



Sanjay Mehta

Sanjay Mehta
CEO, MAIA Intelligence

The Journey: Early days to how I got here

I have been in the IT industry since 1993 with more than 18 years of experience. Initially, I ran a bespoke software solutions company called Global ware in early 90's. I also had an experience of running a dot com company for a very brief stint from 1999-2000 which dot.com business busted. Then, I founded Udyog Software India Ltd. which became the largest selling excise software company and 2ndlargest brand in India in Packaged Software (D&B 2007). I exited this venture when a US based company wanted to enter in India markets. I also had an investment in ERP Services Company where I exited with average returns in 2007.

My experience includes create successful start-ups and creating software brands and marketing them. I have knowledge of Indian software product market and specliazed domains like Manufacturing, Retail & Distribution.

Since2006 I am the CEO & founder of MAIA Intelligence, an enterprise application software product company with less than 50 technocrats and mission to democratize BI.

Also currently I am secretary for ISB (Indian School of Business) CEE Alumni Mumbai Chapter and secretary of IAMCP (International Association of Microsoft Certified Partners) for India Chapter. I am NASSCOM Regional Council Member for West. I am also a member of IT Committee at Indian Merchant Chambers (IMC) and Indian Angel Network (IAN).

Decisions that mattered

American scientist Carl Sagan once said, knowing a great deal is not the same as being smart. Intelligence is not information alone, but also judgment, the manner in which information is collected and used. This holds as good for companies as it holds good for individuals. Companies are accumulating information all the time, sometimes much more than they can manage. The collective corporate memory of all such information can be mind boggling and companies may struggle, and eventually fail, to effectively use it for decision making.

The start-up we were part of had taken decisive growth steps, implementing ERP software. The customers were happy with the product, but often found that an ERP implementation alone would not suffice to meet their information needs. The seed for the idea had been sown at a business meeting with officials of Parker Hannifin Corporation, which had bought the ERP product from Udyog Software, my earlier start-up. Having a catalogue of over 12 lakh products, they wanted to know what was moving and what was not.

The Turning Points

Being an entrepreneur, I like identifying the addressable market space, building a team and nurturing a team to deliver and build value for the clients. Often I offer a consultative solution to the customer. My efforts and laser beam focus has so far helped me defeat bigger and highly funded competitors in diverse business. My two most precious assets are: time and money. My secret weapon is know how to cut through bureaucracy.

Like any other start-up, we too faced initial challenges. It was very difficult to convince a venture capitalist and to find an angel investor who would just let you do your job.

Another challenge we faced was finding the right people. It is very tough to find the right kind of people and it is tougher to keep them on board. Setting up was not that easy. The same rule applies to finding the right place and environment within the budget to start the operations, ensure daily cash flow, among other things. Finding the first customer and generating demand for our software product was also a big challenge. However, we won our first customer and till date they are using our product.

Work and Role: Then and Now

After we had set up this ERP product, we found the challenges of creating lots of report. People were putting in data and were saying that they weren't getting enough back. The Udyog team added a reporting tool to the business software as a plug-in and found the users liked it. Customers soon started asking for reporting features in specialized business software such as customer relationship management and human resource application.

After having tasted initial success, each day that goes makes it easier for us to reach our goals. Being recognized as a significant player in the BI space by the industry, media and customers is our biggest achievement.

Two Years Down the Line

Going forward BI space shall definitely is going to mature and open up. BI will meet the demands of tomorrow's digital natives; integrate seamlessly with cloud data and platforms; align people, conversations, and data with business strategy; and make the most of the infrastructures we have today.

- Simple: the right interfaces for the right people at the right time
- Seamless: tightly integrated with data sources, applications, and business processes
- Social: allow people to collaborate around analyzing information and making decisions
- Strategic: closing the loop between strategy to execution

On-demands BI, embedded BI, etc. would be the future roadmap.

Changing Days: Lessons Learnt

Following are few of the lessons I have learnt across in my professional life.

