

Balmer lawrie Organisational Gazette



BLOG

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a Balmer Lawrie Brand

For an experience beyond compare



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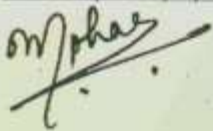
Balmer Lawrie & Co. Ltd.

EDITORIAL

The acquisition of the premier holidays brand Vacations Exotica in February 2014 and its subsequent integration into the organisation as a Strategic Business Unit, "SBU: Tours - Vacations Exotica (SBU:TVE)" was a significant and welcome milestone. Today the travel and vacations space has become highly competitive with more and more people opting for customised vacations and personalised travel solutions. Balmer Lawrie has a strong foothold in the ticketing business and now with a whole gamut of specialised tour solutions, it is poised to successfully compete with the leaders in both the travel and vacations domain. I'm confident SBU:TVE will successfully value add to our Tours and Travel business taking it to greater heights in the years to come.

The theme of this issue of BLOG is centered on SBU:TVE - its People and its Services. Team Vacations Exotica is highly customer oriented, infectious energy, passionately performance driven and believes innovation is 'everyone's job everyday'. They all share one goal and that is to become the No. 1 Company in the Tours & Travel Industry. Let's get one with the passion and the goal, and irrespective of the SBU or Function we belong to, let's aim at steering Balmer Lawrie to newer heights in the days to come.

Hope you enjoy reading the issue and do send me your suggestions/feedback and contributions for the 'Talent Unlimited' column from you and your family members. You can email them to mukhopadhyay.mohar@balmerlawrie.com.



LEADERSHIP SPEAKS



Mr. Viren Sinha

Chairman &
Managing Director

Balmer Lawrie traditionally has been in the travel and ticketing business for decades and on boarding of Vacations Exotica has added much value to our tours and travel services offerings. It's just six months that we have acquired Vacations Exotica, and I must tell you that the experience of working together on our enhanced value propositions has been exciting. Vacations Exotica is an established premier holiday's brand, and has a multi-talented, young and professional team with loads of domain expertise and a thorough understanding of customers' preferences.

The Tours & Travel (T&T) business is one of our key strategic businesses and has strong credentials with a formidable physical network and a loyal customer base.

You can well imagine the scale of opportunity that would unfold once the synergies of Vacations Exotica and T&T starts playing out in the market. It would create unmatched value for our customers. As we move forward, we will merge the two business units and christen it SBU: Travel & Vacations. We plan to do this by October 2014. Our vision for the Travel and Vacations business is bold; we want to be amongst the top 3 players nationally in this domain over the next 3 years.

We have around 250 touch points across India and a huge customer base to which we will be able to offer end-to-end services in travel and vacations. We are rolling out strategies to strengthen our foothold in the Corporate Travel Management space, and to actively push growth in the leisure and the inbound tourism business.

The challenges are many. We have to continuously innovate and create value for our longstanding and increasingly demanding customers. Considering the immense competition in this business, innovation has to be everybody's job. We will continue to invest in technology, sales promotion and marketing activities to emerge a leader in the travel and vacations space. I'm quite excited about the road ahead for the Travel & Vacations business. Let's work together to unleash the potential of this synergy!



Mr. Niraj Gupta

Director
[Service Businesses]

It was a pleasure to learn that this issue of BLOG is focusing on our youngest SBU: Tours-Vacations Exotica.

The company has primarily been into ticketing and was thus looking for an opportunity to enter into the fast growing holiday market. Sometime in 2013 an opportunity came to BL for purchase of an existing holiday company, Vacations Exotica Destinations Pvt. Ltd., and thus SBU:TVE was born.

The SBU being in the service sector is about its people - people who actualize dreams of individuals like you and me to explore and enjoy the unseen and unknown.

Through this issue of BLOG I once again extend a warm welcome to all the members of TVE into the larger BL family.

