

FORCENET

E-ZINE

Magazine for military veterans in the corporate
June 2023, Volume V, Issue 06

Seek New

& Give
A Try

Learn
Something
New

Find Yourself

GO ON

Take a
PLUNGE

Get Fresh
Ideas

Try it Out

Explore

To New Horizons

Maj Rahul Sooden
Star of Forces Network

Cdr V Srivatsan
ForceNetPreneur

Maithili
An Adventure Diva!
Women Power

Adwika Singh
Author of the month

Fatima
Rising Star

Poems &
Moment in Time

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Sqn. Ldr Manish Kumar - Best Selling Author



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SCAN ME



FORCENET

From the Editor

Hello Friends,

We are aware that transitioning out of the military can be challenging. You can have feelings of confusion, unease, or even fear regarding what is ahead. However, we want to nudge you forward. We have picked "Go On" as the theme for this month's issue, and that is exactly what we have done. Advance to more rewarding endeavors. You possess the abilities, the knowledge, and the motivation to succeed. Make sure your tale doesn't end with your time in the military.

Today, we find ourselves surrounded by a world bursting with possibilities. Your second career must bring with it a renewed sense of energy and the opportunity to embark on new adventures. As military veterans, we have experienced the rigours of service, the triumphs, and the challenges. We carry within us a unique perspective on life, forged by our dedication and unwavering commitment to a cause greater than ourselves. Now, it is time for us to embrace the call to "Go On" and discover the boundless potential that lies within each and every one of us. Throughout our military careers, we learned to adapt to change, overcome obstacles, and think on our feet. It is now our chance to explore ourselves, to seek new horizons, and to embrace the ever-evolving world around us.

The world is hungry for the unique perspectives and skills that we, as veterans, possess. Our ability to adapt, to lead, and to work in diverse teams is in high demand in industries far beyond the military. It is time to apply our knowledge and expertise to make a lasting impact on society. Let us not be defined solely by our past service but by the incredible contributions we can make in the present and the future. So, fellow veterans, let us rise to the challenge and answer the call to "Go On." Embrace the spirit of exploration, unleash your creativity, and embrace the opportunities that lie before you. Together, we can prove that our service was only the beginning of a remarkable journey. Let us go on to bigger things in life, for the world eagerly awaits the contributions that only we can make.

Most importantly, go on to live your life to the fullest. You deserve to be happy and fulfilled. Don't let anything stand in your way.

We believe in you. Go on and make us proud. With unwavering respect and admiration!

Until next time, cheers to Forces Network – **“the Network that works”**.



Yours,
Going On

Capt Rajesh Nair

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Regards,

Ankur Kharbanda
Director Retail Sales
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[A NOTE FOR THE READERS](#)

This is an interactive e-magazine with active links on many pages, including the advertisements, which can be used by just tapping or clicking on them.

For ease of providing feedback, such links have been provided at the end of the articles too.

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed within this e-magazine are the personal opinions of the authors and interviewees. Thus, the information and viewpoints presented in the articles do not represent those of Forces Network, and neither does Forces Network accept any duty or responsibility for them.

Star of Forces Network

A Forces Network Star is a member of the Forces Network who has gone on to achieve glory in his or her corporate or civilian avatar. The aim of this series is not just to celebrate our successes in the veteran community, which unfortunately we do not do enough of, but also to inspire others. The ultimate goal is to set up a virtuous, self-sustaining cycle of inspiration that leads to more successes, in turn inspiring many more.

IN INTERACTION WITH IQBAL SINGH

Maj Rahul Sooden is an alumni of OTA, Chennai. In the Army, he has served in the active CT/CI ops area. After completing his short-service commission, he entered the corporate world. He gained hands-on experience in the safety and security domain while working and supporting multiple streams of businesses like retail, SCM, e-commerce, telecommunications, and micromobility. His current role is Director, Safety and Security (India and JAPAC Region) for Palo Alto Networks Association, U.S.A., and he has completed his IGC from the National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health, U.K.



IQ: Please tell us something about your background prior to joining the Army, and your subsequent Army career. Please share any significant achievements.

Rahul: I want to start by thanking Col Iqbal Singh and the team who worked behind the scenes to generate this excellent newsletter and provide me the opportunity to participate in this forum. I graduated from Punjab's Army School in Pathankot. The Indian Army is heavily deployed in Pathankot, a border district in northern India. Every child has a first preference and desire of joining the military, and I was no different.

After completing my schooling at Army School, I joined Government College, Chandigarh and graduated in 2002. I enlisted in the National Cadet Corps (NCC) during my time in college, rising to the rank of SUO in my last year. I also received the Chandigarh Directorate's Best Cadet Award. I participated in extracurricular activities, including declamation and debate competitions and adventure sports. I had a large social network of like-minded individuals who were defense aspirants.

I strongly pursued admission to the Army after graduating, but as a backup, I was enrolled in Pune's law school (LL.B.), where I later earned a distinction. I had recently finished my first LL.B. year when I got the Army's joining letter. I was attached to the Madras Regiment on March 19, 2005, as the ASC was my parent corps. I served in a number of capacities when our battalion was stationed at the Line of Control (LOC) in the J&K region, including as company commander.



Madras Regiment Offr's Mess - 2005

After the completion of my infantry tenure, I was posted to Amritsar in the Army Service Corps (ASC). I enrolled in the DGR-sponsored IIM, Indore, and finished the six-month resettlement course. I always had a fascination with law, so I earned my law degree while I was in the Army, giving me the means to carry out my backup plan. I had already graduated from law school by the time I enrolled at IIM, Indore, in 2010, which enabled me to be one of the first students to obtain a campus placement with an American MNC after completing our course. They offered me the position of Manager (Legal), but I was unable to accept it for personal reasons.



515 ASC Bn's Offr's & Families - 2009

IQ: Give us an understanding about your current role and what you are presently engaged in. Also please share in chronological order the roles and companies in your corporate career?

Rahul: I currently work at Palo Alto Networks as the Director of Safety & Security, where I am in charge of making sure that all of our staff members and assets are secure throughout the Asia Pacific and Japan regions. Our company is headquartered in Santa Clara, USA, with our India office located in Bangalore. I started off as the India Head - Safety & Security when I joined the company two years ago, but after eight months, I was given a bigger portfolio and the extra responsibility of the Asia Pacific and Japan region.

I worked for bounceshare.com, a Bangalore-based micro-mobility firm, as the Director of Safety & Security before I joined Palo Alto Networks. I concentrated on conducting investigations, preventing theft, and working with law enforcement during my time in this position. I worked at bounceshare.com from November 2019 to April 2021, which was a difficult time considering the pandemic's widespread effects and how they affected the startup industry.

During my time as general manager and head of security (security and loss prevention) for Reliance Jio's supply chain vertical, which spanned from October 2016 to November 2019, I was in charge of over 550 large and small warehouses that housed assets worth \$25 billion. Additionally, 500 vehicles were ready around-the-clock to move items worth INR 40-50 crore every day, making it one of the country's busiest supply chains. Due to Reliance Jio's aggressive technology upgrades and telecom industry development goals, this work got noticeably more challenging.



Family Dinner with Jio Colleagues -2018

In February 2014, I joined Flipkart as Senior Manager of Safety & Security. During my tenure of 32 months, we scaled up from 100 sites to 700 sites, which was a phenomenal growth rate, given that e-commerce was still in its infancy in the country. I was entrusted with ensuring the security of assets in the last-mile delivery vertical, the most challenging part of my role. In August 2015, I was promoted to Associate Director in recognition of my contributions to the organization.

My first corporate role after leaving the Army was with Reliance Retail as Manager - Security & Loss Prevention, where I worked at a tactical level and managed shrinkages at the retail stores in the Delhi NCR region from February 2011 to February 2014.



Flipkart offsite team pic 2016

IQ: How did you prepare yourself for the Military to Corporate transition?

Rahul: To be completely honest, I wasn't sure of my intended professional path when I left the Army in 2009 to enroll in the DGR program at IIM Indore. I did, however, take a few steps to help with my transition, the most important of which was earning a law degree and enrolling as a practicing attorney with the Punjab & Haryana High Court (my previously mentioned back up plan).

My second choice was to enter the field of SCM management because my time as an ASC officer had given me the necessary knowledge in that field. Despite the global economic crisis of 2008, India's SCM industry was still growing at the time.

In addition, I was hopeful that the IIM Indore full-time residential program and the Placement Committee, which was established at the conclusion of our management course, would present me with a variety of chances and help me possibly land a campus job.

I also enrolled myself on a correspondence MBA program, but due to professional commitments and limited time, I was unable to complete it at my leisure.

Transitioning from the military to civilian life is one of the most difficult challenges for military personnel. But the military also teaches people how to be mentally tough and adaptable so they can deal with everything. The Army offers a multitude of knowledge across a variety of fields, including supply chain, auditing, disaster management, and people management. We are taught to be ready and keep our composure in the face of any difficulty, and this becomes our greatest strength.

IQ: What were the challenges faced during your Transition? How did you overcome the challenges?

Rahul: Transitioning from the Indian Armed Forces to the corporate sector presented a range of challenges for me—or rather, for all the officers who were transitioning with me at that point in time. Here are a few of those challenges:

Cultural Adjustment: The culture of the Indian Army was significantly different from that of the corporate sector. I found it very challenging to adjust to the new corporate culture and work environment. I missed the bonhomie and trust between my colleagues in the Army.

Skill Set: The skill set required for success in the corporate world is quite different from the skills that an officer has developed during their military service. Even in the domain of Security & Loss prevention. For example, while leadership and decision-making skills are highly valued in the military, the corporate sector requires additional skills such as project management, budgeting, SAP proficiency, financial analysis, etc.



An Evening with Col Iqbal and Family



With CEO Mr. Nikesh Arora

Networking: In the corporate world, networking and building professional relationships are crucial for career advancement. An officer transitioning from the military may find it difficult to build a professional network in a new industry. I am glad that when I stepped out, the avenues and opportunities for networking were not as strong as they stand today, but thanks to Col. Iqbal Singh who took the initiative, I believe I was among the first 100 officers who joined the network. In 2010-11.

Recruitment Bias: Some companies were indeed hesitant to hire ex-military personnel due to preconceived notions about their leadership style, communication skills, or lack of business experience.

Job Availability: The corporate sector did not have as many job opportunities as 2009, which was still considered another subsequent year post-recession, and quite a few of the officers struggled to find suitable employment.

Compensation: The salary and benefits package in the corporate sector offered to us was significantly different and low from what an officer is accustomed to in the military; it was a challenge to adjust.

Overall, transitioning from the Indian Armed Forces to the corporate sector can be challenging. Still, with the right mindset and preparation, an officer can successfully navigate these obstacles and build a fulfilling career in the corporate world.

To overcome the challenges, I first recognized the problems in order to conquer them, and then I started looking for answers. I made connections with the right people, worked to understand the business in each capacity I took on, and undertook numerous on-the-job training sessions (OJTs), even if they had nothing to do with my job function. With the use of this strategy, I was able to establish a solid network within the company and get insightful knowledge of the industry, both of which later allowed me to solve problems involving asset loss and manage shrinkages. I also made sure to keep up with the most recent training courses in the safety and security industry and remained open to learning from people at all levels, including both low-level security guards and high-level executives. This mindset was instilled in me in the Army and has remained with me ever since. This approach allowed me to develop good strategies with the leadership team and successfully implement them with my team. As a functional leader, achieving this degree of standardization and execution is an important accomplishment.



Successful completion of CATS (Counter Anti Terrorism Specialist) course in 2015

Though you are an ASC officer now working in a Cyber Security product company? Did you have to learn some technology related subjects? How did you do so ?

Rahul: In my current role, my primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of our personnel, property, and assets. My professional expertise in this area spans over two decades, beginning with my service in the Army in the field of Safety & Security. While the fundamental principles of safety and security remain constant, the implementation and level of controls may vary from industry to industry and business to business.

My prior experience in the Army has proven beneficial to some extent in my current role in the corporate sector. However, the impact of this experience is contingent on the nature of the role that one performs. For example, during my previous employment with Reliance Retail, Flipkart, and Jio, my understanding of Supply Chain Management gained during my tenure in the Army proved to be valuable in my role in Loss Prevention. This knowledge allowed me to grasp the end-to-end delivery of shipments, and I was able to implement more effective mitigation measures compared to my colleagues, resulting in lower losses.

In conclusion, success in any field is determined by one's abilities, passion, and the opportunity to work in a domain that aligns with their interests.

IQ: If you were to Transition from the military to the corporate today with the benefit of all the insights and wisdom that you have gained in the corporate today what would you have done differently?

Rahul: It's admirable that you have a clear and detailed plan for your career development, with specific milestones and a focus on developing your skills and emotional intelligence. Pursuing higher education and technical courses can also help you stay competitive in the corporate market.

In the past, there may have been a lack of guidance and resources for military personnel transitioning to the corporate world. However, there are now many programs and resources available, including mentorship initiatives and job training opportunities, to help veterans successfully make this transition. It's important to take advantage of these resources and seek guidance from those who have experience in these areas.

Most importantly, when you are having a fresh start, one should reach out to veterans who have considerable experience in that domain. Search them on LinkedIn, drop them messages, introduce yourself, listen to what they suggest and then define which courses you want to do.

For example, I did TAPA in 2015. It's a course related to developing security controls and measures in a warehouse and transportation, it's irrelevant to someone who is in a corporate security setup. Therefore, I suggest that you do what is meaningful and important for the role that you are in or plan to take. I would have done the same if I were transitioning today.

