

## In Conversation with **Ramnath Sarma**

Professor of Practice & Head of Consulting, KJSIM, and Former  
Global Head - Client Service, Standard Chartered Bank

**Alum of Batch 1986**

**Ramnath Sarma**; an illustrious alum from the **1984-86 MMS Batch** recently joined KJSIM as Professor of Practice and Head of Consulting at K J Somaiya Institute of Management. Ramnath comes with over 37 years of experience in Banking and Technology. Having worked for Global Organizations such as ABN AMRO Bank, Tata Infotech Limited (now TCS) , ANZ Bank, etc. he has an impressive track record of executing large scale Transformation Initiatives for these institutions.



1.) You had an illustrious career spanning over 35 years with organisations like ABN Amro, Tata Infotech, ANZ Bank to being the Global Head of Client Service for Standard Chartered Bank. What has been the most rewarding/challenging role for you?

◆ Every role brought with it a set of challenges and opportunities that helped to stretch my own capabilities and thinking and help me grow. It is hard to pick any single role, but some remain close to my heart. One that I remember very fondly was my role at Tata Infotech Limited where we successfully built out a software solutions business in Europe. The other one is the M&A project that I led at ANZ Bank to integrate an acquisition that we had made in six markets. That project had a great deal of complexity and had to be completed within rather difficult deadlines.

2.) You completed your MMS in 1986 (second Batch) from KJSIM, how does it feel to be reassociated with your Alma-mater?

◆ That's right. I joined the second Batch of MMS if I recall correctly, and I must say it is an honor to be re-associated with the Institute albeit in a different capacity. It is back to my roots in the real sense of the word. I must also mention that the faculty and staff at KJSIM have been very kind and welcoming and made me feel at home from Day 1. The process of 're-integration' has not been difficult at all.

3.) After spending 35 years in the industry, what motivated you to join KJSIM to set up Consulting Practice?

◆ I have derived immense satisfaction from my professional career and, K J Somaiya Institute of Management is responsible for laying the right foundations to enable that. I felt a strong sense that I must contribute to the Institution that helped build me up and so I reached out to Dr. Raman Ramachandran to see how I can help. I am deeply grateful to the Institute for the opportunity and I hope that with everybody's support, we are able to build a successful consulting practice.

4.) Can you tell us about the Consulting Practice and what you hope to achieve?

◆ I strongly believe that academic excellence, research and professional practice are three pillars of a Management Institute like ours. As an academic institution we have incredibly talented faculty whose knowledge and expertise is backed by some high quality research. The purpose of the consulting capability is to boost our Professional Practice by leveraging the expertise of our faculty to build a better connection between our Institute and the Industry. As part of our Professional Practice, we already have a rapidly growing Executive Education Program and we are increasingly working with a number of leading organizations to develop and deliver

-er 'customised' training and development programs to suit their specific needs. Alongside Executive Education, consultancy provides us a platform to bring our knowledge to Industry. Simultaneously, real life experiences will help expand on and enrich what the faculty take back to the classrooms. So it is a win-win

## 5.) What opportunities do you see as part of Consultancy Practice offering?

◆ As we all know, India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world today and it shouldn't be a surprise if I say that there are significant opportunities that exist across the spectrum. These opportunities apply in equal measure to all sectors of Industry - be it the Large corporates or the MSME industries. Ofcourse, at the right time, we need to pick our sweet spots. At the moment, we are currently focussed on developing a set of offerings in areas where our faculty at KJSIM can demonstrate strength and expertise. We are also looking for synergies with other parts of the Somaiya Vidyavihar University as well as our International Partner Universities. Apart from problem solving in traditional areas of management such as Market Research, Human Resources and Operations Optimization, I think that new areas that will provide a lot of opportunity - there are two that come to my mind right now. Firstly, India has a thriving Start-Up ecosystem and I feel this is an area that can do with some help across the various stages from Product development to Commercialisation. Another area that is gathering traction relates to Sustainability and related aspects of Regulatory Compliance.

## 6.) Can our Alumni Network help with the Consultancy Practice?

◆ One of the critical factors for success in this area is the extent to which we can demonstrate Industry Knowledge and experience. At the moment, we are working to create a pool of such experts drawn from our Alumni that can help us in various stages of consulting projects. I also recognize that many of our Alumni are successful entrepreneurs in their own right and I am certainly looking forward to partnering with them as we build up the practice. I would also use this opportunity to ask Alumni to feel free to get in touch with me directly if they are keen on contributing to this venture.

## 7.) You have seen the industry change from close quarters, has the industry's expectations changed from fresh MBA graduates over years?

◆ There have been several significant events that have taken place globally in the last 25-30 years be it Technology advancements, Financial Crises, Climate events or even COVID. Each has the potential to be very disruptive in many ways and turn our lives upside down. Alongside challenges, each comes with a set of opportunities. MBAs of today need to be a lot more resilient, self motivated and must constantly adapt themselves to cope with and take advantage of these situations. We also need to recognize that The Global Economy is also a lot more integrated today than it ever was. So an MBA that is entering the corporate world is competing not just with fellow MBA students in his or her own city, but potentially with similar people from 100+ countries around the world. The stakes have gotten much higher.

## 8.) How do you generally unwind?

◆ I like to travel and I also play golf whenever time permits.

## 9.) What are some of the significant learning you had in your two years at K J Somaiya Institute of Management?

◆ I had joined KJSIM straight after my graduation and had very little idea of the corporate world at the time. I did have some great faculty that helped shape my thought process in the two years. I think the biggest learning for me was to understand the different facets of an organisation and how the different functions have to work together to deliver the required outcomes. What I also learnt was the fact that collaboration with others is very important and we need to work with others as one team to deliver outcomes. I recall a "Marketing Fair " that we as students conducted in 1986 which was the first of its kind and an astounding success.

## 10.) What would be your advice for the students and young Alumni, starting their careers?

◆ I would say Be Excellent at your present job. Do it with passion and dedication . Be inquisitive and learn all the time. Don't be afraid to express yourself. Buildup your reputation in your network - Career Growth and Success will automatically follow.