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Kindly introduce us to yourself. Brief something to us about your enlightening journey.

An engineer by academic qualification and a designer at heart, I consider myself as being more of a DesignTech evangelist rather than just a designer or a technologist because I believe that design and technology go hand in hand. Steve Jobs once said, "Design is not what it looks like, design is what it feels like" and that has been the core mantra behind all that we build at WITS Interactive(<http://www.wits-interactive.com>).

It has been an interesting journey over the past 17 years. What started off as a two people garage studio (Our first office was a small shed with glass walls that could accommodate two people, three max if you literally squeeze in, which we built in a part of the garage outside my house) to a 80 member team with offices across Mumbai, Munich and London, every step of the journey has been challenging and fun.

From starting off as a web design agency (and surviving the dot com bust) in the early 2000s to becoming a premium DesignTech Agency, it has been a fun ride so far, but we have only just begun.

What ignited the spark in you to start this startup venture of yours? During the course of the establishment, what kind of challenges was faced by you?

Born in a Marwari family, I come from a family of entrepreneurs. Growing up in an extended family and observing my father and my uncles run their respective businesses, I possibly learnt the fundamentals of running a business way before I learnt Math, Science, History or Geography.

Soon after completing my engineering degree from Mumbai University, like most engineering graduates, I joined a leading IT firm based in Mumbai and worked there for two to three years. However, while the work was interesting and the projects challenging, I was not really enjoying what I was doing and found something lacking. I left the job and assisted my father for one year, in his business of manufacturing household articles made of plastic. Working in my father's business did not mean that I had everything handed to me on a platter. In fact, I had to work harder than everyone else as my father has always been a disciplinarian who believes in treating everyone with equality, dignity and respect. Whether it's the person working on the factory floor to the business head of the unit.

During this one year, not only did I get clarity on what I wanted to do but also learnt first-hand the basics of running a lean, profitable business. I got to work across different departments from product design to supply-chain management, to marketing and customer service. That one year of working under my father's guidance, helped me lay the foundation of WITS Interactive.

As with every business, I have also had my fair share of challenges, from getting a core team in place to winning my first customer, and scaling the business at the right time and pace. The key to overcome such challenges, in my opinion, is to believe in yourself, have a positive, never-say-die attitude and treat every challenge as an opportunity. You also need to realize that it is not always possible to overcome a challenge on your own and having a good team by your side, willing to fight it out with you, is half the battle won. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have a team who believes in the vision of WITS Interactive and the unwavering, unflinching support of my family without whom I would not have reached this far.

Describe us about your business mission and vision in detail. How does your startup stand out from the rest?

Our vision is to connect technology with creativity and innovation. WITS Interactive is a DesignTech Agency working across digital, print, film and offline medium to provide integrated communication strategies to its clientele. The WITS Interactive Group through its divisions, WITS Interactive Technology (Mobile app and web development services), Black Pepper (Exhibitions, Events & Retail Design), terrawits (Spatial and Environmental Design Solutions), GoPhygital (Experiential solutions through AR, VR, MR) and CreatelD8 (Strategic Brand Design Agency) works across the entire spectrum of brand communication and engagement right from brand identity creation to brand engagement and evolution.

We endeavour to always outdo our efforts in the adoption of newer technologies complemented by an experienced team of technologists that possess deep domain knowledge, to ensure adding value to our clients through our set of comprehensive services. We deliver creatively innovative solutions and with a 98% project on time delivery, we always bring in a unique experience.

What is your competitive advantage over the other enterprises in the niche?

At WITS Interactive we transcend our efforts in adoption of newer technologies to offer excellent customer experiences. We do this by having an experienced team of designers, analysts and technologists who possess deep domain knowledge across industry verticals. We add value to our customers through our set of comprehensive services while delivering innovative solutions with a 98% timely project delivery. Our promise is to provide unmatched quality, quick turnaround, expertise and innovative solutions to our customers.

What has been the biggest risk that you took so far in your business venture? What steps did you take to overcome the same?

The biggest risk I have taken so far in my business venture was starting a new Joint Venture in Germany back in 2009 called Book2look International GmbH. It was a completely new concept for the publishing world, but most importantly, I saw the potential of what it could be and how it would be a potential game changer in the book publishing market.

