

A Creative Start Shaping a Big B2B Brand Building Mindset By Mansi Rastogi – TheThrive.in – Talk Show

Have you ever wondered how a creative beginning shapes a major **B2B brand-building mindset**?

We are excited to share the full transcript and video of our insightful conversation with **Mansi Rastogi**, the Founding Partner at **9 Point Design** [00:00:33, 02:00:240]. With over 15 years of experience, Mansi has helped build **over 400 brands**, including major names like AIA, Mahindra Finance, McDonald's, and Cadbury.

In this episode, Mansi details her inspiring journey from her creative roots and freelance design career to becoming a leading **Brand Strategist** focused on the often-overlooked B2B space [00:01:16, 02:00:240]. She shares invaluable advice on what truly defines a brand, why many brands fail, the crucial difference between B2B and B2C strategies, and how freelancers and business owners can confidently scale their pricing and services.

Host: Have you ever wondered how a creative start shapes a big B2B brand-building mindset? While freelancing, I went to one client. I was pitching my design service, and the client said, "Do you want to be the head of my department?" But I didn't have educational experience in design. I said, I want to learn design. I realized I didn't want to learn with a purely Indian institute. Design without content is zero.

Our guest today is **Mansi Rastogi**, Founding Partner at 9 Point Design. Since 2008, she's built 400+ brands, having worked with AIA, Mahindra Finance, McDonald's, Cadbury, and more.

What was the most challenging project you handled in your career? Today, we will learn about B2B brand building from Mansi. Some brands in the world are very successful, and some fail. According to you, what is the major reason brands fail? So, what is the psychology of a luxury brand? As a brand strategist, is an MBA necessary? People consider what they see to be branding. Actually, branding is... At what point did you feel you are not a designer; you are a **Brand Strategist**? This episode will give you everything necessary for B2B brand building. Have you seen any worst rebranding? Do you think they made the biggest mistake? Many young creators who start building brands quickly give up on branding, even on the business itself. Branding is like running a marathon; marketing is like running 100-meter sprints. If you could give advice to your younger self, what would it be?

Welcome, Mansi.

Mansi: Thank you.

Host: So, you work for B2B brands for brand building, right?

Mansi: Yes.

The Creative Roots and Early Career

Mansi: For that, I have to go back a little bit, all the way up to my childhood. I've been surrounded by my mom, my aunt, and my grandmother, who have been very creative throughout my childhood. My mom is an artist, and she would sit and do arts and crafts with me. So arts, painting, and craft were literally in my blood.

I started doing design on the first few computers, starting when I was in my 10th standard. In college, I did my BA in Economics but was more interested in design, so I joined a course to learn software like CorelDraw and Photoshop. My teacher eventually asked me to teach, and that was my first

job, where I earned **₹3,000 a month**. I learned things deeply, like what effect pixel colors would have when using **blending modes** in Photoshop.

After teaching, I wanted to learn, so I worked at a web design company and a print company. I even worked as an intern in a video editing production unit. While freelancing, a client offered me the role of **Head of the Media Department** at their software company.

I realized I had practical experience but lacked **educational experience in design**. I wanted **international exposure** but didn't have the money to go outside India. I found a Singapore-based design school in Bandra, which had teachers from Canada, Spain, and other countries. The fee was **₹8 lakhs** for two years. My grandmother gave me the first ₹1 lakh to start. I quit my job, went back to school, and started to **freelance simultaneously**. I was the **oldest in my class** at 26 or 27 years old, while the others were much younger.

Transition to Strategy and Core Learnings

I got a chance to learn with foreign mentors. My French Canadian professor taught us not to criticize still-life paintings but to see them with the **eye of the observer**. He praised a lot more and asked us to observe how the other person was observing. My biggest learning was that they are very **open-minded**. They appreciated it if we disagreed, and there was no "professor vs. student" tussle. They gave us options like adults. I use the same approach with my team today.

I switched to Brand Strategy because I realized **design without content is zero**. I learned that the **decision-making power** rests with the MD or CEO, not the designer. I realized I should be adding value at the **strategy stage**, not just design

or content. I initially worked with a brand strategist who eventually told me I could do the same.

The most challenging situations weren't projects but **challenging clients**. A project is challenging when you don't have experience. One of my biggest early projects in 2012 required a lot of legwork and research, as there was no one to guide us.