If I were an officer who was transitioning now, I would have a detailed plan for my career over the next decade, complete with specific milestones at the fifth and seventh year marks. In pursuit of my goals, I would also work on addressing my weaknesses and continuously developing my desired skill set. Additionally, I would aim to improve my emotional intelligence through methods such as transactional analysis, as outlined in Coleman's book "EI 2.0" which I would highly recommend to all leaders and managers.

To stay current and competitive in the corporate market, I would prioritize pursuing higher education and technical courses that align with current industry trends. In previous years, there were limited opportunities for transitioning from the military to the corporate world, resulting in a lack of guidance and resources for individuals seeking such a transition.



Jio Warehouse Visit 2019

IQ: Any important lessons you learnt while switching jobs and companies in your corporate career? Any advice for transitioning military personnel on this front?

Rahul: One of the most valuable lessons I learned early on in my career was the importance of flexibility in my approach. Upon entering the corporate world, I quickly realized that annual salary increases were the most practical aspect of working in this sector and that pay was not typically based on the difficulty of the job.

Industry veterans taught me that a good position, working for a larger company, and earning a high income all made up a good job. Consequently, if you could secure two of these three components, it would be wise to seize the opportunity. I was able to escape the conventional ex-serviceman perspective of staying in hometown and working for huge organizations as a security manager with limited engagement in the core business thanks to this way of thinking.

My acceptance of selecting two out of three components also enabled me to make difficult decisions, such as leaving a job with a billion-dollar organization to work with a startup using a hands-on approach. I also avoided sticking to a single industry, having moved from organized retail to an e-commerce startup, then to a telecommunications giant, back to a startup, and eventually to where I am today, where I can enjoy all three components.

IQ: How important is it to understand your own passion and expertise and then to work towards upskilling in that domain so as to have a better innings in the corporate? How does one identify one's passion?

Rahul: As I mentioned earlier, I believe that discovering one's own passion is the greatest challenge one faces when leaving the forces. However, it's important to consider practical aspects when committing to something.

For instance, law has always been and will continue to be, my passion. After leaving the forces, I practiced law in sessions court and the high court for almost four months. Although I gained valuable experience, I realized that the hierarchical structure and slow judicial process would always leave me dissatisfied if I pursued advocacy as a career.

As a result, I had to let go of my greatest passion and transition to another career that was also a passion but not of the same magnitude as my love for being a legal practitioner. However, as they say, knowledge gained is never wasted, and in my case, my knowledge of procedural and substantive law helped me excel in my security career by providing me with visibility and helping me achieve greater heights.

Therefore, until you discover your passion by exploring new avenues and engaging in new domains, you won't know what truly excites you and what you can work on for hours, days, months, or even years with a smile on your face while still wanting to learn more.



IIM Indore

IQ: You have had a long stint in the corporate world. To be successful, what traits from the military must we give up and what must we imbibe?

Rahul: Transitioning from a career in the Indian Armed Forces to a corporate job can be challenging, and it requires some adjustment in terms of mindset and behavior. Here are some traits that an Indian Army officer may need to leave behind before taking on a new corporate job:

- **Authoritarianism:** In the army, officers are expected to lead by giving orders and expecting them to be followed without question. However, in the corporate world, employees are more independent and may not respond well to an authoritarian approach.
- **Micromanagement:** In the army, officers are responsible for every aspect of their soldiers' lives, from their training to their personal well-being. However, in the corporate world, employees are expected to be self-motivated and take initiative on their own.
- **Strict adherence to hierarchy:** In the army, there is a clear hierarchy of rank, and officers are expected to follow orders from their superiors without question. However, in the corporate world, collaboration and teamwork are often more important than strict adherence to hierarchy.
- **Lack of flexibility:** In the army, officers must follow strict protocols and procedures, and there is little room for deviation or improvisation. However, in the corporate world, adaptability and flexibility are essential skills for success.
- **Rigidity in decision-making:** In the army, officers must make quick decisions based on limited information and often under high pressure situations. However, in the corporate world, decisions are often more complex and require more analysis and consideration.

In summary, an Indian Army officer transitioning to a corporate job may need to leave behind traits such as authoritarianism, micromanagement, strict adherence to hierarchy, a lack of flexibility, and rigidity in decision-making to be successful in the new environment.

IQ: What message would you like to give to transitioning military officers who wish to make a career in the technology industry in non tech roles, especially in a product company?

Rahul: When an Armed Forces officer transitions into a corporate job, there are certain traits they may need to adapt to succeed in the new environment especially when they are moving to a non-tech role in a tech industry. Here are some examples:

- **Collaborative Leadership:** In the Armed Forces, officers are often expected to lead from the front and give orders. However, in the corporate world, collaborative leadership is valued, and officers need to learn how to lead by consensus and build strong relationships with their colleagues.

- **Open Communication:** Communication in the Armed Forces is often hierarchical and formal, but in the corporate world, officers need to be able to communicate openly and effectively with their colleagues, subordinates, and superiors.
- **Business Acumen:** Armed Forces officers may have limited exposure to business concepts such as finance, marketing, and sales. To succeed in the corporate world, officers need to acquire a basic understanding of these areas and be able to apply them in their work.
- **Adaptability:** In the Armed Forces, officers are trained to work in a specific environment, but the corporate world is often unpredictable, and officers need to be able to adapt to changing circumstances quickly.
- **Networking:** I am reiterating a few things because they are important and often neglected. Armed Forces officers may not have extensive experience in networking, but it is essential in the corporate world. Officers need to learn how to build relationships with people inside and outside the company to build their professional network.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** In the Armed Forces, officers are trained to be mentally tough and to suppress emotions, but in the corporate world, emotional intelligence is highly valued. Officers need to learn how to manage their emotions, empathize with others, and build strong relationships.

IQ: Tell us about your family. What role did your parents play in shaping your value system? Also, please share the role played by your family including your spouse in your successful transition?

Rahul: It is important to acknowledge the significant role parents play during life transitions. In my case, my father and grandfather were both practicing lawyers while I pursued my degree in law. My father actively encouraged me to explore various career options and provided financial support, while also imparting practical insights on the life of a legal practitioner. He remains supportive of my corporate career while always encouraging me to join him in practicing law one day.



Family Pics

My mother, a professor of Literature at a college affiliated with Guru Nanak Dev University in Pathankot, was an avid reader and writer who provided invaluable emotional support and mentorship throughout my corporate journey. Despite my current position as APAC Head, I still turn to her for guidance on dealing with human resource and other manpower challenges, as her wisdom and expertise have proven to be invaluable assets.

Lastly, my spouse has been a crucial figure in my life. Though she was a banker when we married, we jointly decided to prioritize our responsibility of raising our child and therefore made career choices that would enable us to do so effectively. While some may view this as a traditional approach, we are happy and content with the decision we made for ourselves and our family.



Lt Col Iqbal Singh is the Founder of Forces Network. Iqbal is an infantry officer who is working as a senior tech executive in a Big Tech company. Iqbal apart from two technology degrees has a slew of industry certifications spanning across IT service management, Cloud, AI/ML and Project Management. He is a keen technology enthusiast who firmly believes in breaking barriers to learning technology and making it accessible as well as easy. He has mentored thousands of veterans and guided them on to successful corporate careers.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Interview, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

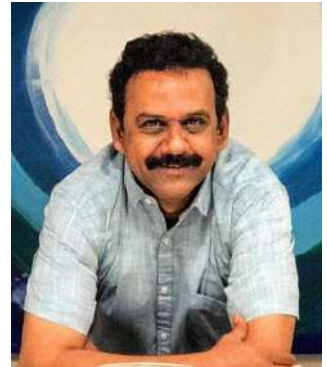


ForceNetPreneur

In this series, we plan to showcase a few entrepreneurs who are members of the Forces Network and have achieved a reasonable degree of success in their business ventures. The aim being to celebrate their success as well as learn from them with a view to motivating more members of our community to take up entrepreneurship as a full-time vocation. Finally, we do need job creators in greater numbers than job seekers.

IN INTERACTION WITH IQBAL SINGH

Cdr V Srivatsan was commissioned in the Indian Navy's communication branch in 1988. Post his Navy tenure, he has worn different hats: a Mathematicophile turned Naval Officer turned Software Sales Executive turned Entrepreneur. in different geographies of the globe. He loves studying, writing poetry and public speaking. His aim is to complete visiting the remaining four countries that are pending by 2025, completing a century of foreign country visits.



IQ: Tell us something about your background prior to joining the Armed Forces, and your subsequent Forces career. **Top 5 Learning from the Services Career?**

Srivatsan: I come from a middle-class background, steeped in academics and sports since early childhood. I was the last of the three children born to my very spiritual parents, who instilled not only very high personal standards but also a generous dose of spiritual and religious input.

I followed in the footsteps of my elder brother (4 years my senior, who joined the Army and retired as a Col from the Armd Corps) and brother-in-law (my senior, who retired as a Maj Gen from the Armd Corps too), but unlike both of them, I decided to get my feet wet because the Navy poster said: Join the Navy, See the World. So immediately after graduating from Delhi University (Mathematics Hons), despite having qualified for a clutch of MBA and management trainee positions, I decided to take the 'plunge' into the Indian Navy.



Commissioning Crew (Officers and Sailors) on the 25th Anniversary of INS Delhi at Vizag, 2003

My career path was rather staid and along predictable lines until my accidental fall onboard the ship in the year 2000. The subsequent prolonged recovery time ensured that I must focus my ambitions on my second career and not on the present one. But I have neither any regrets nor any wistfulness at having left the IN after precisely 20 years of service. Because the Navy did indeed teach, show, and demonstrate a lot to me. And if I were to summarise the lessons that I learned, it would be as below:

- **Discipline and Responsibility:** The Navy places a high value on discipline and responsibility, as every officer or sailor onboard a ship, is expected to adhere to strict codes of conduct and fulfill their duties with precision and excellence. This emphasis on discipline has helped me to develop self-control and personal accountability, which have proved invaluable in all areas of my life in the corporate world as well as in my personal life.
- **Teamwork and Collaboration:** Teamwork and Collaboration: The Navy operates on the principle of teamwork and collaboration, as everyone onboard works closely with one another to achieve shared objectives. Serving in the Navy has taught me how to communicate effectively, build trust and rapport with others, and work together towards a common goal, all within the confines of a ship for countless days.
- **Adaptability and Resilience:** The Navy operates in a complex and challenging environment, and all onboard must be able to adapt quickly to changing circumstances and remain resilient in the face of adversity, natural or otherwise. This emphasis on adaptability and resilience has helped me develop mental toughness and the ability to thrive under pressure.



Celebrating the Silver Anniversary of INS Delhi with the Commissioning Crew, Vizag January 2003

- **Leadership and Decision-Making:** The Navy places a premium on leadership and decision-making skills, as officers, especially onboard ships, must be able to make critical decisions quickly and effectively in any high-stakes situation. Serving in the Navy has definitely helped me to develop these skills, as we are given plenty of opportunities to lead and make decisions that can have a significant impact on our ship and its mission.
- **Global Perspective and Cultural Awareness:** As you all know, the Indian Navy operates in a global context, with many ships deploying to different parts of the world and interacting with individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds. Serving in the Navy helped immensely in developing a global perspective and cultural awareness as we learned to navigate different customs, languages, and ways of thinking. This has proved to be an invaluable asset in today's interconnected world.



Post-BARAKHANA as part of the silver jubilee celebrations of INS Delhi's commissioning, Vizag, January 2003

IQ: What was the impetus for you to leave the uniformed service? Tell us about how your career panned out till you were a corporate employee?

Srivatsan: So, back when I was still serving, I thought that I would definitely enjoy a long and successful career. But all it took was a slick pair of wet shoes, a ladder, and my bad luck. The trifecta effectively put paid to all my career ambitions in the white uniform and rather prematurely made me prepare for the white-collar job market. So, as soon as I completed the mandatory 20 years, I took premature retirement. The other factor that contributed to this decision was also the fact that, at 42, I wasn't too old yet for the job market. Given the skills and competencies I had acquired in the lead up to the point of quitting, I was fairly confident of landing a better-than-average job for myself.

As you see, in early November 2008, the financial meltdown truly hit the global markets. From holding a bunch of confirmed job offers on October 31st to getting all offers withdrawn by the first fortnight of November, I went through a rather tumultuous period. I was certain in my mind that I did not wish to pursue any of the following:

- No defence/defence-related industry – as I was not too happy about going back to the Service HQ to sell something there.
- No HR or Admin jobs
- No Chief Security Officer (physical security) roles

Accordingly, I put in strenuous efforts to network and apply for jobs that suited my inclinations and proclivities and provided the right environment for deploying my skill sets and capabilities. Eventually, at one time (towards mid- or end-March of 2009), I was holding six different job offers from six different companies in six completely different domains or verticals. I am going to list them all below because, for a general list officer of the Armed Forces, all these are within reach if you ‘arm’ yourself with the necessary skillsets:

Sr. No	Domain	Role	Notes
1	Automotive	Operations Head of Used Car Company of a Tier-1 automotive manufacturer (Top-5 in India)	The position was based in Mumbai. The salary was not commensurate with expectations. But was above-average for that particular industry and role. Role identified through open advt.
2	IT	Head of Project Delivery for a Big 5 IT leader	The position was based in Bangalore. Excellent stepping stone to higher roles. But a deeper investigation revealed that the attrition rate was very high, with more than 5-6 incumbents sacked in the last 1.5 years alone. Role identified through personal networks.
3	Telecom	InfoSec Practice Lead for a Big 5 telco of India	The position was based in Delhi NCR. Everything was great with the role, profile, etc. However, I was advised by well-wishers not to take up the role as it would push me into a super-specialist domain from which heading businesses, etc., would be a little tough. Position came through the network.

