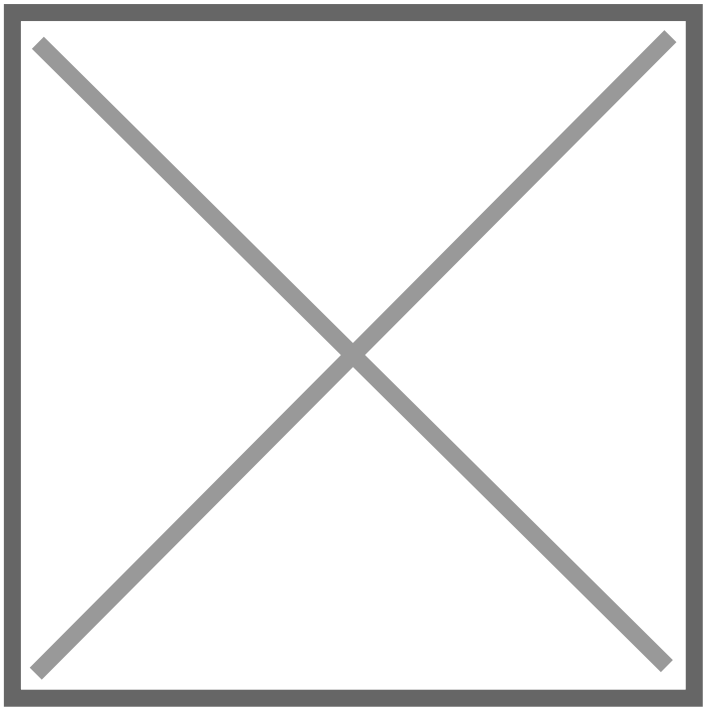
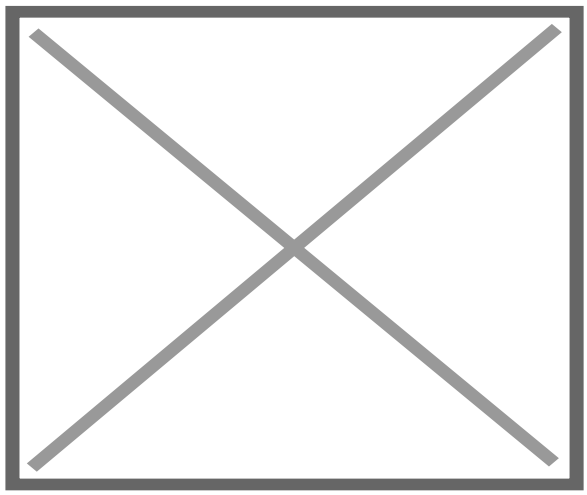
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Taking untrodden path for success

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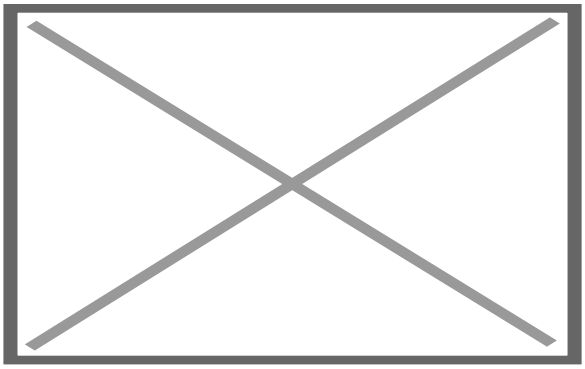
The son of a cardiologist, Dr Rashmi Barbhaiya opted not to tread his father's footsteps and entered the arena of pharmaceuticals pursuing higher education in clinical pharmacology. More than two decades later, the father proudly describes his son's achievement: Ã¢â?¬Å?As a doctor I can treat about 20 patients a day; while Dr Rashmi's work, with such a strong base in pharmaceutical R&D, can help save the lives of millionsÃ¢â?¬?



When one throws a ball at the wall, it rebounds. But the force with which it rebounds depends on whether the ball is hard or soft. If it is tennis ball then the force will be more. The exit of Dr Rashmi Barbhaiya from Ranbaxy in 2004 had similar situation, as he was pushed to the wall with nowhere to go.

