

The Maverick

From air conditioning to fitness, he excels in his diverse roles. This businessman believes that business should not control the person; the person should control the business. Meet the enterprising R. Krishnaraj.

"No one plays to lose. Success is very relative. To me, success is pride with humility. Any successful man knows that he is not the sole cause for his success. Many others and many other factors play a part. He takes pride for his contribution, but is also grateful to others for their contribution." These are the words of a man who first entered the turnkey air conditioning business, made his mark as one of the best at the national level, and then diversified into setting up fitness studios. He is already a force to reckon with in Chennai. Confidence personified, this forthright leader, a fitness model himself, has an insatiable zest for life.

Meet **R. Krishnaraj**, Managing Director, Air Command and Maverick Fitness Studio.

Krishna believes that he is what he is today predominantly because he was a cricketer and also had the experience of hostel life in his younger days, so much so that he advocates that every child should play a sport and go through hostel life to shape his character. "Personality development, forming



of perceptions, teamwork, self-motivation, the ability to motivate others, and a competitive spirit were instilled in me by playing the sport. Hostel life taught me to understand people and relate with them, to accept and adjust with what was available and more importantly, never to crib about life," he said.

When asked what influenced him most as a youngster he replied,

"There was a TV serial called Bodyline about the Ashes series between Australia and England. In one episode, the captain would motivate his main bowler by saying that a marathon runner runs one third of the race on his stamina, one third on his training and the remaining part, when the body wants to give in, on his spirit - and that's what makes a champion. Ever since, I have repeated this to myself a million times; it keeps lingering in me and has created me."

Krishna believes that the person at the top should have about 70% knowledge of his business. He said, "It is this knowledge that helps me understand what the other person is talking about. I may not be a technical genius, but I know enough to take a decision. It helps me appreciate professionals and retain them." When asked what he does to gain this knowledge he said, "Whether it is the air conditioning business or the fitness studio, I interact with people, visit places, read related books and get hands-on experience. I am open to learning from any person who knows more than me, and that's one of my strengths."

When asked what gives him results he said, "Delegation gives me results. I am not a worker. I am a strategist. I work with the team, provide the infrastructure, train them and take care of them. I am in constant touch with the team. Every organisation and every brand has a culture. The culture of my organisation is 'what is promised has to be delivered; what is committed has to be honoured'. It takes time to train people in the culture, but once trained they deliver." When asked if delegation has always worked for him he said, "Sometimes it wasn't the right person; sometimes it has proved costly, but that's where one's intelligence and prudence comes in. You may not always be right, but it's important that you learn from your mistakes. You can be emotional till the decision is made, but you have to accept it once it is made. When I was a youngster, I would take a week to accept the consequence; then it became a couple of days; now it's a few minutes, and perhaps one day it won't even bother me.

Every time I've been hit, I have come back stronger, whether it was as a bowler or life in general."

Of his management style he said, "Business should not control a person. The person should control the business. I have to be free from daily activities in order to focus on business development. I will never do a business which requires my time on a daily basis. My strength is my pace of decision-making. The decision is a collective one, arrived at with inputs and views from everyone. Hence, everyone's heart works towards ensuring its implementation. This helps me balance my life."

Krishna regards his team as his extended family. "Today, I am directly and indirectly responsible for 300 families. I take responsibility for my team. The only thing that is expected of them is sincerity and commitment. I create them by giving them enough opportunities and provide them a lifestyle which they would've never dreamt of. My team knows that I

will always help them during a crisis and never let them down. I go a step beyond the protocol. In fact, in today's scenario where retention is a big issue, it is my strength. We have people who've been working with us for over a decade. There's also an instance of a fitness trainer who, with the right attitude and character, has gone on to become a general manager. I realised that beyond a stage you don't work for personal prosperity. There is greater fulfilment in creating people and helping them grow. Of course, I also act as a gardener who removes unnecessary weeds," he said.