LEADERSHIP SPEAKS



Mr. Ravishankar
Chief Operating Officer
[Tours - Vacations Exotica]

Well, this issue of BLOG is a wonderful opportunity and platform to talk and share reviews, performances and new happenings in SBU:TVE. This is my first BLOG, and I'll try my best to keep you engaged on this one. To make it simple, I've divided my message in sections:

SBU: TVE

I'd like to begin with SBU: TVE. What is SBU:TVE? Before we became SBU: TVE, we were known as Vacations Exotica Destinations Pvt Ltd. It was conceived and established in the year 2007 with 3 Offices across India and quickly accelerated to opening 6 other branches and 3 associate offices within 1 year of its conception.

We created VE to fill up the void the travel industry was facing due to lack of Innovative, Quality driven products and cold customer service. We wanted to change that, we wanted to give people a valuable product backed by customer service that is meaningful and memorable. We wanted to give the best to our Customers and OUR PEOPLE. People & products make this company great because of which we are one of the Top 5 leading Leisure Travel companies in India.

Products

Our business is divided into main parts - Group Tours (GIT) & Free Individual Travellers (FIT). Under the banner of GIT, we sell International Group Tours & Indian Holidays. These tours are planned by the highly skilled Product Development Team and the tours are designed to meet the requirements of every discerning traveller. Customers can choose from over 60 different types of products across various destinations.

In terms of the FIT portfolio, we offer another set of products, like Ticketing - Domestic & International, Visa, Insurance and the valuable FIT Tours.

Ticketing, Visa and Insurance are self-explanatory, so I'll skip them and give a brief note of the FIT Tours. FIT Holidays / Tours are custom built products that are conceptualised, planned and executed to meet every customer's unique requirements. Attention to detail is given to all starting from Budget to the High End products or customers.

Also, what's interesting to know is that FIT tours, expand our knowledge about destinations - some of them are as unique as the hill station town of Khajjiar, Himachal Pradesh known as the Mini Switzerland of India to a region in Arizona called the Wave, known for its sandstone rock formation or the the Antarctic, uninhabited wilderness, inhospitable conditions in most time of the year, and yet giving a small window of opportunity to travellers to visit and experience the region.

In short, our journey through the world continues everyday through our ever growing company of curious customers!

Statistics

The GIT Tour is a valuable product; thanks to the introduction of value added services to its range. The Group Tour contributes to a plum 53% of the business. Not too far and chasing fast is the FIT Product with 47% in its contribution and constantly evolving to meet new market demands and pushing us to the edge to boost our knowledge and deliver top notch customer service.

Going Forward

Albeit being the Top 5 leading Leisure Travel company, we aim to be No.1. Many challenges lie ahead but these difficult times will and should create energy to fuel the ambition in each of us to be No.1.

First, we have to realign our work force, re-establish strategies, simplify our working structure or model, get tech savvy and build teams that collaborate to achieve the organization's goal.

Second, focus on the LTC market - we must win through the competition by creating affordable but quality travel products for this market and finally the venture and pursue the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions) market.

The overall result of these changes will yield productivity, growth, partnerships with each of you as well as our vendors and keep us moving forward. Since we are new to the Balmer Lawrie family, I wish that we go through this transition phase in the most thoughtful way possible and yet at the same time I wish that each one of you in TVE take this time to build momentum and accelerate our success in the Travel business.

Good Luck and wish you success in all that each of you become!

TOURS – VACATIONS EXOTICA

Balmer Lawrie acquired the premier holidays brand "Vacations Exotica" along with its people and business, in February, 2014. This takeover was an endeavor to strengthen its foothold in the Tours domain. BL is one of the largest travel & tour agents in India providing domestic & international travel and ticketing, and travel & tourism related services to its clients. BL Tours & Travel is the oldest IATA accredited travel agency in India. It enjoys a high level of trust, and services major customers in Government, Ministries & Departments, Public Sector Undertakings, Private Corporates and others. With more than 88 touch points pan India including ISO certified branches in all major cities, BL Tours & Travel services customers round the clock through its 24x7 Call Center and an Online Travel Portal.

