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it's my biz

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AT 29 years, Sandeep Maheshwari's life reads like a fairy tale in which a college dropout from a middle-class background faces countless adversities to become one of the most well-known entrepreneurs of India.

Not surprisingly, India's leading business weekly, Businessworld, recently adjudged Sandeep as one of India's Most Promising Entrepreneurs. On the surface, Sandeep Maheshwari might appear plain lucky to have started the right business at the right time. But like all success stories, there's a lot more to Sandeep's success story than just plain luck.

Before the success of Mash Audio Visuals Pvt. Ltd. (of which ImagesBazaar and ShotIndia are a part), he had tried his hand at six businesses, but in vain. At the age of 21, he had authored a book on marketing. But when no publisher was ready to take it on, he published it himself. Out of the first print run of 1,000 copies, barely a hundred were sold. The book might have failed but look carefully and you will see that's a very special book. Unlike most books, the pages need to be turned left to right rather than right to left. If you are wondering why, you just need to read the first page that asks, "If you can't even change the way you read, how can you change the way you think?"

Sandeep's attempts at creating something unique did not end there. At 23, he created a world record in photography by taking more than 10,000 shots of 122 models in just 10 hours and 45 minutes.

SOURCE OF IDEA

As a photographer, Sandeep would regularly get queries from advertising agencies who wanted to use his pictures for their campaigns rather than shooting fresh images. That's when he thought of creating a website with a stock of pictures that he had already shot.

Some research on the internet revealed that 'Stock Photography' was a well-established industry worldwide. However, he discovered that there was no stock photography agency providing creative images with Indian faces. This helped him firm his plans and work started in earnest in March 2005, and the website www.imagesbazaar.com was launched in February 2006.

IMAGESBAZAAR.COM

With over 700,000 images, ImagesBazaar.com today has the world's largest stock of Indian images where one can search, purchase and download as per need. The website has proved to be a great hit with small, medium and large businesses by providing them ready-to-use high-quality images for advertising, marketing and publishing. In short, it slashes down the cost on producing a shoot from lakhs of rupees to a few thousands and the time from weeks to a few minutes.

ADVANTAGE IMAGESBAZAAR.COM

According to many surveys, in visual communication, a product of service meant for a particular population has better chances of success if it carries a face that viewers can relate to. With India emerging as a leading market for an ever-increasing range of products, there has been a surge in demand for images that show an Indian face in an Indian setting. ImagesBazaar.com offers an immense advantage with its vast database of images that are reflective of India.

DIFFICULTIES FACED

But creating this website was no easy thing for Sandeep. As a photographer, he was well-versed with the artistic and creative side of his business but the real challenge lay in understanding and implementing the right kind of technology

for fully searchable e-commerce website.

Initially, many complained that the site took over a minute for a simple search query to display the results. With time and optimised technology, a search on ImagesBazaar.com today takes less than two seconds. In terms of speed of page loading and navigation too, this website has become one of the best in the world.

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Having established itself as an undisputed leader in the stock photography industry, Sandeep decided to launch another website, ShotIndia.com, under Mash Audio Visuals in September this year.

Unlike on ImagesBazaar.com where top photographers shoot the images, on ShotIndia.com anybody can upload pictures that they have taken and when one of their pictures is sold, they get 50 percent of the sales amount.

It might be just a few months old, but ShotIndia.com already has more than 3,000 registered members who upload thousands of images every day. Ever looking for new heights to reach, Sandeep has set a target of over two-million images on ShotIndia.com by the end of next year.

CLIENTELE

At present, over 6,000 customers in more than 42 countries are using images from ImagesBazaar.com and ShotIndia.com for advertising, marketing and publishing.

Delivery of images on both websites is completely online. For providing localized customer support, there is also an all-India Toll-Free number (1800-11-6869) and local numbers for Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hydertabad, Cochin, Kolkata and Ahmedabad. Sony, Microsoft, Realiance, Phillips, Airtel, ICICI, Apollo, HP, Toyota, Times of India, Yahoo, Emaar MGF, Jet Airways, TATA, Epson, HCL are among those who use the images regularly.

TESTIMONIALS

Rommel Mudra Rakshasa, National Creative Director of Interads Advertising Pvt. Ltd. says, "ImagesBazaar.com is a boon for India's advertising world, a world where speed is the essence and clients hardly give time to shoot relevant pictures."

In the words of Ramesh S., General Manager, R.K. Swamy BBDO, "ImagesBazaar.com has depth and breadth of expertise to offer a rich variety of Indian images whose look and feel are unparalleled. Above all, ImagesBazaar.com offers very competitive rates across various segments. This makes them affordable even to the small and medium level advertisers."

ImagesBazaar.com is much more than a stock photography website for thousands of creative people. As U. Dwijendra Acharya, Vice-President of Adsync puts it, "I can't help but think of ImagesBazaar.com as an extended arm of our company. Whenever I surf to source images from ImagesBazaar.com, there's a distinct gleam in my eyes. I confess that I am proud to be associated with this fascinating and offbeat website."

SANDEEP'S VISION

With both his websites a roaring success, Sandeep is still raring to create more, bigger and better. In his words, "We will take India to the world. In a few years, we will be behind every possible visual communication about India or Indians anywhere on the globe and that's going to be not just through our still images but also with videos, animations, illustrations and 3D graphics. In other words, the world will see India through our eyes."

"If you can't even change the way you read, how can you change the way you think?"



SANDEEP MAHESHWARI: CREATING AN IMAGE OF INDIA

AT PRESENT, OVER 6,000 CUSTOMERS IN MORE THAN 42 COUNTRIES ARE USING IMAGES FROM **IMAGESBAZAAR.COM** AND **SHOTINDIA.COM** FOR THEIR ADVERTISING, MARKETING AND PUBLISHING NEEDS. WITH OVER 700,000 IMAGES, IT IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST COLLECTION FOR SEARCHING, PURCHASING AND DOWNLOADING INDIAN IMAGES.