Defining a Brand and Cause of Failure

The word **"branding"** was, and still is, very **confused**. People don't understand it because it's **intangible**. They confuse the logo, messaging, or product with the brand. The brand is the company's full **personality**, vision, mission, and how it treats its vendors, clients, and employees.

Most brands that have failed lacked **long-term vision** in their leadership or failed to evolve with the times, like Kodak or BlackBerry.

Luxury Brands and Psychology

Luxury brands like **Rolex** are interesting because their value is mostly **"made out of air"**. Their strategy is built over many years (50 to 100 years of investment). The way Rolex became a luxury brand was by associating its innovative waterproof watch with a key athlete, gaining immediate clout. They also **limit their production** to create scarcity and desire.

Regarding an **MBA**, if you want to get a job, it's necessary for progress. But if you want to own an agency or a brand, no one has ever asked me if I have an MBA; they only ask to see my **work and results**.

Branding is like running a marathon. It's the stable base.

Marketing is like running sprints. Branding requires a **long-term vision** and continuous review, like a yearly review, as the brand, just like people, evolves.

The Role of a Brand Strategist

I stopped being a designer when I had to explain and train my team on how to do their jobs. The Brand Strategist part came in when clients presented a superficial problem, but I saw the depth. For example, a client complaining their LinkedIn marketing is not working has a deeper problem: a **weak brand foundation and messaging**. My role is to get them clear on their base levels—who they are and what they stand for—which then clears up their messaging and marketing.

B2B vs. B2C Strategy

B2B clients are a little different from B2C. Their main problem is that they don't understand the need for branding. They only come to us when they notice:

- Competition is going ahead.
- They are going global, and their brand looks inferior.
- They are getting lower prices or have to negotiate more.

The moment you are **haggling on price**, your brand is not working for you. If sales are happening, it means your sales team is strong, but the brand's job is to give them **ammunition** and make the sale easier.

In B2C, you target one consumer, and data is easy to get. **B2B requires approvals from multiple levels**—purchase managers, influencers, etc.—because purchases are large and **decision-driven**, not personal. I chose B2B because they are the **underdog** and needed help; agencies often overlooked them for the sexier B2C work.

B2B founders are usually **reserved and risk-averse**. When a

client with a recent logo insisted it wasn't visible, I planted the thought to **just improve it** (refresh) instead of demanding a full change. That helped them increase visibility, and now they are open to further changes.

Building Brand Confidence and Culture

The people who come to us recognize there is a problem, but they don't always know it's a **brand problem**. They might say, "LinkedIn isn't working" or "The website needs changing". The lightbulb moment happens when they realize they aren't getting a foot in the door because they don't look like a **premium brand**.

A **Confident Brand** comes from **self-worth**. It's about how you treat your employees and vendors. Your vendors, investors, and employees should be interested in **investing inside the brand** because they know the company's value, processes, and expertise.

The brand only **enhances** who you are as a company; it does not change you. Confidence is knowing your capabilities; it's the difference between **confidence and arrogance**.

Most B2B founders who have been in business for 5-10 years have clarity on their vision but are **not able to articulate it**. When a brand experiences exponential growth (e.g., from 50 to 300 employees) , the best approach is **constant communication with your employees**, starting from the onboarding process, to reinforce the vision and values.

Mistakes, Storytelling, and Platforms

The biggest mistake small businesses make is that **they don't**

think branding is important. They fail to realize that the behavior of their sales person **becomes part of the brand.**

Small businesses should focus on **documenting and sharing their stories** (storytelling) from the beginning, as Tata does. For example, documenting when employees were **proactive** to help put out a fire at a neighboring factory is a story that showcases your values (proactiveness, community care) to new employees.

Online branding is essential, and you have no other choice. **LinkedIn is a very good platform** for B2B, and the leadership should also be building their **personal brands** there. **YouTube** is another platform B2B brands should use more for **evergreen content.**

If sales are strong but marketing is weak, there will be a lot of **stress and tension** to get the prices you want. Marketing gives you the push where sales cannot go. **Caterpillar** is a great case study; the B2B mining machine company became successful by helping the workers (their biggest brand ambassadors) by starting with high-quality **Cat Boots** and protective gear.

