

# The oracle man

Satnam Brar even worked on his wedding night on his way building a £10 million fortune in recruitment



**H**ard work'. 'Work hard'. That's all he heard and saw since childhood. Little wonder then that Satnam Brar himself drew immense inspiration from these words and made them the mantra of his life. The results are there for all to see.

At 33, he is the Managing director of Maximus, a £10 million ERP recruitment specialist company. The youngster has created a stir in the highly competitive recruitment business industry and has carved a niche for himself with Oracle providing complete resourcing solutions for Oracle and SAP across Europe.

The youngest of three children of immigrants from Punjab, Satnam does not tire of saying how his father came to London with £3 in his pocket. He started work the next day and had no time for a break or holiday since then. So much so that he even worked a shift the night he got married.

Satnam grew up seeing his mother juggling a job, bringing up the three kids and running a home and his father working hard. That image and the hard work put in by them stuck on his mind. With time, his father had saved up enough to buy a shop and then another. As a lad he remembers helping his father out in the shop. "I used to stand on a milk crate to reach the till. That was how my learning began." Backed by the hard work and some timely investments, his father gradually did well in his business and also built up a property portfolio.

In such an atmosphere, education and self-advancement were natural corollaries. Armed with a Post-Graduate degree in Management Studies from Kingston University, Satnam was

out looking for a job in 1996. "I came out of university with absolutely no idea of what to do next," he says.

## Turning Point

"My sister saw this advertisement about vacancies in a recruitment agency. I applied and cleared the two-stage interview and before I knew it had the job." This proved to be the proverbial turning point.

And also a good learning experience. "I learnt how the industry works, picked up the ropes quickly from my seniors and soon succeeded in turning the department around."

Satnam understood the need to specialise quite early. He zeroed in upon IT as the growth sector of the future and with this in mind moved over to an IT recruitment company as Account Manager. Satnam quit

The front room of his house was converted into an office and he was all set. And then 9/11 happened. The markets collapsed. Demand for IT professionals fell and there I was thinking was I doing the right thing."

Fortunately he did not give up quickly. Soon the market picked up and he was in business. He trained his first batch at the start of 2002 and in six months Maximus opened its office in Stockley Park, London.

The end of the first year saw a turnover of £150,000. "When I quit my last job, my annual salary was more than that," he recalls. But the motivation to be the best kept him going and Year 4 saw a turnover of £4.5 million and Year 5 bettered it to £5.2 million.

Maximus is now an Oracle Network Partner and in February this year announced its new Construction division. "My aim is to

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five years later as Regional Director. "The scope here was tremendous and I chose to specialise in Oracle."

That was the first step towards a brilliant stint. Working with a team of about 25-30 people he was soon responsible for bringing in business worth three to four million pounds. During his time there the company did well. As he moved up the ranks he also became the highest fee earner for the company. "The achievement was all the more great as I was the only Indian," he says with a sense of pride.

"When I decided to quit I wanted to leave on a wave of success. I personally generated business worth £78,000 in a single month and quit in May 2001," he recalls.

## Setting up shop

Somewhere along the line, he had had the foresight to incorporate Maximus. "My father would from time to time gently mention that I should think about starting on my own." The year 2001 saw him quit, get married, holiday and then get ready to launch his business.

set up three or four specialist divisions which can quickly establish a strong presence and reputation."

Satnam also realised the need to have a proper management structure in place. So last year Maximus bought a spacious office premises in the City and now has a staff strength of 13. "In the years to come I see this growing up to 22 or 23," says Satnam.

The success – Sunday Times has listed Maximus as among the 100 Fast Track companies – sits on his shoulders lightly. Deservedly, he is proud of his achievements.

Where does he see himself in the next 10 years? "I want to retire by 40. By then the company would have heads for its various divisions – I plan to nurture in-house talent to encourage movement – and should be running well," say Satnam with his customary confidence.

There is time for one last question. What if his first job had not been in recruitment? He smiles and, not fearing to tempt fate, quotes Mohammad Ali, "I would have been the best in whatever I had done." ●