Sr. No	Domain	Role	Notes
4	Oil & Gas	Offshore Security Head for a Big 5 MNC in Oil industry	Position based out of Mumbai. Perfect fit (as indicated by the hiring manager). Kept on the 'front burner' till the very end. Position came through the network.
5	Defence	Maritime Domain Specialist for a Tier-1, leading global aerospace company	Based out of Bangalore. Fantastic role and opportunity. Negotiations for pay band and position fell through, and I had to reluctantly decline the last offer from them. Again, I got shortlisted and selected through advt.
6	IT & Teleco m	Head of Implementation & Operations for a leading Indian software multinational	The position was based in Delhi, NCR. Despite a marginally lower starting designation, role, package, ESOPs, etc. were matching my qualifications, skillsets and designations. Tremendous exposure to business from Day 1. Position came through the network.

Eventually, I took up the role of Head Implementation and Operations as it involved managing a team, learning about business, and bringing my core competencies of communications specialisation, Info Systems Masters, and IT background into play.

So much for the historical perspective. So much for the historical perspective. As I mentioned already, I didn't want to take up the more traditionally bracketed roles in HR/Admin/Security because, in my personal opinion, the second career ought to be about rising to the very top in business - as a CxO, then CEO, and eventually Board Member, etc. That meant getting hands dirty, learning the ropes of business, finance, budgeting, handling P&L, setting and achieving targets, working in a KPI/PLI framework, handling the headaches and pressures, and celebrating achievements and successes. What the Fauj taught us very well is that unless you can do it yourself, you can't expect your subordinates to do it for you.

From this role, I moved into an international operations role within the same organisation and was instrumental in turning around the entire MENA [Middle East and North Africa] Region for the company. The CSAT scores were hemorrhaging in this market and were bringing the entire company's scores down. Within 2 years, I was able to turnaround these scores from the low 60s to the 90s. This also gave me ample opportunity to explore my chosen field, sales. As it happens, the mental block, the glass ceiling, was very evident. And that was:

“How can a career defence officer handle sales – and that too of a difficult & tough region?”

However, I fought for and finally snapped up the largest customer of the company, formed my own team from the ground up, and eventually registered a substantial increase in sales, proving that one needn't be a career sales guy from a fancy business school to be able to handle sales.

After about 5+ years with my first company, I decided to move into full-time international mode, which resulted in a Dubai-based position for a Dutch software company. This company had just landed their largest customer and was looking for a senior person to handle the account, which was spread across 23 countries in the Middle East and Africa. By the time I left this company after 3 years or so, the pipeline had more than tripled, and it was a multi-million dollar account.

Long absences from home and the entrepreneurial bug had a dual effect, and I moved back to set up a start-up in true start-up mode.



*My lifeline, My family: Wife Safina & my two jigar ka tukdas –
Tamanna & Armaan*

IQ: You were doing pretty well as a corporate employee. What drove you to take up entrepreneurship?

Srivatsan: I would like to probably say that, apart from the personal (domestic situation) reasons, I could identify 4 to 5 possible reasons for doing this:

1	Pursuing my passion	Entrepreneurship provides me with an opportunity to pursue my passions and create something that's aligned with my values and interests. It is far more fulfilling than working for a company whose goals may or may not align with my own.
2	Personal Growth & Development	Starting a business was challenging and required me to develop new skills and knowledge. For me, entrepreneurship was a way to challenge myself and grow both personally and professionally.
3	Desire for Innovation, Creativity & a Social Cause	I was drawn to the innovation and creativity that came with building something that the law enforcement agencies in our country required and desired. In a corporate setting, there was absolutely no room for experimentation and creative thinking.
4	Autonomy and Control	I became an entrepreneur because I wanted to be my own boss and have more control over the kind of work and schedule that I wanted to put in. In a corporate setting, despite being in the higher echelons, decisions were still being made by higher-ups, and I felt limited in my ability to make changes and take risks to grow the business.
5	Potential for Greater Financial Rewards	While starting my own business was risky and uncertain, it also had the potential to generate greater financial rewards than working in a corporate job. I have now been able to build a successful business that generates significant income and wealth.

IQ: The mindset of an entrepreneur is different from that of an employee? Since you have traversed both the spaces tell us what is different? How did you transition to a business owner mindset?

Srivatsan: Among the foremost things that come immediately to mind are tolerance for risk-taking, adaptability and agility, innovation, creative problem solving, and an ownership mindset. These are the primary factors that I found changing with the change of role from employee to entrepreneur. Also, the biggest change, which, if I may take a little longer to explain, pertains to the adaptability and flexibility aspects. When you enter your office in the morning as an entrepreneur, your head is bursting with ideas. Soon, the mundane and routine hit you because bills have to be paid, casual labour attended to, etc. Once you get out of the way, you are in the role of HR, conducting interviews for prospective candidates or attending to some other issue. Thereafter is a review wherein you become a product manager and do brainstorming. Very soon that hat comes off, and you are neck deep in technical discussions with the CTO and his team. Then you sit down with the finance guys and do financial analysis, paralysis, etc. You are constantly juggling multiple balls in the air, most of them in an unstructured manner. Exciting and yet pleasantly exhausting! Come to think of it, all the traditional concepts and principles of management theory are thrown out of the window in a proper start-up environment. Span of control, delegation, leadership, et al., all take an altogether different meaning. And by the way, the most important role is that of the sales head of your start-up. That is something, unless you are in the big league, you still need to do yourself because no one can speak of your creation as well as you do. Last but not least, you need to raise funds, investments, or capital, a role that is both demanding and fulfilling at the same time.

The transition was anything but easy. But having said that, I think, speaking for myself, I always knew I wanted to own and run a start-up from the time I shed the uniform. While nothing can prepare you for the actual experience, certain key learnings that held me in good stead were:

- a. Be unafraid to ask questions.
- b. Be humble; stay humble.
- c. Own your ignorance.
- d. Never lose the zeal.
- e. Display passion but guard against blind enthusiasm.
- f. Try new and different ideas, especially in new technologies.
- g. Assess your investors well, both for their deep pockets and their risk appetite.
- h. Be ready for failures; prepare for them actively.
- i. Do not use innuendos, and euphemisms while communicating. Be bold, frank, and open.
- j. Mitigate uncertainties to the extent possible. Proactive contingency planning is the key.
- k. Others before self—be it in ESOPs, benefits, recognition, and the like.
- l. Never become rigid—organizationally, in thinking, in execution, in action, in role definition.

Not all are 'mantras' and guaranteed to provide you with success. But a mix-and-match style will effectively reduce the heartburn and prevent the buildup of angst and frustration while you navigate the turbulent waters of a start-up CEO or entrepreneur.

IQ: Please tell us about your entrepreneurial venture? What was the vision behind starting your venture, and thereafter expanding it?

Srivatsan: Well, it started in the most unlikely manner with a few friends from law enforcement seeking help in handling the humongous amounts of data they had at their disposal. I gathered a few likeminded friends and colleagues and decided to extend help in a casual manner, kind of like fulfilling a social obligation. Business was the farthest thing from our collective minds. We started brainstorming and putting together a few ideas, etc., in our spare time and got working on it. Gradually, whatever the folks with the problem threw at us, we started mathematically modeling it and providing small, piecemeal solutions. As no one was footing the bill, we relied completely on open-source technologies with minimal or no financial implications. Over a period of time, the LE folks found success in solving cases using our solutions. One of the brightest sparks in our team proposed the idea of 'productising' the solution, beefing it up with more muscle, etc., and voila, the venture took birth. Hence, in the unlikeliest of ways, a gesture of giving back to society turned into a successful idea for a business startup.

There was a crying need for this kind of solution among not only the LE community but even others in similar lines of work. So, expansion has happened organically, just as our platform grew organically.

IQ: What were the challenges faced in this entrepreneurial journey? And, how did you overcome those challenges?

Srivatsan: **Funding-Funding-Funding...**and the challenge is never fully overcome—ever, in my opinion. The talent pool in our country is amazing, and suffice it to say, despite the Corona period downturn, no one shied away from putting in extra hours with absolutely no idea about the next pay check. We have all worked through that phase and feel confident that we can face the next curve ball too.



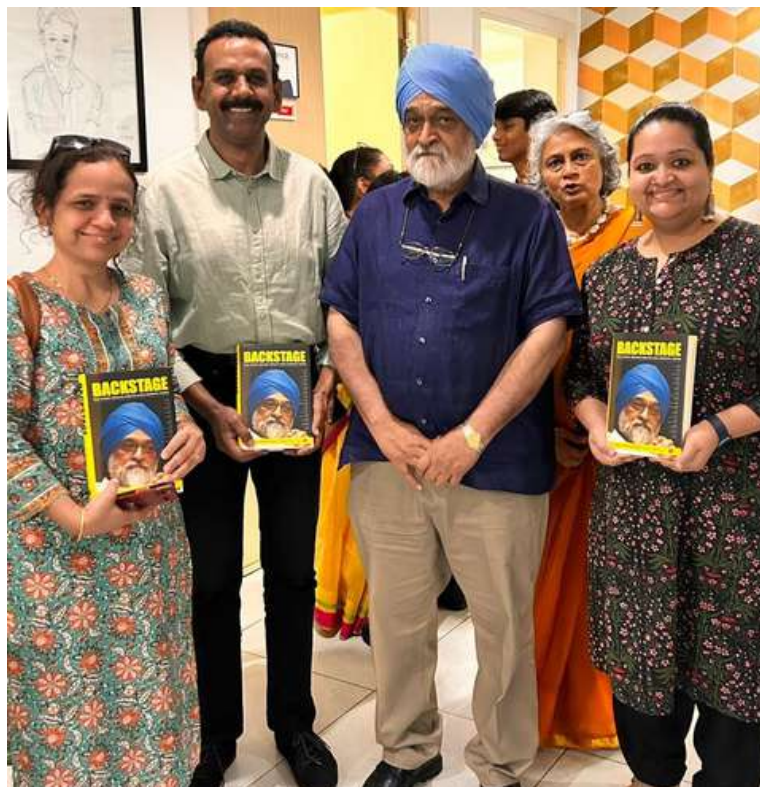
IQ: What is your team like, and how did you build it? What do you look for typically when hiring an employee?

Srivatsan: We had and still have a very small team. Never exceeded 20 permanent people. We built it purely on the basis of talent and commitment. Most are personally known team members who have worked with one or the other senior folks for a considerable length of time. What I have always looked for in hiring a team member is his or her passion for doing something new and their problem-solving ability. I have never ever conducted an interview. I always have an interaction with a candidate. You can fool me in an interview, but never in an interaction—that is my personal belief. I let my other team members conduct the interview, and I only see if the individual is a good fit for our culture, personally as well as organisationally.

IQ: How have you found your entrepreneurial journey so far? Could you please share the Moments of Happiness and those moments when it was really demanding and you dug deep and faced the situation?

Srivatsan: In one phrase, I would say: **Sine Wave**. There are a lot of ups and downs, but never the same intensity, amplitude, or frequency. But that's what one chose, so no regrets. The happiest and the most challenging were both on the same occasion—when I returned to India from the UAE to take up the reins of the start-up. It was both liberating and daunting. It was scary, yet the happiest moment.

No looking back, confidence, and not giving up—these are the traits that were second nature to me even before I turned into an entrepreneur. And these have stood me in good stead during these times.



With Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia at a "Meet the Author" session. Obtained a signed copy of his latest book, Backstage

IQ: What in your view is going to be the likely impact of Generative AI on Data Analytics? What are your future plans going forward?

Srivatsan: Well, this topic would require a whole edition of our beloved magazine. With the pace at which this is hitting us and the developments that are taking place, it is well and truly impossible to provide one simplistic or straightforward answer. But I will try.

The impact is being felt or most likely will be felt in the following areas (some of which are already being utilised in our company's solutions):

- Generative AI models can be used to create more accurate and realistic models of complex datasets. By using machine learning algorithms to generate new data samples, these models can better capture the underlying patterns and relationships in the data, leading to more accurate predictions and insights.
- Generative AI models can be used to automatically clean and pre-process data, reducing the time and effort required for these tasks. For example, generative models can be used to fill in missing data values, smooth out noisy data, and remove outliers.
- Generative AI models can be used to generate new data samples that are similar to existing data but have different characteristics or features. This can be useful for augmenting small datasets or generating new data for testing and validation purposes.
- Generative AI models can be used to create more engaging and informative data visualizations. For example, generative models can be used to generate realistic 3D visualizations of complex data, allowing analysts to explore the data in new and more intuitive ways.
- Generative AI models can be used to speed up data processing tasks by generating synthetic data that can be used to train machine learning models. This can reduce the need for large datasets, speed up the training process, and allow analysts to quickly iterate and refine their models.
-

IQ: So, what advice would you like to give to the fellow ForceNet members who want to take up entrepreneurship?

Srivatsan: I am not big on "giving advice" to fellow travelers on this journey.

But if you feel you want to become an entrepreneur, then I would say that is half the journey completed. This is not something that can be instilled or learned; it has to come from within. Your vision needs to be 100% clear, and you need to commit to it 100%. The ability to own the game and fail are important skillsets that are super-critical and not just desirable.

IQ: Do you have any other hobbies or interests, which you pursue passionately?

