

The Hues Of Hospitality

SUDHIR AHUJA TELLS BINDU GOPAL RAO ABOUT THE JOYS OF BEING AN ENTREPRENEUR WHILE ALSO BEING ABLE TO GIVE BACK TO SOCIETY

Having armed himself with an MBA in Marketing & Research and a Post Graduate Degree in Management from the S.P. Jain Institute of Management Research, Mumbai, Sudhir Ahuja's mantra in life is simple. "Logic will take you from A to B, but creativity and imagination will take you everywhere. An ardent believer of this thought, my actions have always been propelled by creativity and innovative ideas, with a blend of out of the box thinking."



This is why Sudhir was always clear that he wanted to chart his own course in spite of the existing family business (children's garments). Starting with his own men's designer t-shirt brand, he worked hard in his role as merchant supplier to launch a collection for Lawman - a turning point in his life. "Then there was no looking back! For the next two years, it was Lawman, Spykar, and a few export orders in between too. We went from a 720 sq ft factory with five workers to a three floored 6000 sq ft factory in three years with a workforce of 62 making around 500 T-shirts on a regular basis." He later launched his own brand Mon Caban for designer tees and casual shirts, but eventually shifted his focus to hospitality.

Having been to a variety of pubs in the course of his travels, Sudhir soon realized that his hometown of Kolkata was missing a good pub that served finger food. And so, Bakstage was born! "We worked on the concept and space to give the city a theme that they know and love, but were starved to see - rock and retro. After this I knew I wanted to take things up a notch and do something drastic again, hence, Motor Works and Brewing Company (MWBC) was set up. Whereas Bakstage is animated rock, MWBC is grunge and sunshine, two dramatic themes."

Sudhir's newest project is a rooftop, lake facing, all-you-can-eat concept scheduled to open by the winter of 2019, along with a 60-room boutique hotel above the existing property that houses Bakstage on the first floor and MWBC on the ground floor. The seven storied building will also have a plush banquet with state-of-the-art facilities, world cuisine, and a space that can be used for social and corporate events alike.

As part of his social commitment, Sudhir has also launched Bakstage Gives, an initiative where he partners with various organisations to empower the less fortunate. "We most recently invited a group of street kids and another group of house help all for a dining experience," he shares.

Sudhir believes in leading by example and with fitness being a part of his core belief system, discipline matters. "I ensure that my team is healthy and works in an ethical manner. The meals the staff has while working are nutrition based with eggs, chicken, fish and a healthy serving of vegetables. Deliveries to nearby homes and offices are done on a cycle on a rotational basis. At both Bakstage and MWBC, I want to ensure my team does its best so that our patrons get the best. There are no shortcuts to a great cocktail and definitely no quick way to make a meal!"

His advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is simple. "Just answer