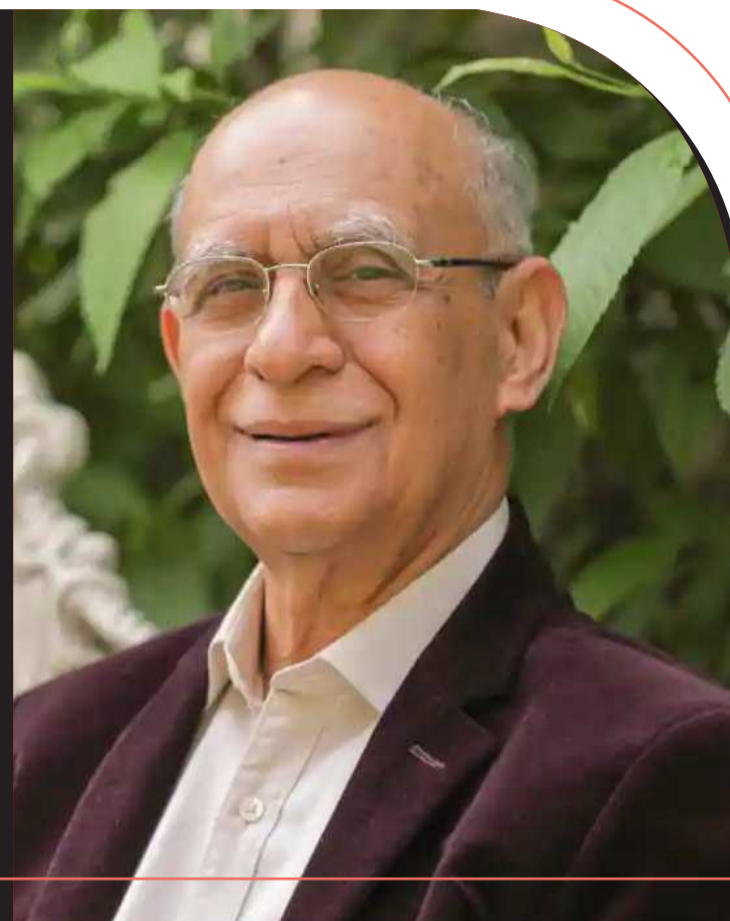


HAPPIEST PEOPLE LEAD TO HAPPIEST CUSTOMERS - ASHOK SOOTA

Ashok Soota is a pioneer in the Indian IT sector. A serial entrepreneur, he has founded and successfully led IPOs in two companies - Mindtree and Happiest Minds. He has also founded Happiest Health - a global health & wellness knowledge enterprise and SKAN - a not-for-profit medical research trust. Ashok holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Roorkee and an MBA from the Asian Institute of Management, Philippines. He is the Executive Chairman of Happiest Minds Technologies, a 'Born Digital . Born Agile' Mindful IT Company that uses leading-edge technologies to deliver solutions. He is the co-author of the national bestseller - "Entrepreneurship Simplified: From Idea to IPO". He has been the President of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), a member of the Prime Minister's Task Force for IT and was on the Advisory Council for the World Intellectual Property Organization, Geneva. He talks to Hurun Report India about the Company, his inspiration, and future plans.



How important is the right name for a business?

I had been researching on happiness for a while then and believe that happiness is the meaning and purpose of life and to be happy is the aim of human existence. The name Happiest Minds came from the heart, from this belief that in a people business, the happiness of our teams, our customers and stakeholders is of paramount importance. So, it seemed logical that we are named for what we believe in. Second, I do believe that a name must be memorable. With a powerful story behind it, it helps a lot more in brand recognition and recall.

You have very often come out of your comfort zone in your journey. What drives you or what motivates you?

My biggest move out of my comfort zone was when I moved into the tech world from a manufacturing environment. Shriram Refrigeration that I was heading at that point was into the business of manufacturing and sales of compressors, diesel engines and water coolers.

That wasn't so difficult because there was one important commonality. In both industries, research and development played a very crucial role. At Wipro, we did our own design and development of computers in a closed market. Also, manufacturing was a skill.

