



HEMEN RUPAREL

1991 – 1993: PGDM, IIM Lucknow

1993 – Present: Owner, Samex Agency, Mumbai

*This newsletter features highlights of our interaction with alumni who are continuously raising the bar in their chosen profession or doing something completely out of the ordinary. This month, we spoke with **Hemen Ruparel**, our alumnus from the class of 1993. Hemen is currently the CEO of Samex Agency, one of India's largest agri-exporting firms, with a multi-crore rupee turnover.*

Alumni Committee: What has been your career path after graduating from IIM Lucknow?

Hemen: The thought of getting a job never agreed with me. I always wanted to do something on my own and was never happy working for someone else. In 1993, exports were expected to grow at 15-20 percent. Agricultural export was one of the key thrust areas for the government. Fortunately, my family had an export business in the Middle East and there was a lot of potential there. However, I needed some experience before considering a jump into the business. During placements, no company had job profiles I was looking for. Corporates did not excite me as I could not see myself playing a relatively minor role in the overall operations. Besides, the whole idea of getting a job was to get experience and not just skills. So, I opted out of placements.

I plunged directly into the business and learnt the ropes and best practices on my own. I was looking at new openings and did not want to deal in the Middle East where the family business had presence. Around that time, sanctions were lifted on South Africa and trade was allowed. It was a good challenge and I started my career with exporting spices to South Africa.

Alumni Committee: Tell us a more about your company – Samex Agency.

Hemen: Samex is an Export House dealing in Whole Spices and Green Cardamom, in particular. In 2007-08, we were No. #3 amongst the Green Cardamom exporters from India. We are the largest suppliers of Green Cardamom in private label to the Middle East and also, launched our own brand last year. We were growing exponentially till 2000-01 in whole spices and had become the second largest suppliers to Unilever South Africa from India. Due to the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, we suffered a jolt and lost our entire capital, stocks, assets and major customers. Since then, we changed our focus to Green Cardamom which we could handle with the capacities left with us. We are a small firm and expanding. We aim to continuously innovate and do better things in a better way always.

Alumni Committee: Have you ever felt that there were things you could have done better? Could you share the same with us?

Hemen: Yes, my hindsight is 20/20. I regret not having made full use of the library during my stay in IIML. It has wonderful resources and I probably used just about 5% of it. Also, I was not much of a team player and would want things to be done my way. I may have missed a lot of good inputs from my colleagues because of my impatience and inability to hear their views. The ability to listen was blessed to me much later and now I regret not having made use of this during my stay in L.

Alumni Committee: What do you think were your greatest takeaways from IIM Lucknow? How have these learnings contributed to your success?

Hemen: The spirit of not giving up and doing whatever it takes in difficult times was what stood by me during tough times. I got this from L. The pride of being from IIML stopped me from admitting defeat many times and helped me go on. We do not need an IIM Graduate to shut down a business but need one to turn it around. These words were the key to turning Samex around after Jan 2001. The skills learnt at IIML are never forgotten but the greatest take away is the spirit of the underdogs to keep fighting when the stakes are piled against us.

Alumni Committee: What do you think is the perception of IIM Lucknow students in the industry? As a long term plan, what are the necessary steps that the institute and the students need to take to get on par with the best B-schools in the world?

Hemen: Students from IIML have an edge over others as they are mentally strong and willing to struggle. The perception of being the underdog is more within IIML than outside. The institute, students and alumni must take up social projects along with the industry that are beneficial to the country as a whole. We could offer online modular courses and certification for specific skills. Preparing content for various courses and sharing them with other management schools under copyright protection may also be considered. Once we believe that we are on par with the best B-Schools, we will automatically behave like one and perform like one.

About Samex Agency:

Established in: 1981
Turnover: Rs 18 crores
 (Apr '09 - Feb '10)
Deals in: Spices
 (particularly Green
 Cardamom)

To know more, please visit:
www.samexagency.com



Favorite Books:

"One of my favourite must reads is Lance Armstrong's 'It's not about the Bike'. 'Instant Millionaire' is also a great book and a must read for all."

Hobbies:

"I like teaching, playing musical instruments, reading, outdoor trekking, and in general doing or learning anything new."

Business Leaders Who Have Inspired You:

"Narayan Murthy, J.R.D. Tata and Ferruccio Lamborghini."

Alumni committee: What do you think can be done to further the spirit of entrepreneurship at IIM Lucknow?

Hemen: The sense of ownership of every activity within IIML must be with the students. The students must feel that they are responsible for whatever is wrong and right within the institute and be encouraged to take up projects/ventures within IIML which will improve not just the quality of their stay but also the future students of the institute. At the end of their stay, they could possibly exit the project by passing on the ownership stake to a junior batch who may once again take it forward/improve it. Over time, the institute or alumni may also pick up a stake in this venture and this could be institutionalized.

Alumni Committee: Can you please share some of your experiences as a student at IIM Lucknow? Any funny memories related to the institute/professors/friends that you would like to share?

Hemen: There have been quite a few experiences and some of the funnier ones may be inappropriate for this platform. The Holi party, the late night parties or the winning of the first Sikander trophy by H3 cannot be forgotten. Having "Killer" (Krishna Gubili) in our batch and hostel, "unforgettable experiences" have been many.

Alumni Committee: What would be your advice to the current PGP batches at IIM Lucknow?

Hemen: Have fun and enjoy your stay. Make the most of these precious years. Pick up as much as you can from the treasures IIML has and give back to the world your best. Wherever you go, you wear the IIML Badge proudly. Remember it is your duty to make your fellow students who follow you proud of belonging to the same institute as you.

Please send in your feedback/suggestions to alumni@iiml.ac.in

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