With the takeover BL will be able to expand its value proposition and offer end-to-end services in the Tours and MICE segment as Vacations Exotica brings with it a multi-talented work force and a wide range of holiday packages.

Today, "Vacations Exotica" is an integral Strategic Business Unit of BL and is known as SBU: Tours - Vacations Exotica. Vacations Exotica began operations in October 2007 and currently has a team with around 100 people, 9 offices in India, 4 associate offices including 1 in USA and is represented by 113 Preferred Partners. Within a span of 7 years of its inception, Vacations Exotica is today ranked among the top 5 holiday companies in India nationally.

SBU:TVE is led by Mr. Ravishankar and has a team of dedicated professionals that is highly customer focussed and continuously works on developing innovative holiday products.

Vacations Exotica takes pride in clocking continuous average growth of 25% since its inception unrivalled in this competitive market, with a large number of repeat clients. As a pan India Company Vacations Exotica has clients from all parts of India and also Indians settled in the USA and GCC Countries.

Their strength in organizing Group Tours to USA, South America, Canada, the continent of Europe, Far East, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, South Africa, Kenya, Middle East, Mauritius, China, Japan et al has put them on a firm pedestal. They have also created a niche in the Indian Holidays segment with Group Tours to Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Goa, North East, Rajasthan, Nepal, Sikkim and many other destinations. Vacations Exotica has specialized and excelled in Individual Family holidays, Customized Packages, Honeymoon packages, Ad-hoc Groups and MICE movement in India and abroad. Check out www.vacationsexotica.com for more details. They have created a commanding position in the market for cruises round the globe and facilitating Rail Europe packages.

Their tag line, "A world of difference", is focused on providing a never before experience which is also borne by 99.9% satisfied clients and a substantial percentage of repeats. A leader in innovation, cost optimization and delivery to its diverse customer base are its core strengths.

SBU:TVE SERVICES

SBU:TVE specialises in providing the following tours & travel solutions to a wide range of customers:



Group Holidays (GIT) - Group Tours to Europe include traditional destinations of Europe, East & Central Europe, Spain & Portugal and Scandinavia & Russia. While tours to the Americas cover USA, Canada and

SBU:TVE SERVICES

South America, Asia includes Far East (Thailand, Malaysia & Singapore) and China & Hong Kong. Group Tours to South Africa, Kenya & Tanzania are the destinations in Africa. Group Tours to Australia and New Zealand are also pretty popular.



Customised Holidays (FIT) - SBU:TVE effectively customizes holidays to India, Nepal, Sri Lanka & Bhutan for customers. Holidays include Weekend Getaways, Honeymoon Packages and Independent Family Holidays.

Ad Hoc Groups - These tour packages specially cater to associations and religious groups

MICE (Meeting, Incentive, Conference & Exhibition) - SBU:TVE mainly provides MICE solutions which include Corporate Incentive, International & Local Exhibitions, Sales Conferences and Board Meetings besides others.

HAPPENINGS

- ❖ In February 2014, SBU:TVE participated in the OTM exhibition held at Mumbai, where Vacations Exotica was showcased as a Balmer Lawrie brand for the first time.



- ❖ SBU:TVE put up a stall at the Discover India Exhibition at Chennai on 15th & 16th February.



- ❖ In the recent past SBU:TVE also participated in the Hindu Travel Fair at Chennai, Holiday Expo at Coimbatore and TTF at Mumbai.

HAPPENINGS

- ❖ As part of its brand promotion initiatives SBU:TVE ran a print Ad campaign in mainline dailies and released Ads of the Joint Promotion done with Canada, Brand USA, California and Philadelphia during the months of February and March 2014.



- ❖ SBU: TVE was the principal sponsor of the Tolly Monsoon Cup 2014 – Golf Tournament held from 25th to 27th July, 2014 at the Tolly Club in Kolkata.



