

The passion perks!

People spend time trying to figure out what can make them successful. They look at education, intelligence, credentials and other factors. But, ultimately what brings difference, more than anything else, is passion. Look at effective leaders; they don't fit into any stereotype mould. Being ordinary they achieve great things – all because of their passion. Nothing can replace it in a leader's life...

"When you set yourself on fire, people love to come and see you burn."

- John Wesley

Sanjeev Baitmangalkar

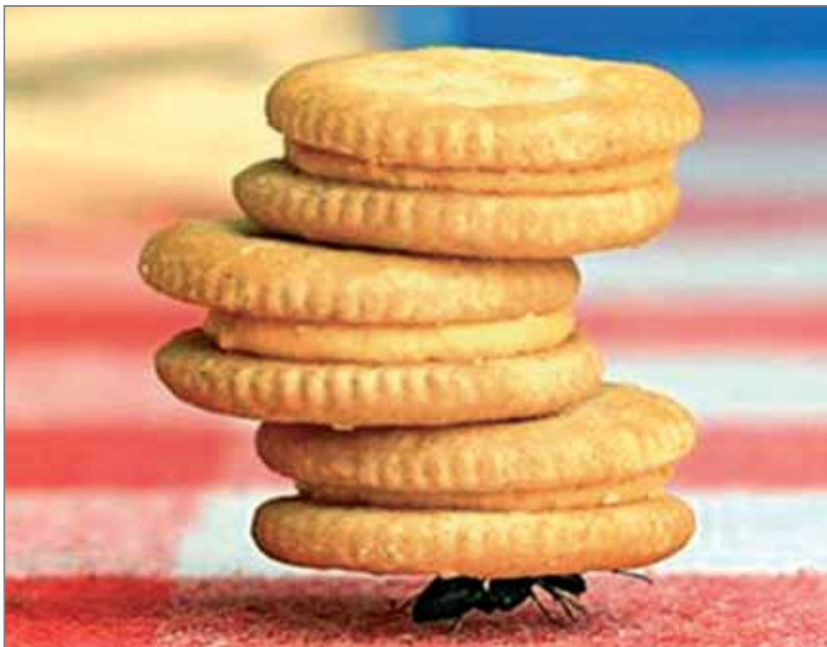
Ever since his childhood, Amit Shah has been full of intellectual mischief and inquisitiveness bound by limitless curiosity. Even as a young child, he wouldn't rest until he had experiment with every toy to its bare components and studied them, be it a hooter or a train. To many he appeared to be an over excited and destructive child. His restlessness was an enthusiastic

curiosity and inquisitiveness fuelled by feverish passion and not mindless destruction.

Initial stages

When he was just ten years old, his parents hosted a Swiss family on their visit to India. They had brought toys for their child to play while their stay in India. One of those toys attracted Amit's attention. The toy set was made of several plastic parts that could be press fitted together to form various shapes. It was neither a Mechano set nor a Lego. It was bigger and different. After studying every piece in the toy set, Amit produced something that was neither in the toy manual nor had been made before – he built a big bus out of it and moved it with electric power! Perhaps it was the first indication of his passion for engineering.

This little genius was a bright student from his young days. However, freedom of thoughts was very important for him. So, if you would have asked him what he wanted to do after his junior college, he might have said, "I want to stay in a hostel." He was not stupid to say that, but his independent thinking mind simply wanted to explore the limitless possibilities of his own potential in the whole world. Being competitive, he easily secured a merit seat at the Engineering





engineering, Amit joined this factory, which was run by his brother and thus embarked on building his professional career. For six years he worked there, his hands-on attitude had developed his competencies all round and he was ready for greater responsibilities. His father then asked him to reopen the factory outside Mumbai and build it all over again.

The initial thought in the group was to duplicate the products they manufactured in the Gujarat factory. But Amit had different ideas, a vision for his own product line. He wanted

to develop a different set of products that would compliment products they manufactured in Gujarat. Thinking ahead, he designed and developed actuators that were ahead of their time in technology. He was excited and passionate about the possibilities that lay ahead. When the

College at Manipal. He excelled in academics and four years later passed out of Mysore University securing the first rank and a percentile above ninety.

