
Financial Express

To tell a business tale

*It was time to tell others of his ilk on how he met with success, and also to the many eager ones who dream to follow his path. **Subroto Bagchi**, co-founder and COO, MindTree Consulting and columnist, decided to do just that with his first book, *The High Performance Entrepreneur*, on what it takes to be a successful one. Incidentally, the book kick-started Penguin India's newest imprint, Portfolio, named after Penguin US imprint of the same name, dedicated to publishing business books. He spoke with **Sulekha Nair** on his new startup. Excerpts from the interview.*

Why did it take you so long to write a book?

I never thought of writing one. I was very happy writing columns for newspapers. I have a full time job as well. Though I must admit that a lot of people asked me when I was writing a book. Writing a column is like flirting and I do literary flirting through my columns. It is a different way of communication and deals with just a subject in a word limit of 750. A book is intense. It's like having a baby. Last year, Penguin approached me to write a book on my experiences as an entrepreneur. Looking around, I found many books on the subject by academicians. There are management books on entrepreneurship and self help. Books have been written on successful entrepreneurs. But I realised there were no books in India written by an entrepreneur himself on a successful start up. I decided to do just that.

What formed the kernel for your writing, besides your experiences?

I came across this interesting statistic that was shocking and provoking enough to prod me in the right direction. Of the about 6.5 billion people in the world, a third live in India and China. In the Indian subcontinent alone, there are 450 million children below the age of 15 who will join the workforce soon. In the next 5-6 years, these children will seek to join the job stream. Nowhere in the world can a government or large businesses by themselves create avenues for employment and growth for these people, leaving this challenge to new entrepreneurs. In India, there is a dearth of entrepreneurship.

Was writing a full length book different from writing a fixed length column?

My idea was not to present my story dryly. I wanted it to read like fiction, lacing it with poetry, a sensitivity that strikes a chord in the reader. I had to merge two rivulets—of writing what worked for me and asking my reader to go try it, and to be a coach. I decided to write it in first person, in a conversational style and merge the rivulets. I was clear that I would write about what I had learnt and not about what I know. So, I have introduced the subject, told a tale, suggested a line of thinking, sometimes coached the reader and summed it up by letting the reader do his own thinking instead of providing a conclusion of my own.

What should a person bear in mind before launching a company of his own?

I think ideation is very crucial. We have shot a film on the topic, which I intend to show at educational institutions. You must have the right reasons to start a company, you have to get an inner call. I have written a chapter on the wrong reasons to start one. Another important chapter is on Emergence and the Willingness to Change. There is a need to be perceptive about the process of unfolding and embracing the inevitable. However, the trick is not be overawed by the changes around.

The critics may be lying in wait. What do you think will be their reaction?

(Laughs) I am like a bird. I have been sent here to sing. I shall sing, irrespective of whether there are listeners or not.
