

the shape of

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WORK

by Linchpin™ magazine

THE **small** BUT MIGHTY

inaugural edition

Featuring small giants.
Businesses that choose
to be exceptional
instead of chasing
unicorn dreams.



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Linchpin (noun)

/ˈlɪn(t)ʃpɪn/

A pivotal force that holds a group, enterprise, organisation, or system together.

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editor's note

Notice how business stories all start to sound alike after a while? This is what we do. Look at how many customers we acquired. How big we got. Did you hear about our latest valuation? Our newest acquisition? This is where we'll be in five years. But sometimes, success isn't about any of these things.

So, for this, our first edition of The Shape of Work, we deliberately set out to find folks who run small companies and run them small on purpose. None of them set out to be the biggest at anything; they chose instead to focus on the work and who they're building for. Exactly the kind of person this magazine was built for: people who do the work with intention but aren't waiting around to be noticed for it.

Like [Anand](#), co-founder of Indexnine Technologies,

who, in a world obsessed with size and scale, refuses to chase unicorn dreams,

like [Mallika](#), who never set out to build an empire and ended up running Super Engineers anyway. She took a family firm and made it something the industry pays attention to, quietly, without ever needing the room to turn and look,

like [Anish](#), who puts relationships over revenue, and proves every day that when done right, the journey matters just as much as the next destination,

and like [Nitin](#), who works on the air we breathe indoors and won't let it become the sort of thing people only worry about when the season turns.

Not every entrepreneur dreams of the limelight or notoriety. Some, like the Linchpins in this edition, just want to do their bit.

We hope you enjoy getting to know them as much as we did.

– Karina

volume

one





small but mighty

Our ambition was to sustainably grow,
never to look at it as a numbers game.

If it's not already a well-established brand, almost every business today seems to be a startup. At least if you go by all the talk you hear about achieving 10x growth, VC funding, unicorn status, and going public. And to a large extent, our conception of what it means to do business is shaped by public conversations about such startups and large public companies that are household names.

The public focus on companies that are large or

aspiring to be large makes it seem that bigger is always better, that a business must keep growing else it risks dying out altogether. But the truth is that such businesses i.e. those designed to be scaled, make up a small proportion of all the businesses around us. There are a large number of small, privately owned businesses that are successful, financially healthy, and growing at a steady pace – and there is great value in this.

In his book *Small Giants: Companies that choose to be great instead of big*, Bo Burlingham writes about this category of businesses. Businesses that



Anand Hariharan

Founder & Chief Solutioning Officer
Indexnine Technologies

have “chosen not to focus on revenue growth or geographical expansion, instead pursuing other goals that they considered more important than getting as big as possible, as fast as possible.”

Small giants, according to Burlingham, have goals, ambitions and priorities beyond just their financial ones. Of course, being profitable is important for the health of the business, but these businesses aren't driven by the goal of growth for growth's sake. They are “interested in being great at what they [do], creating a great place to work, providing great service to customers, having great relationships with their suppliers, making great contributions to the communities they [live] and [work] in, and finding great ways to lead their lives.”

And staying agile is critical to achieving these interests.

We spoke to **Anand Hariharan, Co-founder and Chief Solutioning Officer at Indexnine Technologies**, a design-led software product engineering company head-quartered in Pune – a company that chooses to remain agile so it can nurture the quality, creativity, and sense of ownership that is critical to successful product engineering in an industry which evolves continuously and faster than any other.

On becoming an entrepreneur

Anand, by his own admission, “was never good at academics”. But he considers that a stroke of luck,

a blessing in disguise – it did, after all, lead him to his passion for technology. Barely scraping through in the rest of his academic subjects, he was drawn to computers from an early age. Writing code and building things gave him a feeling of competence and creative satisfaction that no other discipline did.

After gaining a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Computer Science, Anand started out as a software engineer at Frontier Software Development, Pune in 1997. Over the years, he built an impressive set of product development and management skills through a career spread across Veritas Software, Symantec, and Clarice Technologies (now Globant). After an eight-year stint in the United States, when Anand returned to India, it was for personal reasons. But the opportunity to build something of his own was already at the back of his mind.

Inspired by people he had worked with, people whose work he admired, entrepreneurship simply felt like a natural progression for him in his career. A conversation with a friend (Shashank Parab, co-founder at Indexnine) at a tennis match was the beginning of what is now a nine-year-old thriving software product engineering business.