Unconventional Marketing and Rebranding Examples

Two unconventional marketing campaigns stand out:

1. **Hans Brinker Hostel** in Amsterdam, known as the **worst hostel in the world**, decided to **own it**. Their campaign was humor-based, with ads like “Rooms that actually have a door,” turning the hotel into an **attraction**.
2. **Liquid Death**, a sparkling water brand, used a **negative, scary tonality and imagery** related to heavy metal music, making it look unique and brilliant.

Brands should rebrand when the current brand is **no longer working for them**, or if they need to **refresh** and reposition

themselves for an international market. A **pivot** is changing the product or service, like McDonald's changing its menu for India.

Worst rebrands happen when companies don't consider the **consumer** or their **legacy**: **Tropicana** changed its packaging so much that consumers couldn't identify it. **Gap** also failed by not looking at their legacy. **Bira** lost market share after changing its name (to B91) and packaging, making it unrecognizable to the customer.

A **successful rebrand** was **Aditya Birla Capital**, which united 13 different scattered businesses under **one consistent umbrella**. They also did excellent marketing ("Bleed Red") after the rebrand.

Rebranding is not necessary every single time. It's only important if the end result you are looking for requires it, such as expansion into new spaces.

The best marketing campaign, in my opinion, was **Campbell's Soup's user-generated content YouTube ads**, which used early AI to match ads to the user's online search history. The **Ronaldo's girlfriend billboard campaign** was also brilliant because the billboard was just one piece; the viral nature of the campaign was driven by its **reuse** across TV and user-generated material, reaching a much wider audience.

Psychology and Business

Consumer psychology (and psychology in general) is fundamental to branding. You must understand the psychology of the **five key audiences** (consumer, vendor, employee, media, investor).

An **investor** is looking for benefits, like money, the **future of the business**, and the **impact on society**. A **consumer** is looking for, "What benefit am I going to get?".

Regarding the **Jaguar rebrand**, I personally did not like it, as

the logo looks very similar to another bathroom fittings brand, and I feel it lost the iconic symbol of the jaguar.

A brand owner using their own product shows **confidence**. Not only should you use your own, but you should also use others' products to improve your own. Retail businesses use **mystery shoppers** to experience their own brand.

Final Advice and Key Takeaways

The biggest influences in my life were my grandmother and my mom. My grandmother's attitude was always, "If I don't know, let's learn". My mom was a self-taught artist who would go wild with creativity and **never back down** in life.

- **Partnership/Family Business:** It depends on the **maturity** of the people involved. Having a clear understanding and being able to **compartmentalize** personal and business relationships is crucial.
- **Pricing:** It's about a mindset change for the service provider, not just what the client can afford. You must transition from charging low to a higher price gradually, continually upgrading your skill and confidence, even if it means practicing in front of a mirror.
- **Advice for Younger Self:** I would give **financial advice**. I wish I had learned how to manage money and finances better, as it was my weakest part.
- **Brand Myth to Dispel:** The biggest one is that **B2B doesn't need branding**. The second is that **your brand is just your logo**.
- **Top 3 Tips for a Startup Founder:**
 1. **Document and share your stories** (as they are starting with zero).
 2. **Get your hands dirty**—get down to the customer level and continuously improve based on feedback.

3. **Consistency**—keep sharing content about product improvements, processes, and people.
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From ₹2 Crore Loss to CRM Success: Limesh Parekh's Bootstrapped Journey from Bhilad

Introduction & Context

Host: Every entrepreneur dreams of growth. But imagine facing a ₹2 crore loss, seeing a 108-member team shrink to 18, and choosing to drop a safe career path like CA to start a business. Most people stop right there. But today's guest has used these very struggles as his foundation. From a small town like Bhilad, he created **Enjay IT Solutions**—a company that has become synonymous with CRM for businesses in India. The author of "**Cracking the CRM Code**," and a strong believer that small towns in India can also build world-class products—please welcome, Mr. Limesh Parekh.

Host: Welcome Limesh ji.

Limesh Parekh: Thank you.

Host: You wrote on LinkedIn—**CRM is my DNA**. What does this mean? For our audience, in one line: What is CRM and what problem does it solve?

Limesh Parekh: First, let me tell you, the CRM written there,

it's not software. CRM means **Customer Relationship Management**. Whether you have software or not, customer relations are managed. The relation starts probably much before the customer buys your product. The system that manages the customer's buying journey, your sales process, and how you provide service—and formalizes this into a structure—is what comes from the software. Sales is often seen as an “art,” but unless you **productize that art** properly, you can't teach it to your team. The software that helps structure that process is **CRM**.