How do you aim to connect the publishers or the bloggers to the potential readers with the help of WITS Interactive?

Book2look International GmbH (<https://www.book2look.com/>), a social media marketing and sales tool for publishers and indie-publishers, is a joint venture of WITS Interactive, Mumbai, and German publishing house Möllers&Bellinghausen Verlag GmbH, Munich. Book2look is an interactive book sample to share with readers everywhere. It makes the point of discovery the point of sale!

Elegant Biblets (widgets) contain sample pages, unlimited audio & video clips, search functionality, and online reviews, making book samples shareable on various social networks. This viral sample is the perfect "look inside" solution created by the publisher with their shoplinks thus making the point of discovery the point of sale.

How do you aim to advertise your business out to the potential readers? How will the publishers, independent writers and bloggers be benefited through the same?

Book2look is a B2B platform and our target audiences are the publishers, independent writers and bloggers rather than the end consumers – the readers. As explained above, the platform helps publishers and indie-publishers make the point of discovery, the point of sale.

Our intelligent software crawls for online reviews from thousands of white listed websites, blogs, newspapers, journals and magazines giving users access to online reviews inside the Biblet. Besides the above USP's, another reason for publishers and retailers to choose Book2look is for the wealth of analytical data about their Biblets available to them through the Dashboard.

We regularly participate and showcase our platform in various book fairs and literary festivals such as Frankfurt Book Fair, London Book Fair, Book Expo America, Delhi Book Fair, etc. to increase the awareness and visibility of our platform within the publishing community.

We have also partnered with Nielsen Book Data (<http://www.nielsenbookdata.co.uk>) who are our distributors for Book2look in traditional publishing markets and with Bowker (<http://www.bowker.com/>) for Self-Publishing markets.

What is the potential market out there, and how do you claim to dominate the same?

There are on average of 1.8 million new titles produced every year by the member countries of the International Publishers Association. This put's the market size at about 4 million new titles every year. With an estimated value of US \$151 billion at customer prices, book publishing is the largest of the publishing and entertainment industries.

Book2look has more than 110,000 books available from over 1100 publishers and over 4500 self-publishing authors, who use it as their primary tool to promote their books. Over 72 million users across 240 countries have viewed Biblets with an average of over 15 pages viewed and 15 minutes spent on each visit. In addition, over 19,000 diverse websites have embedded Book2look Biblets.

How to do you foresee the scope of the WITS Interactive – one of its kind, develop and grow in the competitive market? What are your future goals as far as the growth and expansion of your business venture is concerned?

At WITS Interactive, we are constantly exploring ways to leverage our know-how of design and technology with the ever evolving dynamics of the business world.

We keep a close eye on emerging trends and customise our existing offerings to suit our client-partner's needs. Whether its creating a brand identity and strategy through our specialised vertical CreatelD8 (www.createid8.com) or pushing the envelope on creating experiential solutions using Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Mixed Reality through our latest venture GoPhygital (www.gophygitai.io) we're always enthusiastic.

We are rapidly expanding, not just in terms of our business offerings but also in terms of the markets we operate in. The next 18 to 24 months are going to be a period of focus and growth for us, as we break into newer geographies and expand our service offerings by investing in IP creation like Lectury – a social media approach to reading and learning, to artificial intelligence and data analytics.

If you had one piece of advice to someone just starting out in the startup culture, what could it be?

My advice to someone just setting out in the startup culture would be to follow the three Ps and S: Passion, Persistence, Perseverance and Support.

If you have already taken the plunge and launched your startup, you have followed your Passion. However, keep in mind that Passion is the easiest of the three Ps. As you continue the journey of building your startup, you will encounter many challenges. There will be times when giving up your dream will seem like the easier choice but that is where the other two Ps need to kick in – Persistence and Perseverance.

Eventually, when you reach to a point where your dreams are crumbling, you are totally lost and see no light at the end of the tunnel; the "S" comes into play, Support. For me, my mother was my biggest support. She would always motivate me and tell me to look at the brighter side of failure after failure. It was due to this magnificent support that things started to turn around!

I always tell people "I am Mom funded"

Remember, running a startup is more like running a marathon and not a sprint. You have to be prepared for the long haul and pace yourself accordingly.

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