“I was in product engineering. I worked in large companies where there is a standard way of doing things and everybody is expected to follow that standard,” Anand tells us.

“For me, I wanted to do the work a particular way

and that is not something a large organisation could support me with. So my motivation, you know, was hey, this can be done in a better way, right? There need to be better outcomes. How can we deliver better service? And that's where Indexnine was born. I wanted to see my ideas come to life.”

As an entrepreneur, Anand thrives on the freedom to chart his own course. For him, it is about two things: agility—the ability to make decisions and act quickly—and the quiet thrill of watching teams that he has built come together, flourish, and deliver.

At Indexnine, the numbers speak for themselves: over 90 products developed, averaging ten a year. Many of these, he says with more than a hint of pride, were executed without his direct input. “It’s proof that people here take what they’ve learned and run with it. That’s incredibly rewarding.”

Then there’s the feedback: a satisfied client, a major win, a new account. Each moment is a reminder of why he does this. These are the things, he says, that truly float his boat.

on doing fulfilling work

For Anand, creative fulfilment has always trumped financial ambition. He is drawn to the challenge of doing things differently, and Indexnine’s portfolio—stacked with projects others might shy away from—reflects that philosophy.

“Most of our customers are startups,” he says.

It is about what smaller teams allow them to accomplish. A tightly knit team, where everyone knows each other and the client, fosters collaboration and agility. “A small team is just more agile,” Anand explains. “When you have a large team, decision-making slows down. You can’t pivot quickly, experiment, fail fast, and adapt. That’s harder to do at scale.”

Indexnine’s structure reflects this philosophy. “There are 20 teams of ten people each,” he says. “You think of it as one organisation, but the work gets done by these smaller teams. In a way, there are multiple Indexnines within Indexnine.”

Having small teams means that there is a human dimension to every client interaction, with every team member having direct access to the client. Not only has this made communication efficient but it has also helped Indexnine deliver technically and creatively challenging projects.

“Our customers really love working with us. The testament to that is that throughout the nine years, we have grown purely through



client referrals. Even today, the majority of our new leads come from customers who connect us to other customers. So it is an endorsement that we have done well.”

Nevertheless, staying small has thrown up its own set of challenges. “Early on, we would take anything that came our way. So if you look at our portfolio today, from a product building perspective, a software product building perspective, we can do anything under the sun. We are equipped to work in many different verticals. But that sort of makes us a jack of all trades. To cultivate people who are very deep in a particular area takes some kind of focus.”

A jack of all trades himself, Anand admits that Indexnine’s portfolio is a reflection of his own journey as a software developer who codes in nine different languages. “Indexnine’s portfolio, like my own competencies, is spread wide across many areas. We have spread ourselves across so many things and not gone deep into one thing.”

Anand believes that this approach is the reason they are still small, especially in their endeavours to scale in a few verticals. “People don't always understand us as a company. And that hurts us because when I show somebody our showcase – say, there are 30 projects – everyone comes out of the meeting impressed: Oh, you did all of these things, that's awesome.”

“But they'll ask you, say, what do you do in data engineering? What is a specific thing you can do in

this discipline? That is a bit difficult for us to explain. The answer cannot be: I do everything.”

Deeply aware that Indexnine’s initial messaging wasn’t focused, Anand and his team are changing that. “Now we have more mature people in the organisation and there is focus in specific sectors. We'll go deep in there, so our initial detour will get rectified.”

Regardless, being a jack of all trades has been creatively challenging and deeply rewarding, says Anand. In fact, it appears this regret at going wide isn’t a regret at all but simply a reflection of Indexnine’s values and priorities.

“There is value in going deep, and there is also value in going wide. So I wouldn't really say that there is something wrong with our journey so far; it’s just how our current situation is. We are spread across a lot of different things, but this brings deep joy and excitement to our work – we get to do something new every six months.”

Given the chance at a do-over, would Anand do it any other way? Not really. “Our ambition was to sustainably grow, never to look at it as a numbers game. Even today, if I get both the options – scale, scale, scale versus staying small and doing good, diverse work – I would pick the diversity mode. And that's just me. It'll be different for different people.”

the architects of small giants

In Small Giants, Burlingham outlines some of the

characteristics that the founders or owners of small, purpose-driven businesses share with one another. Among them were questioning the usual definitions of success, building the kind of business they wanted to work in rather than giving in to external forces, and most importantly, passion.

Like these architects of small but successful and valuable businesses, Anand and all the other entrepreneurs featured in this edition are driven by an insistence to prioritise real value over scale.

