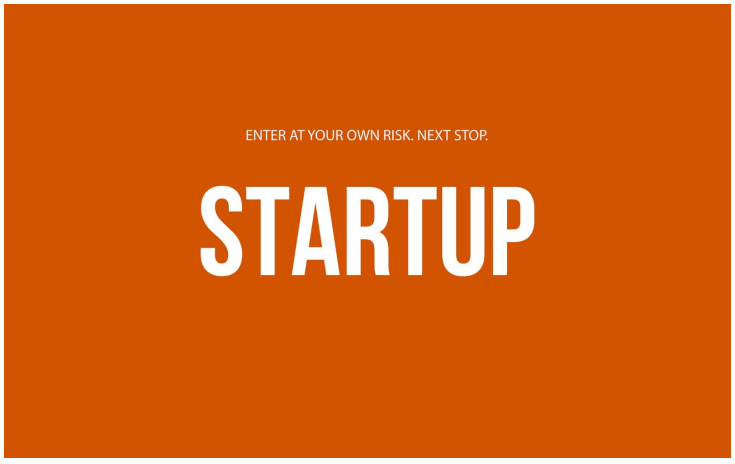
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Hot Start-up: The exclusive scientist-cum-entrepreneur

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Hot Start-up: The exclusive scientist-cum-entrepreneur



While brainstorming ideas for his venture, he saw the need for high quality data analysis services - by scientists and for scientists.

He recognized it as an opportunity for revenue generation and 'real value addition' to the scientific community.

Convinced about the thrust, he started Shodhaka Life Sciences in 2009.

He also believed that a long-term goal of achieving better diagnostics will be possible with novel approach for better biomarker identification.

Today, he also serves as a core faculty member and scientist at IBAB (Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology), in Bangalore, where Shodhaka is incubated at the institute's business incubator.

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He pursued his post-doctoral research at the prestigious Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and at the University of Virginia, USA.

Explains Dr Kshitish, "Initially, after my post-doctoral stint at the US, I wanted to be a part of the rapidly growing Indian organizations and contribute to the growth further."

Shodhaka is now focusing on providing the much required, high-quality data analysis services and training for scientists, working in different areas in the Life Sciences.

"We have been particularly focusing on data from mass scale techniques such as NGS (Next-Generation Sequencing) and microarrays. But we have also been active in biocuration and biostatistical analysis of smaller scale data in special domains such as health sciences, and as well as custom-designing biological databases and software.

"We are the only team, perhaps in the world, that dedicates a huge amount of time and effort in compiling and studying the bioinformatics resources carefully. Our public portal 'startbioinfo.com' will make a huge difference in Life Sciences and to researchers in the field for bioinformatics analysis," he elucidates.

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Dr Kshitish managed to self-fund his company. At times, he also sought the help from some of his friends and fellow scientists.

This scientist-cum-entrepreneur says that he had no clue about running a business when he started.

"I knew nothing about business and have been handling two responsibilities -- as a faculty and an entrepreneur. In addition, poor networking and marketing caused a little setback. But I am glad that the loyalty and personal spread of appreciation by our clients has been helping us so far," he adds.

Dr Kshitish voices that the company now is at crossroads.

"We could partner with like-minded scientists and expand in phases, or bring in bigger investments. Bigger investments will help us to prioritize on diagnostics and prognostics over the next five years. Otherwise, we would continue offering services in the areas of data analysis, biocuration, development of databases and software. If we get bigger investments, we would like to be the world's leading data analysis service providers," he reveals.

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The company intends to reach potential clients from as many countries as possible, but it is not keen on opening other business branches elsewhere.

Apart from IBAB, Shodhaka at the moment has collaborations with Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) and another start-up.

It is also hoping to partner with companies in the area of marketing. "We are also looking for investors who understand research-based companies," states Dr Kshitish.

The last financial year was quite positive for Shodhaka. "Seeing the positive balance-sheet in the last financial year is a sign that we are finally making business sense too," he exclaims happily.

To help internship applicants at IBAB, who otherwise had to travel long distances for written entrance tests, Dr Kshitish started the Shodhaka Online Test System (SOTS).

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"This has turned into an accidental product. Many organizations such as IBAB, Centre for Human Genetics (CHG), Karnataka Biotechnology and Information Technology Services (KBITS) and a multinational biotech company have used the system to short list applicants for their courses or jobs. We have now applied a new algorithm and developed a Job-Suitability-Assessment system (SOTS-JSA) that can assist students in career planning, and help recruiters by creating a useful database to screen suitable candidates for specific jobs," he highlights.

According to Dr Kshitish, there are two aspects for thriving innovation.

"Allowing employees to grow in their area of interests, and focusing on the objectives of projects without bothering too much about money matters," he says.

As an entrepreneur, Dr Kshitish is a fan of Infosys founder Mr N R Narayana Murthy

Dr Kshitish's other passions include human resource development and management.