Perfect solutions

An alum of the Great Lakes Institute of Management in Chennai, Kunal Prasad is the founder and COO of CropIn, which has created an app for the agri sector.

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Your background?
I was born and brought up in a small town called Hazaribag, about 80km away from Ranchi, Jharkhand. I completed my schooling from the same town and then enrolled for a bachelor of engineering - mechanical at the Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) Mesra, Ranchi. After graduating in 2006 I joined Tata Motors in their sales and marketing department and later joined Great Lakes.
I have always wanted to do something other than what was done traditionally. From organising inter-school quiz competitions and earning 80 as participation fees back in 1994 to coaching engineering aspirants during my college days, I always felt doing something new and different inspired me. This quest finally led to the getting together of some great individuals and ideas that shaped CropIn.

Where did the idea of CropIn come from?
What exactly does it do?
CropIn was an idea that emerged from a long time need that was existing in the industry but was never served due to the prevailing challenges in the sector. It's a low-cost pay-as-you-use product on an IT platform on cloud integrated with an Android-based smart mobile app. My partner Krishna Kumar and I had some experience and expertise in supply chain and we spent days together to understand the needs of this sector and ways to service them. We finally found the CropIn way to venture into it.
At CropIn we create a complete platform for the agri sector to fulfill all needs of stakeholders such as buyers, sellers, producers and processors etc. Our current product helps make every farm traceable and know what is going on, where, at what point of time.
Using our product, people can manage their entire farm operations on near real-time basis and take efficient decisions. The product helps farmers gather information and get guidance on best practices available to ensure high productivity, better crop quality, optimum input cost and adherence to food safety and traceability requirements.

Why farmers?
Farmers because they would benefit the most from the initiative. Helping them earn better profits would help improve their living standards.

Have they started benefiting from it?
If yes, how?
 Corporates have benefited by getting higher returns from the same scale of operations, better management of farmers and field staff, optimum utilisation of inputs and resources and better quality of product to fetch them better price showcasing traceability.
The information is easily accessible to farmers ensuring right and timely guidance. As a result, they end up achieving higher productivity, quality products and, therefore, a better price from their farms.

How did you finance the venture?
Initially we started off by borrowing money from family and friends. Later by the end of the first year, we got our seed fund which has helped us grow and sustain our business to date.

What profits do you expect to make out of it?
The sector is huge, promising and still untapped. We expect to make a good business in the coming time.

Who supported you?
Friends and family members who came to know about our initiative supported us in whatever way possible.

A look at the school...

Great Lakes Institute of Management is a leading B-school in India founded in 2004 by Prof Bal V Balachandran, J L Kellogg distinguished professor of accounting and information management Northwestern University, USA.
The institute has academic alliances with Stuart Graduate School of Business USA, Yule University USA, and Nanyang Technical University, Singapore.

Kunal had a vision and was keen and sure about what he was planning to do from Day One... I've been more of a sounding board (to him), as have the others on his advisory board.
- Sanjay Badhe (mentor), a visiting faculty at Great Lakes in the area of retail strategy and ex-VP, Aditya Birla Group

FIVE FACTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

1. ABOUT GREAT LAKES
   Great Lakes Institute of Management is a leading B-school in India founded in 2004 by Prof Bal V Balachandran, J L Kellogg distinguished professor of accounting and information management Northwestern University, USA. The campus has been built on 27 acres

2. FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME
   The institute offers a flagship one-year postgraduate programme in management besides a two-year regular postgraduate diploma in management. In addition, for executives there are two part-time programmes to choose besides a global executive MBA in energy management

3. ABOUT KUNAL PRASAD
   Born and brought up in a small town called Hazaribag, near Ranchi, Kunal Prasad completed his schooling from the same town and then enrolled for a BE in mechanical at the Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) Mesra

4. CHENNAI
   Capital of Tamil Nadu, it is one of the four major metropolitan cities in India. ITT Madras is one of the well-known institutions based here. The city is dotted with historic buildings

5. ADMISSIONS
   More than 600 students- put together at the institute's Chennai and Bhubaneswar campuses. For more details on admissions, eligibility requirements, courses, tuition fees, please contact the institute or visit its website http://greatlakes.edu.in/