Startup Beginnings

Host: Why did you drop out of CA, and what triggered your entrepreneurial journey?

Limesh Parekh: I wanted to become a CA because there are many accountants in our family. At the time, CA was also very cost-effective. While pursuing it, I helped my father with accounting. I saw that I could deliver results in an evening that conventional accountants took three months for. I realized: I use technology, and **I felt very powerful when I used this technology**. Then I thought, “What if we build it ourselves?” I missed the All Over India Rank by **13 marks** in the intermediate exam, but I decided to switch. My father trusted my decision immediately. I've never regretted that decision.

Thin Client Phase & Hard Lessons

Host: What was **Thin Client**, and how was it profitable initially?

Limesh Parekh: Around 1999–2000, a hard disk cost **₹10,000 to ₹12,000**. We created a card that let an older PC run a newer operating system like Windows 95 without a local hard disk. Our tagline was: **“Run your P1 at the speed of P4.”** It saved money and increased security. Since we were operating from

Bhilad and never met customers, we understood the **Power of Marketing** and ran expensive ads in magazines like **CHIP** to build trust.

Host: Why did the Thin Client initiative eventually fail?

Limesh Parekh: The **market changed**. From 2007–2008, laptops and tablets became widely affordable. They came with built-in hard disks. The fundamental problem Thin Client solved—the cost and complexity of the desktop—disappeared.

Host: When your team shrank from 108 to 18 members, what was the office atmosphere like?

Limesh Parekh: This happened gradually. We were clear that every working person must be paid. It was like the film dialogue: **“There is no relative from whom we haven’t borrowed money.”** We raised money from every source to keep the show running, but accumulated losses of around **₹2 crore**. We never felt it was completely over; we kept working because we felt we had no other option.

CRM Pivot & Sales Realizations

Host: How did you accidentally pivot to CRM?

Limesh Parekh: We were already using CRM internally since **2003**. In 2009, an IT person from a company came to our office to replace a Thin Client. He saw our colleague using our internal CRM and asked, “What is this software?” I didn’t think business application software was our cup of tea, but I went to meet him and quoted **₹19,000** just to say no. He immediately said “Okay.” That’s when we realized: **we get paid without giving away any physical stock**. We didn’t lose anything, and we gained revenue. That was the trigger.

Host: Where does using WhatsApp and Excel cause the most damage for SMBs?

Limesh Parekh: They are **Boss-Driven Organizations**. Everything relies on the owner. If you use Excel for 15 years, you end up with 15 spreadsheets where data is **redundant, inconsistent, incorrect, and incomplete**. You lose track of customer history and follow-ups. Crucially, the owner only finds out about problems when the **customer tells them**—the system never flags it automatically.

Small-Town Advantage vs. Big-City Competition

Host: Why did you choose to build a tech company in Bhilad over Mumbai?

Limesh Parekh: In the 90s, many relatives were fed up with the fast life of Mumbai. We moved because we were there. Our strategy became: **We will do something that makes the customer come to us**, which meant focusing heavily on branding and marketing through national publications.

The small town advantage is **real estate cost** and **long-term team stability**. In Tier 1 cities, you get **opportunist** people who leave for a higher salary. In our location, people are often looking for a **long-term game** and stability.

Host: What is the first mindset shift a small-town founder needs?

Limesh Parekh: **I don't think mindset should have a relation with geography**. You can dream big anywhere. The key quality is **Satatya (Continuity/Patience)**. Don't give up. It won't happen in a day, but it will happen one day. You must maintain the mindset that **"this much is not enough; I have to try more."**

Team Building in Constraints

Host: What system did you design to make freshers productive?

Limesh Parekh: We designed our system and culture to be **fresher-friendly** because experienced talent is scarce. We created a program called **ONE dot FIVE** (1.5 years). Freshers start at a fixed salary of **₹20,000** (higher than the local market). The goal is for them to reach **₹50,000 in 18 months**. The first three months are dedicated only to training, focusing on values, work etiquette, and career roadmaps.

Host: How did you ensure this salary growth was a strategic ROI?

Limesh Parekh: **If the people are great, the company will automatically become great.** We've been profitable every year since 2017. Our increment structure (reviews every three months, increments every six months) ensures **deserving people get the deserving amount**. We check that employees are genuinely productive, not just "time-passing."

