

## Interactions with Alumni – Mr. Navdeep Singh



*Mr. Navdeep Singh with student managers of IMT, Nagpur*

In an institution, it is a moment of pride when the alumni of the institute comes back to guide the students, as a representative of a top notch company. On 24<sup>th</sup> August, 2016 Institute of Management Technology, Nagpur had the privilege of hosting an interactive session with Mr. Navdeep Singh, Area Manager (Mumbai), Asian Paints Ltd. In the Project Sales profile at Asian Paints, Mr. Singh has worked at Bhopal, Gujarat and is currently working at Mumbai. Here is an excerpt from the interview with him:

**Q1.** How does it feel to be back home at IMT Nagpur?

**Ans.** It is interesting and quite nostalgic as a lot of it has not changed which is also natural. Four years is slightly less of a time for a lot of change to happen, but it is good to see that lot of things are as it is. It is interesting to be back on the other side.

**Q2.** Seeing the trend, do you think Management graduates cannot become good brand managers without going through a sales stint?

**Ans.** My question to the people wishing to get into marketing is – How would you market if you do not know how to sell? If you do not know what to sell, what would you market? It is important that you get through the sales stint to understand how the entire process is happening. While it is not difficult that you get into marketing roles directly, but then I think you will appreciate marketing slightly more if you come from sales background and understand the nuances better.

**Q3.** With the venture of AP Home Solutions emerging, what is the strategy the company is focusing on?

**Ans.** Home Solutions started off with the aim to be an end to end service provider for the product that we are selling. We thought it is important for us to deliver the final product – a beautiful home. So we thought we should be custodians of giving that finish. Thus in metropolitans where people would pay slight premium, actually premium is quite a lot. However we charge 30 percent more than the labour plus material rates which are existing in the market. But we do compete with others in professional services. The end customer pitch that we have is that we are expensive but we will be delivering the entire system. For example, from start till end, the system and the products that we use is from Asian Paints. Also we take care of entire scheduling, so there is a dedicated Customer Relationship Associate attached to you who will visit the site everyday and he will monitor how the contract is being executed. Apart from this we have an on time delivery promise and we warranty our services. Different products have different warranties, in case of any product failure we will stand by you. So our marketing strategy is primarily pitched towards end to end solution and a hassle free painting from professional painters in a controlled environment.

**Q4.** What were the two things that you learnt at IMT, Nagpur which helped you mark a position in corporate world?

**Ans.** IMT is a platform for a lot of autonomy, a lot of independence. The schedule is such that you might be occupied up with your lectures but then, there is time when you can hone your skills and talent. IMT being a community of about 700 people and add to that faculty there are about 820 people who live on campus, so it is a self sustaining community. So you learn a lot of skills of living in a community, cohesiveness, being part of a larger organisation. One is independence, the second is management, because having done the first part where you are involved in lot of things, you also start learning how to manage your time and you learn how to prioritise.

**Q5.** What is your advice to the student managers who are looking to build a career in FMCG sales?

**Ans.** People who seek a job – the effort needs to start from them. It needs to start from you rather than wait for someone to come with a job for you. What I have seen with a lot of MBA students is that they come in with a vision to get a job but they do not know how to do it. They do not know what effort to put in and at what time. You need to be sincere, dedicated and hardworking in everything you do and that is when you will find a good job. If you already have the basics in place and your foundation is correct, then there is no stopping from getting a good job. IMT will offer ample of opportunities to get that job but you need to be there when that door opens for you. Be there with all guns blazing that you will be able to give your best at that time. Therefore my advice is that be hardworking, be consistent, be driven and then I am sure sky is the limit.