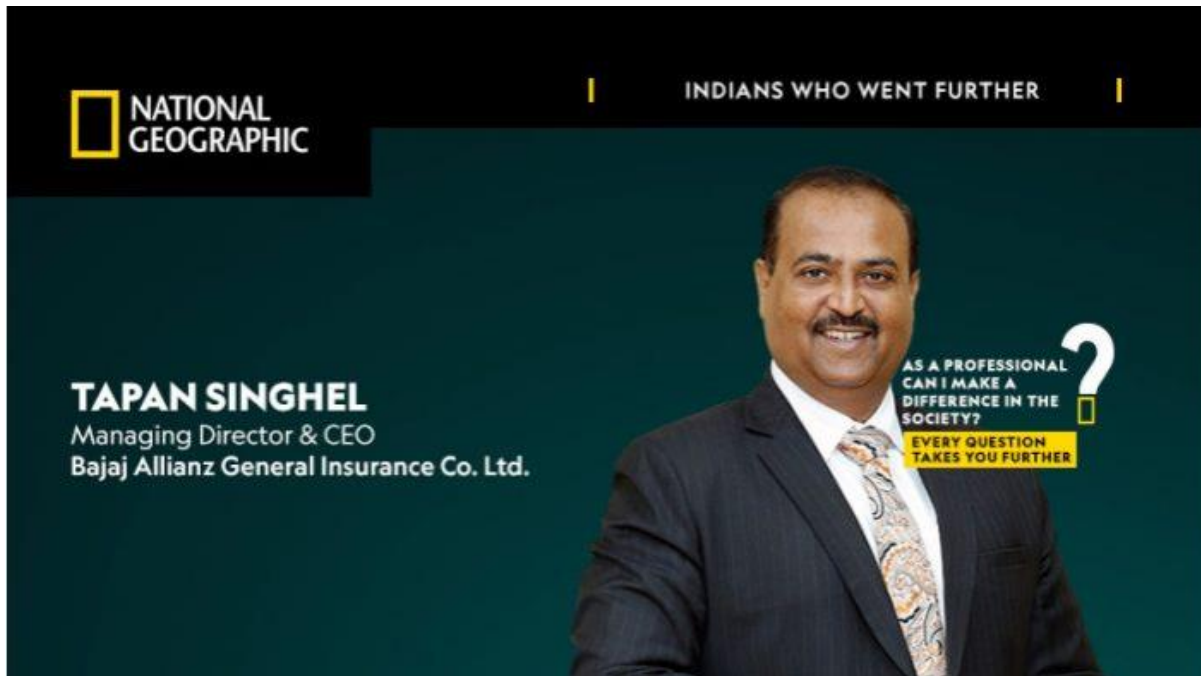


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## [Indians who went Further: A walk through Tapan Singhel's distinguished journey](#)

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**With over three decades of experience under his kitty, Tapan Singhel, MD & CEO, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance has been an inspiration to many. Tapan initiated his journey as a Direct Officer at New India Assurance Company Limited and since then there has been no turning back.**

A decade into the industry, he joined Bajaj Allianz General Insurance and has been a fundamental part of the brand since its inception. During his illustrious journey, Tapan was also involved in various international projects, like setting up of retail business for Allianz in China. He was a member of the Board of Directors for Berkshire India Ltd. and Berkshire Hathaway Services India Pvt. Ltd. during 2011-12 and was also the President of Indo-German Chamber of Commerce (IGCC).

In conversation with Social Samosa, Tapan takes us through his journey, the highs and lows, and the right questions which led to the right answers, taking him further one question at a time.

**Right answers are derived from the right questions, which take you further. One question in your opinion that changed your life completely, carving you into the person you are today?**

I noticed early on in my life that, while people who were well off were helping others, there were some who left their jobs to push for a cause they believed in. I always wanted to help people in the best of my capacity and was constantly thinking whether there's any middle path through which I can contribute to society. Then I asked myself - 'By being a professional in India can I make a difference in the society and do good to people through the profession I am in?' This question changed my life and perspective towards business and my customers to a large extent. Choosing my career in the insurance industry, although incidentally has enabled me to be with people whenever they need support the most.