Host: You said your employees openly tell you if they are going to resign. How did you build this trust?

Limesh Parekh: We eliminated all policies I hated: you don't need permission for leave; you just need to coordinate. The culture is built on the belief that **if you don't take care of your wife, somebody else will**. If an employee comes to quit, we discuss the issue, and many times, the issue is resolved, and they stay and grow. We never take original certificates as a bond. If a person wants to go, we ask them to leave gracefully.

Host: You speak about football team vs. army rules in company culture.

Limesh Parekh: We follow the philosophy: **"People are not punished because of taking wrong decisions. People might be punished because of not taking decisions."** This is the Army rule. We trust their gut. If a mistake happens, and we lose money or pay a penalty, it's never deducted from the employee's salary.

Sales Strategies & Market Expansion

Host: What was your biggest personal challenge in transitioning to sales, and what are the 3 secrets of sales?

Limesh Parekh: My biggest challenge was doing **cold calling** and overcoming my accountant mindset. To teach others, you must convert the “art of sales” into a repeatable **science/process** (a sales playbook).

3 Secrets of Sales:

1. **There is no secret.** You have to work hard.
2. **Listen to the Customer:** Stop being fascinated by your own product and listen to what the customer actually needs.
3. **Listen to the Data:** Data is always more complex than you imagine. Focus on **“What’s wrong”** (investigation of lost deals), not **“Who’s wrong”** (fighting with the sales team).

Host: You encourage employees to use LinkedIn freely. Why?

Limesh Parekh: We believe in the philosophy: **“Train people so that they become very valuable, and treat them so well that they don’t go.”** We want our team to be valuable and visible. If they get multiple offers, it shows we must stay competitive.

Host: How does the **no-force sales policy** and **refund policy** work?

Limesh Parekh: Our core value is: **“If our product doesn’t work for you, your money won’t work for us.”** This policy removes the customer’s fear, speeding up the sales cycle. When I refunded a ₹3-4 lakh fee to a client because his team wasn’t using the CRM, he gave me **13 referrals**. We avoid selling to customers who try to negotiate too much, as they are likely to churn due to lack of commitment.

Zoho & Odoo: Competition and Learning

Host: How do you position Enjay against global players like Zoho or Salesforce?

Limesh Parekh: We never compare ourselves. Our comparison is only: “How will I solve your problem?” We focus on **solution-oriented selling**.

Host: Do SMBs benefit from an ‘all-in-one’ approach (like Zoho/Odoo), or a simpler, sharper tool?

Limesh Parekh: All-in-one solutions are not viable in the long run. Building **ERP** (focused on money/material) is fundamentally different from building **CRM** (focused on people/processes). You cannot be a poet and a businessman simultaneously. As a business grows, it needs **specialized** tools. Many large companies use SAP for ERP and a specialized CRM.

AI, CRM & The Future of Work

Host: What are your thoughts on AI?

Limesh Parekh: AI is like the *tadka* (tempering). You need the *dal* (lentil—the foundational business process and data) first, and then you add the *tadka* (AI). If you feed **chaos** into the software, you get **automated chaos**. If you want a serious business application of AI, you need **data first**. The challenge is not AI vs. Humans, but **Humans with AI vs. Humans without AI**.

Host: What is the next wave of SaaS coming out of India?

Limesh Parekh: There will be huge growth in sectors like **manufacturing, agriculture, and defense**. As the salary gap reduces, Indian talent currently serving US clients will **shift their focus back to the Indian market**. India will see more

quality global products emerge.

Host: If you had a candid coffee with Sridhar Vembu, what would you ask him?

Limesh Parekh: I would ask him about his **books**. I would share what I read, and ask him which books were most inspiring to him.

Host: What is the one painful lesson about pricing that a new founder can avoid?

Limesh Parekh: Understand that a free trial is often a **lead qualification mechanism** for the software company, not a feature test for the customer. Price strategically to cover **CAC, Retention, and Service**, or you will fail.

Concluding Thoughts

Host: What is the biggest trap for a new SaaS founder?

Limesh Parekh: They start thinking about the **exit (acquisition)** before building the product.

Host: A mistake that every entrepreneur should avoid?

Limesh Parekh: **Trying to do too many things in one shot.**

Host: Your one habit that helped you become a leader from a founder?

Limesh Parekh: **Letting others speak.**

Host: A book or mentor that deeply shaped your journey?

