

Being a 'Great Organization' is a by-product of being a good one: I-Attire Founders

Started by Ashish Sahay and Parichit Parmar in a one bedroom flat in 2011, the corporate uniforms and PPE manufacturing company I-Attire today, has a sprawling 20,000 sq ft manufacturing facility in Pune, offices in 4 cities and is a partner of choice to over 350 Fortune 500 companies and alike. The story about two or three friends doing a business together is commonly heard, but have you heard of 6 of them doing it together and accelerating towards a fast-growth? Here's one unique and inspiring story about entrepreneurship.

Ashish, Parichit and Shobhit were a team destined to be together not only at I-Attire but even during their business school days in Pune. The three were leading members of the coveted Placement Cell helping students get placements in the best companies. Post their respective placements and working their way up the corporate ladder for few years in different cities, Ashish and Parichit decided to quit jobs and start a company in Pune. They pulled in the third member of their pack, Shobhit Agarwal who was in Delhi and started tapping 2-3 regions at a time.

The three founders share one common belief - "an entrepreneur always identifies the need for change, responds to it, and creates an opportunity". I-Attire is one of the fastest growing corporate and medical uniform manufacturers in the country. Our Founders believed strongly about the vision of making in India and the Indian manufacturing industry back in 2011. Being a part of the corporate set-up, they identified the need for change in corporate uniforms and merchandise sector which was booming but largely unorganized. They soon

realized that a sophisticated manufacturing facility providing quality and well-designed apparel can uplift the brand image, and foster a culture of equality, growth and pride among the workforces.

Starting a company by leveraging your education and skill-set is the most straightforward thing to do. But for I-Attire Founders nothing is exciting if it is straightforward. Understanding textile and apparel for marketing and finance folks is quite unusual. Getting into this business required in-depth knowledge about fabric, yarn structures, garments



L-R: I-Attire Founders, Parichit Parmar, Ashish Sahay and Shobhit Agarwal

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manufacturing technology, designing, and more. The trio made multiple trips to textile markets of Mumbai, Surat, Chennai, Ludhiana to understand the industry and its potential. Simultaneously, their first small and big uniforms orders had started floating in.

The Sterling Years

With passage of time, the Company envisioned installation and use of state-of-the art technology tailoring/fashion designing/embroidering machines in big way, and roll out products to Customers' utmost satisfaction. I-Attire has sealed its place in the market as one of the best corporate and medical uniform manufacturers in the country; nevertheless, it's strive to raise the bar sees no end.

Collaboration is Key

I-Attire resonated with 'good quality' uniforms for everyone; it made companies, hotel and hospitals realize the importance of choosing quality fabric and well-designed uniforms vis-à-vis compromising on it as Uniforms were never perceived as a key point of discussion in anyone's agenda. Bringing a shift in this thought process was challenging, however, one of the most strategic moves that helped overcome this was, I-Attire's collaboration with Textile conglomerate - Mafatlal Industries Ltd.

A rapid growth soon followed as I-Attire's clientele expanded quickly from business schools to five-star hotels to large hospitals and eventually being the number one uniform partner for some of the most respected national and multinational companies across India. By this time, I-Attire moved its office from one room to a slightly larger space accommodating some *karigars* and newly purchased tailoring machines. As the business grew, the Founders decided to pull in their other close

pals, Hussain Shakir and Hisham Ajani. Hussain was a part of the Placement Cell at the business school from the same batch. Hussain started taking care of the Production and Operations. And, Hisham another friend with experience in corporate merchandize took lead in expanding the business portfolio. The five men were later joined by the first woman employee, Sweta Agarwal, a friend and a batchmate who applied her Finance prowess at I-Attire as the Head of Finance.

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The Directors have a unanimous belief in the power of collaboration. Bringing a culture of collaborative working relationships, encouraging intellectual contribution, and building opportunities for learning within the organization has been a growth-driver for I-Attire. This growth has reflected not only in business but also in its year-on-year employee strength. This core belief has strengthened I-Attire's network and helped gain recognition as the go-to uniforms partner in the market.

A Humane Workplace is a Productive Workplace

"Every individual is an asset; it's only a matter of identifying their core competencies and empowering them to grow together with your organization", says Ashish.

Cultivating a culture of employee empowerment and reducing the traditional 'yes boss' approach is the first step towards building a humane and culturally strong workplace. At I-Attire, they pay attention to behavioural qualities for role compatibility and build an ecosystem that facilitates employees identify their competencies and perform to the best of their abilities.

