

Joseph's Dilemma: Startup or MBA?

Rakesh Gupta

IIM-Nagpur, India

Abstract. The case highlights a dilemma faced by many aspiring entrepreneurs... whether to continue with a startup venture or pursue an MBA degree? Joseph was concerned about waste disposal practices in his native home of Kumbalangi, Kerala, India and was keen to solve the problem. While working in his engineering college laboratory, he developed a process to convert the biodegradable waste collected from near his village into bio fertilizers and organic manure. In his enthusiasm, he launched K.J Ventures in 2016 to build on the opportunity while still pursuing his education. After completing his engineering degree in 2018, he devoted more than two years full-time to the venture but encountered a series of challenges for which he was not adequately prepared to cope with. Under pressure from his father and family, he eventually applied for an MBA at a top-notch Business School. Coincidentally, he received a communication from Kerala Start-up Mission accepting his application for incubating K.J Ventures and a call from his friend Jibin from Heythen Gelatin, a manufacturer of gelatin with substantial waste product to deal with, to renew the waste management contract with K.J Ventures. Now he was caught in two minds; whether to pursue the MBA degree or continue to focus on his venture and capitalize on this new window of opportunity?

Keywords: entrepreneurship, waste management, MBA, start-up, business opportunity.

It was a sultry evening of April 2021, Joseph, founder of Kiliyara Joseph (K.J) Ventures, was sitting in his room thinking about recent turn of events. K.J Ventures was founded by Joseph in 2016 and was engaged in converting biodegradable waste into bio fertilizers and organic manure. Last week, he had received a communication from Kerala Start-up mission accepting his application for incubation of K.J Ventures. A few days ago, he received a call from his friend Jibin working with Heythen Gelatin informing their willingness to renew their contract with K.J Ventures. Suddenly, things were looking rosy after a prolonged rough patch for the start-up. His thought process was interrupted abruptly as a mail dropped on his mobile phone. It was a communication from a prestigious Business School in Delhi-NCR (India) confirming his admission in the MBA program. This news put Joseph in two minds, whether to continue with K.J Ventures or join the MBA program in the prestigious Business School?

This shortened version of the article is for promotional purposes on publicly accessible databases.

Readers who wish to obtain the full text version of the article can order it via the url

<https://www.neilsonjournals.com/JIBE/abstractjibe19jd.html>

Any enquiries, please contact the Publishing Editor, Peter Neilson pneilson@neilsonjournals.com

© NeilsonJournals Publishing 2024.

1. Joseph: Family Background

Joseph grew up in Kochi, considered as the commercial capital of the southern state of Kerala (India). His father was General Manager at Cochin Shipyard, and mother, an executive engineer with the Irrigation Department. Before joining Cochin Shipyard, his father was an entrepreneur and founded Cochin Chemicals, a firm supplying chemical gases to small industrial units in and around Kochi and also owned a small mushroom farm. At times, his father would take Joseph along to the farm and other project locations, which kindled a strong interest in him towards business from an early start.

“I have often heard from my father that the childhood of a person defines their adulthood. I was lucky that I was able to observe and aid my dad in his business ventures. I believe, this made me more mature at an early stage of life”

He completed his schooling in 2014 and joined a prestigious college, Rajagiri School of Engineering and Technology, Kochi, for a Mechanical Engineering degree. Fueled by his passion for entrepreneurship, he became a member of its Entrepreneurship-Cell (E-Cell) and went on to become the core committee member. In E-Cell, he was involved in organizing various entrepreneurship related events and also worked on various projects. During this time, he cultivated an interest in entrepreneurship and read many books on the subject, especially the success stories of entrepreneurs. Over time, he developed a strong interest in starting his own venture at some point. His family had raised him to be an independent individual working towards societal welfare issues, which also influenced his outlook.

2. Seeds of an Idea

While Joseph lived in Kochi with his parents, his dad's native place was a village island named Kumbalangi¹, which was 10 kilometers away from Kochi. It was the first village selected by the Kerala government as part of its “Model Village”² project in 2003. Under this project, the government transformed the 15 sq.km. village island into a model fishing and tourism spot and named it “Kumbalangi integrated tourism village”. The project was a huge success as the initiative brought in many enterprises to set-up marine export plants creating employment opportunities for the local population. In a short period of time, the place was known for best quality marine food and emerged as a prominent tourist destination because of backwaters³.

-
1. “Kumbalangi”, Kerala Tourism, accessed March 12, 2022, <https://www.keralatourism.org/destination/kumbalangi-kochi-tourist-village/353>
 2. “Model village”, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, accessed March 12, 2022, <https://tribal.nic.in/Model-village.aspx>