They imagine ways of doing things other than those we are all familiar with and bring great passion to their work to build companies that align with their visions. These businesses may be small, but they are mighty.



a goldfish among sharks

Often, people chase the destination.
I believe in the process that gets you
there.

*b*orn into a family of doctors, it seemed preordained that **Mallika Fredericks** would follow in her grandparents' footsteps and enter the medical field. Yet Mallika had plans of her own. After high school, she resolved to explore different avenues—whatever her ultimate decision, she wanted it to be hers. She enrolled in a Bachelor of Science program with a specialisation in Chemistry at Nowrosjee Wadia College in Pune, then went on to earn an MBA in Marketing from the Neville Wadia

Institute of Management Studies and Research.

During her student years, she helped her father with administrative tasks at his engineering company, an experience that would eventually guide her to join his business.

Today, Mallika has spent 25 years, give or take, at Super Engineers, where she is both Partner and indispensable driving force. The company specialises in manufacturing and supplying CNC and VMC machined components to engineering firms in Europe and the United States.

on being a second-generation entrepreneur

“Being an entrepreneur was never a personal aspiration,” Mallika says, recalling how many people advised her to work elsewhere before joining the family firm. But Mallika had a clear sense of where she was needed. “I knew I could add value,” she says, “and my decision to take on that responsibility has paid off.”

Super Engineers was founded by Mallika's father a couple of decades before Mallika came on board, but that hardly made her job a stroll in the park. She was just 22 — “fresh out of college,” as she puts it. The steep learning curve demanded that she master technical knowledge, business acumen, and people management in short order.

Responsibility, she found out, is not always handed down; sometimes you have to grab it for yourself. One



Mallika Fredericks
Partner, Super Engineers

definitive moment arrived about six months into her tenure, when the company's long-time accountant left for another opportunity. "I had a choice: fill that gap myself and take on the entire Accounts section, or wait and let my dad find a solution. I opted for the tougher route."

She likens the challenge to "changing the tires of a car when it is in motion"—a technically demanding assignment. But Mallika found a way through: "I just showed up each day and did what needed to be done, learning on the job. I handled everything from data entry to finalising the balance sheet."

Those who pictured a different track for Mallika might have imagined her biggest obstacles would come from working alongside her father. They are, in her own words, as different as chalk and cheese. Yet it was precisely that mismatch of personalities that helped the business flourish. "Our strengths, limitations, and perspectives beautifully complement each other, making us an effective team," Mallika says, explaining that, despite the occasional disagreement, they share a common vision. "We always reminded ourselves we're one team—so we found a way to come to a common ground, which helped the company reach greater heights."

on working behind the scenes

Some assume that entrepreneurs crave the spotlight and the power that comes from calling the shots. But

not every superhero — nor every Super Engineer — wears a cape. Mallika proudly labels herself part of the “backstage crew.”

“Early in my career,” she recalls, “my dad was the visionary and the face of the business, armed with the technical know-how. I worked behind the scenes, handling administration and finance, ensuring we were ready to take on any challenge.”

That backstage role reflects in part Mallika’s personality. She describes herself as reserved, with a “quiet exterior.” Beneath it lies a “faith in God, inner strength, resilience, and a love for knowledge” — attributes she has honed through her disciplined nature, hunger for a challenge, and penchant for reading.

Over time, Mallika’s role expanded. She developed skills that were, by her own admission, at odds with her natural temperament, all in the service of continuous learning and effective leadership. “In the early days, I was present at every meeting —listening, observing, learning, and providing input when needed. Understanding the nuances of the business has been my trump card in navigating this industry.”

Mallika’s knowledge, experience, and resilience have proved indispensable as she leads a team in a male-dominated industry. “I’ve faced my share of resistance and snide remarks,” she says. “But when people realise you know what you’re talking about, they respect you. This doesn’t happen overnight — it

happens over time. Being knowledgeable about your industry and staying resilient to negative remarks is key to not just having a seat at the table, but a real voice at the table.”

on pioneering the export path

Super Engineers was founded in 1983, and for its first fifteen years, it catered primarily to India’s domestic market — a scene with limited elbow room for new players.

Mallika’s father, however, had a bigger dream, “a vision to diversify into exports.” With father and daughter acting as the chalk-and-cheese duo — he the risk-taker, she the more cautious one — Super Engineers set its sights on international waters.