Srivatsan: I love to write professionally on various topical issues. I love to study, something I never gave up throughout these years. My passion is writing poetry, which I hope to publish soon.

In the recent past, I have entered the sports arena after a prolonged break, and I hope to participate in the Senior Olympics in athletics (sprints), and I am training hard for the same.



*Poetry reading on occasion of
Republic Day celebrations, 26th Jan 2023*



Lt Col Iqbal Singh is the Founder of Forces Network. Iqbal is an infantry officer who is working as a senior tech executive in a Big Tech company. Iqbal apart from two technology degrees has a slew of industry certifications spanning across IT service management, Cloud, AI/ML and Project Management. He is a keen technology enthusiast who firmly believes in breaking barriers to learning technology and making it accessible as well as easy. He has mentored thousands of veterans and guided them on to successful corporate careers.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Interview, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

Women Power An Adventure Diva!

Spouses and daughters of Defence officers, as well as those who have donned the uniform, have immense potential as individuals. While many of them have already established themselves as successful independent entities, a very large number still have to recognise and exploit their inherent hidden capabilities and worth. In this series, we plan to showcase the achievements of such women of the members of the Forces Network who have carved a niche for themselves through hard work, grit and determination, so as to provide adequate motivation to the others.

IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY K SHRIWAS

Ms.Maithili Tembe is the daughter of Lt. Col. Pramod Tembe (Retd.). Her career has spanned across the shipping, media, FMCG and IT industries, and she is currently working for a US-based software company. She has degrees in Psychology (University of Pune) and Management (Symbiosis Institutes of Management Studies). She is an adventure enthusiast and loves traveling. She loves the outdoors and has traveled the globe, including a recent 31-day road trip covering 10,300 km. She describes her journey in her own way.



Uday: Please tell us about yourself and your recent tour of the country?

Maithili: Like all great travelers, I have seen more than I remember, and I remember more than I have seen. From heavy adventures like mountain climbing to exotic road drives, I have done it all around the Indian subcontinent. But no matter how much one has traveled, there is always more ground left to be covered. My motto in life is: 'Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.'

In between my travels, I obtained degrees in Psychology (University of Pune) and Management (Symbiosis Institutes of Management Studies). My schooling was mostly at Loreto Convent (Darjeeling). While my passion has taken me places, my career has spanned across the shipping, media, FMCG and IT industries. I am currently working with a US-based software company. I am a total fauji brat and take pride in the fact that I have had a fauji upbringing.



My love of the outdoors has taken me globe-trotting, but a recent road trip changed me as a person and started me looking at life from a different perspective. Home away from home was with these veterans who were the youngest in spirit and josh.

Myself, along with 3 bikers, Col Rakesh Sidhu (12 Mech Inf), Col Anil Vaid (8 Mahar in Sri Lanka, then commanded 15 Mahar in Op Rhino/Vijay/Rakshak) and Maj Satnam Singh (65 Armoured regiment) did a roadtrip of 31 days spanning almost the entire country. Along with me in the car were Col and Mrs. Sayaji Nikam (12 Mech Inf). The other ladies flew in to Bagdogra and set course with us. Flagged off from South Delhi, this team covered Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Dehi/NCR, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Banbassa to Kakarbhitta (Nepal), West Bengal, Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Bhutan, Manipur, Assam, Eastern and Western UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. Touched the borders of China, Bangladesh and Myanmar.



Take off from base on Day 1, October 5, 2023. Packed with rations that can feed the entire fauj and proud parents seeing me off

The route I took was via Mumbai, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Delhi, with pitstops at Nahargarh Lake Palace (to enjoy the swimming and the natural beauty) and Jaipur to shop and shop. People often ask me, "Why isn't flying cheaper?" but my patent answer to them is that in our land of diversity, where everything from language to attire to the taste of dal changes, venturing on such roads is an adventure. Most people ask me if I feel unsafe on my own or when we sisters take off on a road trip. Well, honestly, we tend to be the tourist spot ourselves, but the black beast (Safari) with blacker tints (abusing the RTO norms) has been the saving grace most times.



Passed via the Kishangarh Marble Dust Dump Yard, where I couldn't stop but strike the pose



Outside Amer when the rain started to lash, thankfully shopping was done by then!

Jaipur to Delhi, which would otherwise take 4 hours or less, took a whopping 9 hours to be received by our unit officer, Lt Gen PM Hariz, and some yummysicious south Indian food made by Zarina aunty. We've realized by now that Cyclone Sitrang has hit many places, but that didn't dampen the josh at all.



A flag off party was hosted by all officers and ladies at our Officers Mess



RV Delhi Flag Off Day 8 - 12 October 2022

As we gathered for the flag off in our "assal Maharashtrian" avatar without realizing that a flag off at 6 am means 6 am. And I got so busy getting dressed for the occasion that drive aage kar lenge. From the mess, we reached the National War Memorial at India Gate to pay homage to our martyrs and take their blessings for the days ahead.



At the National War Memorial, paid homage to our martyrs and took blessings for the days

Day 8 – India Gate to Banbasa (Nepal Entry)



The origin of my name from Mithila

Nepal stay for 3 nights at Mahendra Nagar-Butwal (440 km) through Shuklaphanta National Park, on good roads and no roads too! Grueling 11 hours of driving, excluding an hour of break time! Butwal to Janakpur (370 km) took 10 hours, exclusive of an hour's break. Bad roads to even worse ones!

Crossover from Nepal to India: 350 km from Janakpur to Bagdogra. Coming back home has never felt so good! The road conditions in Nepal were overkill! Raced before the border closed at sundown to be welcomed by our army in a grand way.



Got some beautiful shades of the sky too!!



Being Welcome back to Home

The Indian Army set up a temporary shed with hot tea and snacks as a welcome gesture on our side of the border. It just feels so safe and welcome. I think our partner on this trip has been the Hindustani Fauj.



Rangia (Assam) to Shillong (Meghalaya)



A small hiccup didn't deter the spirit at all! My Man Monday saved the beast with his special jugaad!

Bagdogra (West Bengal) to Rangia (Assam): the most picturesque drive of my life through tea gardens, swanky roads and tapri lal cha (black tea). Bagdogra to Rangia (Guwahati): 440 km, 10 hours through Dooars-Terai tea gardens, Hasimara crossover from West Bengal to Assam. Not to mention that this part of the country always has a special place in my heart.



SHE leads because she can! And because her parents gave her wings to fly!



Umiam lake also known as 'Bada Pani'

Driving through the long, unwinding roads from Guwahati to Shillong with fresh mountain wind in my hair through Umiam Lake, also known as Bada Pani,

Assam to Meghalaya—Rangia to Shillong via Guwahati—150 km, which took me a while due to engine trouble. Fauji mechanics did a marvelous job as always.

A pitstop at the serene yet bustling Shillong was a kind courtesy of the Assam Rifles Holiday Home, which made us feel so comfortable. A quick fix at the dentist was also part of the game.



Shillong



Kissing through the Bangladesh border and absolutely vouching for the worst roads

Silchar (Assam) to Imphal (Manipur)

Time to slow down! Silchar to Imphal via Jiribam and Noney (325 km, 20 hours) through the NH 37, known for the volatile fury of nature. A drive through the most treacherous mountain roads, a landslide and two accidents as the bikers faced mental fatigue from the last few days.

I managed to drive through the landslide in the nick of time as boulders came down the mountain towards my car. This is the first time in all the road trips that I felt vulnerable and Nikam uncle said, "I saw fear in your eyes". The Assam rifles gave us the QRT and ensured the ROP was perfect.

Support and constant surveillance of our vehicles by the Indian Army posts along this route were a big relief. We crossed through the hot belt (insurgency-prone). NH 37 is a route I probably don't want to try ever again. Shaken but not broken!



This was the most treacherous part of the drive, and with Cyclone Sitrang in full force, I single-handedly drove through it, but I was more scared of the bikers and the ladies. It was a nice thing to remember for the longest time. And time and again, we say that without the support of the Indian Army, we would be lost. At some stretches, we were served traditional chai pakoda, and a few had to buy petrol and diesel for the route ahead. For any of our demands, "Ho jayega saab!" was the only answer we got.



Catching the morning sun at the treehouse and our backyard! And a brief view of the Burma border

Imphal (Manipur) to Kohima (Nagaland)

136 km in 5 hours. A nice long drive through interesting villages en route and a mix of good and bad roads. A race to the iconic War Cemetery before it closed for the day was an emotional moment and a source of pride.

The beautiful cemetery in memory of the men of the 2nd Division who fell in the battle of Kohima fighting for the Imphal road during April-June 1944 is so beautifully maintained. It is sited at the exact location where the battle was fought, with a panoramic view of the city of Kohima. It bears the inscription, "When you go home, tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow, we gave our today."





Each sunrise is the beginning of new miracles! Shades of coral and pink against this bright, beautiful blue canvas! The most magnificent sunrise seen from our terrace as the long drive awaits!

Kohima (Nagaland) to Upper Assam

Kohima (Nagaland) to Dinjan (Tinsukia, Upper Assam): 370 km, 10 hours, bypassing Dimapur, Jorhat, and Dibrugarh. The roads in Nagaland remain a terror, but as we crossed over to Assam, it was a smooth drive through tea gardens, paddy fields, and small hamlets. The weather is a little warm and humid, but nothing that a hot shower can't fix! The Josh remains high! The lady and the gentleman in the pictures are intrigued that a woman has driven all this way singlehandedly. They spoke in Assamese, and I replied in Hindi.



And we set course for yet another north-eastern town. Josh is still high!



A stopover at the Golden Pagoda was just the Zen I needed!

Assam to Hayuliang (Arunachal Pradesh)

Dinjan (Assam) to Hayuliang (Arunachal Pradesh) via Tezu, Golden Pagoda and Tidding Bridge. 250 km in 7 hours. Arunachal literally means the land of the rising sun.

The cyclone effect cascades in the east, and we encounter heavy rains and mudslides. The roads turn crazier and more intense. Convinced that it takes some nerve to drive or ride across the North East. However, the landscape is absolutely breathtaking. I drove through the tea gardens in Assam and the lush greenery and clouds in Arunachal.

The hospitality of our army throughout the route was reassuring too. I must admit that this particular stretch through the entire drive was very challenging and tested my driving skills to the hilt! Adventure at its extreme.

Diwali at Hayuliang (Arunachal Pradesh)

Diwali was spent at an Indian Army unit with the boys, watching the mandir parade as the Josh remained high. The sound of the crackers and "Bharat Mata ki Jai" was roaring in the valley. The best ever Diwali I've had!

Hayuliang to Lohitpur (Arunachal Pradesh)

Hayuliang to Lohitpur via Parshuram Kund (Brahma Kund) (Arunachal Pradesh): 180 km, 9 hours. What a day it's been! Driving through treacherous roads, especially in hilly terrain, through landslides, slush and muck. At some places, the width of the road was the width of the Safari. It totally tested my driving skills, as I struggled in 1st gear continuously and felt my car skidding in the valley below. We escaped the landslides by a fraction of a second yet again!



Lohitpur (Arunachal Pradesh) to Assam

Assam welcomes us with a lot of sunshine, finally! Lohitpur (Arunachal Pradesh) to Dergoan-Jorhat (Assam): 350 km, 9 hours. Pitstop at the Golden Pagoda for some Zen yet again and Dibrugarh for an elaborate luncheon. Butter smooth roads, but the diversions and erratic traffic take some patience. As we embark on our return journey, we do feel proud of the last few days of hardcore driving and waking up each day in a different North Eastern state with beautiful landscapes and a different challenge every day.

A lazy day wandering through Kaziranga, shopping for Assam silk at Tezpur and touching Guwahati for the night. 440 kms. Highlight of the day: resisting hard not to sleep whilst maintaining the speed limit of 40 kmph, sometimes a painful 20 kmph through the animal corridor. A long but delightful drive.

Guwahati (Assam) to Binnaguri (West Bengal)

Guwahati to Binnaguri: 350 km, 7 hours through Hasimara. I had a scrumptious lunch at a sainik dhaba and a grand welcome at Binnaguri.

Very proud of the boys, indeed! Wasn't an easy one to navigate through the terrain and the weather. The Josh was very high!

Had locally posted officers who, as a mark of respect, rode with the boys from Hashimara to Binnaguri (40 km), Col Shantanu Mukhopadhyay, Col Arjun Singh and Lt Col Raman, mandatorily paying homage to our martyrs for successfully getting us back to civilization.



Breakfast at Bhutan (Phuntsholing)

Seamless entry across the border as the paperwork was well taken care of by our fauj. Beautiful country as I catch a glimpse. well-maintained infrastructure, beautiful landscapes and being amazed to see the traffic discipline. One can see the stark difference when you cross over. Jaigaon, the Indian border town, was in total chaos. I spent the afternoon lazing at Binnaguri and had a lovely evening drive to Sinclairs Chalsa. Just the break I needed!

Binnaguri to Bendgubi (West Bengal)

Binnaguri to Bengdubi via Siliguri (110 km): a beautiful drive through lush green tea gardens, crossing the Teesta and a fantastic view of the Kangchenjunga range. The day was spent shopping a little, getting the beast (Safari) back in its element, and having a lavish evening at Mayfair. The tremendous abuse the beast has endured in Arunachal was commendable and it kept the bearing tall until we reached the service station. The dust cover had blown off!

Leaving a little piece of my heart in the Northeast.

Bendgubi (West Bengal) to Muzaffarpur (Bihar)

Bendgubi (West Bengal) to Muzaffarpur (Bihar), 380 km, took just 6 hours. The roads in Bengal and Bihar were pleasantly surprising. As we return home, I can't help but be thankful for all the moments added to my memory bank.