- ❖ SBU:TVE organised an exclusive FIT holiday for Mr. Arun Govil (famous Actor who acted as Ram in the mythological television serial Ramayana) and his family to Europe - Paris, Switzerland and Italy. In photo are (L-R) Aditi Potdar [TVE], Sunil Lahiri (Actor who played the character of Lakshman in the serial Ramayana), Arun Govil and Kaustubh Wagle [TVE] at the SBU's sales office in Mumbai.

Tete-e-tete with Pradeep Noronha, Vice President – Marketing & IT [Tours – Vacations Exotica]



Your experience with Vacations Exotica...

The idea of creating thoughtfully done holidays evolved the company.

Being the first venture as an entrepreneur the experience of creating and delivering quality & honest holiday solutions to customers has been an experience in itself.

Nurturing and growing the brand every day gave us all an experience of all the challenges that need to be overcome to create a wonderful and strong brand.

The innumerable challenges and solutions that have been understood and fought with are the lessons learnt from these

experiences.

How have you seen the business evolve since its inception?

We launched VE in 2007 with just 3 branches - Mumbai, Chennai & Bangalore. We kick started VE with the launch of just a few Superior Quality Oriented Group Tours to Europe & USA, and catered to an approx. 300-400 pax that year but today VE caters to approx. 10,000+ customers for various holiday requirements.

Our Group Tours segment accounts to 45% of our business today and we cover the top destinations across the globe and our Customized Tours accounts to approx. 40% of our business. We have about 96 people working for VE with over 13 branches pan India.

What according to you is the biggest strength of Tours – Vacations Exotica?

The Primary Strength of the business is our People. Ensuring we employ people with the right attitude and spirit to grow our business is a critical factor in the brand emerging as one of the best leisure travel brands in India.

The next important strengths are its Products & its Attitude to do this business which is to create "A world of a Difference".

What steps are being taken to keep pace with the changing market trends and combat

competition?

First off, we have initiated to adapt to some state of the art technology tools to meet the demands of quick revert to customers. Second our relationship with our DMC's and our sales record to these various destinations helps us get deals that can meet the price conscious customers. Third, OUR SERVICE; we ensure that every customer is taken care of personally with all their travel requirements met before they travel and also ensure that their travel is smooth and efficient as planned.

What will be your message for newcomers in Tours – Vacations Exotica?

It is a world of opportunity. This business is driven by highly motivated and like-minded people who care for its Customers and the Brand VE.

It is an opportunity to understand what exactly is customer service, customer retention and customer satisfaction and apart from being customer oriented, we care for our people. Everyday we discover someone with a new talent or we train them to develop skills that will enhance their quality of life and ours.

As the company grows to become one of the largest conglomerates of this business, it will on its way create several leaders and winners.

Tete-e-tete with Anaita Elavia, Associate Vice President - Product Development [Tours – Vacations Exotica]



Your experience with Vacations Exotica...

Just to give a brief, after my graduation, I joined Thomas Cook in 1998 as an Executive Trainee excited about being in the travel industry. I have worked in many functions of the business, starting with airline and land operations for group tours. My role also included product development, pricing, training and brochure design for group tours.

In 2007, Vacations Exotica was a company formed with a vision of providing best in holidays. It was