By 2001, that aspiration had become a reality.

Mallika likens those early forays into foreign markets to “a goldfish swimming with the sharks.” For a small, family-owned outfit, the journey was anything but straightforward. Today, she is relieved to see a more welcoming environment, thanks to fewer barriers, more opportunities, and the convenience of the digital age. “The industry now offers more opportunities to smaller entrepreneurs,” she says. “I’ve seen many small companies move into exports. I also love seeing more women operating machines —adding new energy to this field.”

on Super Engineers’ commitment to

great service

Under Mallika's and her father's collective leadership, Super Engineers has carved out a robust niche, particularly in Europe and the United States. In 2012, they were honoured by the Alfa Laval Group — selected "Best Global Supplier" from among 4,000 suppliers.

But shiny accolades and a thriving bottom line aren't the only indicators of success. Mallika emphasises that her team's foremost goal is delivering top-tier customer experiences. "One of our clients is a large multinational with sites across Europe and the U.S. It is incredibly gratifying to hear that their various sites specifically request us for certain projects," she says. "To have your work recognised and valued is deeply fulfilling."

Achieving that recognition hinges on managing people well — employees, customers, and suppliers alike — what Mallika describes as "the most challenging yet fulfilling part" of her work. "Diverse personalities, expectations, and cultures make managing people tricky," she explains. "But if you get this right, your business will thrive."

And thrive it has. Super Engineers' staff, Mallika says, shares the company's commitment to premium customer service. "When your workforce is with you, heart and soul, they rise to every challenge," she says. She has seen her team work through the most daunting deadlines to ensure client deliverables are

met, often exceeding expectations in the process. “The goal is to communicate at the right time, with the right words — whether it is internal or external stakeholders.”

success balanced by humility

The market is changing, and Super Engineers must keep pace. In particular, European customers increasingly focus on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria. Robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) loom large in manufacturing, requiring significant upfront investment — no small feat for a smaller enterprise.

Yet Mallika remains confident, pointing to the company’s strong customer relationships, commitment to innovation, and culture of problem-



solving as vital assets. Through all of it, she has come to appreciate that the journey matters more than the destination. “Often, people want to reach the goal but don’t want to go through the process. The process is the real deal — it’s what makes life fulfilling and enriching.”

For all the success Super Engineers has achieved, Mallika remains warm and humble. She credits her faith for much of it. “The last 25 years have been a roller coaster — I’ve laughed and cried, succeeded and failed, all the while evolving into the entrepreneur I am today

Of course there were times I wanted to throw in the towel, but my faith in God and my quiet determination got me through. Without faith, we could have achieved nothing. By His grace, our business has grown from strength to strength." Her mother, also a partner in Super Engineers is her rock in tough times. Her husband, Rohan, who joined the company in 2019, is her biggest cheerleader, she says.

Whatever the secret ingredient — whether grit, faith, a supportive ecosystem or a bit of all —one thing is certain: this goldfish has not only survived among the sharks; it has flourished. And in a business environment where bigger fish often gobble up the little ones, that alone is quite the feat.





moving people, sparking joy

Delivering these transformative travel experiences is why I got into this business, but the customers I've met along the way are why I stay.

In January 2017, Anish Pednekar founded DestinationNXT, a travel company with an unpretentious yet ambitious mission to craft bespoke experiences in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) segment. With a clientele spanning pharmaceuticals, FMCG, BFSI, and other industries, this small, quirky business has quietly become a trusted partner for corporates navigating the often chaotic world of professional incentive travel. The journey, as Anish likes to say, has only just begun.

Anish is no stranger to the world of tourism and

hospitality. His career is dotted with marquee names like Hyatt Hotels, Thomas Cook, and SOTC. But the seeds of his entrepreneurial journey were sown long before he stepped into these corporate corridors. During his high school years, as classmates laboured over textbooks, Anish gravitated toward vocational

Anish Pednekar

Founder, DestinationNXT



subjects. "The classroom approach never appealed to me," he explains. That instinct led him to Goa's Institute of Hotel Management, where he earned a degree in Hospitality and Hotel Administration, and later to the grind of hotel operations at the Grand Hyatt in Mumbai. He spent three years in hotel operations and went on to do his Master's in Business Administration. From there, he made the leap to sales, then to the MICE department – a trajectory that combined his knack for operational logistics with a people-first mindset.