One has to go where the other guys haven't. Take advantage of what you have so that you can beat the competition with what they don't. Many believe that great ideas and lots of energy will always triumph, so they waste countless dollars and years fighting the bad guys on their own turf. Well that is not the case many a times.

In any industry, you'll discover is that the people with power are those who either do the buying or make lots of sales. Follow the money! The money leads to power—the power to make decisions, the power to build the business you want to build, the power to hire and fire and shape and dream and succeed.

What I learnt along the way

Following are few of the things which sometimes keep us awake at night: In spite of the rapid growth of the company, there is always a big question mark on “How Do We Make It Big?” There are several factors that as a start-up, we had to work upon, to keep everything in the air – marketing, fund raising, product development, team building & so on....

My startup feels like a juggling act. How do we keep everything in the air —product development, fundraising, marketing, developing a team, keeping the coffee cups clean... Every day we just hope that when we do inevitably drop something that it isn't the chainsaw.

We need to be an execution machine! All great problems to have! It keeps me on my toes.

Trends to Watch Out For

Quite a few trends like self-serve, real-time analytics, on the go enhanced data visualization, and BI through mobile are shaping up in BI space. All types of critical decisions – buying, selling, monitoring, optimizing decisions – are being made on the fly. This kind of “on your tips” decision-making, where the decision-maker gets access to a flashy dashboard or a tabular report on a mobile device and is able to make game-changing decisions, is increasingly becoming a major trend in BI space.

BI is no longer nice to have application. It has become a must have tool. The most important driver for BI purchase we have come across is “improved decision making”. BI capabilities have evolved BI from an information delivery system to a decision platform and that is what has increased the value of BI and driven its growth.

Advanced analytics will be another trend that will play a key enabler in turning data into insight and this will accelerate as organizations strive to move from running BI point solutions to being a comprehensive analytics competitor.

My Advice If You are Starting Out

Do what you are passionate about, with required skills and experience. At the same time the business plan should be able to derive big opportunity for revenue. Starting a new business is one of the most exciting things that you will experience in your life. It is also one the best decisions that you are ever going to make. Also, constantly look for mentorship from a senior industry veteran who can help sharpen your vision further.

Trends to Watch Out For

A lot is happening in BI front-end space beyond conventional drill down, slice-dice. We have already started exploring the Web 2.0 based technology wave of RIA (Rich Internet Applications) based BI. This kind of intuitive GUI was never

experienced before by business users.

BI on Rich Internet Application technology is evolving. MAIA's 1KEY Touch interactive dashboards will change the BI landscape. It allows data to be presented in a dynamic manner without the need of any programming.

Organizations are now demanding quicker BI solutions, leading to an increase in the packaged analytic solutions implementation. Also embedding of business intelligence (BI) software in user's transaction applications is much easier now.

Mobility will be an important trend in the BI space. It is expected that business ownership will increase with growth of mobility in the BI space. The tool also has capability to send the report figures through SMS gateway

Books/ Websites I Recommend

Business Intelligence Blog - <http://blog.maia-intelligence.com> which has now become the hub for most comprehensive compilation of enterprise level corporate IT content, including information on emerging BI software trends, CIO community, events and knowledge, Challenges, vendor commentary, compliance considerations and other areas of interest to both global and Indian companies, technology professionals and industry constituents.

Last But Not Least

BI professionals must understand and address critical challenges to manage the work flow smartly in a BI environment. BI project has to be recognized as cross-organizational business initiative, and to understand that as such they differ from typical standalone solutions. Business sponsors need to be engaged who enjoy required authority in the enterprise. There should be availability or willingness of business representatives for a BI. Skilled staff needs to be made available for BI project implementation (ETL, data warehousing, etc.) and management. The project should follow a breakdown structure and a methodology. Business requirements should be analyzed and business activities to be standardized. Dirty data should be tackled before being ready for BI as it may drastically impact business profitability. The necessity for and the use of meta-data should be understood well.

http://bi.siliconindia.com/profiles/Sanjay_Mehta-pid-67.html