In the journey of I-Attire, a valuable aspect is the support of its long-standing employees, partners, and customers who have contributed significantly towards the company's growth and expansion. Parichitadds, "in a labour-intensive industry such as ours, the semi-skilled labours form the backbone of the company. At I-Attire, we currently work with 330 semi-skilled labours. We started working with 20 and as the company grew, the labours were joined by their family and relatives who have now become an extended family of I-Attire".

Bringing in a culture of values, care, and growing-together is an integral part of the boardroom discussions at I-Attire. Therefore, taking conscious steps towards employees' well-being, happiness and most importantly bringing 'fairness' in the ecosystem has helped achieve high productivity and performance.

Scaling Heights

I-Attire made headway with introduction of tech-enabled manufacturing, fashion designing, transforming packaging, endless custom-tailoring options, and product delivery excellence. I-Attire's new

clientele profile grew to more than 100 by 2016, and at the same time it continued to be the registered uniforms partner year-on-year to large corporates and factories for Pan-India locations. The company upgraded from a 5,000 sq ft facility to a 10,000 sq ft space to set-up its state-of-the art manufacturing unit with German machinery. I-Attire currently has over 350 clients, 4 sales enablement offices across regions, and 400 employees including the semi-skilled labours.

The year 2020 adversely affected the MSME sector among others. Many businesses were forced to shut their operations and this was more prominent among MSMEs in metro cities and those in the retail and manufacturing verticals. Majority of MSMEs (nearly 60 per cent) believed that it would take up to 6 - 8 months for business to return to normal. As

opposed to this belief, by the 12th Day of Lockdown 1.0, I-Attire's uniform manufacturing facility transformed into a PPE body coverall and face masks manufacturing unit. The scarcity of PPE in our country was often covered by the media during Covid-19 initial stages. Therefore, catering to the need of the hour, our teams imported specialized machinery for PPE manufacturing; acquired certifications from government bodies such as DRDO, SAF, SITRA etc and donated PPE items at Police Stations and Hospitals as part of CSR initiative. The quick response towards the pandemic helped I-Attire not only disburse salaries to all its employees on time, but additional support to grade III and below workers for few months. Today, I-Attire is one of the largest PPE manufacturers in Pune and among the largest in the country. The

company supplies PPE to one of the largest domestic airlines, hospitals and corporates. Adding feather to its cap, I-Attire also won India's Best MSME Award 2020 for Quality Excellence.

The Road Ahead

I-Attire recently acquired a brand-new facility measuring 20,000 sq ft in one of the industrial areas in Pune. As the company continues to expand its footprint, being a manufacturing company, it also understands its responsibility towards keeping planet earth sustainable. I-Attire is exploring opportunities to incorporate bio-based fibres for apparel manufacturing and aligning with various initiatives towards the use of biodegradable, recycled, recyclable and sustainable materials for textile applications.

HyLyt ties up with MSME Business Forum for enabling 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'

HyLyt, the technology based unified information management and collaboration platform has tied up with MSME Business Forum to empower the medium, small and micro businesses through tech empowerment and help them maintain data security and full privacy in their small businesses. HyLyt, the fully home grown 'Made in India' app aims to provide an affordable solution to the small businesses so that they can stay in control of data and build up the narrative towards 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Commenting on this launch, Ravi Nandan Sinha, Director - MSME Business Forum India said, "In most organizations today, data and other information are managed in isolated silos by independent teams using various data management tools. Tools like Hylyt brings all under one

umbrella and paves the way to managing data as an organizational asset."

He added that today, innovative technologies are a vital tool for MSMEs to bring efficiencies and a higher degree of standardization. We feel this collaboration will help Indian MSMEs to a large extent.

Announcing the tie-up with MSME Business Forum; Rajat Singhania, Founder of HyLyt by SocioRAC said, "I strongly believe that Indian MSMEs need more technology intervention to make them efficient and sustain against the competition. HyLyt is an endeavor to support these businesses through their entire lifecycle and adapt to the changing style of business environment."

In this era of the gig economy, sometimes projects require the creation of teams consisting of freelancers or people not working in the same organization or even the same country.

Digital collaboration tools become vital for these applications thus enabling remote working and cost cutting," he added.

Access to technology and transforming business to efficient units of operation is the only way to success in the coming time. HyLyt is a unique technology that works on top of multiple apps and data silos to converse and collaborate which will help the small businesses to control the teams and enhance productivity. The app helps to prevent data leakages and get a 360 view of all information that matters at one place.

The app is a smart product that is designed to provide optimal performance on one hand and is versatile and organization friendly on the other. The app can be customized for users, organization and entire stakeholder of the businesses, thus making them self-sufficient and less dependent on manpower." ■