Like a tennis ball, Dr Barbhaiya, with extensive global experience in handling diverse aspects of drug discovery and development at Bristol-Myers Squibb, USA and leading a team of over 900-strong scientists at Ranbaxy, bounced back with the same or greater force. The support and encouragement of his colleagues - Dr Kasim Mookhtiar and Sanjiv Kaul - led to the setting up of Advinus Therapeutics in 2005.

Ã¢â?¬Å?I started Advinus at the right time, right environment; backed by the right set of people,Ã¢â?¬? says Dr Barbhaiya, who left India as a student to the UK to pursue doctoral studies, over 35 years ago. This graduate in biochemistry from MS University, Baroda, later landed in the US following the advice of his guide in the UK. Ã¢â?¬Å?Hence the journey for Advinus became smooth; to achieve the goal to explore novel targets in selected diseases areas with no API, no generics, no manufacturing, no sales and marketing experienceÃ¢â?¬?.



Advinus' Pharma Development Bangalore operation, located on a 8-acre campus with 220,000 sq ft of modern facilities, offers end-to-end pre-clinical to early clinical development platform for pharma product development

The leadership team (with over 160 years of combined working experience in large pharma companiesÂ in the US) and the Board, also shares the same mindset. Advinus, as Dr Barbhaiya adds, is the abbreviation for Ã¢â?¬Å?Advantage India US.Ã¢â?¬? In a short span of five years, the company has achieved many milestones. Advinus has emerged as a leading partner of choice for multinational pharma companies like Merck, Novartis, Johnson & Johnson, Genzyme, DNDi besides others; for drug discovery activities.

Ã¢â?¬Å?I really did not have a plan to turn an entrepreneur. Stars were aligned for me to do something out of the ordinary,Ã¢â?¬? says Dr Barbhaiya, commenting on his entrepreneurial journey. This only son of a physician from Ahmedabad (Gujarat) is a late bloomer as an entrepreneur, starting Advinus when he was in his early fifities. Ã¢â?¬Å?Pharmaceutical research and development was never India's forteÃ¢â?¬?, he says. He did not know that he would move to India.

Driving forces

Recalling his career at Bristol-Myers-Squibb from 1980, he calls them the fantastic 21 years that gave him over two decades of highly productive stints in the industry. During that time, Dr Barbhaiya was actively developing drugs in-house in many areas like antirectoviral, aÂ number of drugs for AIDS, cancer, depression and anxiety, hypertension and congestive heart failure (CHF), diabetes besides many infectious diseases.Â He is proud to say that during that time, the company launched many drugs. He is also one of the rare industry professionals who has authored nearly 150 scientific research papers.

Although he never thought of returning to India, the changes taking place in BMS during 2000, led him to opt for an early retirement, at the age of 49; and start consulting services. He could not resist the offer from Ranbaxy Laboratories; and moved to India in 2002, along with a couple of former colleagues - Dr Kasim Mookhtiar and Sanjiv Kaul. He joined Ranbaxy Laboatories as president of R&D, and led a team of over 900 professionals involved in generic, drug delivery, herbal and innovation-driven new drug research and development activities. During his short tenure of two years, Ranbaxy Laboratories announced the first and major partnership deal with a global pharmaceutical major, GSK for drug discovery work. Dr Barbhaiya says, Ã¢â?¬Å?It was Kasim and Sanjiv who supported and motivated me to consider taking the risk of becoming an entrepreneur with no platform for backup. A major factor that Dr Barbhaiya admits, in the way for him to turn an entrepreneur is the support by Tata Group as promoters to the venture, Advinus Therapeutics, that came unexpectedly. The decision was made, and there was no looking back. The company got off to a start with the logo designedÂ by Dr Barbhaiya's daughter, Puja, a fashion designer based in the US. Even now, his family is based in the US and he shuttles between New Jersey, and the cities of Bangalore and Pune, where the research facilities of the company are located.

Dr Barbhaiya recalls that a phone call from the Tata Group came at a time when he was almost closing the deal with a venture capital firm; and Advinus got a whole new dimension. Ã¢â?¬Å?The elements of the business plan of AdvinusÂ played a crucial role in establishing partnership with Tata Group,Ã¢â?¬? says Dr Barbhaiya giving credit to the Tata's support to drug discovery; and investment into the knowledge-based industry, besides the incredible visionary leadership within the Tatas.

