

## Getting Good Luck with Mr. Ashwin Sanghi



*Mr. Ashwin Sanghi with Dr. Jitendra Sharma (Dean, Academics), Dr. K. Nilakantan (Associate Dean) and student managers of IMT, Nagpur*

Institute of Management Technology, Nagpur had the privilege of hosting Mr. Ashwin Sanghi, an eminent author, for the Mahendra Nath Memorial Guest Lecture on the Topic '13 Steps to Bloody Good Luck'. Some of his prominent works are "Rozabel Line", "The Krishna Key" and the best seller "Chankaya's Chant". A graduate from Yale School of Management, he has also been the director of M. K. Sanghi Group Ltd. Here are a few excerpts from an interview with him.

**Q1.** What defines you better, being an entrepreneur or an author?

**Ans.** Actually both. 10 years ago I was an entrepreneur trying to be a writer; today I am a writer trying to be an entrepreneur. So, both have been a significant part of my life, the difference being that my focus has changed. Earlier I was a businessman attempting to be a storyteller. Today I am very much a storyteller and a writer first, and along the way I try to look into a few things in business.

**Q2.** Studying at Yale, starting up your own ventures and then going on to get featured in the Forbes 100 Celebrities List, how would you sum up your journey?

**Ans.** My journey has been a series of failures. It was not like I was a topper student at school, I was not on the Dean's list at Yale. When I graduated from Yale, it was not as if an instant multi-million dollar job was waiting for me. When I came back to India, and joined my

family business, there were 2-3 ventures that went belly-up, partly due to my own egg headedness in terms of how I wanted to run them. But if you ask me, this has precisely been my greatest teacher. So if you have not fallen, you will not know what it feels like to fall. If you have not failed, you would not know what it feels like to fail. Falling and failing is critical. Somebody rightly said that strength is not about lifting weights in the gym, it is about picking yourself up when life has knocked you to the ground. That is pretty much that I have tried to do my entire life.

**Q3.** Sir, your book ‘13 Steps to Bloody Good Luck’ is about grabbing the right opportunity at the right time, so what would be your advice to the budding managers at IMT Nagpur?

**Ans.** My view is that education really tends to teach us how to be successful. What education does not seem to really teach us is how to survive failure. So, when students come out of MBA programs, they assume that if they get A’s in their assessments, they will get A’s in life. This is not true. The strongest piece of advice to all those graduating from IMT Nagpur is, do not run after success that is simply a by-product. Just focus on picking yourself up after failure. Like Thomas Edison said that I haven’t failed, I just found 10,000 ways that do not work. Consider this, if you flip a coin 10 times, odds are you will get heads 5 times and tails the other 5 times. But if you flip the coin a 100 times, it should fetch us 50 heads and 50 tails. So, the absolute number of successes goes up, but the absolute number of failures will also go up. So, one cannot be done in isolation of the other.

**Q4.** When you wrote your first book, you faced 47 rejections before self publishing it. What was your driving force, what kept you going?

**Ans.** The first rejections came from literary agents. After which I started writing directly to the publishers. Then the publishers also began to say no. Through all that time I thought the worst that can happen is that everyone in the world will say no. I also made a separate list of 200 small publishers and wrote to them saying I would send them my book and asked if they would read it. All of that happened, and to say that there was no dejection at any point, would be a lie. And after a point of time, I stopped counting. So when I say 47, it could be fewer than the actual number. Ultimately, I ended up self publishing the book, which was a fairly new concept at the time. Even though it was easy to get the book out there, it was very difficult to market. Even with difficulties that kept coming, Westland became the publisher of my first book. So frankly as long as one has the next step in their mind, they should keep going. The solution lies in not worrying about the 47 rejections but wondering now about what do I do next.

**Q5.** What would be your advice for people who would like to take up writing, but do not have a literary background, just like in your case?

**Ans.** To my mind, the first step if you want to be a writer is read because every writer starts as a reader. Today the reality is that many writers do not start as readers and that is very evident in their writing. Second, even if you do not write a book, get into a habit of writing, it could be on your blog, in terms of your diary or journal, but get into the habit of writing at least 500 words in a day because it sets you into that mode. Third would be not to worry

about what the world thinks of you or what the critics think of you, just carry on doing what you do best, because at some time people will see value in what you do. Do not think about it too much, just jump into it.

**Q6.** How has your experience been at IMT Nagpur?

**Ans.** Oh! Delighted. I am very glad I took up the invitation because you have a vibrant student body, you have world class infrastructure and you have terrific faculty. More than anything, interacting with your faculty, tells me that when you have a great diverse student body and professors who is truly committed. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. I think it is a great institution and I sincerely hope that every student who is here understands the value of the sort of education that they are getting here.