

# AlumSpeaks

*In conversation with*

*Mr. Apoorva Mehrotra | CEO & Managing Director at Airtel - Zambia*

*SIMSR Alum Batch 1992-94*



- 1. With an illustrious career spanning over 25 years, what has been the most memorable moment so far in your career?**
  - A. Most memorable moment has been to receive the award for Best Circle Operations in Vodafone in the year 2013 – for a circle which was considered a dark corner in the company.
- 2. Describe your experience and evolution as a professional from being the Area Sales Manager to CEO?**
  - A. The transformation has been gradual in parts interspersed with periods of rapid learning and growth. The drive to become a better version of yourself everyday has been a constant factor along with the hunger to succeed and excel at what you do. It was amply pampered with desire to break from the herd and surge ahead. In terms of personality traits, this meant becoming more patient, more empathetic, more grounded and more deliberate.
- 3. Airtel Zambia officially launched 4G in Lusaka two years back. A year later, state owned telecom operator Zamtel launched 4G. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?**
  - A. Zambia is an emerging economy and the challenges are similar to those of any such economy e.g. Infrastructure. The potential for consumption of internet is huge due to low penetration of smartphones, a young growing population and lower telecom penetration.
- 4. How is the work culture in Zambia different from that in India?**
  - A. It will be puerile to say India has one universal work culture. Personally, I feel every state or region of India has a different work ethic. Having said that, Zambian people are more respectful, more patient and more resilient in terms of work culture.
- 5. How is Executive Education helping to create world class leaders?**
  - A. I perceive Executive Education programs as time-outs which are essential to recharge, re-assess and re-calibrate your sights – they are key to self-awareness, introspection & professional growth.
- 6. How do you deal with failures?**
  - A. Early in my career, I was anxious and had morbid fear of failure – which made me risk averse and hindered the speed of my progress. Over the years, I have started taking failure as a part of learning journey. I often share this quote with my team “Fail Fast and Fail Forward”.
- 7. What do you do when you are offline?**
  - A. Listen to music, read and spend time with family.

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

A. I don't think I would like to change much - maybe just amplify the fun & learning moments and pipe down the stress and heartaches.

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

A. Ability to envision a larger picture, learning to adapt and work in groups/teams, leading self, teams and businesses.

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

A. Be yourself. Stay focused. Be Self-aware. Have fun.

**Rapid Fire Questions:**

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| 1. <b>Role Model:</b> Nelson Mandela   | 2. <b>Success Mantra:</b> Do your best               |
| 3. <b>Phrase you use quite often:</b> Don't chase perfection, instead keep making progress | 4. <b>Word that describes you:</b> Ambiversive       |
| 5. <b>Favourite hangout spot in SIMSR:</b> Nestle Maggi & Coffee Stall                     | 6. <b>Favourite holiday destination:</b> Switzerland |
| 7. <b>Favourite Movie:</b> Shawshank Redemption  | 8. <b>Favourite cuisine:</b> South East Asian        |