

[“Always challenge the status quo”: Sourabh Chatterjee](#)

Sourabh Chatterjee, President, Head – IT, Web Sales and Travel at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance, talks about how he navigated through life and his career and what motivates him.

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A good student from the very beginning due to his inquisitive nature and his overwhelming urge to solve the problems that bugged him, Sourabh Chatterjee did not plan on joining the IT industry at first, but fate had different plans for him. He was an avid debater and actively participated in school events. Having a knack for mathematics and science as a student, math and thereafter engineering happened by chance, and after finishing high school in Bhopal, he pursued an Electrical Engineering degree from SGSITS, Indore.

“So getting into technology and the digital field happened to me by chance. It was not a planned move or something I was always interested in. However, I was always a very inquisitive person and tinkering around with things. If there’s something I can’t solve or find a reason for, it used to bother me that why I can’t solve or figure out a solution for this,” Chatterjee explained on his fortunate tryst with technology.

Like many engineering students, his time at the engineering college was highlighted by the hostel life and outside with friends. Even though his maternal side of the family lived in the same city, he cherished the opportunity to live in such an environment. The other thing that made his engineering life memorable was the practical knowledge that he gained in studies and even day-to-day life and its ups and downs, rather than just the theory that fed his curiosity and inquisitiveness.

One of the most important things that he learned in his college life was the power of connecting with different individuals and networking. Reminiscing back on those days, he recalled part-taking in organizing college festivals and being the editor of the college magazine or getting sponsorships for these festivals, all of this helped him in selling an idea or a concept to complete strangers. “In professional life, if you see today, one of the leadership traits is how do you talk to / adapt based on the stakeholders that you are talking to and present yourself in the way that they would understand and appreciate, in terms of, putting yourself in the audience’s shoes,” Chatterjee says.

Having been a decent student in engineering, although never the topper, Chatterjee managed to land a job at Infosys through college placement and was posted in Mangalore. The premise

of the job was quite different from what he had learned in college, as it revolved around computer science and coding, and Chatterjee had practiced this only once during a college semester. He still remembers the Infosys interview where they had asked him to solve two Shakuntala Devi puzzles, and he managed to solve one and shared the working approach of others with the interviewers.

Talking about his experience at this unfamiliar job, he says, “My first job actually turned out to be completely different than what I had learned during training, it quickly meant what you learn, you have to apply, but then you have to constantly be able to learn fast, adapt and be agile.”

After 8-10 months of joining Infosys, he was shipped to the United States where he stayed for over a decade. In 2011, due to personal reasons, he returned to India and sought a change in his career, even though he had the chance to continue with Infosys, wanting to see the other side of the table, beyond IT Services and joined the insurance industry on the Technology side of the organization.

Chatterjee had worked mostly with customers in the P&C, and Life insurance sector during his time with Infosys, and this sparked an interest to work in this particular field. In 2011, he joined ICICI Lombard as the Associate Vice President of Technology and rose through the ranks in 3 years to become the Vice President of Technology in 2014.

4.5 years later after joining ICICI Lombard, he shifted teams and joined his current organization, Bajaj Allianz General Insurance as the Senior Vice President of Technology, Digital Marketing, and Web Sales. Speaking on his experience at BAGIC firm, Chatterjee adds, “My experience with this organization has been phenomenal over the years. The best part here is the independence that I have to constantly experiment with new things that are market-defining and first in the industry. Thus, a constant force of inspiration for me to look for something different that can make a difference and transform the industry and help our Customers, Partners, and Employees through digital tools and technologies.”

Crediting a part of his success to his many mentors, who have helped him and guided him throughout his career. Many times, his bosses at BAGIC, ICICI Lombard, and Infosys have played the part of a mentor, and many have been outside of work.

“One thing I learned from my mentors during the Infosys days is to stay grounded, and how to be very humble, at the same time, deliver with patience and grace...ICICI Lombard days have been characterized by one thing, that the mentors taught me is that, you can be put into any new and unknown situation and you have to learn to manage that, so it’s almost like being thrown into the water and then you either swim or sink, but come out a better individual who is ready to face any situation in the world,” Chatterjee reminisces.

His mentors at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance have constantly challenged and encouraged him to try out new things and always be inquisitive by never being satisfied with the status quo. One thing he has been taught by his mentors that stood out to him is that, in professional life, highs and lows are not forever. If one knows how to use the lows to their advantage, it can help them grow and override the lows and reach the high.

“The order in which all the mentors have always told me is that health comes first, family comes next, and then comes work,” he says about the concept of work-life balance.

The role of mentally strong and driven women has played a pivotal role in shaping me as an individual and as a professional. Here, Chatterjee says, his maternal grandmother and his wife, who studied with him in SGSITS, Indore, have played a key part over the years.

Having won a plethora of awards and accolades, Chatterjee still believes that these are not his biggest achievements. It’s the people that surround him, whether it is his team, his family, friends, who are his biggest achievements, as there is the possibility of learning from them and getting a chance to inspire them.

“The impact that a leader creates is not when they are present in any situation or any organization, it is the legacy they leave when they are not there,” Chatterjee believes.

His second greatest achievement is that he has trained himself in such a way as to always keep up his habit of continuous learning and has managed to keep his inquisitive nature intact.

Talking about the way he has faced challenges throughout is by not considering them as challenges, instead, seeing them as opportunities, and facing them, “Take the challenge head-on and don’t be afraid of failures—that is something that I’ve learned from challenges,” Chatterjee says.

The only challenge that has bothered him the most in his career, something that he also sees as an achievement, is how to get the best out of people as a leader, whether his own team or peers, or managers.

Despite having an established career at that point, Chatterjee decided to quench his thirst for further education by doing a 1-year leadership program from INSEAD during his ICICI Lombard days that gave him the opportunity to travel around the world to countries like France, Singapore, and work & learn from colleagues who were themselves industry leaders, family business owners, entrepreneurs, and such.

Working in the insurance sector may prove to be stressful for many, but that is not the case with Chatterjee who is quite passionate about the cause of insurance and finds it a service to humanity and help people in times of their need.

Heading the travel vertical at his firm, it is an obvious assumption that he likes to travel, and makes at least 2 domestic or 1 international trip in a year, although he has not been able to do so for the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Even when traveling, he likes to experience the true essence of the city, rather than just going around like a tourist.

Like many others, since traveling is not an option, Chatterjee has turned to reading books in his spare time and calls himself a voracious reader who is not fixated on any specific genre.