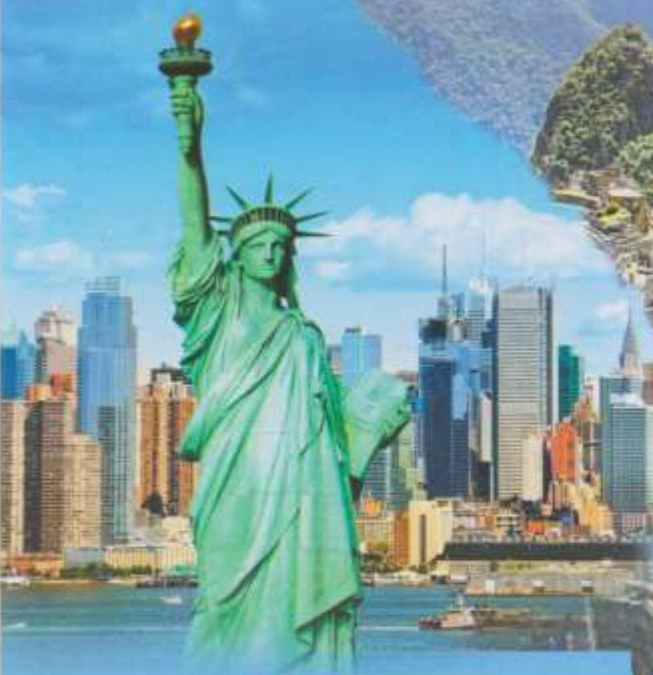
formed by a team of like minded people who wanted to give holidays a different meaning. I have been with the company right from its inception and have seen it grow. I am proud of my association with the entire team, especially Mr. Ravishankar with whom I started off my career way back in 1998 and his knowledge and guidance in this business is extremely valuable given his experience in the industry.

As an Associate Vice President – Product Development, my team and I continue to be directly

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Tete-e-tete with Anaita Elavia, Associate Vice President - Product Development [Tours - Vacations Exotica]

responsible for product development, contracting and pricing of tours. I have also extended these responsibilities to develop the FIT segment and luxury holidays business.

From being involved in the company's day to day progress, to developing and making innovative itineraries I can still say I get to learn something new everyday. I enjoy creating and designing new itineraries especially to introduce newer destinations in the market which have not yet been explored.

How have you seen the business evolve since its inception?

Since its inception in 2007, the Vacations Exotica brand has grown tremendously and consistently over the last 7 years. The brand Vacations Exotica has also evolved building a set of loyal customers who have travelled with us over these years.

We started with a few FIT clients and gradually in summer of 2008 we launched our first group series departures and printed our first brochure to Europe, USA, Asia and Australia.

The brand today is recognised to be on par with the leading tour operators in India and is associated with quality product, honest and competitive prices and customer satisfaction.

We have a strong 'word-of-mouth' customer flow, which itself speaks a lot for the kind of trust the clients have in our brand.

Vacations Exotica also prides itself in launching many 'firsts' in terms of products in the market. Today I can confidently say that a lot of 'bigger and known' tour operators have followed and incorporated in their itineraries what we introduced when we took the bold step and chance to start off. Just to give a few examples, introducing destinations like Yosemite National Park, Monterey, Carmel, 17 Mile Drive in the USA, or giving the clients an experience of staying at Port Douglas, Sovereign Hill and Ballarat in Australia, or a visit to Zermatt etc. in Switzerland. These are only a few of the things we introduced first in the market. We also were one of the first ones to have introduced group tours to Spain and Portugal, Japan, Canada and Alaska.

What according to you is the biggest strength of Tours - Vacations Exotica?

Our customers are our biggest strength; this followed by an experienced professional team of staff, most of them having knowledge of minimum 15 years in the travel industry. Though at times we are perceived as being a tour operator which offers tours at a slightly higher price than our competitors it is the trust and faith of our customers who believe in the quality of our product that keeps us going. We have a record of nearly 98 - 99% satisfied customers. This itself speaks on the high service standards we maintain on the holidays we offer our

clients in terms of ensuring good quality hotels, modern coaches and vehicles, professional and experienced tour managers etc. Our team being highly experienced complements the fact that we have staff that not only build a client's dream holiday but also ensure that it is well executed.

What steps are being taken to keep pace with the changing market trends and combat competition?

We constantly strive to come out with products that are competitive as well as innovative in the market. We ensure we have a variety of products that would suit every client with varied budgets.

Just to give you an example on the group series we have our niche and high end products categorised under the 'Exotic' series followed by tours which would suit a mid-range to a complete budget conscious traveller. However, even on our extremely budgeted tours too, we ensure that we maintain a certain standard on the tour, which gives us our repeat clients. Besides, we are now concentrating on developing our FIT and luxury holiday business and independent family vacations.