Stepping untrodden path

Advinus with 470 employees, is a company created with a vision Ã¢â?¬â?? of not entering the field that 15 other companies are into. Ã¢â?¬Å?We choose to create a drug development center where we can do all regulatory requirements for IND. To put a molecule into human beings we are the only company with this kind of bandwidth,Ã¢â?¬? describes Dr Barbhaiya.

The state-of-the-art facility in Pune, Advinus Drug Discovery, develops its own drug candidates to out-license them at preclinical or clinical stages

Advinus currently has six-seven programs, and aspires for 12-14 in the near future; to enhance drug discovery in a very big way. Dr Barbhaiya adds, Ã¢â?¬Å?Advinus works on non-validated targetsÃ¢â?¬?.

Of the success milestones, Dr Barbhaiya states that Advinus is a company with many firsts Ã¢â?¬â?? to conduct toxicology studies INDs have been filed in the US and Canada besides other countries; also, a two-year carcinogenous study with a US-based company; it's molecule gk-001 has been worked from discovery to human studies; and is the only molecule for which 100 percent IND work has been done in India. Ã¢â?¬Å?We are very proud that we have the 100 percent made in India molecule.Ã¢â?¬? Among the other notable firsts are that Advinus is the first partner for Merck; it is also the first company to work on R&D in neglected diseases Ã¢â?¬â?? particularly those significant to India.

Inspired by his grandfather's words: Ã¢â?¬Å?I should play a game to win it and try not to lose it.Ã¢â?¬? Dr Barbhaiya admits

that a major factor for success of Advinus as a company is the senior team. In today's world, it is a big deal for the senior team to remain intact. He shares that many senior employees of Advinus have moved to India not to make a living Ã¢â?¬â?? having left behind successful careers in the US. They are here to make a difference to India's pharmaceutical R&D.

Sharing the vision for Advinus for the next five years, Dr Barbhaiya says, Ã¢â?¬Å?Having the senior team intact, giving fresh thought to the next phase of growth to go leaps and bounds (for which we may look for a strategic investor from outside); achieve turnover of $40-50 million Ã¢â?¬â?? not by entering manufacturing, but by building more capabilities.Ã¢â?¬?

Ã¢â?¬Å?The dream of Advinus could not have been fulfilled without Dr Kasim Mookhtiar, Sanjiv Kaul; Homi Khusrokhan, managing director, Tata Chemicals; Dr Venkat S Sohoni, managing director, Rallis India; R Gopalakrishnan, executive director, Tata Sons; and Kishor A Chaukar, managing director, Tata Industries,Ã¢â?¬? admits Dr Barbhaiya. Ã¢â?¬Å?Their passionate commitment was crucial in creating Advinus. Their tireless and sustained support made it possible to bring Ã¢â?¬? concludes Dr Barbhaiya.

First Person

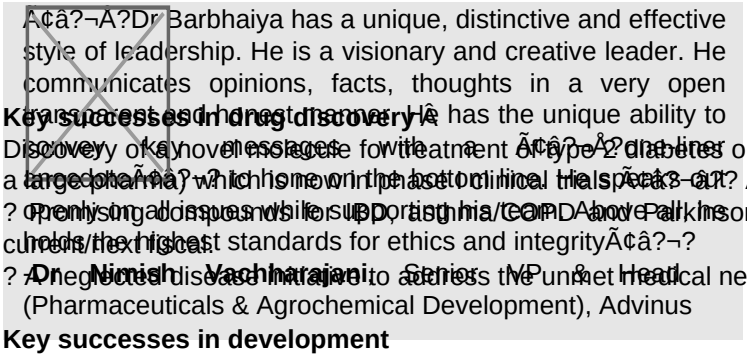
Â¢â?¬Å?Rashmi as a person Ã¢â?¬â?? is large-hearted, warm, caring, emotional, meticulous, organized and a commanding personality. Rashmi as a professional - tremendous self-belief, well respected, passionate about research, face of Advinus, and today's poster boy for innovative pharma research in IndiaÃ¢â?¬?
-**Sanjiv Kaul**, MD, ChrysCapital Investment Advisors

Â¢â?¬Å?Dr Barbhaiya is a brilliant blend of science and business, and is wonderful to talk to. His desire to discover new molecules is backed by a thorough scientific knowledge and a passion to prove that one can do this from IndiaÃ¢â?¬?
-**Anu Acharya**, CEO, Ocimum Biosolutions

