CK Ranganathan. He has been my inspiration. It's amazing how he set up a great professional organisation and successfully took on the might of global giants like Hindustan Unilever and P&G.

**If not a brand marketer, what would you be?**

A marketing professor.

**Name a brand (other than your own) you admire.****And tell us why.**

One brand I've always admired is Nike. It's an example of a brand with very strong character, expressed through its slogan "Just Do It". While the brand is about sportswear, the Nike trademark can drive many other categories. That's the power of the brand.

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

The stationery category, which has remained stagnant for many years, has witnessed the entry of several new competitors. We expect to see many global players entering the category.

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

Brand loyalty is reducing with new players offering new concepts, and with technology impacting the consumption of these products. The importance of art is increasing; this is a good thing for Camlin, a pioneer of art products in India.

**Which product segment out there impacts trends in your category most? Why?**

Writing and writing instruments have been transformed by the digital surge. Now, there are pens with a stylus.

**In what ways does your marketing strategy change from Tier I to Tier II and III markets?**

All marketers are giving more importance to small towns, in terms of both marketing and distribution. Over the

years, development has taken place at the bottom of the pyramid and there is a big market there. Today, in marketing briefs, small towns form an important element.

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

Today companies expect returns on investment to happen at a faster pace. Whenever margins are under pressure, the marketing budgets are the first to be reduced. The other challenge is that marketers have to constantly work on new product concepts.

**As a marketer in the digital age, what is your biggest nightmare?**

What if everyone switches to digital for communication?

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

Digital is becoming a very important medium for communication, something we never expected.

**Are the best creative minds still in advertising?**

Advertising will definitely attract creativity and this industry will always have the most creative people.

**In what way has your relationship with your agency partners changed of late? What's the one must-have quality for an agency today?**

A good agency will always value the relationship with the marketer, both in good and bad times.

**Are you open to paying agencies a pitch fee?**

Paying an agency for a pitch will be like paying a job applicant for an interview. Agencies do invest time and money for a pitch but that is a choice they need to make. The client also invests time for the evaluation. Recently a big marketer announced the idea of charging agencies to make a pitch. I would not be surprised if agencies still go for it.

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

I strongly feel the need for consistency in the brand strategy, and hence the need for one creative agency as a strategic partner. But due to constant evolution of different media verticals, we need a different agency for each – one for TV, one for social media, one for outdoor.



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