Limesh Parekh: **"Delivering Happiness"** by Tony Hsieh for building culture, and **"The Goal"** by Eliyahu Goldratt for understanding business.

The Essential Learnings for Every Founder

Limesh Parekh's journey is a masterclass in resilience and strategic clarity. From facing a crippling ₹2 crore loss to building a profitable SaaS company from a Tier-3 city, these are the indispensable lessons for every entrepreneur:

- 1. Wrong Decisions are Better Than No Decisions:** Action creates data, even if it leads to an error. Inaction, or the fear of failure, stalls the business indefinitely. Foster a culture where teams are empowered to move forward and learn from mistakes. (Reference: The Army Rule)
- 2. Price for Service, Not Code:** Do not price your product based solely on development costs. Your price must generously fund Customer Acquisition, Sales Enablement, and Customer Success. Being cheap inevitably compromises service, leading to high churn and failure.
- 3. AI is Tadka, Not the Dal:** Technology like AI is an enhancement, not the core solution. You must first have a strong, structured business process and clean data (the dal) before you apply AI (the tadka) for meaningful results.
- 4. Sales is a Science that Must Be Systemized:** Move past the idea that sales is an "art." You must productize your sales process by defining clear stages (Lead, Qualification, Opportunity) to create a repeatable, scalable, and trainable sales engine.
- 5. Build a Future-Proof Team on Culture, Not Location:** In a remote-first world, your location doesn't limit your talent pool. Focus on building a culture of trust and transparency (like the ONE dot FIVE program) that prioritizes commitment and growth over degrees or pedigree.
- 6. The Refund Policy is Your Best Sales Tool:** Embrace the

risk. Offering a money-back guarantee removes the customer's fear and forces your sales team to aggressively qualify prospects, ensuring you only onboard customers who are likely to succeed.

From Pune Factory to Pan-India Brand: The Unstoppable Journey of Artis Founder Anil Daryani

In a candid conversation on The Thrive Talk Show, Anil Daryani, the founder of the Indian IT and electronics brand Artis, shared his entrepreneurial journey, detailing the turbulent shifts, policy challenges, and the continuous need for transformation that defined his company's path from a nascent manufacturer to a pan-India brand.

The Policy Shock that Forced a Pivot

Anil Daryani started his professional life after completing Mechanical Engineering from Bombay University and a Master of Science in Industrial and Systems Engineering in the US [[02:09](#)]. Returning to India in April 1990, he joined his brother to establish a manufacturing unit for black and white monitors and motherboards in Pune [[02:47](#)].

The initial momentum was shattered after 6-7 years. Daryani recounts the pivotal moment when the government, following the 1996 World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement, introduced 0%

customs duty on imported finished IT products [[03:15](#)].

“It was cheaper to import rather than manufacture in India... If we had received the encouragement for manufacturing that the current government is giving now, we would perhaps be ahead of China today.” [[03:32](#)]

This policy shift forced them to shut down their manufacturing facility, a process that took two years to manage and exit completely [[03:06](#), [03:06](#)]. This event was a major setback, which Daryani believes cost India 15-20 years in building a strong semiconductor and electronics manufacturing ecosystem [[13:14](#)].

Transformation: The Rise of Artis

The company pivoted from manufacturing to importing finished goods and decided to focus on building its own brand. They began their branding journey in 2002 [[03:40](#)].

Initially, they sold under their supplier’s brand. The brand **Artis** was adopted after a Taiwanese supplier of PC speakers decided to discontinue the popular line. Daryani’s company registered the name in India [[03:40](#)].

Over the years, the brand portfolio became confusing with multiple names like **Power Safe** (for UPS), **Pronet** (for networking), and **VIP** (for cabinets) [[03:42](#), [03:54](#)]. In a key decision for brand clarity and investment focus, they merged all their product categories under the single brand: **Artis**, in 2012 [[03:50](#)].

Today, the business is segmented primarily into:

- **Power Products (65% of revenue):** UPS, laptop adapters, high-end desktop power supplies, used widely in data centers, CCTV, medical equipment, and other industrial applications [[04:23](#), [05:21](#)].

- **Home Audio Products (25% of revenue):** Soundbars, party speakers, and Bluetooth speakers [[04:34](#)].

Distribution, Digital, and the Return to Manufacturing

From the outset, Daryani focused on building a strong distribution network across India, relying on exhibitions and magazine advertisements in the pre-digital era [[39:35](#)]. This network comprises distributors, resellers, and system integrators [[37:42](#)].