We constantly monitor products offered by our competitors and try to be more competitive than them. We launch various discount schemes valid for a certain period and now we are targeting to be stronger in the social media domain and online activities to increase the awareness of our brand value and build more customers.

My main focus is now on developing the luxury travel and FIT market (independent family vacations) as that is where I see a huge potential of business and greater revenues.

We are also planning on expanding our NRI business; from having had a very successful NRI clientele from USA, we now want to target the NRI's residing in the Middle East countries.

What will be your message for newcomers in Tours - Vacations Exotica?

At Vacations Exotica, we believe that our people are our strength. We've had most of our staff that joined us as Trainees and were complete fresher just out of college and today hold high positions within the organization through their hard work, dedication and commitment to their job. We provide a complete on-the-job training where we mould newcomers to fit into their job roles without much difficulty.

To any person who is joining the organization be it Tours - Vacations Exotica, or anywhere else I would say, as long as you enjoy your work and put in hard work and commitment to your job, and at the same time strive and achieve a work and personal life balance, you will achieve success in whichever field you choose.

Tete-e-tete with Leera Sequeira, Chief Manager – Indian Holidays [Tours – Vacations Exotica]



Your experience with Vacations Exotica...

Experience as they say cannot be put down in words. But will try my best to write a few words which will surely not justify what I have learnt and achieved.

The knowledge, encouragement and guidance I have got from seniors has seen me grow from an Executive Secretary to Chief Manager – Indian Holidays. Vacations Exotica has provided me the ground to grow and given me opportunities to learn and discover my potential and the process is still ongoing. I can say if you take the initiative, there will be no dearth of opportunities to enhance your ambition.

Working with Vacations Exotica has always been an experience in itself; we have been given a free hand to explore all possible opportunities. We were always encouraged to take decisions and at the same time be responsible for them. We have been taught to be proactive and anticipate problems and take care of them before they actually arise.

One important lesson what I have learnt is mistakes do happen, but one has to take responsibility for the same and learn from them rather than give up and run away from the problem.

How have you seen the business evolve since its inception?

Being part of Vacations Exotica since its inception, I have seen the highs and lows of starting a

new company. The road has not been easy, but to achieve success one has to experience not just roses but also the thorns which are a part of it.

It has grown from a company with few branches to number of branches in various cities. From catering to a few destinations we have now grown and are able to cater to most of the destinations around the world for both regular and niche clients.

Vacations Exotica has grown in great volume both in terms of number of passengers and gross value, and today we can compete with the leaders in the trade who have been major players for many years. Vacations Exotica has set itself a very ambitious target and has grown into a brand that people can trust and would like to travel with.

It has achieved such standards that we are now compared to the leaders in the trade, and passengers now look at the product we offer before they take a decision, as we always offer good products with honest price. And now our association with Balmer Lawrie has given us a stronger foothold in the market and has enabled us to reach wider number of passengers.

What according to you is the biggest strength of Tours – Vacations Exotica?

The biggest strength of Vacations Exotica are its people and the commitment each one of them has in them to ensure to provide the level of service promised and expected by the passengers.

The experience of each colleague, the culture which is practiced, the respect, support and backing one gets has enabled us to create a brand which is recognized and well known within a short span of 7 years.

Each person is responsible for his/her action or decisions and is given a responsibility to ensure their little bit, which contributes to the whole.

OUR PEOPLE, THEIR EXPERIENCE AND COMMITMENT IS OUR BIGGEST STRENGTH.

What steps are being taken to

keep pace with the changing market trends and combat competition?

To grow in the industry and ensure you are not lagging behind, one has to constantly study the market trends and take necessary steps to ensure you are in the race. Training and updating the staff on the competitors' products and how it can be compared to our product is an ongoing process in Vacations Exotica. The staff is encouraged to attend presentations organized by Tourism Boards so that their knowledge on destinations is updated. The market trends are constantly reviewed and corrective measures are taken regarding flights, foreign exchange variation, government policies, etc.

