"THE BIGGEST HIGH!"
India’s leading HR Heads Talk About The Best Moments Of Their Career
**INTERVIEW**

Q. How, where and when did you start your career, specifically in HR?
A. My journey with HR was more by default than by design. I was keen on Civil Services – chose subjects during graduation with this aim. However, not wanting to get married early and needing to become financially independent right after graduation, I tried to figure out what to do and ways to reach my goal. Yet, mono-civil services was no longer the preferred option. Mandal Commission had made it even more unfavourable.

In the early 1990s, students had limited access to information as there was no Internet and the telecom revolution was yet to begin. I would go to the post office every week and get a copy of the Employment News paper while I was pursuing my graduation in Bhopal. Every page was scrutinized like there was no tomorrow.

That’s how I got to know about TISS, applied and got selected to the prestigious institute.

My 20 years journey in HR began here and since then, there’s been no looking back and I am enjoying every moment of it!

During campus placements, I was offered a job at then a new HR employer, National Organic Chemical Industries Limited (NOCIL). During the interview, I told them that I would consider joining NOCIL only if they allowed me to begin on the shop floor.

The men were shell shocked. Is this girl nuts? She wants to work in one of the environments of those times? But I was firm. They came back the next day and made an offer.

Q. Could you briefly describe the initial years of your career – what were the challenges you faced, the areas you enjoyed the most, the lessons learned?
A. At my first full time job, the experience was very enlightening. It covered a wide gamut of issues — be it union issues due to the size of Batata Vadas (called as Aloo Bondas in some places), routing of bus transportation and integration and change management focus when NOCIL & PIL went out of Manila in 2003. In a completely alien environment, I tried to understand it all through a simple, focused and straightforward nature, setting up of robust systems and processes and coaching people internally for bigger roles.

Clearly, I once again made a mark in Monsanto locally and globally. My career growth was extremely enriching and rewarding from where I truly transcended geographical and cultural boundaries!

Q. What would you describe as the highest point of your HR career?
A. My career choices revolve around enriching myself at Monsanto for all the experiences, challenges, rewards, and friendships. It truly helped me become well-rounded, global professional.

I have of course, in each of my jobs, been able to bring about key changes and also make a long-term impact for the organization.

As I take a trip down memory lane, I find the Pune-based Vishwakarma Publications approaching me to write a book as the best moment at Monsanto so far.

The fact is that they wanted me to pen down a simple, handy book which ignited my desire to reach out to GEN-Y, especially the student community, who are confused, not sure what to expect from their career so far.

It has given me the opportunity to share the “What’s” and “Whys” in contemporary HR, real life challenges and knowledge acquired through 20 years of rich global experience across industry sectors. For these reasons, I titled the book “Reality Bytes – The Role of HR in Today’s World”.

The book is a best seller (first two print run already sold out), widely acclaimed by business and HR professionals.

A. What advice would you like to give HR practitioners of the next generation?
A. Every HR person must strive to be authentic in their thoughts, actions and deeds. Employees need to experience the genuine concern and support from every HR colleague.

My advice for the same is: “Be the 3 C’s mantra: Competence, Connect & Care. All three C’s are in place and employees experience the credibility of HR with employees. All three C’s are equally important — only Competence without Connect and Care does not help the culture (soul) of the organization.

In the same time, only Connect and Care without a Competent HR leader or team is sheer populism which harms the credibility of Human Resources.

So, to a delicate balance that every HR person in an organisation needs to bring in and maintain.

Credibility and respect come once all the three C’s are in place and employees experience the impact through organizational culture of learning, growth and development, which HR has a key role to build along with the CEO and Line Managers. HR has to be a friend, philosopher and guide of employees.

In summary, much of one’s growth as a person and professional comes through hardships and challenges. Embrace those and know that you will be better, stronger and wiser. No job or role is below your dignity... take everything as a learning experience, you will only gain!

The road to success is almost always under construction.