I missed the girls as they flew back from Bagdogra and I missed the mountains too!



Josh is high: Group of women, ex-armymen on 6,500km expedition

Vivek.Chauhan@timesgroup.com

Lucknow: On a 6,500-kilometer-long expedition, a group of four veterans of the Indian army, along with their women companions, arrived in Lucknow on Wednesday.

While men are driving bikes, women are driving SUVs.

The ex-army men had served in Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) during the Sri Lanka conflict.

In Lucknow, they paid tribute to the war veterans at the National War Memorial.

Talking to TOI, colonel RS Sidhu said, "The most interesting part of our journey was the drive from Dinjan (Assam) to Havulliang (Aruna-



The group is on way back to Delhi now

ward spontaneously to query about our mission. During the ride, our age factor does not cross our minds. We think that we can beat youngsters."

Major Satnam Singh also reiterated the same.

Woman rider Maitihilli Tembe said, "Though the ro-

Muzaffarpur (Bihar) to Ayodhya (UP)

Muzaffarpur (Bihar) to Ayodhya (AKA Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh): 420 km via Kushinagar and Gorakhpur. A new UP welcomes us with super sleek roads and a new avatar. The morning was spent galavanting at Kushinagar, the place where Buddha was laid to rest. The gigantic sleeping Buddha is a visual delight, surrounded by lush greenery and glimpses of our history.

Ayodhya to Agra via Lucknow (UP)

Lucknow to Agra (Western UP): 335 km. A drive to remember as we turned the Safari into a boeing and took off on the sleek expressway that connects these two important cities of UP. Being a paracommando's daughter, I have grown up with a special affiliation to the maroon beret, and Agra, as Papa calls it, is totally his territory.

This gang over the past month has been a home away from home and a family I swear by. Finally, a goodbye isn't the end of the road; this is only a new beginning. A visit to the Taj once again and some shoe shopping make me a happy girl!

The grand flag in - Agra to Babina

To new beginnings! Agra-Babina via Morena (where UP, MP and Rajasthan borders meet), bypassing Gwalior and Jhansi totaling 260 km. Coming back to our roots, our home. The Daring Dozen is always the best place to be. Flagged off by the father (The General) and flagged in by the son (The Colonel)



Babina (UP) to Mhow (MP)

530 km, bypassing Guna and Devas. A long, picturesque drive and the warmest welcome by the Daring Dozen. Making memories during the last leg of the journey. As the beast crosses a thousand miles of pure, unadulterated wandering! Our love story and the road trips continue. An impromptu decision to stay in at Mhow. A day spent with tons of shopping, the mandatory chole kulche at Bhawarilal, catching the sunset over the Choral Dam, and crushing my diet and fitness goals at the iconic Sarafa bazaar at Indore. Probably the only vegetarian food street.

**Homecoming 6th November 2022 Mhow (MP) to Pune (Maharashtra)
Mhow to Pune via Nasik - 585 kms.**

The last leg begins! Josh is still very, very high! The home run: 31 days, 10,300 km from Pune to Pune across the northeast and international borders. Finally, the wheels are in! The last 31 days on the road have been a reminder that the smallest pleasures of life must be relished and cherished. It's all about the little things!



Lessons learnt

- **Breaking the age barrier** (if these boys can do this at their age, I have nothing to complain about).
- **Shattering stereotypes** (women can't drive! Well, this woman can, and trust me, she can give a man tough competition on the road (I am yet to meet a better driver, just being modest here); she did single-handedly 10,350 km on the worst possible terrain.
- **Resilience:** Where there is a will, you make the way!
- **Punctuality:** When the march-off for the day is 6 a.m., it better be 5.55 a.m. Every minute on the road, with limited daylight in the tough terrain, matters. The discipline of respecting everyone's time is important, and no one is better than the Faujis to teach this virtue.
- **Nothing is impossible.** Any rough patch is achievable with will and skill.
- **You are as strong as your weakest link.** Always carry the team along and be mindful of everyone's capacities and inhibitions.
- **Adversity** gives you an insight into who your friends are.
- **Tata Safari Dicor** is the king of the road, sustaining absolutely any terrain or weather! This boy remains the beast he is. The kind of abuse the beast has handled on the road is commendable. The dominance of Dicor on the road is unmatched.
- The next time you find yourself waving goodbye, take a glance in the rearview mirror of life, appreciate the view for a moment, and then enjoy the ride onto the untraveled roads. Who knows which adventure awaits to create more memories?
- For most of my road trips, I have a backup driver or a backup car; this time I was the adm vehicle and sure learned a lot of good stuff.
- We are deeply indebted to the culture we have in the army—always welcoming with a smile and hot pakora. Thanks to the Assam Rifles, the Eastern and Central Army Command.



Capt Uday K Shriwas was commissioned into the Corps of Signals and served in various theaters during his service for five years, including in a newly raised RR Battalion. Thereafter, he has worked with many renowned companies, like Kingfisher Airlines, IFB Home Appliances, JK Cement, and Yes Bank Ltd. He enjoys working in the fields of marketing, business development, and strategy. He also has a keen interest in the field of personal branding. He is presently working as Regional Head - Honour First (Defence Vertical), IDFC FIRST Bank.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Interview, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

Stars On The Horizon

Children of Defence Officers have the capability to excel in various fields, owing to their extensive exposure resulting from frequent transfers and change of stations. They possess very high adaptability skills, and immense potential as individuals. In this series we plan to showcase the achievements of such children of the members of Forces Network who are on the path to carve a niche for themselves through hard work, grit and determination, so as to provide adequate motivation to the others.

IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY SHRIWAS

Fatima Rizvi is the daughter of Col Bobby Rizvi. She is an avid golfer. She was encouraged to learn the game at a very young age and coached by her father in her initial days. Today, she stands to play in international tournaments. She has also excelled in school with A+ grades. She moved with her parents to Dubai in 2017 and was studying at Hartland School and practicing golf at Emirates Golf Course until 2018, when she got an offer from a golf academy in America. Currently, she is working towards studying at an NCAA Division 1 US college on a golf scholarship. She already has a couple of tournaments under her belt.



Uday: Please, tell us about your childhood and the life you spent in an Army environment. What's the best thing that Army life teaches you?

Fatima: Having an army childhood has taught me to be adaptable and to have a never-give-up attitude. And also, change is the only constant in life. This learning has helped me immensely.

Uday: What has been your childhood dream and any specific moments from your early childhood which left an imprint?

Fatima: My dream had always been to just enjoy life and play golf professionally. I faintly remember being at an Army gathering when I was about 7 years old or so with my parents, and it was on a golf course. I recall an uncle asking my name, and when I told him, he gave me a bright pink golf ball with my name on it. I loved the color. Moreover, I was shocked by the coincidence, and so was he. I couldn't wait to use that pink ball on the golf course.

Uday: Your early memories as you started playing Golf?

Fatima: I remember walking with my dad caddying for me on the golf course, whether it be a practice round or tournament; that in itself is very special to me.

Uday: How did you prepare for your Golf Career as you grew up playing in tournaments?

Fatima: I have always wanted to play in the US since the golf platform is much bigger there than in any other part of the world. Initially, I started playing tournaments in India and then my family moved to Dubai so that I could reach my goal of playing competitive golf in the US College Division 1 (best for student-athletes), which can further pave the way for my professional path.

Uday: It is evident that you decided to follow a certain path in Golfing. Could you please share more about the Journey so far?

Fatima: I started when I was three years old and entered tournaments when I was six. I quickly peaked at the top of my age group on the Indian Junior Golf Tour and qualified to represent India in the US, Australia, and Thailand. I moved to Dubai at the age of eleven to get my first coaching from a professional coach, as my dad had coached me previously as we moved constantly due to the Army lifestyle. From there, an athletic golf boarding school in the US scouted me when I was thirteen, and I have been doing my high school in the US since then.



Chasing The Dream

Uday: Would you like to talk about mentors and teachers who have guided you through your journey?

Fatima: My mom and dad have been my biggest supporters and mentors in my life. They took on so many roles from the get-go: teacher, coach, you name it.

Uday: And why do you think mentors or teachers are really important in our lives?

Fatima: Mentors are important in your life to help you grow into the person you aspire to be, especially as a teen when you are still figuring out who you want to be in life and what values you want yourself to represent.

Uday: What is your larger goal in life, and how are you preparing for it?

Fatima: I want golf to be an aspect of my life and I will work on achieving my goal of becoming a Professional Golfer. However, I also have ambitious goals apart from golf. I want to have my own Interior Design Company which allows me to flourish my artistic side. I wish to travel and design airports, hotels, and maybe even golf courses one day.



First tournament at AGC Delhi 2012

Uday: Any special memories of your time spent with your Army Cantonment Friends?

Fatima: I believe all my memories with my cantonment friends have been special to me, maybe even a little more than my other friendships. But one that sticks out to me the most is probably my eighth birthday in Dehradun. We had planned the event outside in the front yard of our house, but because of the monsoon season, the arrangements crashed minutes before the guests arrived. I still remember having so much fun, regardless of the circumstances, with my friends and dancing in the rain. It was a lot of fun!

Uday: There is a huge potential, especially in Fauji Kids. What would be your message to them?

Fatima: I think as Fauji kids, we share many skills and values like discipline, integrity, patriotism, and a sense of grit, which I consider to be very unique to us thanks to our Mom and Dad. I would advise you to follow what you want and give it your all because, in the end, we have a long life to live, so there isn't something like failure; just learn and keep doing what you do best.



Winning the qualifier for the Luckiest Ball on Earth

Uday: Would you like to share any experience which helped you immensely in your journey to becoming a better Golfer?

Fatima: Traveling and playing in various environments and conditions—thanks to golf I have been traveling ever since I can remember, whether it be long drives in India or international visits to foreign countries. Traveling has been the best method of learning and personality development for me. I have not only gained more knowledge of other countries but also different cultures and social interactions, even if they were from India.

Uday: Would you like to tell us about your achievements in the golf world?

Fatima: I was No. 1 in India's national ranking for under-10 girls at the age of seven and eight. I represented India in the US Kids Tournaments when I was seven and then I won a scholarship for Australia when I was eight to get professional coaching for a month and represent India in tournaments there. I also traveled with the Indian team to Thailand when I was nine and represented my country there. And I continue to represent India as I study in the US and have achieved many more wins in under-18 girls golf.

Uday: Any subjects/ social goals which you are passionate about and people need to be sensitized about?

Fatima: Being kind to others. I don't think people zone in on this aspect enough. And I don't just mean doing nice things for people, but rather not judging someone you don't understand. It is always about trying to extend that olive branch and include others because, at the end of the day, we are all new to something, whether it be a place, a skill, or a friend group. The least I could do is be kind and include others.

Uday: Anything that you would like to add as learning from your vast experience of having met players from different countries and varied cultures?

Fatima: I have had some of the best interactions with golfers from other countries and have made the best friends. Even though we are all from different cultures and have our own stories to tell, there are still some awesome people out



With Family

there that you just instantly get along with, and I was able to find them by building up the courage to talk to them first. I believe a simple 'hey' with a compliment can grow beautiful friendships everywhere.

Uday: Any interactions (engagements) that have remained with you and why?

Fatima: A couple of years ago, I won the qualifier for the Luckiest Ball on Earth, which then allowed me to play in the tournament with professional golfer Ross Fisher. I was paired with him in a team with my dad caddying for me, and we ended up winning. At the prize distribution ceremony, Ross Fisher mentioned me and gave me good words of encouragement at the podium, which still stuck with me.

Uday: As a professional golfer, what keeps you going?

Fatima: I am still technically an amateur, as you need to be a certain age and have certain qualifications to be a professional, which I aspire to be. Like any other student-athlete, I have my ups and downs as well, but what keeps me going is reminding myself of how far I have come and how hard I have worked to be where I am today.

Uday: What are the top 5 qualities that can help every individual to excel in any walk of life?

Fatima:

- Integrity
- Responsibility
- Grit & determination
- Self-Awareness.
- Time management



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Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Interview, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

Author of the Month

Ms. Adwika Singh

IN INTERACTION WITH RAJESH NAIR

Ms. Adwika Singh is the daughter of a serving gallantry award-winning officer, and her mother is a teacher and public speaking expert. She is 11 years old and studies in class 7 at Delhi Public School, Knowledge Park V. Prior to that, while studying at Loreto Convent School, she developed an interest in writing and started writing poems at age 9. 'Shouting in Silence' is all about her way of sharing strong thoughts that she wishes to yell out but does not. She has a passion for writing, painting, sketching, ballet dance and playing music on the piano. She loves traveling, eating and playing sports. She is aspirant to study in the field of law.



Rajesh: What inspired you to start writing?

Adwika: Books inspired me to start writing. I thought that if people could write books about a variety of subjects affecting them and their surroundings, I realised that even I could too!

Rajesh: What inspired you to write your first book of Poems?

Adwika: I saw many authors writing books on various genres, and because I was into poetry at that time, I could connect with them easily and thus write them easily. When I penned approximately 25 poems, I desired to publish them so that they could reach a larger audience. It is because of my hard work over the last two years that I could finish 42 poems.



At School

Rajesh: You have written 42 Poems covering areas of Lockdown, emotions, school, your pet, your eco system, nature and more. Why did you choose these areas to write poems upon? Any more details that you can share?

