

*In conversation with **Mr. Ajay Kaul**
Managing Partner - AgreeYa Solutions*

K J Somaiya Institute of Management Alum Batch 1988-90



- 1. With an illustrious career of around 30 years, what has been the most memorable moment so far in your career?**
 - A. It's difficult for me to pick one particular moment. However, if I have to pick just one, I would say it is the formation of AgreeYa Solutions. It is through AgreeYa that I am living my dream of making a difference to the world every single day. I still have that child-like excitement while solving a business problem and get incredibly thrilled to see our contribution creating a positive impact on the lives of millions – from making passengers fly safe to helping citizens with air quality information.
- 2. Your venture, AgreeYa Solutions, with a workforce of 1600 employees, has emerged as the 5th fastest growing company in the Sacramento region. What do you think is the biggest strength of the company?**
 - A. I am thrilled to share that AgreeYa has grown and is now an 1800+ employee strong organization. In my opinion, the credit for this must go to the people of AgreeYa, who we lovingly refer to as 'AgreeYans.' It is their passion, drive to do more and this unquenchable thirst to deliver excellence in everything they do, which has helped us reach where we are today. Every day when I walk into the office, I feel this infectious energy from my fellow AgreeYans. I am incredibly grateful for the team we have.
- 3. How is AgreeYa Solutions dealing with COVID-19?**
 - A. COVID -19 has certainly changed the way the world operates, especially for businesses. However, as an organization, we are well prepared as far as business continuity planning is concerned. We have employed smart new technologies to overcome some of the biggest challenges posed by the suddenness of the remote working situation. We utilized Microsoft Teams and Chatbot technology to enable seamless communication among our remote working employees. We leveraged the Cloud to provide safe and secure access to corporate information and services. While our teams continue to work from home, we ensure that we are in constant communication with our customers and keeping them informed of the business progress on a daily basis. This has further strengthened our relationship.
- 4. Having a wide experience of Consulting Management, Strategy, Marketing, Sales and many others, which is the domain you have enjoyed working the most and why?**
 - A. Each of the areas that you mentioned plays a critical role in the bigger cause of problem-solving but I feel that they are slightly limiting when looked at in isolation. I was fortunate to have played roles in my past that enabled me to see the larger picture. I feel, to excel in your field, you must be able to see the larger picture. Today, many young entrepreneurs and business school graduates are fabulous in their area of education. Certainly, this is good for the business but limiting for the individual. I always tell them that they need to think about the 'big picture' as it will help them in developing rational thinking and a business-oriented approach.

5. Which technologies do you foresee facilitating major changes in the near future?

- A.** There are so many innovations happening everywhere and they are shaping business practices and communities at large. It is exceedingly difficult to predict how far technology will reach in the future. However, based on my inference - hyper-automation, the democratization of expertise, AI Security, Block chain and empowered edge - are some exciting areas that will see overwhelming demand in the years to come.

6. How important is diversity to you and what value does it bring?

- A.** Diversity is imperative in both personal and professional environments and is an essential element of AgreeYa's culture. As a certified minority and women-owned business, AgreeYa is a melting pot of highly skilled professionals from diverse backgrounds and cultures. Due to their diverse past, they bring in unique experiences and perspectives that have led to some creative innovations and phenomenal outcomes.

7. As a Global professional, what differences have you felt while functioning in different countries?

- A.** During my long journey, I have had the privilege of working and interacting with professionals from various countries and I have picked up some great lessons from them all. While the Americans have inspired me with their innovations, professionals from China showed me the importance of hard work and perseverance. The Germans are engineering-focused and the Swiss business people value balance. I would say Indians are ruling the world of technology today due to the strong educational base, ability to adopt and adapt and eagerness to learn.

8. What do you do when offline?

- A.** I rarely go offline, but whenever I do, I love indulging in things that I am passionate about. I am an avid sports fan and spend time watching live broadcasts of basketball, soccer and cricket. I also consider myself to be a movie buff. From recent releases to classics – I enjoy watching all sorts of movies.

9. If you have to relive your days at K J Somaiya Institute of Management, how differently would you like to live them?

- A.** Instead of focusing on books and scoring marks, I would be more focused to deal with real-life issues and challenges utilizing my knowledge. And there are so many things we can do around us from helping an NGO to better design their supply chain to improve the delivery of the milk supplier. Opportunities to learn are in abundance.

10. What are some of the significant learning you had in your two years at K. J Somaiya Institute of Management?

- A.** 'Continuously upgrade, evolve and accept best practices' - I think this core value of our college got institutionalized in me. I have always tried to keep myself updated on exciting new things happening in the technology space and evolve AgreeYa as an organization, leveraging these technologies. Another key learning is: 'merge technology with tradition to create globally transferrable skill sets.'

11. What would be your advice for the students/young Alumni who are starting their career?

- A.** I think the best advice I could give is to be passionate about what you do. When we graduate from college, most of us fall into the lure of getting high packages. Don't do that. Always remember, a corporate career is a marathon and not a sprint, some people will shoot ahead at the outset, others may take off a little late but eventually, we all will get there.

Rapid fire questions

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Favourite hangout spot in K J Somaiya Institute of Management: Nescafe Stall (Maggi House) | 4. Favourite cuisine: Thai |
| 2. Favourite movie: War | 5. Role model: Swami Vivekananda |
| 3. Favourite holiday destination: Switzerland | 6. Success mantra: Albert Einstein said "I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." |
| | 7. Word that describes you: Perfection |

Interviewed & drafted by:
Anjali Pinjani