

TEP TALK

"If you can dream it, you can do it" - Walt Disney

The official newsletter of Technology Entrepreneurship Programme

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JARSH Innovations - "An entrepreneurial journey with compelling lessons for all"

In this issue, we continue to follow the fascinating journey of the incredibly talented innovators from Jarsh while introducing you to the roller-coaster ride the team had to undergo before emerging successful. After months of ideating with different thinking caps, JARSH came up with a revolutionary climate controlled head gear which is taking on the 3000 crore helmet industry. The story also teaches us the importance of identifying customer needs, dedicated technology development and above all-unfailing resolve to overcome all odds. Last but not least; JARSH never wasted a good mistake. The team used them as stepping stones to learning.

Seth Godin had famously said, "Don't find customers for your products, find products for your customers". This was one of the key lessons that Kaustubh learned during his incubation with the entrepreneurship program in one of the world's leading B-School. In Kaustubh's own words "I learned from TEP's workshops that it's not the idea you need to look for but a problem, preferably something that you face yourself, and you will be solving the problems of millions of people such as you".

This thought encouraged him to explore a wide array of everyday problems (Ranging from high fuel prices to faded shirts) from a different perspective. Finally, he and his team zeroed in on a problem that was impacting the common man around them, including themselves- 'uncomfortable, sweaty and badly designed helmets'. After analysing the discomfort of riding with the helmets on, their research led them to the harsh and hot environment of factory floors where safety measures mandate workers to wear helmets as part of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). However, inefficient design and discomfort of wearing these helmets were impacting the worker's efficiency which in turn adversely affected his productivity and quality. With a much pertinent problem in hand, the team took up the task of meeting various users and found themselves an industrialist, as a mentor - who could guide them on product development. Some major highlights in their journey of product development are elaborated below.

Aesthetics and Viability: Product development involved the 'successful' breaking of over a hundred helmets in all possible ways to come up with a working prototype which was functionally viable. However, with its rather unattractive finish, it was not exactly aesthetically appealing! The team spent days refining the prototype both aesthetically and functionally, based on user feedback. After redesigning the helmet to make it

aesthetically appealing, one of their mentors pointed out that the design had several sharp edges which could harm any potential user. JARSH realised that a good looking helmet is only good if it does not poke the user with sharp edges! This is how it looked after multiple iterations, and trial - <https://youtu.be/QoYPDWxtQao>

Consumer Perception: Another interesting episode was when the JARSH industrial prototype helmet was being tested with the workers of a leading MNC. The industry practice for powered helmets was to have a battery pack around the user's waist. JARSH changed that with a small battery on a back-pack as it was easy to wear, had even weight distribution and a shorter cable length (Since the battery was on the back instead of the waist). While the product was definitely more user-friendly, the workers wearing it were ridiculed saying that they had come to work "wearing a school bag". This seemingly trivial issue could have a significant impact on user choices and made JARSH understand that design decisions were not just about better functionality but also about the customer's preferences. Based on multiple iterations, finally, the battery backpack was replaced with a waist mounted battery, which is an industry standard existent for a few decades.

Sourcing Certification: The JARSH team felt that getting past certification would be a breeze since their product was unique with no competition. Ironically, this uniqueness turned out to be an unexpectedly troubling impediment. Indian Standards Institute (ISI), the certification body of India (ISI mark) certifies a product only if it conforms to the industry standards. However, the biggest hurdle that the team had to endure was that there was no standard against which their helmet could be certified, as it was a new product! The JARSH team had to work closely with the certification body for almost a year, painstakingly putting together a new standard. The process involved individual certifications for all the modules of the helmet to an integrated single certification for the entire helmet assembly.

More interesting stories to come in our next edition. Till then, happy reading and feel free to write to us with your suggestions and comments using the "Call to Action" section at the end of the newsletter!

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