**The Indian society is challenged by the shackles of dogmas and stereotypes, many of which you have known to go beyond through perseverance and courage. Which have been the biggest hurdles you had to get through?**

To be at the top of any corporate organization especially in a set up like India, there has always been a stereotype that a CEO has to be from an Ivy League B-School or from a top end MBA college. This is the stereotype that I am trying to challenge. I have always felt that the real learning lies on the street. I have not really faced any resistance, I am an M.Sc. in Physics with specialization in laser & spectroscopy and have no MBA degree. I have tried to challenge the belief that you do not need to do MBA to essentially run an organization. Even on my blog, LinkedIn and Twitter handle I try to capture the essence of streets through #StreetMBAandhighlightwhat me and my colleagues learned from the streets.

**What are the questions you ask to open up potential solutions and possibilities, when stuck in a deadlock?**

Whenever I'm stuck, I immediately start analysing the situation I'm in.

- Is it because of my belief that I am right or due to the possibilities that are contrary to what I feel?
- Whether the solution will lead to overall good?
- Lastly and more importantly, does it compromise my values, ethics or integrity?

By asking these questions to myself, I am able to evaluate the situation better and get an overall perspective on the outcome of my decision.

**Tell us how asking the right questions have made you stronger and helped you go further in life?**

I have faced many challenges in both my personal and professional life. I have asked myself many questions to move to the next level. This has been a continuous process for me, right from the time when I failed in some subjects during graduation, chose insurance as a profession, felt that I have done my best and deserved promotion, but didn't get one to the times when I wanted to help somebody but couldn't help to the level I wanted to. At all points, I stop and ask myself many questions as I feel that, doing so directs you to the right path and gives clarity on what to do next. This practice has helped me make the toughest decisions and hence, I continue to follow this principle very strongly.

**What would be the three daily habits that helped you go further and become what you are today? How did you inculcate them in the first place?**

I feel that daily habits define the kind of person you are and your perspective towards life. Some of the habits that I have inculcated in my life are:

- Staying positive in all situations
- Not missing any opportunity to do good
- And doing something unconventional everyday

Most of these habits have emerged from difficult situations that I been in. There have been times when I felt down and was looking for somebody to cheer me up. I'm sure same is the case with most people, they want positive assurances and help whenever they feel low or down. With my positive attitude, I want to cheer up people around me and help them whenever they need me. Doing what is being done and looking at the same thing with the lens from which everybody looks at, won't lead to improvement and that is why for me doing things unconventionally and thinking differently helps me redefine my personal life, professional life, my organization and my family.

**Who is the one person you look forward to and who has inspired you to shatter the glass ceiling?**

My parents have been the greatest inspiration in my life. I have had a series of ups and downs, and their advice and support have helped me sail through such situations. I remember the times as a kid, listening to the stories my mother used to tell me. Despite the fact that they were told for entertainment, her stories always revolved around the topics of ethics, values, and principles. My father used to take me along for evening walks and I really used to look forward to it. He would tell me about various things like how the world was created, science, spiritualism, etc. I learnt something new each time from him. It sparked inquisitiveness in me and made me wonder how greatness is defined. From everything we discussed, I learned that passion, commitment, and perseverance is required to do great work and make a difference in the lives of people.

**Albert Einstein once said, "A person who never made a mistake, never tried anything new." Which is the one mistake in your career or life that eventually helped you become a better person and professional and grow in life? If you had the opportunity, would you do it differently?**

Earlier I used to get angry very easily and one mistake which I still feel bad about is getting angry on a poor auto-rickshaw driver. When I look back to that incident, I realized the importance of respecting humans and understanding other's point of view. As I have grown in my life and career I understood that anger doesn't really do good to anyone, keeping your calm helps you see a better picture and understand the person/situation better.

**Looking back which is the one moment that made it all worthwhile?**

Smile on my daughters' faces is worth it all

**Which was the one advice/tip that helped you conquer all your fears?**

Never give up, this too will not last.

**Well begun is half done! Please share a few tips for those who're pursuing their dreams and need that inspiration to take the first step**

If you're really passionate about what you want to do, the chance of failure is very low. But it requires hard work of minimum 2-3 years to be able to make your presence felt. Success may be just around the corner, don't give in till you really make it.