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Tell us something about yourself, your journey. What were the impediments you have faced?

Mr. Rajan: I started as a software engineer after I got campus placement with Infosys. Due to the client-focused services approach, the work/culture was project-oriented than product-focused, and the scope of innovation was limited.

I aspired to innovate products to solve real-world problems.

I wanted to work with a product focused company rather than a services-oriented company.

With that realization, I resigned and moved to a much smaller product-focused organization - naukri.com with just 72 employees.

I loved the product-focused environment and innovation happening at naukri.com. But I still felt a void and wanted to be more closely involved in the conceptualization of the products but being an engineer, it was limited.

The real challenge was to carve out a niche in my software engineering profile to solve real-world problems.

The only solution was to transition into Product Management Domain.

Considering my product-focussed initiatives and performance in a strenuous interview, the company gave me an opportunity to be the product manager for their education platform - shiksha.com.

That was my first milestone.

To expand my horizon further, I decided to move to Australia in 2010.

But the excitement didn't last long.

The responses in relation to securing a job were negative and demotivating from "You don't have any local experience" to "No one gets a job here in their field and be prepared to work in a departmental store."

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I took those responses as a challenge. Despite the resistance, I got 3 jobs in 16 days and I joined Hotfrog - an online business directory in more than 38 countries as a product manager.

In just 3 years I became the Product Director managing a team of product managers.

In 2016, due to major divestment in Cirrus Media, I had to wind down my team and finally I was also made redundant. After the redundancy, I got involved in my own PropTech startup and also joined an InsurTech start-up as a Head of Product. After 2 years, I joined OneSaas as a Head of Product.

My challenges were still not over.

Due to some unexpected commercial impacts, I was made redundant again in Nov 2019 along with few other team members.

That highly unexpected redundancy really shook me up.

I promised myself that I will create so much abundance and avenues that it will remove the dependency on a job.

I started exploring new avenues with a razor focus on my goal and doubling down on execution.

As a part of exploring multiple businesses/avenues. I joined the Antler Australia 2020 cohort. Antler is a global startup generator and early-stage VC.

Our idea to disrupt the immigration industry was in the top 8 tracked start-ups in the Antler cohort and was selected in the pre-IC round to be pitched to the Investment Committee for seed funding.

Due to Covid's impact on immigration, we could not secure the funding.

After that, I did contracting/consulting for the Australian Doctor Group helping them pivot to a new business model.

However, the one which is closest to my heart is Coaching as it helps me impact lives!

What incident had most influenced your career choice?

Mr. Rajan: After becoming a Product Director in 2013, I got a chance to mentor product managers, transitioning from various domains like engineering, marketing and even journalism with no previous prior product experience and they needed guidance!

While mentoring them, I got a different level of fulfillment and I started mentoring product managers externally as well.

How do you manage working into different sectors?

Mr. Rajan: When you focus on the core and have the right Product Mindset it organically aligns with all the domains/sectors. In my 15 years of experience, I have worked in multiple sectors – From Healthcare to IT Services sectors.

I have managed working in different sectors by having the right Product Mindset, sticking to the

fundamentals and by focussing on creating value.

What qualities do you possess that, in your belief, makes you a good product management coach?

Mr. Rajan: I believe the qualities I possess (validated by my mentees) which makes me a good product management coach are empathy, patience and approach of empowerment and contribution, which helps me understand and relate to the situations they are going through.

How do you keep up with the latest technology advances?

Mr. Rajan: I am a tech enthusiast and I keep up with the latest technology advances by a lot of reading!! – Latest News, blogs, Magazines, Newsletters etc.

What career accomplishment makes you most proud?

Mr. Rajan: My promotion to Product Director is one career accomplishment which really makes me proud.

How would you guide someone who felt constrained by their family's wishes?

Mr. Rajan: I would advise them to find their purpose and passion first. I sincerely believe when your work is aligned with your purpose in life, you don't have to push yourselves to work towards it

What is the biggest obstacle you have overcome in your own life?

Mr. Rajan: The biggest obstacle that I faced very early on in my journey, even before I started my professional career was when I got stuck in an engineering college that had no future prospects. After preparing for engineering entrance for a year, I didn't get the desired engineering college.

After a protracted period of preparation, I rewrote the exam and got into a good engineering college that provided me a head start in my career as I got a campus placement in Infosys.

How would you assist an established individual wishing to switch professions?

Mr. Rajan: I assist established professionals by focussing on 3 verticals.

1. Mindset Transformation
2. Upskilling
3. Transition

Tell me about a difficult work situation and how you overcame it?

Mr. Rajan: The most difficult work situation I faced was right after I was promoted to Product and Technology Director in Cirrus Media.

When I was brought in to manage a team of 23 direct and indirect reports, my responsibilities were to analyse the way products were conceptualized, managed and developed, to organize the team and to improve communication to the internal/external stakeholders.

Organizing the team to work on process improvements and work as a team was a huge challenge

mainly because of the instability, lack of motivation and lack of internal/external communication due to frequent redundancies and changes in the top management.

How do you evaluate success?

Mr. Rajan: Success is more perspective driven and subjective and depends on how you perceive it. Few people measure it based on what assets they have collected, few based on comparison with others, but in my opinion, success is what can provide you true happiness and fulfilment in life.

What are your long-term career goals?

Mr. Rajan: Product Management is truly my passion and coaching helps me - take it to a different level.

My long-term career goal is to help thousands of professionals to transition into and build a successful career in product management. I am involved in multiple start-ups in EdTech and HealthTech as a co-founder and director, I want to build a highly successful business with an aim to solve real world problems.



Be in touch with Mr. Rajan Sharma