Adwika: I thought of reaching people in a unique and interesting way and making them aware through poetry! And because I started writing at the time of lockdown, I thought of sharing my experience and including it in one of my poems. We all have a different way of expressing our emotions, so I created a poem on that too. We all know about pollution in nature and how nature is important to us, so I wrote a poem about it to make people aware of protecting nature. Similarly, my unbound love for pets, my teachers from previous and present schools, my affection for tiny toddlers, my connection with friends, etc. could be easily translated into a poem.

Rajesh: Tofu has been an important part, tell us more about him?

Adwika: I am an animal lover, so when I was a toddler, my parents got me a dog (Rhino), to whom I was very attached. Unfortunately, due to some disease, he couldn't survive. After a few years, my parents got me another dog, Tofu! Whenever I came back from school, he would run and come to me happily. He is currently 1.5 years old. His unconditional love is mesmerising. Many people don't know about my pet rabbit, Duggu (the most docile of all), as I haven't written a poem about him which I will surely cover in future.

Rajesh: How do you gather ideas for writing a Poem?

Adwika: I just pen down my feelings and thoughts about the topic on which I'm writing the poem. I gather ideas from studying the topic and then twist them into a poem.



Fun Time with Parents

Rajesh: Children at your age read poems or stories, what motivated you to break the stereotypes?

Adwika: Just like I loved reading, I wanted people to cultivate a love for reading and subsequently, writing too! I started writing poems because stories don't have twisted meanings or emotion in them like poems do. I wanted to foster empathy and emotional intelligence in people through poems, with a dash of humor too!

Rajesh: Who was your mentor through your first book?

Adwika: I don't really have a mentor. Different authors and different books inspired me throughout my journey of two years.

Rajesh: What are the barriers or blocks you face while writing and how do you overcome them?

Adwika: The different barriers that I faced were:

- **Writer's block-** I struggled to generate ideas and got stuck sometimes in the writing process. I overcame this by brainstorming ideas and forming lines that don't mean anything but when combined together, form another poem!
- **Perfectionism-** I wanted every single poem to be perfect and flawless. But later, I learned to accept imperfections and focus on the process rather than the outcome.
- **Distractions/Time-Management-** I am a seventh grader, so studying is important for me, and during examination periods, I spent months without writing a single poem! But I overcame that barrier by writing many poems in the last month (almost 21).

Rajesh: What is your message to all those kids who plan to write a book but never really take up the effort to do so?

Adwika: I want to tell those people: Even when you feel like your stories are nothing and no one will like them, remember that every journey is a masterpiece and when you learn how to mold your stories into chapters, you come up with an incredible book! If you've started writing, you're already halfway there!

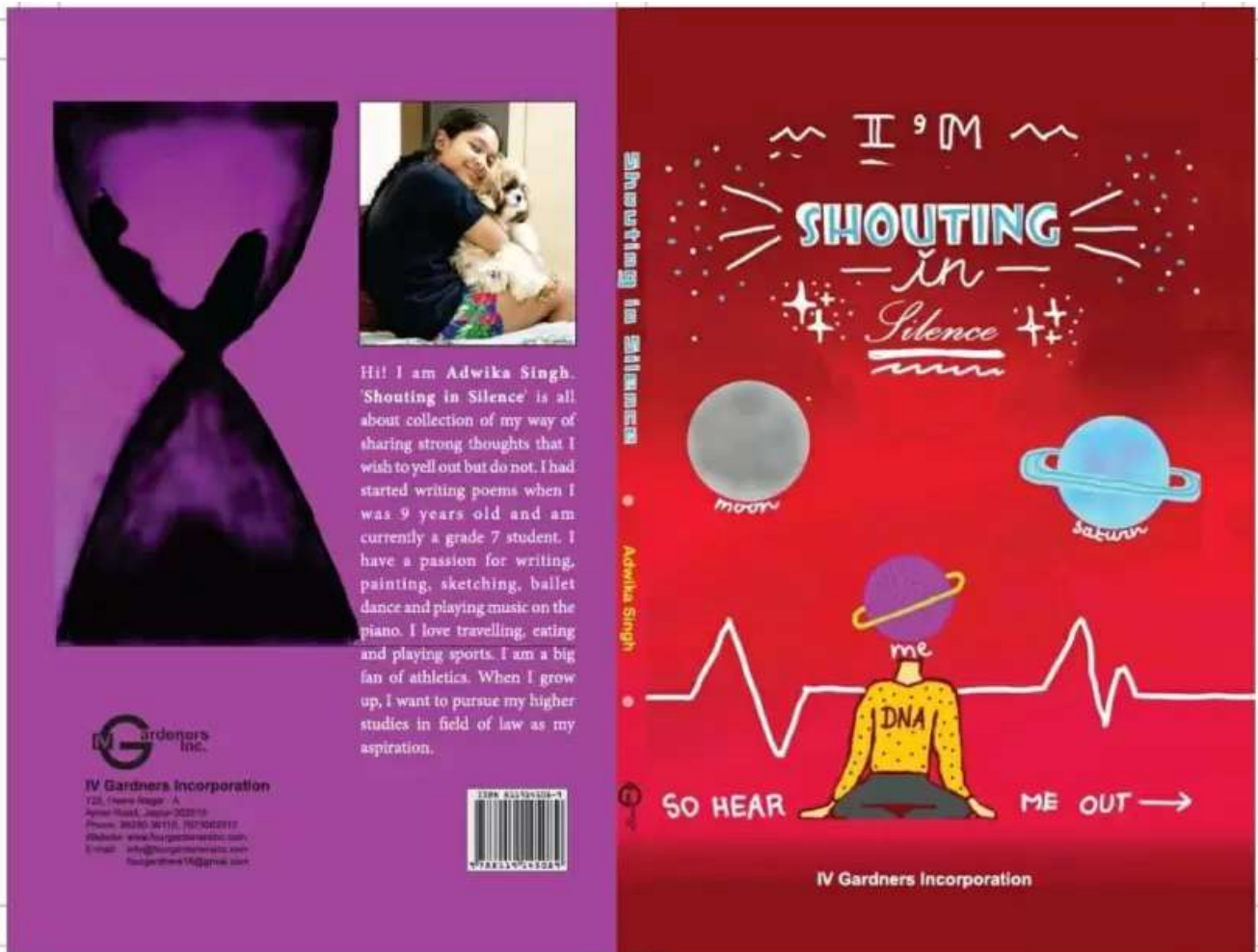


Ballet dance, my Passion!

Rajesh: You have yourself designed the front and back cover, what was the thought in designing same?

Adwika: For the front cover, I wanted to create the weirdest, silent, but dramatic place with my thoughts floating in the air (that's why the head is cut off), and I wanted people to explore my universe.

For the back cover, I created a silent, lonely place filled with dark emotion falling like sand in a sand clock. I wanted to create an ultimate loop of sadness because the last few of my poems are different from the others.



Self Designed Cover page

Book name : Shouting in Silence

Publishers : IV Gardners Incorporation

Available on: Flipkart

Price : Rs.695/- (purchase price)

Link : <https://dl.flipkart.com/s/1XPNoIINNNN>

**Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on the book, on the Website-
Editor**

Moment In Time

This photography section, "Moment in Time" provides an outlet for the creative side of our esteemed members. The rules for submission are as follows:

1. Forces Network members, spouses and their wards can submit images for publication.
2. No nudity or porn.
3. No mention of Mil establishments, unit identity, tac numbers or tail numbers.
4. It's a photography section, so no images of various get-togethers and social functions will be published.
5. The longer side of image should be 2048 pixels.
6. Maximum of five images will be published every month. The images must be submitted by the 20th of every month.
7. Mention your Instagram ID.
8. **While submitting, the following details should be submitted along with the suitable Title:**
 - a. Aperture
 - b. Shutter speed
 - c. ISO
 - d. Camera used
 - e. Lens
 - f. Focal length.
 - g. In the case of a mobile click, the same may be mentioned.

All Photos may please be sent to forcesnetworkz@gmail.com by 20th of every month.



***Fish & sunset - Nikon Coolpix P900, Aperture - 2.9, SS - 1/1600, ISO - 100, FL - 10mm
By Col Prashant Kakkar***



Leh - By Col BS Rai



Kashmir - By Col BS Rai



Squirrel- Nikon Coolpix P900, Aperture - 2.9, SS - 1/400, ISO - 400, FL - 357mm
By Col Prashant Kakkar



Candles- Nikon D700, Aperture - 1.6, SS - 1/800, ISO - 400, FL - 50mm
By Col Prashant Kakkar

Special Feature

A Celebration of Literary Freedom

*BEST SELLING AUTHOR SQN LDR MANISH KUMAR
IN INTERACTION WITH UDAY K SHRIWAS*

Sqn Ldr Manish Kumar is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and XLRI, Jamshedpur. He was commissioned in the Helicopter stream in June 1992. He was awarded the Chief of Air Staff Commendation in 2001 for two rescue operations. He left the service in 2006 and joined NIIT where he was instrumental in turning around a center. Later, he joined Shaurya Flight Sim as Chief Operations Officer. He has authored two books, *Be Your Own Pilot* and *My Comeback Trail*. He is also a motivational speaker and the President of MK Media which aims to promote new authors. His company also has a license for the import and export of books.



Uday: What inspired you to start writing?

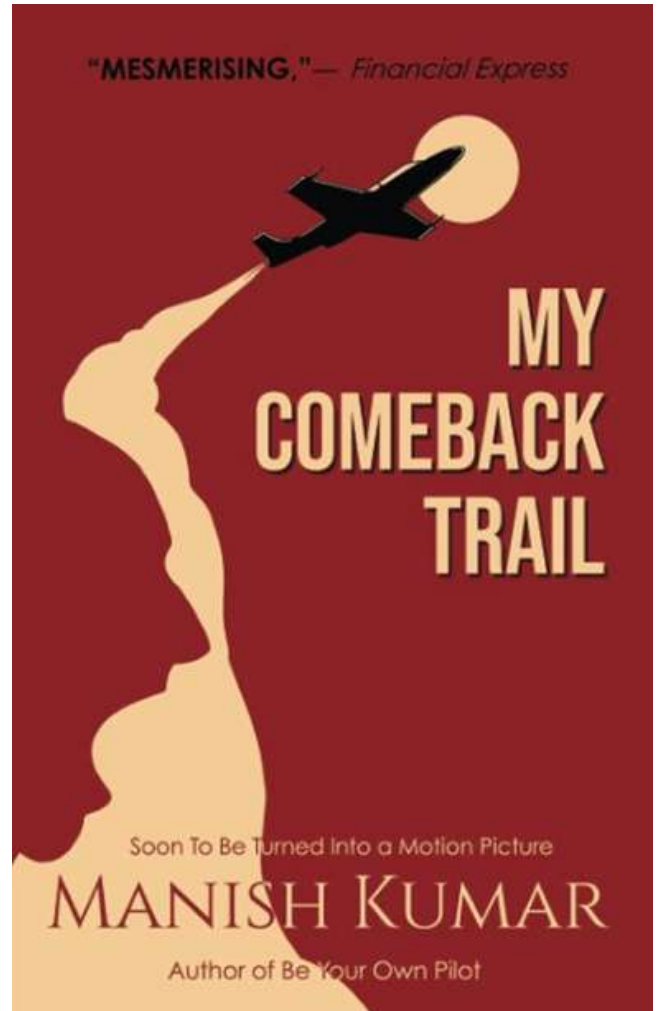
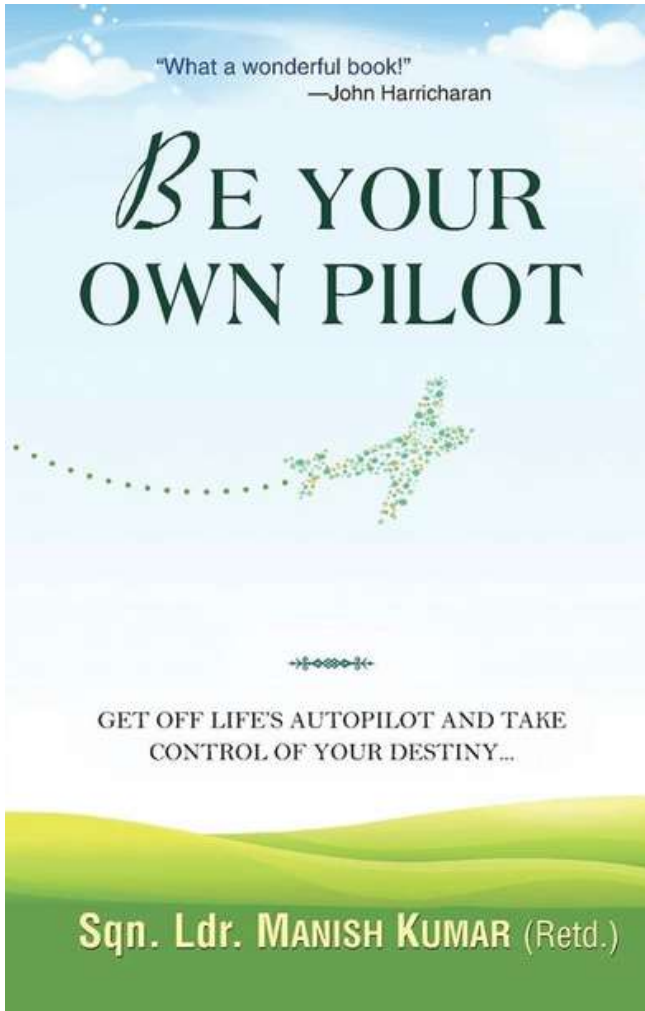
Manish: It is an interesting story. I was teaching a senior MD to fly at the simulator where I used flying as a metaphor for life. He suggested I pen down the wisdom in a book. I took a break from the job and searched for creative writing courses on the internet. One from Creative Writing Mahaguru John Harricharan caught my attention. John was a bestselling author of books like *When You Can Walk on Water*, *Take the Boat*, *Under a Tamarind Tree*, and several others. His books had sold millions of copies and been translated into many languages. He was a friend to Prince Philip, Muhammad Ali, the Dalai Lama, Dr. Deepak Chopra, etc.