He was also good at co-curricular activities. An avid outdoorsman, as a member of Maharashtra Trekkers, he has climbed the Sahyadri Mountains. He was not satisfied until he had done the impossible and achieved what most would not have even attempted for. He enjoyed doing things that he liked. And that pretty much sums up Amit even today. Driven by speed, he is someone who wants to get tomorrow done yesterday. As Dale Carnegie writes, 'You never achieve success unless you like what you are doing.'

Determined moves

Amit's father ran a textile engineering and manufacturing business in the suburbs of Mumbai. During the days of labour unrest and union instigated problems, he had to close the business and move to open a new factory in Gujarat. After the completing his



Amit Shah at his work place

Few tips to increase your passion

If passion is not a quality in your life, your leadership is in trouble. The honest truth is that you can't lead something you are not passionate about. You can't start a fire in your organisation unless you are its first ember. Consider a few tips to increase your passion:

- **Measure:** Record your passion temperature. Are you passionate about your life and work? Does it show? Ask your spouse, colleagues and co-workers for an opinion. You will not become passionate until you believe that passion is the difference maker in your life.
- **Homecoming:** Return to your first love. Don't allow life and its circumstances to get you off track. Look back in your career – even as a child – what really turned your crank? What could you spend hours doing? Recapture that enthusiasm. Then evaluate your life and career in light of those old loves.
- **Association:** Associate yourself with the people of passion. If you have lost your passion, flock with the firefighters. Passion is contagious. Get around those people who can infect you with it.

people involved with marketing told him that his products could not be sold, he worked with zeal and drive to redesign his products. He had to redesign all the tooling as well. In two months he had all new actuators ready for the market. Amit made new catalogues and set out to conquer the market. His initial steps yielded results and reinforced his faith and belief in what he was doing. In a short period of time he succeeded in developing positive response for his products.

Handing over the job of selling to the marketing guys, Amit turned his attention to the export market. He had great expectations from the launch of his products at the international exhibition in Europe. He packed his bags along with Leena and Bhowmick (his colleagues), who accompanied him to man the stall. Hoards of people tramped in his stall, giving his products a fantastic response. However, the best was yet to come.

One morning, an American walked in and discussed the prices. He asked Amit how much discount he would get if he gave an order for 5,000 actuators. Amit was happily surprised. The order was like his one-year's production at that time. He must have been beaming when he said, "Ten per cent."



After discussing for a while the customer said, "Meet me at the cafeteria after the show at 6 pm, and I want some beer and sandwich." Amit quipped, "Fine, will do." Sure enough Amit with his colleagues was there before time. After the initial banter, the American told Amit, "I am neither a customer nor do I have anything to do with buying actuators, but I have spent 30 years selling them and I have come to tell you this, that, at the prices you are quoting nobody will buy them as they are available for half the price in Japan and Europe."

"There is no greatness without a passion to be great, whether it's the aspiration of an athlete or an artist, a scientist, a parent, or a businessperson," writes Anthony Robbins. All the beer instantly drained out and Amit did not know what to say. For price he had built up on marginalised costing, he could not comprehend a 50 per cent price reduction, which would have yet not been good enough. But this is when the possibility thinkers rise to meet the challenge. Amit asked the American to give him the samples from the European

and Japanese manufacturers, packed his bags and headed home with the samples. It was almost like Lord Tennyson's 'charge of the light brigade'. He had competitors everywhere. But, he had to do it anyhow. The goal on the price was now set.

Efficient efforts

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, 'Enthusiasm is one of the most powerful engines of success. When you do a thing, do it with all your might. Put your whole soul into it. Stamp it with your own personality. Be active, be energetic and faithful, and you will accomplish your object. Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.' To add, nothing great has ever been achieved without great passion behind that enthusiasm. Charged with expectation, faith and belief, Amit poured all his passion into his work and completely re-engineered his products. His commitment would not let him stop until he had produced designs that could sell at prices 60 per cent below his earlier ones and compete with the best in the market. Only a possibility thinker would take up such challenge, stay the course, walk the distance and not stop until his goal is reached. 'Anyone can dabble, but once you've made that commitment, your blood has that particular thing in it, and it's very hard for people to stop you,' said Field Marshall Ferdinand Foch.