In conversation, Anish is frugal with his words. Asked why he chose entrepreneurship, he points to freedom and responsibility as the primary lures. "The independence to close my clients and operate my groups myself appealed to me," he says. His motivation was as much about his clients as it was about the gaps he saw in big travel firms, where a mass-market approach often left the end traveller underserved.

an emphasis on relationships and a culture of ownership

DestinationNXT was his answer: a small, boutique firm where relationships, not numbers, drive the business.

It is a philosophy that extends to his company's culture, whether those relationships are with travellers, employees, clients, or suppliers. Rejecting traditional hierarchies, DestinationNXT runs on what Anish calls a

"relaxed and productive" ethos. Team members, from industry veterans to fresh graduates, are empowered to make decisions, a rarity in an industry defined by its rigid protocols and structures. This fluidity, he believes, fosters ownership and creativity.

Clients, meanwhile, benefit from DestinationNXT's nimbleness. The company boasts turnaround times and customisations that larger players often can't match. "Syncing our goals with our clients' has always resulted in fruitful relationships," he says.

As a travel enthusiast himself, Anish always wants the guests on his trips to have memorable experiences. It's part of why he decided to take the path less travelled, stepping away from big travel companies to start his own small business. Travel, for whatever purpose, can be a deeply rewarding experience, but with "a mass training approach to it without a robust training infrastructure, in the long run, the consumer suffers." In setting up his own boutique agency, he could ensure that every trip bore the unmistakable imprint of care and genuine intent.

"Delivering these transformative travel experiences is why I got into this business, but the customers I've met along the way are why I stay," he says with quiet pride. It is a sentiment validated by an impressive track record: DestinationNXT, Anish reiterates, has never lost a client to service issues or project missteps.

This unbroken streak isn't merely a point of pride.

In an industry as unpredictable as travel, the trust and appreciation of his clients fuel Anish's resolve to navigate even the most turbulent times.

The DestinationNXT team is an ensemble of experience designers and travel coordinators who invariably build a unique camaraderie with customers. The company actively cultivates this rapport, crafting not just travel itineraries but enduring relationships.

Anish believes this is a result of the company's deliberately flat structure. "Every team member is equipped to make decisions related to their delegates and projects," he says. "Even freshers find it easier to fit in and perform without the additional red tape." It is a deliberate inversion of the corporate norm, designed to ensure that each person, seasoned or just starting out, feels a sense of ownership.



This environment of grace and ownership extends to all of DestinationNXT's relationships. "We treat our suppliers the same way we expect to be treated by our clients," Anish notes, distilling his approach to a simple yet profound equation. This ethos, born of small-business intimacy, fosters an engaged team, solid partnerships, and a culture of reciprocity. It has allowed this nimble operation to go toe-to-toe with industry behemoths, armed with little more than an obsession for human details often overlooked in larger firms.

riding out the pandemic

Anish dreams of building DestinationNXT into a brand synonymous with genuine service and deeply satisfied customers and guests, a goal he says is far more meaningful than a balance sheet swollen with profits. His conviction is born of resilience. When the pandemic swept across the globe in 2020, the travel industry – DestinationNXT included – came to a screeching halt. Overheads loomed, revenues evaporated, and uncertainty reigned. Yet, in the depths of "The Great Lockdown," Anish refused to buckle. He was confident, as with all things good or bad, this too would pass. Terrible as the pandemic was, Anish's predictions were right: only a couple of years later, travel had already exceeded pre-pandemic levels. Over four years down the line now, we ask him about the challenges faced; he dismisses them as nothing more than a "blip."

on the future of travel

Today, Anish wants to do more meaningful work - be it for business or leisure, travel should spark joy. He's excited by some of the trends he sees in the tourism and MICE industries today. "Itineraries are focusing more on traveller experiences rather than ferrying guests through a destination with a cookie-cutter itinerary." Clients, he notes, are no longer chasing the cheapest deals – they want the "wow" factor. Anish is glad that both corporate decision-makers and corporate travellers are finally coming around to an approach he has always advocated for.