Being transparent in dealing with the passengers, updating the passengers with the necessary requirements, travel information and providing hassle free travel is what we promise our clients. This is not only promised but also ensured. Hence, clients come back happy and look forward to traveling with us again.

Ours is a non-tangible product, so to sell it successfully we have to be competitive in the market and we ensure to do that by coming out with niche and unique products, which are not available in the market.

There is a lot of potential for Indian holidays especially group departures and we are lagging behind in this area. This market is huge and we have not tapped this area at all. To keep pace with this competition we need to invest in blocking air seats at very competitive rates, and booking hotel rooms way in advance by making pre-payment to hotels and thus making our Indian Holiday product comparable in the market.

What will be your message for newcomers in Tours – Vacations Exotica?

Being in the service industry the main aim and focus should be to be committed to provide quality service to the passengers before the travel, while the travel is going on and also after the travel. Keep in touch with the latest

Tete-e-tete with Leera Sequeira, Chief Manager – Indian Holidays [Tours – Vacations Exotica]

trends in the travel market, provide accurate information and be willing to learn. Do not be discouraged with mistakes, but instead learn from them and

emerge victorious. One can never stop learning in the travel field; hard work and commitment can only enable one to achieve their goals and ambitions.

Be patient and remember when one door of opportunity closes, the next one opens, so never give up.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HARD WORK.

KNOW YOUR LEADER...



He is a leader who leads from the front and is a role model for all at SBU:TVE. A thorough professional, he aspires to steer Balmer Lawrie to the No. 1 position in the travel and holidays space. A perfect gentleman, he is amiable and extremely humble. Meet Mr. Ravishankar, COO [Tours – Vacations Exotica] and read on to know more about him.

Tell us about the inception of Vacations Exotica and the road ahead...

It was in 2006, I had resigned from a career that spans 25 years in the travel field and was all set to become a Teacher & set up a training school in Mumbai. But some of the people I knew along the way wanted me to start a travel company – a travel company that was unique and meant for people to whom quality and meaningful holidays mattered. This struck a chord in me, especially because I knew travel companies were moving away from delivering quality, well planned and memorable holidays and this created a space for us to start a new company that would pave the way to bring back professionalism, quality driven products, services to people and make Vacations Exotica a global brand.

I had planned to start with one office in Mumbai, but I soon found myself thronged by people who wanted to join me in this endeavour to create Vacations Exotica – and hence, from 1 office we became 3 branches and within few months we launched 6 other branches along with 3 Associate Offices.

Vacations Exotica was launched in 2007 creating a massive buzz in the travel market and saw other companies discounting their price to compete with us. We stood firm and faced the challenges and before we knew it, we

became a force to reckon with.

After 5 years, I wanted to expand and grow the company and wanted an investor who could invest & most importantly retain the brand and take it to greater heights. As with all investment deals, we had our share of ups and downs but with Balmer Lawrie they decided to not only retain the brand but shared the same vision of taking Vacations Exotica & Balmer Lawrie to great heights globally. We finally got acquired and now are a part of Balmer Lawrie. We have some fantastic plans to help this company reach the global status it deserves, and though everyday is a challenge, I see this company moving ahead everyday.

Significant professional and personal achievements...

Well, the important one, would be creating a brand name that is known worldwide but the most significant achievement both professionally and personally for me is the goodwill, respect, friendship, camaraderie, trust and belief that I've earned from all of my colleagues in the travel fraternity, my business partners and my team. It's their trust and hope in me that keeps me looking forward to achieve the best for them and the company everyday.

What according to you is the USP of Vacations Exotica?

The USP of Vacations Exotica is in its people – it's this team of people that

drives the business with quality products, going the extra mile and making sure they deliver holidays with "A world of difference" for every customer; ("A world of difference" is our official tag line).

Who is the person who influenced you the most and why?