Amit was very passionate about being involved in all technical aspects and solving problems. He would not rest until he would have understood the finer nuances of the equipment. To understand the equipment, he would even be involved in breakdown repairs. He purchased machinery equipped with better technology like CNC lathe, & vertical machining centre. He once had to resolve the problem with a programmable turret on his CNC lathe. True to his nature, he let the Turret open, cleaned it up, and changed the worn out seals. Ravi who was servicing Amit as customer, was surprised with his progress. He abruptly

said, "Amit, you will spoil the accuracy of the turret." And Amit quipped, "The accuracy comes from the curvic coupling and not the seals." It was Amit's deep involvement which, never allowed him to accept a clerical solution to a technical problem. Without passion, man is a mere latent force and possibility, like the flint, which awaits the shock of the iron before it can give forth its spark.

A strong believer of the saying – 'quality of thinking in the human mind determines your success', Amit did not hesitate to challenge potential leaders. He very fondly narrated the case when Aruna a commerce post graduate, working in his accounts department, asked him one day, "Sir, what else can I do in this factory?"

"I can give you some other work, but once you accept that, there will be no going back. Which means the door of accounts is permanently closed for you," Amit told.

Aruna, ready for the challenge, said, "Yes sir, I accept." Amit said, "Alright



At the assembly station

then, I will put you in charge of our automation business. Do you think you can handle that?" Aruna replied confidently, "Yes sir, I will."

She had been doing a great job since, learning the technical and sourcing aspects of the products and answering the customers. There are those who come to work and those who enjoy their work; perhaps she belonged to the latter class. Unless the person loves his work, he cannot be successful. Daring to take charge of a technically oriented responsibility shows leadership quality. And it shows Amit's willingness to recognise potential, delegate responsibility and build leaders.

Learning lessons

Few things that you can learn about passion from this story are:

First step: Passion is your first step towards achievement. Your desire determines your destiny. Anyone who lives beyond ordinary lives has great desire. Think of great leaders and you will be struck by their passion – Gandhi for his human rights, Martin Luther King Jr for equality, Churchill for freedom and Bill Gates for technology. Just as small fire creates little heat, weak desire brings weak results. Great desire brings in greater potential.

Willpower: Passion increases your will power. This can be best explained with a story. Once a dispassionate man approached Socrates and said, "I have come to you for knowledge." The philosopher looked at him once and took him down to the sea, waded in with him and dunked him under the water for half a minute. Allowing him to come out of the water he asked, "What do you want?" "Knowledge, O great one," the man replied. Socrates immediately dunked him under water again, this time longer. This went on. After repeated dunking and responses Socrates asked, "What do you want?" The man finally gasped, "Air, O noble one, I want air." "Good!" Socrates said, "Now when you want knowledge as much as you want air, you shall have it." There is no substitute to passion. It



fuels the will. If you need something badly enough you can find the willpower to achieve it. And developing passion is the only way to have that kind of desire.

Change: Passion changes you. Follow your passion rather than others' perceptions; you will become more productive and dedicated person. This will increase your ability to impact others. In the end, your passion will have more influence than your personality, just as you remember Gandhi for his passion and not personality.

Make the impossible possible: Passion makes the impossible possible. In humans beings, whenever anything fires the soul, impossibilities vanish. A fire in the heart lifts everything in life. That's the secret behind the effectiveness of passionate leaders. Remember that a leader with great passion and few skills always outperforms a leader with great skills and no passion.

As Denis Waitley said, 'Chase your passion, not your pension.' **MMT**



Sanjeev Baitmangalkar is the CEO of Stratmann Consulting. He has an expertise in lean manufacturing, BPR & turnarounds, supply chain management, industrial marketing, machine tools and product development. He imparts training in areas of finance and leadership, is working with overseas and Indian clients. He can be contacted at stratmannconsulting@gmail.com