Krishna completed his engineering in computer science and when asked why he didn't pursue it, he jocularly said, "My greatest service to the IT industry is that I didn't join it." Krishna joined the family business of air conditioning. He said, "I thought it would be a bed of roses, but it's only after I entered the bush I discovered the thorns in it. Every time a thorn was removed, it boosted my confidence. In fact, soon after I



T.NAGAR LKS
GOLDHOUSE PVT.LTD.
SINCE 1925

**DIAMOND
BRIDAL FIESTA**



perfect match of precious diamonds
as precious as your life partner
carefully designed backed by 3
generations of trust & craftsmanship

60 USMAN ROAD T.NAGAR CHENNAI - 600017 PH : 2434 4444

joined, I had to deal with labour issues, as a result of which I had to close down two factories. Moreover, too many family members were involved. My father and I moved out of the family business and started Air Command. We became dealers for Blue Star air conditioners and started doing turnkey projects. We took a couple of years to settle down, but took off soon after. It's then that I started thinking of diversification."

"How come fitness as a business?" I asked. He answered, "Initially I was into sports, but then I put on a

“Today, I am directly and indirectly responsible for 300 families. I take responsibility for my team. The only thing that is expected of them is sincerity and commitment.”

lot of weight. So in order to get back into shape, I started working out in my private gym at home. When I didn't see the desired results, I took the advice of a dietician and joined a fitness studio. It's then that the idea of starting a fitness studio of my own occurred to me. It was exactly at that time that I underwent the Entrepreneur Development Program at Alma Mater, and I took that step of starting Maverick Fitness Studio. The first studio was a hit. Soon I understood that fitness is a location-based

business, and hence we set up studios in two more locations in Chennai and also started a branch in Bangalore. Everything fell into place beautifully. There is a lot of satisfaction that I derive from working on the wellness of people and from seeing so many improve their fitness levels after coming to our place."

Talking about the availability of too much information, which eventually confuses people instead of throwing clarity, Krishna said, "We are not here to create a revolution, but we are certainly creating the right awareness. To me, one is fit when his body can do what he wants it to do. It will obey you at 30 and if you have the confidence that it will still obey you at 65, you are fit. One should listen to his or her body and follow a program, which he must sustain. There is no magic formula; one has to go through the process. Everything should be enjoyed in moderation. At Maverick, we do a wellness scanning - we test the heart and lung capacity, blood pressure, do blood tests, sugar tests, physiotherapy screening, etc. The requirements are varied and based on the tests reports, the fitness regimen and the diet are arrived at. Our strength is to provide service through knowledge. In fact, out of the 40 ACE certified trainers in India, Maverick will be the only studio to have 8 ACE certified trainers by June. We keep updating our knowledge and techniques."

Krishna attributes his success to the people around him. He said, "My family is everything to me; I

owe everything to my family. Shankar Basu, the CEO of Maverick, is the only trainer in the entire country who is certified in strength training and body conditioning. He has added immense value in creating systems and devising programs. He and Arunagiri, my General Manager who executes most of the ideas, are key people at Maverick. The clarity and the maturity I carry is all because of my teacher T T Rangarajan, the founder of Alma Mater."

Krishna believes in holistic development. "Every year I look back to find out how much I have grown. I read Frozen Thoughts and Osho Times, and my spiritual alignment owes to my association with Alma Mater. It's a responsibility that I enjoy. In fact, I live a responsible life with no rules."

When asked from here where, he said, "I am a more seasoned businessman now. My faith is that nothing will go wrong in life. I believe that divine grace always helps me. If my thinking is right, everything will happen. I have always believed in keeping the rules of the game of life simple. It's all there in the heart, mind and action. One should not vegetate, but leave a mark. It's time to reset the axis and surge forward and help people around me grow. We are ready to take off - growth is certain."

Here is a man who works out his plans in his own style and lives life to the fullest - he's most certainly a Maverick!