In the mid-2010s, recognizing the growth of e-commerce, the company launched its online division, starting with **Amazon** around 2013-2014 [[44:33](#)]. Today, e-commerce contributes **20%** of their total business [[45:09](#)].

In a full-circle moment, Artis has started to re-embrace domestic production. Encouraged by the government's push for manufacturing, they are currently performing the assembly of certain UPS models, spike suppressors, and speakers in a warehouse in Pune, with plans for backward integration to locally source more components [[04:54](#)].

The current biggest challenge, according to Daryani, is the slow process of government certifications like **Gem Registration** and **BIS certification** for new products, which he feels needs to be streamlined to support local manufacturing effectively [[54:49](#), [55:15](#)].

The Next Generation

Anil Daryani also highlighted the generational shift in entrepreneurship. His son, having also studied in the US, returned to India to start his own venture, **Prana**, which manufactures and sells air purifiers. Daryani supports his

son's independence, stating, "I don't interfere in his business... I am available if he needs help" [[01:17:40](#)]. This reflects a key learning: providing freedom and a conducive culture for the next generation of leadership is crucial for a company's future growth [[01:17:26](#)].

Learning from this podcast for business owners or entrepreneurs

The journey of Anil Daryani and Artis provides several critical lessons for those in business or looking to start a new venture:

- **Embrace Change Management and Flexibility:** The most crucial element for survival is the ability to adapt. When a government policy (the 0% import duty) wiped out their initial manufacturing business, Daryani pivoted to importing and branding. As an entrepreneur, you must possess the *risk-taking ability* and be ready to **transform quickly** with your surroundings to survive long-term [[29:39](#), [30:05](#)].
- **Build Your Own Brand, Not Just a Business:** Initially selling under supplier brands, the company made the strategic decision to invest in and register its own brand. Later, they corrected their mistake of having multiple brands by merging everything under the single, strong brand **Artis** [[35:50](#)]. This focus ensures clear market visibility and a better return on marketing investment [[35:35](#)].
- **The Power of Slow and Steady Growth (Old School Thought):** Artis did not pursue external funding or hire expensive celebrities, unlike many competitors. Daryani advocates for the "old school of thought"—to **expand your business only as much as your resources permit** [[01:13:17](#)]. They prioritized being a profitable, self-

funded business over becoming a loss-making giant, proving that **sustainability** is a viable path to success [[01:13:10](#)].

- **A “Blended” Marketing Approach is Necessary:** While a strong pan-India distributor network was built through traditional means like exhibitions and magazine ads, the company successfully transitioned to the digital age by actively engaging with platforms like Amazon. Modern businesses must maintain a **blend of both physical and digital marketing** to achieve full market penetration [[01:01:17](#), [44:17](#)].
 - **Lifelong Learning and Peer Mentorship are Essential:** Despite decades of experience, Daryani actively engages in a peer-to-peer entrepreneur group (Ascend Foundation) [[01:27:01](#)]. Sharing challenges and hearing how others tackled similar problems is a form of continuous learning that keeps experienced business owners relevant and helps bridge the **generational gap** [[01:27:23](#), [01:30:37](#)].
 - **Provide Next-Gen Leaders the Freedom to Fail:** Daryani highlights the importance of giving young leaders—like his son with his startup, Prana—the **freedom to operate and make mistakes** [[01:17:26](#)]. An older generation must learn to step back and trust the speed and vision of the youth to ensure the company’s future growth [[01:17:40](#), [01:17:19](#)].
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How a B.Com Grad Built a Software Company That's Transforming Courier Businesses

Sanjay, the founder of the software company specializing in courier solutions, shares his remarkable journey of pivoting from a commerce background to becoming a technical pioneer in the logistics software space.

The Journey of a Self-Made Tech Entrepreneur

Sanjay grew up in a joint family in a South Bombay *chawl*, learning the value of shared resources and hard work [01:57]. As an “average student,” he chose Commerce (B.Com) but was always driven by a need to be **financially independent** [03:50, 04:28].

