

THE ECONOMIC TIMES  
**YOUNG LEADERS**  
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# By the Grace of Guru

They've been with them through thick and thin, teaching them to stretch their limits and patiently shaping their work ethic. Young executives tell **Anumeha Chaturvedi** what their best mentors and bosses mean to them

## BAJAJ AUTO



**Abraham Joseph, 44** ⤴  
Chief Technology Officer

## See the Larger Picture

### The Mentor who Shaped the Path

I joined Bajaj Auto after graduating from the National Institute of Technology, Bhopal. **Rajiv Bajaj**, MD of Bajaj Auto, has been my boss for the past 21 years and has played a critical role in shaping my professional life

### How He Helped

In the initial years, he introduced the streamline manufacturing systems group, and picked me to be a part of that group. In 1998, he asked me to design a new product for the Indian roads, which was unlike the typical 100cc bikes which were prevalent at that time. This led to the launch of Pulsar, which, in its revamped avatars, continues

### Critical Attributes

He believes in team work, but expects each one of us to be a specialist. He feels that teams should not compromise on an individual's personality and it is this thinking that has led us to work as independent individuals who work in teams to create great products together. He also expects us to take a macro view and to look at things from a holistic perspective

**Best Advice From this Mentor**  
Be yourself and do what you believe in

**The Advice Being Applied Now**  
View people in an individual manner. Understand their mindsets, understand where they are coming from to create tailor-made products

⤴ **EMAMI** | **Rajiv Tibrewal, 41** | Director, Emami Biotech

## Innovate, and Never Stop Trying

### The Person who Shaped the Path

**JN Godbole**, ex-chairman of IDBI Bank. He was in charge of the eastern zonal office of IDBI when I worked under him. I got an opportunity to work under him for three years

### How He Helped

He taught me the ways of turning a debt-ridden company into a healthy, profit-making enterprise. He once handled a very complex debt restructuring proposal very intelligently, and guided me to prepare a complex but unique debt restructuring proposal. This gave me the opportunity to hone my skills in preparing financial restructuring plans. He also innovated a concept called ballooning of interest. Because of this, many companies could grow successfully

### Critical Attributes That Changed My Approach

First, I learnt to never go just with what appears on paper. Second, every problem has a solution. And third, if you take care of your colleagues and subordinates, they will take care of the organisation

**Best Advice From this Mentor**  
Always remain honest and loyal to your profession and the organisation

**Advice that is Coming in Handy**  
Keep trying. Success will follow

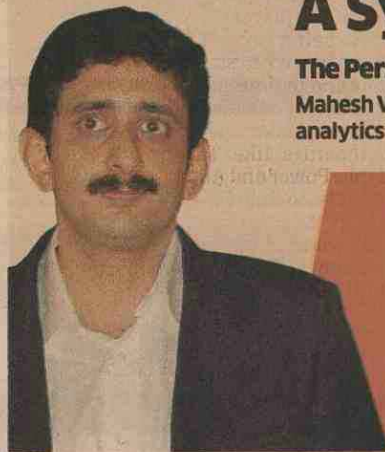


⤴ **COGNIZANT** | **R Rajesh Balaji, 37** | VP, Manufacturing & Logistics Practice

## A System Where it's Safe to Fail

### The Person who Shaped the Path

**Mahesh Venkateswaran**, now the MD of social, mobile, analytics and cloud at Cognizant



**Best Advice From this Mentor**  
The human mind can work wonders if you do not impede it with a command-and-control system of management

**Advice Being Applied**  
The key to encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset is to create an ecosystem that's not fail-safe, but one where it's safe to fail

### How He Helped

Once Mahesh identifies his team, he backs them to the hilt. He also gave me the opportunity to play different roles early on

### Critical Attributes

Given my nature to be process-oriented, working with Mahesh changed my approach. Mahesh would be with the team as a rock-solid support when things were not going too well

**VODAFONE**  
**Apoorva Mehrotra, 42**

Business Head, Karnataka, Vodafone India ⤴



## People at the Core

### Mentor who Shaped the Path

**Sunil Sood** - chief operating officer, Vodafone India

### How He Helped

Sunil always pushed us to focus on the basics by generating consumer insights, planning diligently and executing relentlessly. He taught us to focus on input parameters and not on outcomes. He exhorted us to run the business as if it was our own money being invested

### Critical Attributes

Sunil always pushes you to look at the big picture. His customer-centricity is exemplary. His approach to people management is uncomplicated as he trusts people, gives them complete operating freedom with a healthy oversight and regularly engages with them

**Best Advice From this Mentor**  
Do not sweat over small things. Work on consumer insights, plan well, execute relentlessly

**Advice Being Applied**  
Sunil has helped me keep in mind the impact of my decisions on customers, the business and my team

⤴ **RANBAXY** | **Lavesh Samtani, 39** | VP - Legal, Americas

## Move Beyond 'I' to 'We' Concerns

### The Mentor who Shaped the Path

**Sitaram Jindal**, chairman and MD of Jindal Aluminum. I worked closely with the Jindal group on certain transactions

### How He Helped

Being a businessman, the bottomline was important to him, but equally important was the manner in which he attained his goal. He took every decision by thinking about the people around him. As a result, I have developed a very loyal work ethic in all my professional endeavours

### Critical Attributes

Mr Jindal has three simple mottos: Be a good human; put yourself in the other person's shoes, and be aware that nature has a way of adjusting itself

**Best Advice From this Mentor**  
Stop thinking about yourself and think about everyone. The day I understood that my job is not about 'I', but about 'we', I realised a fundamental difference in the approach to my profession

