



**SANJAY THAPAR**

1985 – 1987: PGDM, IIM Lucknow

1987 – 1994: Bata India Ltd.

1994 – 1997: General Manager, Ramms India Pvt. Ltd.

1998 – Present: President, North & East, Ogilvy and Mather Advertising Pvt. Ltd.

*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 **Sanjay Thapar**, an alumnus from the class of 1987. Sanjay is currently President, North and East India, at Ogilvy and Mather.*

**Alumni Committee:** Sanjay, could you describe your career path since you graduated from IIM Lucknow?

**Sanjay:** At campus itself, I got placed with Bata India Ltd. Sure there were other options, but I chose to sell footwear. What came on to me at that stage I don't know, but quite frankly as I look back I have no regrets today. I spent a little over 7 years with Bata India Ltd. Selling shoes (and smelling feet) during my training, running our wholesale operations in multiple locations, Brand management and finally looking after Merchandising and Distribution for our North India Retail operations. In 1994, I crossed over to the communications side, joining a small start up, Ramms India Pvt Ltd, a division of MAA Bozell. During my little under 3 years there our operations grew threefold and from a single city to a three city operation. A year in Mudra, followed by joining Ogilvy & Mather Pvt Ltd in 1998 and since then I am still out here. I joined Ogilvy in Kolkata and was responsible for turning around a loss making operation. I then moved to Delhi as Head of Advertising in 2002 and presently am responsible for our North and East operations as well as helping set up the Retail Practice for Ogilvy.

**Alumni Committee:** Could you elaborate on your current job profile:

**Sanjay:** Simply put, I currently oversee our entire communications business (all disciplines, such as Advertising, Direct Marketing, Public Relations etc) for the Delhi and Kolkata offices. In addition I mentor our Ogilvy Action business at a National level. It is here that we are looking at re-defining our business to focus on Brand Sales conversion at the Last Mile, with particular emphasis on Modern Trade. I am also a member of the India Board and in that capacity play a role in contributing to the future strategic directions that we should take.



**Alumni Committee:** What according to you are the skills required for a career in advertising?

**Sanjay:** I personally feel there are some skills that are needed in any field/ profession. However some things that I look for when recruiting – and maybe those are a bit more specific to Advertising, or dare I say Ogilvy – are Passion, Curiosity, Ability to fire up teams (people handling), Bravery and Agility.

**Alumni Committee:** Do you think the advertising landscape in India has changed over the years? Has the Indian consumer matured with regard to advertising?

**Sanjay:** This is most definitely true. Like any business, Advertising has changed too. India has come of age from a pure creative point of view and this is at the Heart of Advertising. Even companies have moved from providing purely Advertising solutions to total communications solutions which we at Ogilvy call 360 degree communication solutions. Of late, one is seeing a growth in digital influence and this will yet again define a new phase. Not to say that traditional media will not exist or have its place, but increasingly digital will be an area that one cannot ignore.

**Alumni Committee:** Nowadays we get to hear a lot about Social Media. How do you feel this will impact the way branders reach out to their consumers?

Like any media, social media too has its place. When I referred to digital influence in the previous question, social media is a part of that fabric in any case. One thing social media is surely doing is that it is helping to narrow the distance in this world and creating groups and communities of like-minded people. This will surely help in more focused and targeted communication.

Also, one sees blogs becoming increasingly relevant. Consumers can make or break Brands by communicating freely their thought and points of views. Brands that can live in this fabric and gain from it will ultimately be champion brands.

