

The Hunt - Part 3

The 2nd Musketeer...

Before we hop on to our second tale, I would like to thank all those who have joined the hunt so far. All the shots at cracking the 'universal' secret have been innovative and richly illustrate the diverse intellectual depth amongst our readers. However— purely from the judge's discretionary privilege—just a handful have come close, and so far I am obliged to host only one expensive dinner 😊! But there is good news. You see, our expedition is far from over and there is no need for the hunting party to disperse as yet. Perhaps this 2nd musketeer will guide us closer to the destination...

Do you know 'someone' who lives life a little larger than you? Like when you watch the IPL cricket finals together, his boisterous roaring for the Chennai Super Kings dwarfs your half-baked cheers. When you dine together, his taste buds seem to relish chicken tikka and curd rice with an equal enthusiasm. When you drink together, he loosens up even before the first sip of his single malt. And when he discovers your 'Kolaveri' dance on YouTube, he excitedly calls you in the middle of the night! If you know 'someone' who fits the above criteria, I would recommend enrolling him in your inner circle of friends. The 'zest for life' is a contagious trait—those who enjoy this great gift called Life, tend to rub it off on others around them as well. Take it from me, as I speak from personal experience.

In the winter of '96, the young Cybage was upgraded to an empty row-house in Kalyani Nagar. Our family followed suit as we took up a rental apartment in the nearby Gera Harmony society. Kalyani Nagar was a ghost town in those days. A whole bunch of investors had picked up properties right before the real estate crash. As a result, the suburb was colonized by empty societies, deserted lanes, and sporadic street lights. Life outside the society was scary, the one inside was lonely. There were only four inhabitants at Gera. One of them was Koratti R Chandrashekar (KRC), Parametric Corporation's local sales manager.

KRC's 1BHK was diagonally opposite ours on the 3rd floor, a small garden separated our balconies. His place seemed to be the only one having any action

in Kalyani Nagar, with a regular late-night ruckus. What a nuisance! Our frustrations piled up. Eventually Ritu, carrying our troubled baby Misha, went knocking on KRC's door to vocalize our collective annoyance. She came back with an invitation for their next party! And that's how we entered KRC's house and life. Eight weekends later, KRC and I became kind of close friends. Eight months later, it was all over. KRC took up a job with Hughes Software in the UK (they were his earlier employer in India as well). The new role required him to set up the company's European sales operation. The move was tactical, not strategic. It was not the position, but the income in "pounds" that lured KRC to relocate. And thus my happy-go-lucky friend slid away before I could get my arms around his professional identity.



KRC and I

Interestingly, it was only after he flew away that I began to learn about his professional side. Over the next six years, I met KRC on a biyearly basis. Every time he visited India, he would ensure a side trip to Pune. Reason? Partly because of the sentimental attachment towards his first little 'home'; and partly due to his growing fondness for our family, particularly our 'million-dollar smile' kids as he affectionately christened them! It was a recurring semester rendezvous—he would arrive in Pune, come straight to borrow our beat-up Maruti 800, and then have dinner with us the night before his departure. Each trip allowed me an opportunity to track his professional progress.

By 2003, KRC had built up Hughes' European business to US\$200 million revenues, set up offices in several European countries, and ramped up a small army of 15 sales professionals. Of course, this phenomenal success had come with a price tag—living in & out of suitcases in every country imaginable, with marginal time to enjoy his newly bought British house and newly born daughter. Meanwhile, Flextronics acquired Hughes' software business and there was a change of CEO. KRC stayed put through the churn. And just when I was this

close to figuring out his secret success formula, KRC sold his Gera flat and stopped coming to Pune.



KRC - Swinging away...

Fortunately, by then, Cybage had forayed into Europe; so now my UK business travels started. My first voyage saw KRC pick me up in his new BMW 550 Sport. We went pubbing in London, laughed and caught up on old times. The episode had a déjà vu effect a year later, except the pickup car was a tad more expensive. A BMW 730 Sport. His home also had seen a proportionate upgrade to a row house. His company now had been sold to EchoStar, and there was a new CEO at the helm. Shortly thereafter, EchoStar sold its software business to Aricent. This resulted in one more new CEO, and of course a major promotion—KRC now became “Vice President - Global Major Accounts” for Aricent. He celebrated his success by purchasing his 3rd house in 2006 with an astonishing price tag of over million dollars! Then in 2010, KRC quit Aricent to play golf. Six unhappy months later, he boarded Infosys as the European “Head of Sales for Engineering Services”. Twelve unhappy months later, KRC rejoined Aricent as “Senior Vice President and Global Head of Sales”.

In the last four years, we had two family vacations to the UK. During our last visit, KRC and Martina drove us to the oldest (about 1500 years old) pub in the UK in their second-hand Aston Martin. Two beers down, I pestered him for his success formula. He replied with a single-malt face “Nothing specific. I just got lucky with the right company. I understand Aricent and I understand the business of our customers. And I realize why we are the best company in the

telecom servicing industry. And that knowledge makes deal closing easy. " I didn't get it. Then last year, our families accidentally ran into each other during our Kumarakom holiday. "Please illustrate with an example", I urged him. He narrated how once he ended up sitting next to the Vice President of Lucent Technologies on an international flight, and how he spoke nonstop for four hours on why Aricent is a better company to develop technology for Lucent than Lucent itself! Six months later, Lucent sold its India captive center to Aricent! As simple as that!

A 'Bachelor of Science' graduate leading a team of IIMs and equivalents in a mammoth telecom player—how can it be "as simple as that"? Surely, like Navendu, KRC also possesses some secret recipe for professional success? But here is the funny thing—Navendu succeeded while hopping multiple jobs. While KRC is doing the exact opposite—staying put, even though the company ownership keeps changing hands! Then how is it plausible for the recipe to be 'common'? As the riddle is getting foggier, it's time for a breather before we leap into our third and final tale. Meanwhile the commenting doors are wide open for our brilliant detectives...

And for those not into stressful detective games, here is a stress buster quiz: If you had a six month sabbatical from work, which of the following relaxing therapies would be your primary choice...

- ☐ Leisurely Sport (Golf, Scuba Diving, etc.)
- ☐ Reading
- ☐ Travel
- ☐ Movies/TV
- ☐ Chilling with Family

Vote