The course was worth \$2500. I wrote to John and requested that he reduce the price or offer me the course on EMI. There was no reply. After some time, I sent him another email referring to the previous one, saying, "John, you must have read Indian mythology and come across Droncharrya and Eklavya. I have read all your books, watched all your videos, and gone through all the material that was available on the internet. Like Eklavya, I have taken you as my Guru of Creative Writing and begun writing my book. After a week, I got a reply from him saying, "Manish, you write the book. I will write the Foreword for it." And, in his Foreword, he compared 'Be Your Own Pilot' with Richard Bach's 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull' and predicted that the book will change millions of lives.

Uday: How do you gather ideas for writing a book?

Manish: By the grace of God, I have been blessed with a good visual memory which got sharpened during the flying training as pilots have to visualise a lot of things. I just

have to give words to these images. Apart from that, I am a voracious reader. You get a lot of ideas from reading other authors. One thing I strictly follow is that if I have an idea, I always note it down. Also, I make sure I am doing something creative every day. It necessarily doesn't have to be writing. It can be playing my guitar or violin or listening to some soulful music. It keeps the idea factory churning..



The first book, the latest...and, with more to follow

Uday: What is your process for creative writing? How do you go about writing a book? Tell us about how did you go about writing your latest book?

Manish: The first book, "Be Your Own Pilot" almost wrote itself. It was as if it were being dictated. I first conceptualized and decided on the chapter headings. The technique I use is "Write with your heart and then edit mercilessly with your brain." When I write, I let the ideas flow; even if they are irrelevant at the moment, I note them down for future use. Then, after I finish the first draft, I copy-paste the entire paragraph and read it out loud, looking for rhyme, rhythm, and jerks, and then edit it. There is a beautiful book called Hypnotic Writing by Joe Vitale that teaches how to engage all the senses of the reader so that they feel they are there at the scene.

My Comeback Trail was tough to write. It was a struggle between how to reveal and how much to reveal. Then there was a question of its acceptance, especially by my own

community. Martin Scorsese, the great film director, said, "The most personal is the most creative." And I let the barrage of emotions flow. It took me seven years to complete the book—three years to write it and another four to edit it.

Uday: Is it possible for anyone to write a book or at least a short story?

Manish: It is not only possible to write a book or a short story, but I suggest everyone must. Two books that will immensely help any budding writer are *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron and *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

If you write even one page a day, in 300 days you will have a decent-sized book. It's doable, and the joy of holding your new book is like holding your firstborn.

Uday: What are the barriers or blocks you face while writing, and how do you overcome them?

Manish: W. Somerset Maugham — 'I write only when inspiration strikes. Fortunately, it strikes every morning at nine o'clock sharp.' This quote helped me immensely along with the book *War of Art* by Steven Pressfield, to overcome the writer's block. I made it a point to do my writing at a particular time every day, even if it meant writing a few lines, editing a few pages, or reading the above books.



Signing books at WH Smith bookstore at Delhi Airport

Uday: Are you having any plans to write full length novels or writing in other categories/genres ? Please tell us about that.

Manish: I have three books in mind. The first is *On My Father's Pyre*. I lost my dad, a Capt of the Jat Regt who later became a District Judge, after seven years of coma. I stood by his pyre for three hours and had some revelations. The book will be about that.

The second, *Apprentice to a Modern Master*, is about meeting a Guru who helped me edit the book, wrote the Foreword and guided me tremendously in my spiritual evolution.

The third, called *The Doffles*, is about the various energies that

operate to help the author write a book and the readers to lead them to it.

I am also writing the script for the adaptation of My Comeback Trail into a movie with a Tamil director.

Uday: Did you self-publish your book? Can you share the steps involved in self-publishing?

Manish: I self-published my first book. Later, it was picked up by a publisher. What I learned was that ultimately the author must become a salesperson; otherwise, his or her book dies an unlamented death. We need to shed our inhibitions and promote our book relentlessly.

To overcome all these, we now have our own publishing house, MK Media, and we intend to promote new writers. We also have an import-export license, and we aim to take their work to international readers.



From the days of getting trained at NDA.....to becoming a trainer and conducting workshops

Uday: What is your message to all those people who have quit service or are planning to?

Manish: For SS officers and those leaving after a short tenure, my suggestion is to start planning early. I would even suggest keeping the entrepreneurial option open. There are books like Lucky or Smart, One Minute Entrepreneur, Zero to One, and Good



A happy family...with wife Sapna and son Abhaas

to Great, etc., which not only teach these skills but also how to build a successful company. There are a lot of officers who have taken this route and are doing very well. If this is not your option, then choose a company whose ethos and work culture resonate with yours. And then aim for the top.

For others who have done the full tenure, I would like them to follow their passion. If you still love challenges, the government is appointing retired officers as heads of PSUs. The CMD of Hindustan Salt is a retired naval officer who has turned around the company. Above all, whatever you do, enjoy yourself.

Uday: Finally, where can the readers lay hands on your books?

Manish: These can be found at this link <https://amzn.to/43xsIN1>



Capt Uday K Shriwas was commissioned into the Corps of Signals and served in various theaters during his service for five years, including in a newly raised RR Battalion. Thereafter, he has worked with many renowned companies, like Kingfisher Airlines, IFB Home Appliances, JK Cement, and Yes Bank Ltd. He enjoys working in the fields of marketing, business development, and strategy. He also has a keen interest in the field of personal branding. He is presently working as Regional Head - Honour First (Defence Vertical), IDFC FIRST Bank.

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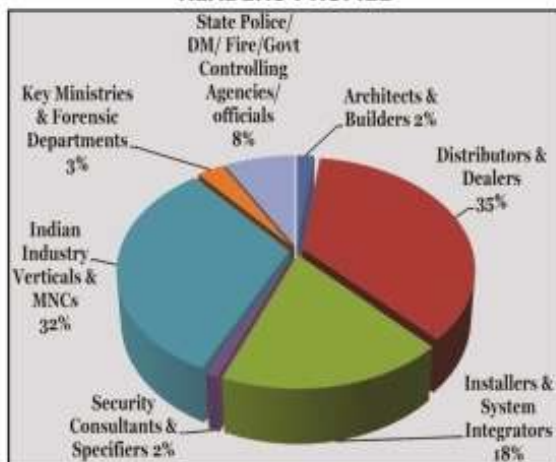
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Tech Corner

Cyber Security Primer Series – Part 7 Introduction to the Role of Chief Information Security Officer (CISO)

BY IQBAL SINGH

Introduction

Due to the ongoing relentless digitization, businesses, as well as their customers, are interacting with digital platforms like never before. But this digital disruption also comes with a number of vulnerabilities in the cybersecurity space for organizations. This is why the demand for experienced cybersecurity professionals is at an all-time high. Research has found cyberattacks are launched 2,244 times a day—that's every 39 seconds. The average cost of a data breach is \$3.9 million. According to Cybersecurity Ventures, between 2013 and 2021, the number of vacant cybersecurity positions worldwide grew by 350% to 3.5 million. They also predict that between 2021 and 2025, the number of companies with board members and C-suite executives from a cybersecurity background will increase from 17% to 35%, respectively. As a result, the leading cybersecurity role of the Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) will be in high demand in the coming years. It makes it important for anyone interested in this space to understand what a CISO is and why they matter.

What makes this role more interesting for veterans is that military personnel are well suited to fill it; this is validated by the fact that a large number of CISOs in companies are veterans.

What Does a CISO's Role Do?



A CISO is a role with Multiple Responsibilities

The CISO is the senior-level executive responsible for the organization's information security program. The CISO is responsible for developing and implementing an information security program that includes procedures and policies designed to protect enterprise communications, systems, and assets from both internal and external threats. The CISO may also work alongside the chief information officer to procure cybersecurity products and services and manage disaster recovery and business continuity plans. The CISO must also be able to communicate effectively with both technical and non-technical audiences.

The CISO may also be referred to as the chief security architect, the security manager, the corporate security officer, or the information security manager, depending on the company's structure and existing titles. When the CISO is also responsible for the overall corporate security of the company, which includes its employees and facilities, he or she may simply be called the chief security officer (CSO).

Evolution of a CISO's Role

While it is clear how vital the CISO role is today, this wasn't always the case. Even in the IT and cybersecurity industries, there used to be considerable confusion regarding the role of a CISO when a CIO already existed. Since businesses had limited cybersecurity vulnerabilities, they rarely hired CISOs. Further, given the back-office nature of their work, a CISO who did their job correctly would not get noticed as much.

But the world has changed, and the role of the CISO has acquired considerable importance. Initially, the CISO was limited to focusing only on security strategy, but now they are expected to consider long-term business strategies and have a higher level of involvement in the leadership team. They need to proactively consider threats and implement preventative measures to combat them while keeping business goals in mind.

Having a CISO or an equivalent function in organizations has become standard practice in business, government, and non-profit organizations. By 2009, approximately 85% of large organizations had a security executive, up from 56% in 2008 and 43% in 2006. In 2018, The Global State of Information Security Survey 2018 (GSISS), a joint survey conducted by the CIO, CSO, and PwC, concluded that 85% of businesses have a CISO or equivalent. The role of CISO has broadened to encompass risks found in business processes, information security, customer privacy, and more. As a result, there is a trend now to no longer embed the CISO function within the IT group. In 2019, only 24% of CISOs report to a chief information officer (CIO), while 40% report directly to a chief executive officer (CEO), and 27% bypass the CEO and report to the board of directors. Embedding the CISO function under the reporting structure of the CIO is considered suboptimal, because there is a potential for conflicts of interest and because the responsibilities of the role extend beyond the nature of the responsibilities of the IT group.

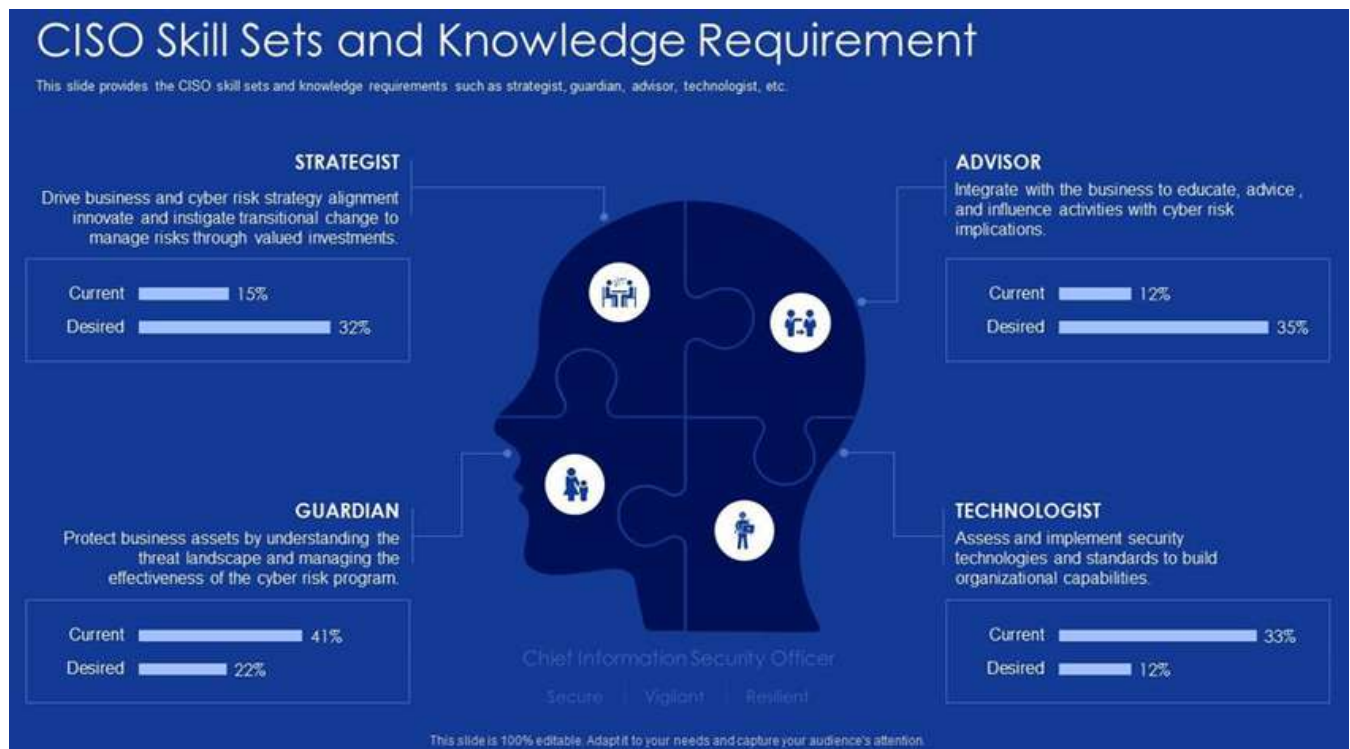
Responsibilities of a CISO

The responsibilities of a CISO vary from organization to organization, but some common responsibilities include:

- Developing and implementing security policies and procedures.
- Managing the security team.
- Overseeing the security of the organization's data and systems.
- Conducting security audits.
- Responding to security incidents.
- Educating employees on security best practices.
- Staying up-to-date on the latest security threats.
- Cybersecurity.
- Disaster recovery and business continuity management.
- Identity and access management.
- Information privacy.
- Information regulatory compliance (e.g., US PCI DSS, FISMA, GLBA, HIPAA; UK Data Protection Act 1998; Canada PIPEDA, Europe GDPR).
- Information risk management.
- Information security and information assurance.
- Information security operations centre (ISOC)
- Information technology controls for financial and other systems
- IT investigations, digital forensics, eDiscovery

Skills and Qualifications of a CISO

The CISO must have a strong understanding of information security principles and practices. The CISO should also have experience in risk management, auditing, and incident response. In addition to technical skills, the CISO must also have strong leadership and communication skills.