As we begin to wrap up our chat, Anish seems lost in contemplation. It's easy to guess where his thoughts are headed. After all, the tag line of DestinationNXT is as much a personal credo as it is a professional one: Where next?



nitin naik,

Dew Point and an idea whose time has come

Come Diwali, and each year, North India celebrates smog season, extending all through the winter months and beyond. As we write this, the AQI in parts of New Delhi (where, thankfully, we are not based) is well over 300 - not even the highest this season has seen. A harrowing state of affairs, one that is spoken about fervently among the media, civil society, and the general public. One that hasn't been effectively addressed - reports suggest that as many as 1.5 million people in the

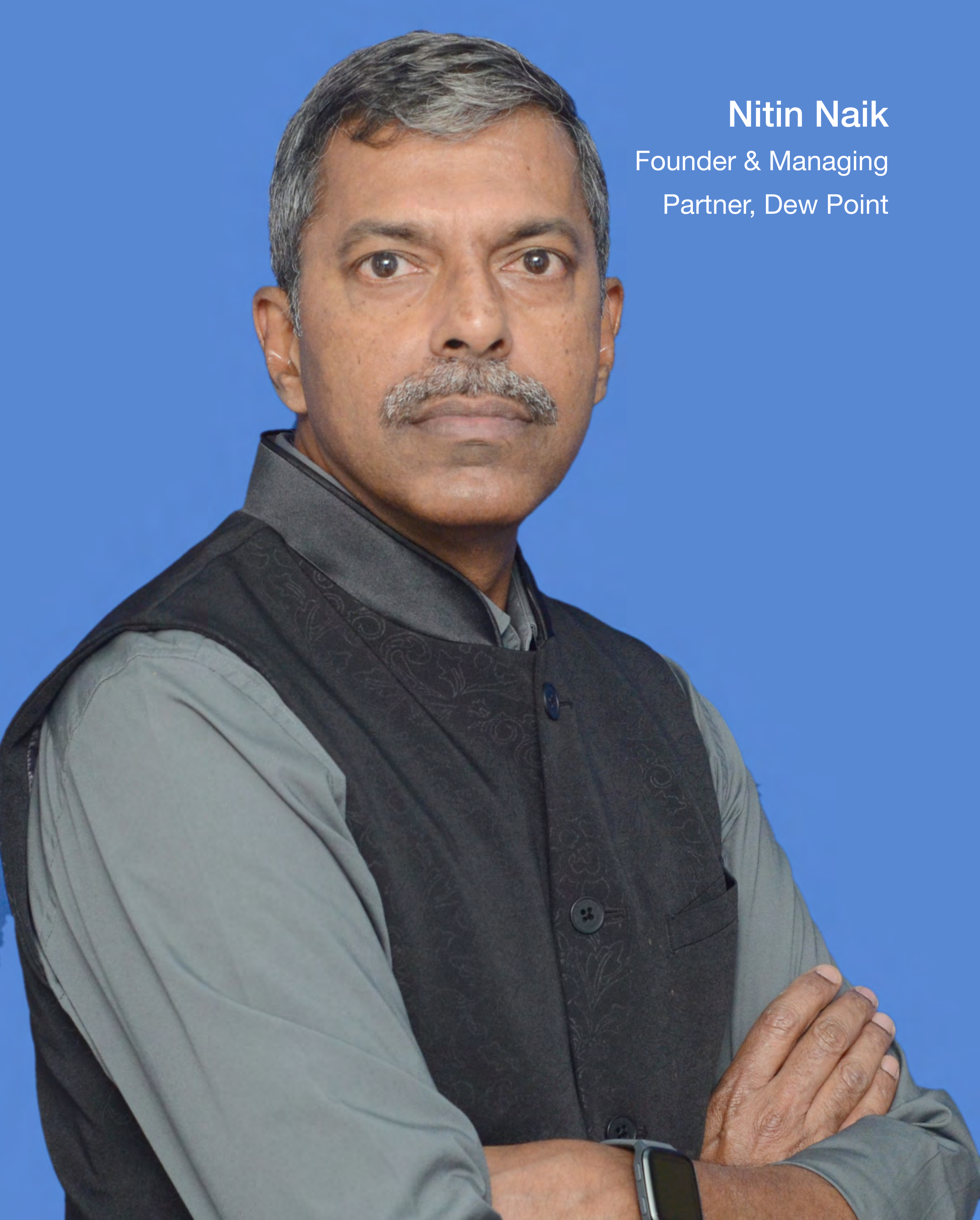
country die every year due to the alarming air quality.

To escape the dystopian horror outside, those of us who can lock ourselves up indoors, in our air-conditioned homes and offices, but that hardly solves the problem. Unfortunately, most people don't know that the quality of indoor air can be two to five times worse than that of outdoor air. What makes it worse is that we spend about 90% of our time indoors.

