

## **BUMGA GROUP OF COMPANIES:**

### **A TALE OF BOOM AMIDST GLOOM**



#### **Siddharth Balachandran**

When the real estate and construction boom started fizzling out, several big players in the sector crumbled almost overnight. With his analytical ability and an emphasis on professionalism, Siddharth Balachandran has successfully led the Bumga Group right through the turbulent days for the sector.

Construction and Education may appear to have little in common, but for a professional they are both areas where brands can be built and success achieved. Ask Siddharth Balachandran, Managing Director of the Bumga Group and he will vouch for the fact that professionalism can win the day whether one is running a travel and tourism institution that offers training courses, or managing a diversified conglomerate in the construction sector.

Siddharth, in his role as Managing Director of the Bumga Group, is responsible for strategy formulation and implementation, as well as continuous improvement of internal policies and expansion plans of the group. And that is not an easy job, considering that the Bumga Group is involved in different verticals of the building and construction sector.

The Bumga Group comprises of four companies, namely Builders Merchants (established in the year 1968), Bumga Enterprises (established in 1971), Bumga FZCO (established in 2004) and Bumga Building Material Trading LLC, Abudhabi (established in 2008). Builders Merchants specializes in high quality building materials, structural steel, timber, timber-related products and deformed bars, Bumga Enterprises is a service provider dealing in a wide range of general hardware items and light engineering equipments, and Bumga FZCO is strategically located at Jebel Ali Free Zone, the world renowned business hub. Bumga Building Material Trading LLC is the latest addition to the group as part of its strategy of geographical zone expansion into the emirate of Abudhabi.

After five good years in business in Dubai when the property and construction segments were booming, there was the downturn as well, but the Bumga Group was among the few that negotiated the turbulent phase rather well.

## **Trained to Succeed**

It may appear that Siddharth was lucky to be in the building sector just when the market was taking off. Fact is, that he is an experienced professional in management of an enterprise. Along with his role in the top management team of Bumga Group, Siddharth is the Executive Director of SB Global Educational Resources Pvt Ltd, India, and before that he had a stint as Strategic Accounts Manager at Dun & Bradstreet Information Services in 1999. In addition to these responsibilities, Siddharth also serves as a Director on the Boards of Jaihind TV Pvt Ltd, a leading regional language TV channel based in Kerala, and Waste 2 Energy Pvt Ltd, (A joint venture between the Chamber of Commerce, Kochi and W2E Inc, a USA based company) an alternate energy generating company based in Kochi, Kerala. He is also the Chairman of Sreevaas Roofing Pvt Ltd, Chennai and Vishram Hospitality Pvt Ltd, an establishment that has significant stakes in many 5 star hotels in India.

In his role as part of the top management team of SB Global Educational Resources Pvt Ltd in the travel and tourism educational sector, corporate training, career coaching and employability skills – one of the leaders in its category in India with a number of institutes across the country – Siddharth had already proved his mettle. Patriot Aviation College, a wholly owned subsidiary of S B Global, received a certificate of recognition for “high graduate success rating” in 2009 for IATA training in India.

Patriot Aviation College helps in moulding a cadre of professionals for the airline, airport, travel and tourism industry, and offers the internationally –recognized IATA, UFTAA and FIATA courses alongside a combination of related courses.

SB Global conducts coaching and test preparation for careers in corporate finance, Law, Management and also the listed study partner of CIMA while another offering, 'Spark', offers a refreshingly new approach to meet the genuine need of the youth in Kerala to enhance communication skills in English for greater employability and career growth.

With a faculty of over 50, SB Global is quickly expanding across India, and the institute lays special emphasis on personality development and employability skills. Siddharth, the Executive Director of S B Global, is a firm believer that Indian students have an edge when it comes to intelligence but lose out on opportunities because they do not hone their personality character attributes well enough.

The latest initiative by Siddharth under SB Global is Project SPARKLE -- a unique programme for fresh, inexperienced BEd graduates in Kerala, who are unable to get jobs as Teachers. The project extends a 100% scholarship to eligible applicants from economically weaker segments of the population.

Siddharth says: “Teachers are the soul of a school. They are primarily responsible for the quality and caliber of the students who pass out after completing their schooling. There is an emerging crisis in school education because of the non- availability of 'good ' teachers. Many of the fresh BEds are ‘NOT EMPLOYABLE’. In spite of having the requisite qualifications they lack many of the skills required in a school of today. Subject knowledge alone is not enough.”

Project Sparkle is a 45-day intensive Finishing programme with campus interviews / placement assistance. The course fees , subsidized 50% by the SBG Educational Trust , includes training fees, course materials, field trips, a set of professional attire etc. In the first year itself, PROJECT ‘SPARKLE’ aims at transforming 1000 fresh, inexperienced, graduate teachers across Kerala, into Confident Teachers with a Sparkling Attitude!

Photo: The women and children fund.

## **Tapping the Tech Potential**

SB Global IT Academy, part of the group, projects itself as the ideal platform to launch one's career or add value to one's skills in information technology. The academy provides training in all IT verticals so as to make students employable through short term courses.

The academy also offers a range of globally valid courses and certification in IT, giving working professionals the opportunity to choose from different courses to sharpen their skills, keep abreast of the latest developments in the field, and propel their careers.

The course modules are designed to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical application so that the students get better exposure to and understanding of the subjects. The management of S B Global has ensured that all courses are delivered by experienced professionals.

## **Young Achiever**

Born on June 1, 1976 in Thiruvananthapuram to R Balachandran and Sabitha Varma Balachandran, Siddharth has set a scorching pace on the track of achievements. Siddharth had the advantage of a good lineage, too. His mother hails from the Travancore royal family, and is a descendant of the legendary painter Raja Ravi Varma. His father, Mr. R Balachandran, is a respected figure in the management and entrepreneurial circles of Kerala. His paternal grandfather, Justice K. S. Rajamony, was a revered personality in the region's law and order fraternity.

Siddharth studied at the Chinmaya Vidyalaya, Ernakulam, and prior to that, in Chennai, before doing his civil engineering at the Mysore University where he came out with flying colors, being ranked fourth in his branch. He then proceeded to do a Masters in International Business from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (in collaboration with the PSG Institute of Management, Coimbatore).

Recognition was quick to come. Siddharth was elected Chairman of India Club, Dubai in 2010 and at 33 years, the youngest ever, and the first south Indian, to be accorded this honor. At the age of 31, he became the youngest ever Chief Patron Trustee of the Indian Social and Cultural Centre, Abu Dhabi, where the other chief patrons are stalwarts like MA Yusuffali, BR Shetty and Syed Salahuddin.

Siddharth sets aside 20% of his net profit for charity, including the Science India Forum, UAE, of which he is a patron, where an attempt is made to inculcate scientific knowledge in children. Siddharth also supports the Dubai Autism Center for children in Dubai and the Abu Dhabi centre for special needs. In the month of August in 2011, Siddharth, in conjunction with the Consulate General of India in UAE, set up a fund for women and children affected by the economic downturn in Dubai. He contributed the seed fund of AED 500,000/- (USD 150,000/-).

## **Facing up to Challenges**

The global recession presented difficult times to entrepreneurs across industries and the construction sector was among the worst affected. Siddharth, however, is unfazed by the current state of affairs. He is waiting out for the bad times to pass, and is ready with strategies for the future.

There has been no lay-offs in his company, and Siddharth has backed his team through the troubled times. "Consolidation is the key factor now", says Siddharth, as he exudes confidence about the industry bouncing back. With his ability to analyse the dynamics of the economy and his acumen to spot the right opportunities, the trajectory for the Bumga Group can only be northward.