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Gen Next

Making of a sales guru

Vijay K Singh, chairman and managing director, VCI Hospitality, aims to take his company to great heights and, in the process, create a sales and marketing empire. By **Dinkar Farwaha**

An alumnus of Sainik School Tilaiya (Bihar), Singh pursued post graduation in tourism and travel from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. "I started my career with a British company and was based out of Delhi," he informs. Singh joined the company as a sales executive earning a salary of Rs. 3000. His perseverance and commitment paid huge dividends to both the company and himself. The company, boosted by Singh's innovative ideas, witnessed phenomenal growth in the sales department. Singh rose from the ranks and within four years, became the vice president (sales and marketing) of the company. Working for the company, Singh was amazed by the absence of an established Indian sales and marketing hospitality company. He wondered why there wasn't any Indian player at a time when the industry was booming and there were numerous recognised international sales and marketing companies like Preferred Hotels, WorldHotels and the Leading Hotels of the World. The ambition to establish a pioneering sales and marketing hospitality company in India led to the formation of VCI Hospitality with Singh as its chairman and managing director.



Journey of VCI

"Since inception, we have consistently been providing all the sales and marketing support required by our customers (hotels, clubs, timeshare, spas and golf resorts) and have not only augmented their sales and marketing, but also ensured their overall profitability," informs Singh. He adds that in just nine years of operations, the company has recorded a blistering growth rate in terms of turnover guaranteed to hotels.

The company, today, has more than 18 sales and marketing offices across India and an office each in London, Dubai and Shanghai. It handles more than 2,200 room inventories in the luxury and upscale segment in the country and plans to reach the 6,000 mark pan-India within the next couple of years. VCI plans to invest around Rs 60 crore in sales and marketing over the next two to three years. The company witnessed a growth of more than 75 per cent last year and generated revenues for its clients of Rs 400 crores during the last financial year (April 2007-March 08). VCI Hospitality has been achieving an annual revenue growth for clients

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of more than 50 per cent for the past three years. It is hopeful of touching the Rs 700 crore mark this fiscal year (2008-09). As far as its long term plan is concerned, according to Singh the company wishes to be a leader in the hospitality marketing domain and achieve a 5000 room inventory in the luxury segment by 2011.

The company has also launched its new hospitality brand, 'Indus Hotels and Spa'. The group's first property under this brand is in Jalandhar. The company has an equity stake in the property and is also managing and marketing the property. "We are looking at other emerging cities like Ludhiana, Amritsar and Kumarakom to extend the presence of Indus Hotels and Spa brand beyond Jalandhar," informs Singh.

The company meanwhile is also set to foray into travel industry. The group is launching a new travel company, World Destination Travel, which will cater to high-end travellers. "Driven by the phenomenal growth of inbound and outbound (both leisure and corporate) tourism, we have decided to launch a new travel company that will cater to all the needs of the high end traveller," says Singh. He adds, "We will be foraying into various segments of travel, like business travel, leisure travel, inbound, outbound, meetings and incentives, residential conferences, and concierge services." For the outbound market, the group is targeting south-east Asia and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and will employ its own staff. The company is planning to launch its high-end travel company in the first quarter of 2009.

The hidden mantra

So how has this phenomenal growth been achieved in such a short span of time? Singh explains, "We have adopted aggressive sales and marketing tactics, have rapidly expanded our distribution network, anticipated market needs and provided the right solutions at the right time. These factors have led to the consistent growth of our partners and also our company."

It is fair to say that Singh, who feels that his most defining trait is 'risk-taking', is well on his way to create a sales and marketing empire. Singh attributes his success to his ever-supporting wife. "Being a part of an industry which requires attention 24 hours, I travel extensively throughout the year and at times it becomes difficult to balance career and family. Thankfully, I have the most supportive wife in the world," he says, adding, "She has been a guiding force in the growth of VCI Hospitality."

Singh, whose motto in life, is to work diligently hard and enjoy life with maximum luxury, feels that the secret of his success is also his "capability to anticipate business opportunities and achieve it through team work and continuous motivation." Of all the famous people that he has met, Singh feels that Sunil Mittal (chairman, Bharti Group) has really stood out. Besides managing business, his other interests revolve around the fashion and film spheres. Ask him where he finds himself ten years down the line, he says "Hopefully being chairman of the company which will be the global market leader in the sales and marketing sector of the hospitality industry."

