

### Get Inspired With The 17 Year Old CEO...

*His passion for the Internet has made him CEO of a web solutions and networking company at the age of 17. Suhas Gopinath today runs offices across 11 countries!*

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At a seminar on 'Education System in India' at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, last year, a boy dressed in casuals stepped out of his car and entered the gate. He is stopped by the security personnel: "This event is only for CEOs, you are a college boy." The boy smiled, picked up his cellphone and soon a whole swarm of organisers arrived at the entrance to usher him in.

But then we really can't blame the security. Even the wisest of men probably won't guess that the 17-year-old Suhas Gopinath can be the CEO and President of a Bangalore-based IT solutions company, Globals Inc. Suhas had actually been invited as one of the speakers at the seminar...

"Because of my age and looks, I often land in embarrassing situations and do not know how to handle the confusion," says a candid Suhas, who is currently juggling his corporate life with a BE in Information Science at the M.S. Ramaiah Institute of Information Technology. He owns a car, bought out of his earnings, but doesn't have a license to drive it around the city as he is too young to get a license! As a CEO, he wraps up mega deals, but cannot sign on the dotted line as legally he is not yet an adult.

His is a story of a pastime turning into obsession. As a student at Air Force School in Mathikere, he frequented a cyber cafe near his home. "I was overwhelmed by the world of Internet. It became a passion. Though my parents were completely against it, I would spend hours before the computer. My elder brother Shreyas encouraged a lot. I learnt HTML, ASP and every possible software at the cyber cafe," recalls Gopinath.

On May 14, 2000, along with friends Clifford Leslie and Vinay M.N, he floated his own website-www.coolhindustani.com. "I did not have the money to start. My parents refused to give me a penny, saying it was not worth it. So I wrote to Network Solutions Inc in the US and they readily agreed," he says.

Suhas, really had 'IT' in him. In August, the same year, he set up Globals Inc, a web solutions and networking company, with a team of four. Now, he has 350 employees, offices in 11 countries, and a turnover of \$1 million this year.

"Initially we offered the services for free. As most of us were studying and were very young to actually run the company, many clients were not keen on us. But after seeing the work we delivered, they were impressed. Lot of them in fact still are very encouraging," he smiles.

At the Bangalore office, there are more than 15 full-time software engineers today. How does he deal with employees elder to him by many years? "Most of the people who work with me are between the age group of 17-19 yrs. I treat them as friends first, than act like a boss. So the job becomes much more easier," adds Gopinath.

But it's a stressful life, he admits. "As I got more interested in the company, my studies went for a toss. In my Class X exams I scored 80 per cent, but in I PUC could barely get 65 per cent. Even here I try and not bunk too many classes, but clients cannot be given lame excuses. When I have exams, I tell them I am unwell..." he is candid.

Success comes with a price and Suhas has understood the importance of it. "At times, I repent that I am not a normal boy, enjoying a teenager's carefree life. Most of the time I am forced to wear blazers and I am always nervous-about work or studies," he says.

While most others of his age are rolling balls down a bowling alley, he is charting the road map for his company. "We are planning to start management consultancy in the industry sector as well. There are plans to expand our services to non-IT areas by next year," explains Suhas.

But ask him what's his message for to-be entrepreneurs and he's cautious. "I don't think I am mature enough advise others, but if you have it in you, go for it. One should also make time to enjoy other things in life. With work, you get too busy to even repent," he adds.