

While trading bandwidth during the IT boom, OCIMUM BIOSOLUTIONS' CEO ANURADHA ACHARYA realised that her heart really was in starting off on her own



GEETANJALI

IT MANTRA FOR BIOTECH RESEARCH

SHE IS THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF ONE OF THE FIRST INDIAN companies to offer IT solutions for biotechnology research. And she does not have a degree in biotechnology. Ms Anuradha Acharya, the young and dynamic head of Ocimum Biosolutions, now in her mid thirties, had migrated from pure physics to biotech and IT.

After completing her engineering from IIT Kharagpur, Ms Acharya went to US to do her masters in physics from the University of Illinois. She worked with IT major Infosys and then moved on to work with Mantis Telecom.

While trading bandwidth during the IT boom and working as an IT consultant in the US, she realised that her heart really was in starting off on her own. She wanted to do something more challenging and more novel.

The inspiration to start a business in this field came from her biotechnologist friend in the US. Her friend was finding it difficult to get technology support for her work, and Ms Acharya decided that was the area she would focus on.

With support from her husband and some funding from friends and family, she founded a bio-solutions IT company in 2000. In a year's time Ocimum was on a roll, providing some of the best software in the industry for Laboratory Information management Systems (LIMS) and bio-informatics. Its two blockbuster products—Genchek and Biotracker—made Ocimum Bio a landmark company in this segment.

When sourcing proved to be a problem for their bio-informatics, Anuradha and her team ventured into a tie up with Michigan Tech in the US. Indian companies are yet to make a mark in biotech, and competition is tough. Nevertheless, Ocimum has found clients among some of the big names in the global pharma and biotech industry. The company also has a development partnership with Apple.

Riding high on its success of technology partnership with Microsoft recently, Ms Acharya is enthused to expand her business even further. She expects Ocimum to provide end-to-end solutions, including dry and wet biology support services to scientists and biotech companies across the globe.

"There is a gradual shift in the market from servicing scientific researchers and academicians to offering solutions to some big-ticket pharma players and we are constantly developing capacity and capability in this direction," Ms Acharya said.

GUNJAN PRADHAN SINHA & NISHITA SAXENA IN HYDERABAD

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