Nitin Naik, Founder and Managing Partner at Dew Point, is all too aware of this scenario. He is also familiar with what he calls the “annual ritual” of air quality conversations and the accompanying “enthusiasm to make an impact which does not outlast the season”. He is deeply aware that improving indoor air quality matters as much as, if not more than, working on outdoor air quality.

An electrical engineer by training, Nitin has over three decades of experience in HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning). He spent his early career developing a solid foundation in engineering operations, regulatory registrations, plant maintenance, and project management with MNCs in the pharmaceutical and FMCG sectors.

With the technical expertise and “strong interpersonal and social skills” he developed in his decade-long corporate experience, Nitin took the leap into entrepreneurship. In 2000, he established Dew Point: the starting point for a journey that has, today, led him to the critical field of indoor air quality (IAQ).



Nitin Naik

Founder & Managing
Partner, Dew Point

Based in Goa, Dew Point is the Manufacturer's Representative for variable-speed drives, HVAC valves, and IAQ monitors, representing leading industry brands in India. It caters to the pharmaceutical, F&B, IT, and building and construction industries.

nitin's early journey

For some entrepreneurs today, simply living in a city like New Delhi is reason enough to work on air quality. But when Nitin began his journey as a founder, his motivations were different. After ten years of working on engineering projects, Nitin had developed the confidence, network and skill to make decisions independently. He felt limited by the routine of employment and the pre-defined constraints a job placed on his daily activities and his thought process alike.

“The system will not allow you to think beyond your functional responsibilities. The drive to have greater independence, especially the freedom to make business decisions, was a significant motivator. I saw entrepreneurship as an opportunity to channel my technical knowledge, professional experience, and personal aspirations into creating something of my own.”

In search of more opportunities and experiences, Nitin began to pave his entrepreneurial path. It was every bit as fulfilling as he imagined. Entrepreneurship, in his view, allows a founder to strategise and take decisions independently, to change course when necessary, and to utilise every ability to the fullest. It is also what allowed him to “explore niche areas like indoor air quality and adapt to the changing business environment, especially post the pandemic”.

on the importance of community in the industry

Nitin is the founder of a successful business in the HVAC space, but his claim to fame extends far beyond that. He is well-known in industry circles for his consistent and dedicated contributions to industry bodies.

In the past, he has held various leadership positions at the Indian Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ISHRAE) in the capacity of National Secretary, National Vice Chair of Programs, and Regional Director of the West zone. He is also an active member of ASHRAE, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers, volunteering in various regional leadership roles as well as on society technical committees. He has been a member of the International Air Quality Association (IAQA) & the International Society for Indoor Air Quality (ISIAQ).

That's quite a brag sheet and a clear testament to Nitin's care for the HVAC community. But he asserts that he is only "giving back to the industry that has given him so much." He has gained several opportunities for professional growth and business development in these organisations; his leadership roles have given him a platform to pay it forward and make meaningful contributions to the industry.

"I've always believed in the importance of continuous growth — both personal and professional — and

that's what initially drew me to industry bodies like ISHRAE, ASHRAE and a few others. I wanted to upgrade my technical skills, network with experts and leaders from across the globe, and most importantly, give back to the industry and community that I work with every day.” This symbiotic relationship has enriched a community in much need of more attention and resources.

the IAQ question: an idea whose time has come?

Nitin is a thought leader and a vocal advocate for indoor air quality monitoring and improvement. Even a brief conversation with him makes it clear just how deeply he understands the space. His passion for healthier indoor environments is indisputable. This passion is essential for Nitin to do what he does: after all, sustaining public interest in IAQ and increasing the adoption of tangible solutions is an uphill battle.

The IAQ monitoring and improvement industries certainly had their time in the spotlight when the world was held hostage by COVID-19, an airborne viral infection. The pandemic “undoubtedly brought the issue of indoor air quality into sharper focus, making the average building occupant more aware of the hidden dangers lurking in the air they breathe.”

At the same time, Nitin is clear-eyed about how short-lived that focus was. “While the pandemic served as a wake-up call, the momentum seems to be waning.

As we move further away from the crisis, complacency is setting in again. I genuinely hope we don't need another wake-up call of COVID's magnitude to re-ignite awareness."

A terrifying period for people across the world, the pandemic helped make a business case for the importance of IAQ monitoring. From Nitin's perspective, the picture has improved to some extent. But his optimism remains tempered by the significant obstacles he sees in the path of his important mission. "It is definitely easier now to make the case for air quality monitoring compared to the pre-COVID era, but the challenge remains significant. The increased awareness is largely limited to large corporations, particularly those pursuing building certifications where IAQ monitoring is mandated. Unfortunately, outside these frameworks, the willingness to invest in IAQ solutions declines rapidly."