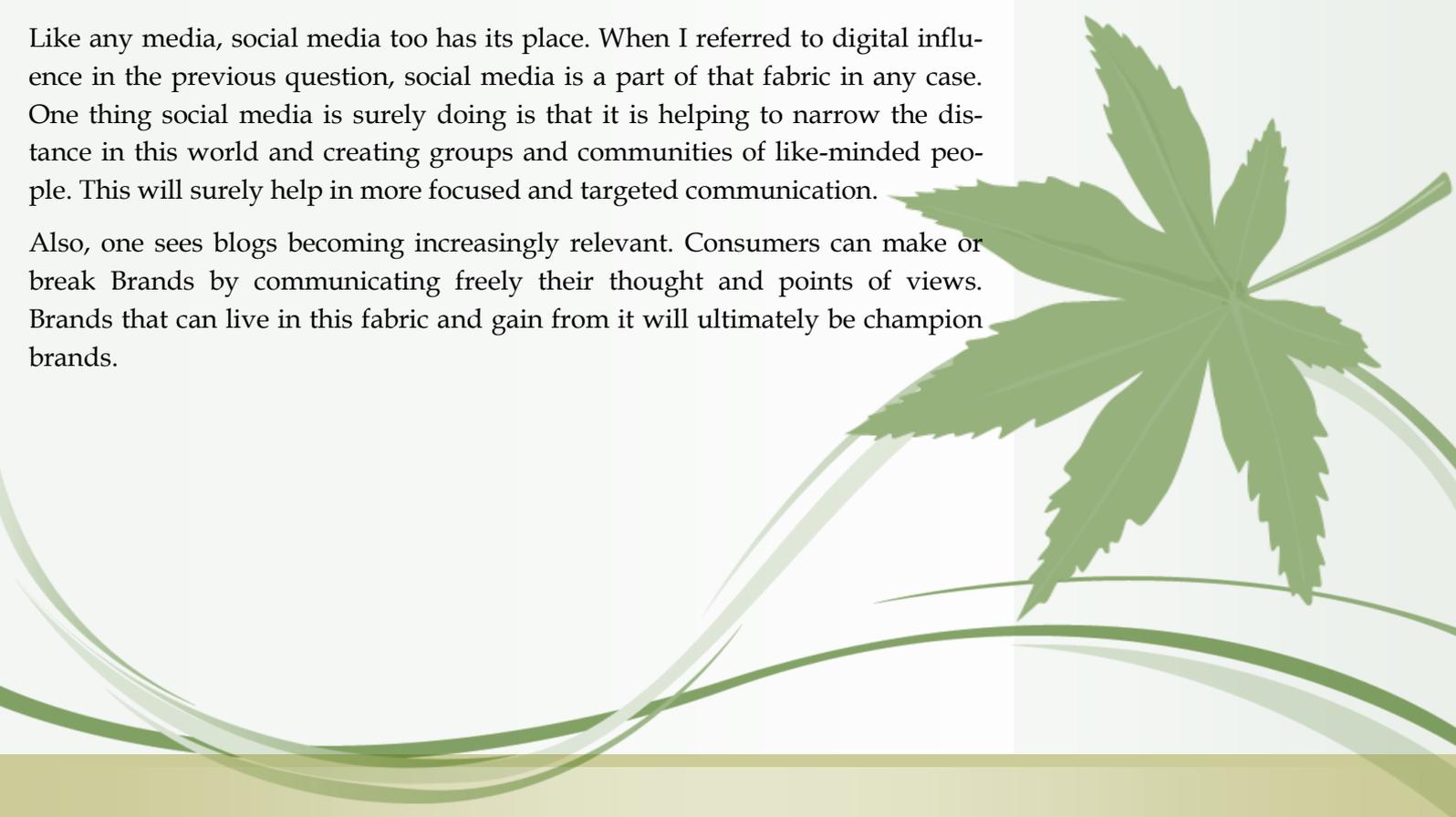


### ***Favorite Books:***

*“Two of my all time favorites are ‘Fountainhead’ and ‘In Search of Excellence’. I also like ‘Present’, ‘The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari’ and ‘Secret’.”*

### ***Hobbies:***

*“There are many small hobbies/ passions that I pursue to keep myself mentally active. I collect coins and match boxes, read and play golf.”*



**Advice For PGP Students:**

*"Don't take life too seriously. Planning a career helps, but if you try to blindly live by that book or plan then you will close your mind to the opportunities that may come in front of you. Life is full of surprises, learn to find joy in them and you shall shine."*

**People Who Have Inspired You:**

*"At every stage, someone or the other has helped influence me, but honestly, if there is one person that I will pen down, it will have to be my Mother. She has shown me the ability to smile during bad times, fight when things are down and always be positive.*

*Other than that, I would say, every one that I have worked with had some qualities that I admired. I worked towards imbibing those and avoiding the ones that I thought were not appropriate."*

**Alumni committee:** What do you think were your greatest takeaways from IIM Lucknow?

**Sanjay:** It's very difficult to pinpoint a gain from one place, but if you do wish to force me into it then I would say, confidence, logical/analytical thinking and interpersonal skills.

**Alumni Committee:** What do you think is the perception of IIM Lucknow students in the industry?

**Sanjay:** IIM L is just a little over 20 years old. People from the institute have made a mark in various places. This in itself helps raise the institute profile. Having said that I do feel that IIM L needs far greater connectivity with Industry, which makes a huge difference in profiling the institute.

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

**Sanjay:** Gosh this is tough. Frankly there are many. One such thing was when we slyly sent a matrimonial application for one of our hostel mates, in response to one in the papers. The parents actually landed up to see the potential groom. What transpired is censored, but gosh was that funny?

**Alumni Committee:** The advertising world is supposed to be this fun and crazy workplace with extremely creative minds at work. Could you share some crazy stories from your workplace?

**Sanjay:** There is no end to this, and I could write a volume on this. Each day is fun in many ways, sometimes pulling peoples' legs, and sometimes being the butt of someone's jokes. We all find time to take digs at people. That is what makes us what we are, happy and passionate.

As our worldwide chairperson puts it, "Its only work if you would rather be somewhere else". Fortunately with all of us, this is probably as good as home.

Please send in your feedback/suggestions to [alumni@iiml.ac.in](mailto:alumni@iiml.ac.in)

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