



**1. You have been instrumental in turning around business for Whirlpool and Franke Faber, what has been your most memorable moment so far in your career?**

- A. Many memorable moments but perhaps the most satisfying phase was to see Franke Faber India make profits in 2017 & be a debt free cash surplus company in 2018. Turning around a perennial loss making organisation to where we are - a clear dominant market leader with a CAGR of 40% plus required a complete understanding of the consumer, revamping the processes, institutionalising a rigorous review mechanics and most importantly, creating a passionate team/organisation culture of belongingness, with a spirit of winning being the binding force.

**2. In 2016 Faber introduced the world's first and only T2S2 technology with 3-way suction chimneys & the 3 in 1 Aerostation in 2019 which has done phenomenally well in overall chimney business. What strategic aspects were considered that propelled it into such a resounding success?**

- A. One of the key reasons for Franke Faber's success over the past 107 years has been the ability of the brand to offer innovative and out of box solutions to key consumer issues, be it being the pioneer in offering baffle filters to eliminate the need for periodic filter replacement or offering lifetime warranty to ensure complete peace of mind post purchase.

During the course of our consumer immersions in 2016, we realised that a lot of housewives were used to high amount of cooking, complained about smoke escaping the chimney filters despite operating at high speeds leading to a smoke and grease filled unhygienic environment. Our R&D team soon came up with a unique solution of putting lateral filters on the hood which would trap the smoke and grease which escapes the bottom filters. This pathbreaking solution led to an immediate acceptance in the market as it was solving a very big latent need for a potential user. Another key reason for its huge success was a marginal premium that the consumer had to pay for upgrading to this technology, i.e less than 5% premium on the product without this feature.

In 2019, we introduced a 3 in 1 Aerostation. It's a chimney, a fan and an Air Purifier. This innovation was followed by another blockbuster local 'patented' innovation where we combined the functionality of three products into our offering. The insight for the product was based on creating a solution for hot and humid climates where operating a ceiling fan in the kitchen adversely impacts the flame from the cooktop. We integrated a secondary blower into the hood and added a HEPA filter to ensure that hood offered the functionality of a chimney, a cooling fan and an air purifier. As expected, the product upon its launch had a phenomenal acceptance amongst the consumers, as it resolved some critical issues related to working conditions in the kitchen. This has been planned in India, R&D'ed in India, manufactured in India and selling in India and beyond.

**3. Franke Faber as a company gives immense importance to research and development. So, what is your approach towards that and how does an intense R&D team help you develop an edge over your competition?**

- A. Marketing and R&D has always played a critical role in the success of FFIPL. The reason for this is our ability to seamlessly integrate world class product development and manufacturing processes with our innate ability to identify and solve for local consumer issues pertaining to the category of products that we sell. We employ a large R&D team whose job is to get into deep consumer immersion on issues pertaining to the operating environment for our appliances, quality of our offerings, product design and usability and ease of use. All these areas of immersions help us generate multiple problems to solve leading to large number of product solutions for our prospective consumers & as we say "consumer compelling propositions".

**4. According to you what skills are required to pursue a career in sales?**

- A. Sales is a science or an art is a much-debated topic for decades. I firmly believe it's a mix of both. It is much like any sports where talent and application/temperament are critical for success. On the science part – discipline in the methodology and application, top the charts

while on the arts side it is ability of think big & believe, killer instinct - a burning desire to win, relentless passion & a bit of impatience aided with an instinct of judgement.

**5. How do you see future potential & plans for your company?**

**A.** Large kitchen appliance industry is amongst the most underpenetrated businesses in the country today. Given the indispensability of kitchen to any household, it presents one of the largest business opportunities for any brand to play. Franke Faber is mindful of this. When one looks at this opportunity from the lens of the market leader that we are, it puts an additional responsibility on us to ensure that there's enough focus and attention to drive the growth in the business. We have been investing ahead of curve to build awareness around the need and importance of hoods, hobs, built in oven/mwo/dishwashers in the kitchen.

Franke brand is the undisputed leader in kitchen steel sinks in India & globally. We have recently started exports from our Aurangabad plant with best in class products. We have also been investing in building new businesses which has strong adjacency to the products that we currently sell. We recently launched RO water purifiers and water geysers. We are also on the verge of launching small appliances. These launches tie in well with the company's stated intent to be amongst the most preferred brand of kitchen appliances. The intent is simple – to be a billion \$ company before I retire!

**6. Corporate social responsibility and sustainability are topics of growing importance. You are recognised as a leader in sustainability. What lessons would you like to share with our readers?**

**A.** CSR is just a way of reminding us as individuals & as corporates of what our mission ought to be. To take care of all the stakeholders & ensure giving back to society as much and as big as possible. Thanks to the awareness, I see a lot of positive change in the last decade and 'giving' is becoming a part of routine. Our Swiss HQ works hard on this axis globally to take care of less fortunate folks & our future generations with respect to environmental needs of present & future times. I firmly believe CSR at company level is good but even better & meaningful contributions can be made by each one of us, individually, across the socio-economic hierarchies albeit in whatever small or big manner. The joy of giving and contributing is perhaps an addiction & I hope, trust & pray this will be the next wave which all of us can enjoy across the world.

**7. What are your values as a company leader? How do you ensure these values are upheld by employees?**

**A.** As a company leader I believe in:

Walk the talk: most important for a leader to be seen fair.

No fear of failure: helps innovation, creativity, risk taking & speed of action.

My Money: entrepreneurial mindset makes work enjoyable, accountable and thereby better belongingness to the brand.

Coaching: to build sustainability it is imperative to groom talent.

CWM syndrome: "Come What May" helps us give our better than the best efforts, ignites the passion to win & the determination of this syndrome helps unleash that important few percentage points which decides the scale of the win.

**8. If you have to relive your days at SIMSR, how differently would you like to live them?**

**A.** I would simply want an action replay with no edits, whatsoever. It was probably the best time of my life. I just wish, there was a way of reliving those day, somehow.

**9. What are some of the significant learning you had in your two years at SIMSR?**

**A.** I joined SIMSR at the age of 20, when I was fresh out of college. I was quite undisciplined, brusque & unaware of the world. SIMSR & specially hostel life helped me make friends for life, be independent in decision making and to know myself & my path ahead. It was an incredible and invaluable experience.

**10. What would be your advice for the students/young alumni who are starting their careers?**

**A.** A career is a long duration of time and can be compared to an ODI cricket match. A couple of maiden overs (not the best of placements/salaries/brand) won't mean that you would lose the match. Remember that there will be few good overs (years) that will cover up for those maiden overs. It is therefore pivotal to be patient and hardworking. Money and fame will follow eventually.

**RAPID FIRE QUESTIONS**

a) **Role Model:** Lord Krishna, the 'coach' for Pandavas

b) **Success Mantra:** Dream big, act fast & fearlessly

c) **Phrase you use quite often:** Efforts never go in vain

d) **Word that describes you:** Passionate

e) **Favourite hangout spot in SIMSR:** Santy, the 'Food Joint'

f) **Favourite holiday destination:** Home, doing nothing at all

g) **Favourite Movie:** Trishul

h) **Favourite cuisine:** Indian



# *AlumSpeaks*