What will it take for people to give IAQ the importance it deserves? What will it take for people to give human health the importance it deserves? These questions — and their answers — drive Nitin's work. It is, according to Nitin, largely about "shifting public perception and understanding", about mindset. His work is a battle against the mindset that operating costs and system efficiencies take precedence over occupant health and well-being. A mindset that needs to change if we're to achieve truly healthy indoor environments on a wide scale.

equity above all else

Our conversations with Nitin spanned the challenges of the Global South in balancing industrialisation with environmental and human health, the role of HVAC industry bodies, the role of governments, and the influence of media and civil society conversations. When he says that he wants indoor environments to be healthier for all, he truly means all.

In discussing topics such as localised IAQ standards, incentivising sustainable farming practices, community engagement campaigns, and urban planning, he insists that “equity must form the foundation of all these strategies”. We are, after all, only as strong as our weakest link, so “vulnerable groups, such as low-income families and small-scale farmers, should not bear disproportionate burdens”. Governments and organisations working to build healthier environments must devise solutions which uplift weak sections of society while protecting their livelihoods and health. As we near the end of the SDG era, he believes it is more important than ever before for the Global South to “chart a path toward sustainable development without compromising environmental and public health”.

In all he says and does, Nitin embodies the principle of purpose over profits. As an entrepreneur, he has a guiding philosophy that extends beyond simply earning a livelihood for himself and his family. He is guided by a desire to travel, meet people from diverse backgrounds, and refine his approach to business to

achieve the greatest impact.

His own words come closest to the full picture: “As someone managing a small enterprise, I understand that my contributions will not make a large ripple in the grand scheme of things. However, if I were to be remembered for anything, I would hope it would be for raising awareness of the importance of healthy buildings and their impact on everyday lives. My goal has always been to advocate for better indoor environments — not just for those working in large, certified commercial buildings but for the average building occupant whose comfort, health, and well-being often go unnoticed. If my work has helped even a handful of people understand the significance of indoor air quality or inspired a shift toward prioritising healthier indoor spaces, I would consider that a meaningful impact.”

In the mission to make clean indoor air a given, our society still has a long way to go. Nitin and his industry peers persist in this vital quest.

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What can common citizens do to improve air quality and protect their health?

1

Reduce vehicle emissions

Carpool to work, use public transport and if possible switch to hybrid vehicles.

2

Use air purifiers with HEPA filters

In small offices and homes also incorporate an appropriate ERV (energy recovery ventilator). This will go a long way in improving your indoor environment.

3

Mask up when you're outdoors
Masking protects from pollution and viruses.





What can building owners do to improve indoor air quality?

Deploy IAQ monitors throughout the building as per international guidelines.

Integrate the IAQ monitors on a real-time basis with the HVAC controls.

Display the IAQ prominently within the building premises.

Incorporate HVAC filtration as well as ventilation systems to ensure the IAQ at any given time is within acceptable norms.

Retrofit older buildings to comply with modern IAQ standards.

Ensure annual third party audits to verify compliance.

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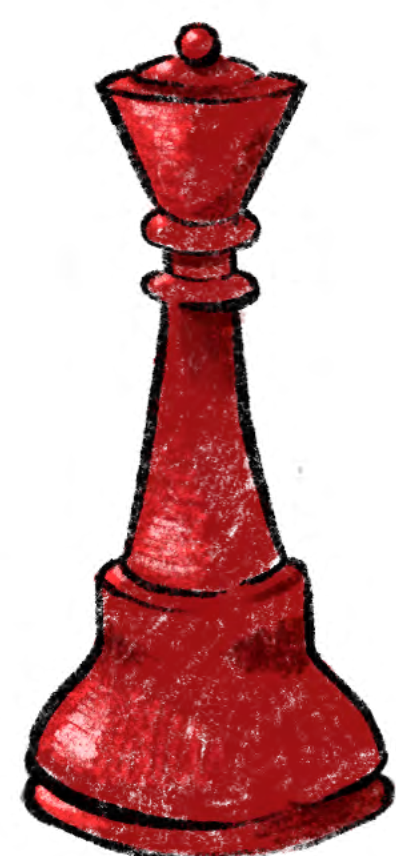
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