A CISO needs Skills Across a Wide Spectrum of Areas

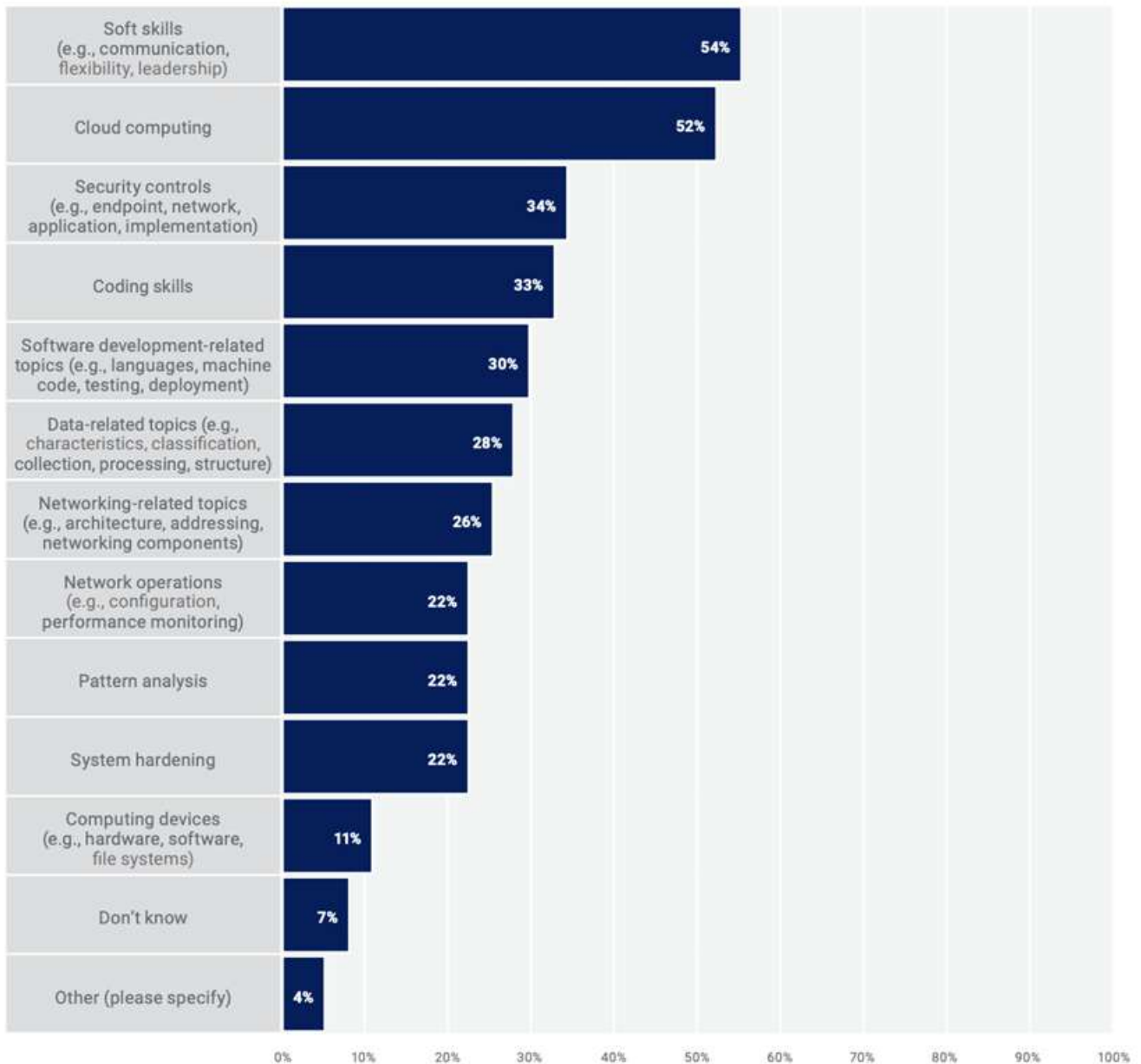
Certifications

There are a number of certifications that can help a CISO advance their career. Some of the most popular certifications for CISOs include:

- Certified Information Systems Security Professional ([CISSP](#)).
- Certified Information Security Manager ([CISM](#)).
- Certified Ethical Hacker ([CEH](#)).
- Information Systems Security Architecture Professional ([ISSAP](#)).
- Information Systems Security Engineering Professional ([ISSEP](#)).

Skills Gap

Despite a plethora of courses and certifications, the industry is plagued by a skills gap. Refer to the infographic below.



What are the biggest skill gaps you see in today's cybersecurity professionals? (Source: ISACA State of Cybersecurity 2022)

A Typical Day in the Life of a CISO

So what does an average working day look like for the CISO of a mid-size or large enterprise? The answer to this question is culled from the feedback received from a few CISOs in this role. This question is intended to give insights into the security, compliance and operational challenges a CISO faces on a day-to-day basis. The most common response we got was that there's no such thing as an 'average' day: there are always new, unexpected events and issues that have to be dealt with, alongside all of the CISO's other responsibilities.



A Typical Day in the Life of a CISO

Here's a description of a **'day in the life of a CISO.'**

- **Intelligence Updates:** Most CISOs begin their working day with a situation report, checking on their organization's current security status for new or emerging risks, as well as for any significant security-related headlines through trusted media sources. This helps identify any urgent issues or potential concerns that need investigating. Often times, the CISO will then bring these issues into the workday that follows.
- **Daily Stand-Ups:** Meetings, and a lot of them, are a mainstay of the CISO's day. One of the responsibilities of the CISO is to liaise across departments, so regular stand-up sessions with a range of staff, from the organization's CIO to IT and application teams, are important. Much like an agile software development process, the focus of the stand-up meetings is 'what's happening, what are we working on, and what do we need to achieve today?' Any changes to or issues in the organization's applications or IT infrastructure have security implications, so it's vital for the CISO to understand all changes that are planned or in progress.
- **Change Control:** Following the daily stand-up, there's likely to be a change control meeting with the application and security teams looking at a specific project, such as provisioning a new application, and evaluating the changes that will be required to network connectivity, security policies, and compliance.
- **Consulting With Support Services:** CISOs use a range of support, consulting, and training services from organizations such as the Information Systems Security Association (ISSA), the Institute for Applied Network Security (IANS), and others. They will attempt to spend some time during the week talking or meeting with these organizations to get advice and share information and updates, but often, there's simply no time for this because of a multitude of other activities.

- **Audits:** A huge part of the CISO role involves managing audits and regulatory compliance processes. Typically, a CISO will have a dozen or more audits on his hands at any one time and will either be preparing for an upcoming audit, responding to requests for compliance information from external partners or clients that the organization is working with, or meeting with an external auditor. Gathering all the documentation and providing evidence of compliance is hugely time-consuming.
- **Meeting with the Board:** CISOs usually report to the CIO, who sits on the board. The CISO's position is often that of the interface between the 'business' and 'IT' sides of the organization, so CISOs spend a lot of time preparing for and attending board meetings to discuss organizational risk, security and compliance. This also means they need to be fluent in both the strategy and the technical issues that will enable the business to remain secure and compliant.
- **Expecting the Unexpected:** In addition to all of these activities, the CISO's day could easily be derailed by an unexpected event, such as a hacking attempt, data breach, malware outbreak, or application outage. When such an event occurs, the CISO will work with his security operations center (SOC) team to quickly figure out what's going on and which business processes are or potentially will be affected.

Dealing with these contingencies will also likely involve urgent meetings with members of the IT and security teams, or even the PR team, the board and legal advisers, depending on the type and scale of the incident.

All of these activities certainly make for a hectic schedule, and CISOs are constantly racing against time. But no matter what the working day throws at them, the CISOs' constant number-one priority is to keep the company's data and networks secure against attacks, outages, and other disruptions. And given the ever-growing number of change requests, audits, security events, and more that CISOs and their teams need to handle, it's no surprise that there's increasing demand for security automation. Not only to handle routine 'keeping the lights on' tasks within organizations but also to strengthen their overall security posture, reduce outages, cut audit preparation time, improve compliance, and free up time for strategic business-driven initiatives.

Conclusion

The future of cyber security is bright. The demand for cyber security professionals is expected to grow significantly in the coming years. This is due to the increasing number of cyberattacks and the growing sophistication of cyber threats. Military veterans have the skills and experience that employers are looking for in cyber security professionals. However, they need to upskill themselves with the relevant certifications and also keep themselves updated on the latest security trends in the industry.

The role of CISO is both challenging and rewarding. CISOs play a critical role in protecting their organizations from cyberattacks. According to a 2021 survey by ISACA, 16% of CISOs in the United States are military veterans. This is up from 12% in 2019. The survey also found that military veterans are more likely to be CISOs at larger companies and in the financial services industry. Even in India, the role of CISO is held in many large companies by veterans. There are a number of reasons why military veterans are well-suited for the role of CISO. First, they have a strong understanding of risk management and security. Second, they are used to working in complex and challenging environments. Third, they have strong leadership and communication skills. If you are interested in a career in information security, the CISO role is a great option.



Lt Col Iqbal Singh (retd) is a former infantry officer who started his career with the Garhwal Rifles in Dec 1987. He is currently a senior technology executive with a Big Tech firm based in Gurgaon. He is firmly of the belief that tech is an enabler and your friend. He is the founder of **Forces Network**, a network of military veterans in corporate. His message to comrades-in-arms has been: "Do NOT be afraid of tech but embrace it". In line with his thinking he relishes breaking stereotypes, crashing glass ceilings, and doing the seemingly impossible. He believes that there are no barriers; all the barriers exist only in one's mind. It was with that firm conviction that Iqbal started the now famous **ABCT (Any Body Can Tech)** Program in the Forces Network in 2019. Under this program, non-tech officers were taken to the cloud certification level. Over 40 participants got certified by Microsoft in cloud computing under this program. This launched the tech careers of many of these participants. Iqbal believes that cyber security as a career is set to boom. He is convinced that military personnel can easily transition to cyber security with some upskilling. Accordingly, he has authored a series of articles demystifying cyber security. The current article is the sixth to appear in the ForceNet E-Zine as part of the series.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Article, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

Leisure AMID NATURE

BY VAISHNAVI SHARMA

Full of water, air and sand,
I treat nature as my Motherland.
Nature has trees, plants and breeze,
Seeing all of them, I freeze.

When it rains, it lightens,
But I see the children frighten.
When comes the bright sunshine,
Even the dark clouds resign.

Leaves are green, yellow or pink
Seeing the variety, children think.
When the beautiful flowers bloom,
Enemies of nature start to gloom.

Birds build their quality nest,
Which always passes safety test.
Barks of the tree are dark and brown,
Many of them are medicinal crown.

Trees to live need carbon dioxide,
Oxygen released gives us food of life.
Nature gives us everything,
Cost of saving, could be anything.



Ms. Vaishnavi Sharma is a Class X student in Army Public School Saugor, MP. She is the daughter of an army officer who is currently stationed at Saugor. She has a flair for writing and she has done two creative writing courses Module 1 & 2 with British Council to enhance her writing skills.

Please provide your invaluable opinion/feedback on this Poem, by clicking/tapping [HERE](#) - Editor

Leisure

GO ON

BY UDAY SHRIWAS

**Go On
The Life we New
Time to give it a Fresh Brew**

**Go On
Explore something new
There is always time for ReNew**

**Go On
Choose a New Craze
And you can find way out of Maze**

**Go On
Give it a Try
Coz' the Motto is Never Say....**

**Go On
Learn a new Skill
So what if it takes a Strong Will**

**Go On
Chase new Dreams
Care less for other's Fancies and Whims**

**Go On
Paint your Heart Pink
Love starts with a cute Wink,**

**Go On
Burn the midnight Oil
If you love it, then it is never a Toil**

**Inside you, there is a voice
Go On.... listen to it
Guide it will, to Make the RIGHT CHOICE**

**Go On
Why Not Run
Sometimes you must choose fun**

**Go On
Be the Leading Light
You just need a spark
To turn Dark into Bright**

**Go On
And feel Brand New sort
Haze and Maze... will get sort**

**Go On
Make way and take that Bend,
At times It is US who must amend**

Go on... Go On... G O...oonnnn



***Capt Uday K Shriwas** was commissioned into the Corps of Signals and served in various theaters during his service for five years, including in a newly raised RR Battalion. Thereafter, he has worked with many renowned companies, like Kingfisher Airlines, IFB Home Appliances, JK Cement, and Yes Bank Ltd. He enjoys working in the fields of marketing, business development, and strategy. He also has a keen interest in the field of personal branding. He is presently working as Regional Head - Honour First (Defence Vertical), IDFC FIRST Bank.*

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