

My experiences in running life science ventures in India

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The wheels of the person that treads the path of entrepreneurship become sturdier and with greater resolve, although one can feel the air trying to leave those tires each day. We had started Ocimum Biosolutions in the US in the year 2000 in Delaware to provide complete solutions to scientist in the domain of genomics. Over a period of a few years, we collaborated with pharmaceutical and biotech research organizations, solving their challenges and increasing the productivity of their R&D efforts through the application of our in-house informatics expertise.

While doing this, we unearthed several places in the R&D value chain that could be streamlined with informatics. But in our first few years, we grew organically. We maintained a positive cash flow by licensing bioinformatics and enterprise software solutions like laboratory information management systems (LIMS) and by providing bioinformatics training. We managed to create a real viable business and thrived.

However, life science is different when a lab comes into play. Interactions with government officials are not easy to navigate and one needs to learn those ropes. Coming from an idealist viewpoint, this is the hardest part to accept. But one finds

solutions as one moves on.

From being a bioinformatics company towards being the lab-next-door, we went through a phase of acquisitions and fund raises, which was fun in an entirely new space. It was a quest to create a Research as a Service or RaaS as I coined it in 2007. This is now becoming our identity.

We looked beyond our means to acquire through creative means and then over the next few years did three acquisitions and two rounds of private equity raises. When the financial crisis hit upon the world, our plans had to change. We went through a roller coaster period in 2012, when we had to divest our US labs. But such is reality for an entrepreneur and lessons are learnt.

So as Ocimum started to get back to its initial glory days, I began to focus my energy on this new company called Mapmygenome and in 2013 we launched our "Genomepatri", a product that had tickled a lot of Indian minds worldwide. I knew this was a good start and we started offering the service to consumers across India.

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