Â¢â?¬Å?Dr Rashmi has brought multinational experience and expertise he developed in the US to India. Through Advinus, he has been effectively translating his learnings, to deliver the India advantage; and culture to meet the global needsÃ¢â?¬?
-**Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw**, CMD, Biocon

Â¢â?¬Å?During the five years that I have known Dr Barbhaiya, I had the opportunity to learn from him science, drug discovery business and even HR! He brings with him a unique style of management; comprising professionalism of the West and seamlessly merging it with personalized flavor of Indian style. He has led from the front on many initiatives; and the noteworthy among them is his value for ethics and integrity. In every employee survey, we have seen that our employees have rated highly Advinus' culture of ethics and integrityÃ¢â?¬?
-**Thomas Putti**, VP & Head (Human Resources), Advinus

Â¢â?¬Å?I know Dr Barbhaiya for over 15 years as scientist, colleague, mentor and friend. Our professional lives have been inextricably linked during this period, starting with my joining BMS in 1992; to our current collaboration at Advinus. Rashmi is a dynamic leader. He is one of the gifted people who is charismatic, a person who attracts others by his sheer personality. This charisma allows him to engage and interact with people who are best at what they doÃ¢â?¬?
-**Dr Kasim Mookthiar**, CSO & Executive VP (Drug Discovery), Advinus



Ã¢â?¬Ã?Dr Barbhaiya has a unique, distinctive and effective style of leadership. He is a visionary and creative leader. He communicates opinions, facts, thoughts in a very open transparent and honest manner. He has the unique ability to discovery key messages with a Ã¢â?¬Å?one liner concept that hits home on the bottom line. He is Ã¢â?¬â?? ? Promising compounds for UPD, asthma/COPD and Parkinson's disease that could be ready for IND enabling studies in current/next fiscal.

Key successes in drug discoveryÃ¢â?¬â??

Discovery of a novel molecule for treatment of type 2 diabetes on a new target in pre-clinical development (in partnership with a large pharma) which is now in phase I clinical trials Ã¢â?¬â?? ? A Glucokinase Activator and other initiatives include:

? Promising compounds for UPD, asthma/COPD and Parkinson's disease that could be ready for IND enabling studies in current/next fiscal.

? A neglected disease initiative to address the unmet medical needs of Ã¢â?¬Å?Kala AzarÃ¢â?¬? with DNDi.

Dr. Nimish Vachharajani, Senior VP & Head (Pharmaceuticals & Agrochemical Development), Advinus

Key successes in development

? A client base of about 80 global pharmaceutical, biotechnology and agrochemical companies.

? First company in India to establish services in regulatory toxicology, DMPK and safety pharmacology; and also to develop IND packages for clinical trials initiation in the US, Canada, Germany, France and other countries.

? Developed the first internal molecule for clinical studies and enabled the identification of the second candidate Ã¢â?¬â?? first molecule discovered and fully developed in India is undergoing clinical trials.

Ã¢â?¬Å?Pursue your dreams, believe in yourselfÃ¢â?¬?

Q What is the Advinus mission?

To create a name like the IT industry for pharmaceutical R&D in India; win respect and achieve success. We want to make a difference to India's pharmaceutical R&D. We have felt great and happy about the success of our competitors.

Q How do you treat your employees?

When they fail, I do not crucify them as long as the failure is not because of negligence. We believe in team work. As individuals we are great, but collectively we fall apart. Managing a team by striking a good balance is a sure way to success in any business.

Q How do you describe your role at Advinus?

I soften targets (potential clients). Then the other team members move in to negotiate the deals. The best way to describe my role is that I am like the air force. After air strikes, the ground level battalion has to move in to win the battle.

Q Who can become an entrepreneur?

For aÂ person who is capable, success will follow. I never aspired to become a CEO. I did my work and became what I am.

Q What words of motivation would you give aspiring entrepreneurs?

Pursue your dreams; believe in yourself. Have the right concept and ideas; and most importantly, the ability to articulate your ideas. Then success is sure to come your way.

Q How do you see the Indian biotechnology industry in the past 10 years and now?

I have profound respect for outstanding work that has been done; the never-say-die spirit of Indians; entrepreneurial abilities that Indians have. Regulatory reforms by the Indian government in this area is an immediate requirement for further growth of the industry.

? **Narayan Kulkarni** in Bangalore