

'Non-Conformism is the Key'

Being an entrepreneur involves belief in the self. The prospect of going live with one's own idea is the biggest opium for an entrepreneur.

BY FAISAL I. FAROOQUI

One of the most frequently-asked questions is what made me start MouthShut.com. Well, it was an idea that I had nurtured within me since my college days in the U.S.—that of creating a consumer review platform. The inspiration was Amazon's book section. But the aspiration was to go much further and create a platform that would touch all segments that affected a consumers' life.

Almost 10 years ago when dot-com was almost a bad word in the Indian business community, a strong sense of self-assured confidence motivated me to chase to go against the predictions of doomsday prophets of the industry. As an entrepreneur, you must have belief in the self. To go against the tide and still come out alive requires pursuing and executing tasks, goals and strategies in a non-conventional manner.

Non-conformism is the key, thinking out-of-the-box and breaking stereotypes the unsaid requirement. I realized this quite early on while taking on the mantle of the title of the Founder, Chief Executive Officer in an eight-person startup.

At that point, my major worries were if the phone lines were working. Few hours later I would be helping the lead software engineer fix a bug in his code. Then there were positions to fill and more people to

be hired—the company did not have a regular Human Resource Manager, so it was yet another hat to wear. I kept on wearing multiple hats and kept performing multiple tasks, knowing fully well that I needed to establish my core team. It was not long before I realized that the term CEO actually meant Chief Everything Officer.

MouthShut.com has tried to fundamentally change the way people make their purchase decisions about products and brands—introducing the concept of reviews to more than just movies. MouthShut.com organizes the collection and collation of user-generated, rated content to fundamentally influence the word-of-mouth concept.

We concentrated on pampering our users, communicating with them, establishing a trust and building a community on the Internet that shares a unique bond at all times. Our users loved us and started talking about MouthShut.com and the proverbial word-of-mouth effect happened to the business. We are growing by leaps and bounds without having to really spend the top dollars that a similar venture would have justified. ■

FAISAL I. FAROOQUI gave up a lucrative career in the U.S. to start his portal, MouthShut.com in India. The site has over 30 lakh registered users and is a popular platform where people can exchange ideas, views and thoughts about brands and products.

TIPS FOR ASPIRING ENTREPRENEURS:

1. Sit down with yourself and understand if the business idea which you thought was great is actually worth investing all your energies in. Once convinced, go for it.
2. Single-minded determination is what is most important for an entrepreneur. Burn your boats—if you have a job, quit it now and immerse yourself in your business plan. Concentrate on the work at hand and get rid of all safety valves.
3. Think out of the box. It doesn't serve to cater to stereotypes. Have the courage to think out of the box. Make outrageous decisions, make mistakes, go against the tide.
4. You have to be a multitasker. Be ready to wear multiple hats.
5. If you want a safety valve, rely on your family. The real support comes from there, everything else is secondary.

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