The bigger transition for me was actually within Wipro. I had come in as President of Wipro Infotech. In 1991, I was given charge of the software business. I was able to capture the wave of growth in that area. That had a different rhythm, particularly since it was a 100% export business for all practical purposes. However, it required a different mindset and approach. So, in a way, I'd say that that was a bigger challenge which I was able to successfully surmount.

Mindtree was an entrepreneurial venture and a very logical one.

In both transitions, one had to choose the change in the business, and this really became an opportunity to address

In the next 10 to 15 years, what do you think will help India grow?

Technology is going to continue to be a major driver; the pace of new technologies is accelerating. This is what will help India grow. Technologies such as AI, Blockchain, AR, VR, Metaverse and many more will keep unfolding, adding to the richness of the solutions, and creating opportunities across diverse industries. Everything is getting 'techified', driven by technology. At Happiest Minds, we are focused on leveraging all these disruptive technologies for our clients and we will continue to add newer technologies to our digital stack:

SMAC (Social, Mobile, Analytics, Cloud) technologies, Big Data, Unified Communications, IoT, AI, Cybersec, AR/VR, Blockchain, DevOps & RPA, Robotics & Drones, LCNC (Low Code No Code), Web 3.0 & Metaverse.

India has a lot of entrepreneurial energy now. When harnessed in new sectors, it will give a fillip to the growth of our country.

What makes you think so differently?

Well, I suppose everything that happens in your life shapes and defines you. I come from a family of six brothers and sisters. It was wonderful being in the middle. We learnt a lot about sharing from a very young age. My love for reading came early on, from reading the books that my elder sisters read. I learnt agility from all the moving around we did as a family, because my father was in the Indian Army.

What are your thoughts on philanthropy and what are you funding?

I would say it is a question of achieving a mission.

My first philanthropic effort, Ashirvadam, lays emphasis on environmental protection & preservation and aims at the social elevation of the underprivileged - bridging the gap in areas of skill trainings and employment opportunities leading to a better quality of life, welfare of women and children, medical help, and community health.

SKAN (Scientific Knowledge for Ageing and Neurological Ailments), my medical research trust is truly my mission at the moment. A 100% not-for-profit in the private sector, we are doing something completely new and different: delaying the onset of disorders and disease, slowing down the progression of the ailment, providing a better quality-of-life, managing problems with less medication, and deploying medical analytics for prevention & early diagnosis. The scientific insights from our research will help people to manage, overcome and lead rich lives despite critical illnesses. Currently, the area that we have decided to focus on is the Gut Microbiome, with specific reference to the Gut Brain Axis Linkage.

I have recently announced the launch of Happiest Health, a global health and wellness knowledge enterprise. Happiest Health will aim to be recognized amongst the top two trusted and credible sources of knowledge on health and wellness globally, while driving thought leadership for integrated medicine and gentler, kinder therapies.

What will be your advice to young people in the country? And what will be your advice to somebody who is older and who is really contemplating?

Obviously, there are more opportunities now in the world than there have ever been before. It is a wonderful time to be young. My advice to anybody would be that one does not need to rush into entrepreneurship. It's far better to build organizational experience, know how to run an organization capably, and raise funds rather than trying to bootstrap. Most youngsters today are bootstrapping. It becomes a very tough job. It is worth it to go larger, faster, because it's easier running a large company than a small company and you don't know where the competition is going to come from. Therefore, you may as well acquire scale very quickly. For older people. I would say: whatever you want to do is never too late. You don't have to feel you have to start hanging up your boots. I believe that keeping oneself mentally occupied and engaged is as important as being physically engaged. Exercise your mind and brain; also keep yourself well and healthy.

In your journey who has the happiest mind? Is it your clients, employees or your family?

Our mission statement is 'Happiest People . Happiest Customers'. In my view, you cannot have one without the other. We believe that happiest people lead to happiest customers, and it gets demonstrated over and over again. Therefore, I would not make that distinction. The same goes for family too. You cannot say that you're happy in the workplace, but not happy at home or the other way around, because today life has become one unified, integrated whole.

Happiest Minds is a Great Place to Work® certified Company; we are among the Top 100 Best Workplaces in India, Asia, in IT & IT-BPM and for Women.