- **First Earnings:** His first job, starting around age 16, was manually writing statements at a bank for about three hours a day, earning him a symbolic ₹300 per month. This gave him his first exposure to dealing with all kinds of people [05:50, 05:30].
- **The Pivot to Tech:** Due to his strength in Maths, he was drawn to the nascent computer field in the mid-1980s, switching colleges to study the available computer courses (Basic and COBOL) [07:05, 12:15].
- **Corporate Exposure and Freelance:** After unsatisfying jobs in data entry and sales, he finally landed a trainee programmer role in a large corporate company, which gave him essential exposure to high-quality software standards [10:43]. Inspired by his entrepreneur

brother, he left the corporate world to start freelancing, which, despite the sudden death of his brother (who was his initial financial guarantor) [[13:44](#)], continued to grow.

- **Product Focus:** Realizing the pitfalls of project-based work—namely the “lulls” (time gaps between projects)—he decided to build a perpetual product that could be sold to multiple clients [[16:08](#)]. His experience from a past project for a large courier company gave him the foundational knowledge to develop the first-generation courier software [[23:04](#), [23:15](#)].
- **Financial Independence:** In the late 90s, the company ventured into technical recruiting, placing nearly 100 candidates in the US over five years [[19:06](#)]. This five-year period generated significant financial resources, allowing the partners to buy their homes and office space, achieving complete financial independence right before the IT bubble burst in 2000 [[19:35](#)].
- **Pioneering the Market:** After the market crash, Sanjay decided to focus exclusively on the courier software that he had developed [[20:28](#)]. Since then, he claims to be a pioneer and leader, having successfully upgraded his software through six generations (from DOS to web, cloud, and mobile solutions) to keep pace with constant technological change [[20:33](#), [29:18](#)]. Today, the company also does turnkey projects and has worked with some of the world’s largest courier companies, often gaining new clients solely through excellent work and **word-of-mouth referral** [[24:28](#), [26:20](#)].

Learning from this podcast for business owners or entrepreneurs

Sanjay’s journey emphasizes a blend of personal philosophy, structured management, and proactive development as the core pillars of business success:

1. The Entrepreneurial Mindset & Philosophy

- **Learning or Earning:** Adopt the mindset that every situation in business is a win. You will either **learn** something new or **earn** money. Both outcomes are beneficial to your growth [[00:57](#), [37:51](#)].
- **Acceptance Over Worry:** Do not label problems as “challenges” or dwell on the negative. Accept the situation gracefully and focus *only* on the solution. This prevents the problem from “sitting on your head” [[38:43](#), [38:55](#)].
- **Do It:** For those starting, Sanjay’s advice is simple: *“Just do it. Don’t think too much, just do it.”* [[00:57](#), [49:59](#)]
- **The Ultimate Goal is Happiness:** The true purpose of business is not just the destination, but the journey. Always strive to ensure that everyone associated with you—customers, team, vendors, and family—is happy because of your efforts, as that guarantees your own continuous drive and happiness [[41:08](#), [50:26](#)].

2. Team Building and Talent Management

- **The Ladder System (Role Rotation):** Implement a structured growth path where an employee’s role must **completely change every three years** [[30:51](#)]. This prevents stagnation (you don’t want a manager to be a manager for life) and encourages constant skill development, providing a clear vision for the next step. People can grow from **Peon to Developer** within the company [[31:15](#)].
- **First Preference to Existing Talent:** When a new technology or a new role is needed, give the first opportunity to your existing team members [[33:31](#)]. This nurtures your team’s loyalty and retention by demonstrating that the company is fully invested in

their long-term growth [[31:54](#)].

- **Keep Development In-House:** To maintain complete control over **quality** and **time commitments**, avoid outsourcing development projects to third parties. Keeping core development in-house minimizes quality issues and ensures time commitments are met [[25:22](#)].

3. Operational Focus and Growth

- **Structured Communication (Morning Huddle):** Implement a scheduled system for meetings (daily, weekly, monthly). Crucially, complete all daily team discussions, task assignments, and problem-solving within the first **1 to 1.5 hours** of the workday [[42:15](#), [43:12](#)]. This ensures that the rest of the day is protected for focused work and execution.
- **Proactive Technology Pace:** Be prepared to constantly upgrade your software (the company has gone through six generations) and **train your existing team** to cope with new technology that emerges every three years [[28:33](#), [29:09](#)].
- **The Family Pillar:** Family support is paramount. In a business family, they encourage risk-taking. In your personal family, they provide a strong pillar. Sanjay's wife actively manages Accounts and HR, freeing him to focus on the technical aspects of the business [[35:51](#)].