My Dad is someone who influenced me the most and why? – Way back in 1954, my dad moved to Mumbai from Chennai and took up a job with the Central Railways – Pension Section. To ensure his survival, he had to learn the local language that is Marathi & Hindi which was essential those days. He was a man of his word and worked with strong commitment, dedication and integrity.

For example, as a young boy, seeing my father, a Government employee burn the midnight oil, at times post 1 am, and working over the weekends, to ensure that miscellaneous aspects to most people such as retirement benefits to exiting employees are paid out within 2 weeks made a lasting impact on me. There was no room for delays in his work model and every job had to be tended to in time.

Although we had a middle-class background, he ensured comfort and provided the best education for all of us. My dad taught me some very valuable lessons in life – Integrity, Dedication, Commitment, the value of time and being humble. Most importantly, he

KNOW YOUR LEADER...

encouraged me to chase my dreams and follow my path and always assured me that he would stand by me and be my pillar of support in whatever I wish to do wisely in my life. Unfortunately, he passed away and although he did not live long enough to see and enjoy the success I've achieved today, my Dad continues to stand by me in spirit.

What is your favourite one liner?

Live life with a positive attitude, unflinching belief in yourself and a warm smile – these three elements get you closer to your dreams and goals.

What are your hobbies?

I enjoy self-drive holidays, collecting coins, listening to music and I especially enjoy listening to Mohammad Rafi, Lata Mangeshkar, Kishore Kumar to name a few.

Which is your favourite travel destination?

India. It's magnificent and nature at its grandeur!

Two things that your colleagues don't know about you...

- That I drove taxi for 2 ½ years in Mumbai to earn some money to complete my post-graduation.
- I was a teacher in K.C. College of Management Studies.

Your management style or mantra...

I do not follow a particular style or mantra, I normally like to go with my instincts, be a good listener and be close to my people.

I believe in the management by walk and have a very strong belief that an ordinary person can achieve extraordinary things by just guiding and motivating them.

Message for all Balmer Lawrie employees...

I believe that the strength of a company is its people and that the people are the face of a company – the ambassadors of a company. Although we are one of the finest travel companies in India, my personal goal for Balmer Lawrie Travel is to make it the No.1 Leisure Travel Company in the world and in all spheres – be it Corporate, Leisure Holidays, LTC and so forth.

A new challenge lies ahead of us everyday and if we stay focused, committed and work together in teams, we can rise above these challenges. Always look out for an opportunity to learn, and be driven for success and achievement.

Based on my experience, I have seen many travel companies aspire and dream of being No.1, but don't have the required elements: talent, knowledge, experience, perseverance and that special flair – creating unique experiences and lifelong memories – But I believe that each of you have these elements in you.

I firmly believe that if we work together as 'One Team', each of us can achieve our professional goals, change the way people see us, initiate new vistas for growth and success and stay true to the tagline, "A world of difference". Always aim to be different & unique from all other companies and I would like that each of you play a pivotal role in making Balmer Lawrie Travel as one of the most iconic travel/holiday brand in the world.

KNOW YOUR FELLOW BALMER LAWRIEN...

(The employees of SBU:TVE featured in this section were interviewed by Mr. Abhilash Ramaria, Deputy Manager [HR])



Maitri Parikh,
Manager [Tours – Vacations Exotica]

How long have you been associated with Vacations Exotica and currently what is your role?

I started my career with Vacations Exotica on 25th January 2010 as a Senior Executive. In a span of 4 years, I have grown to become a Manager at Ahmedabad Branch taking care of the outbound business from Saurashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

What do you like about Vacations Exotica?

Vacations Exotica is a very transparent organisation. We are given full authority to deliver services. With authority, comes responsibility. We are responsible for the Holidays that we plan for our esteemed clients. We are happy to see them coming back to us again and again as our satisfied clients and this is our greatest strength. This

helps in boosting our morale. This has helped us emerge as a very positive individual in our personal life as well.

What is your most memorable moment in Vacations Exotica?

They say that "Hard work pays". I had been in this industry for more than 6 years with a dream to become a "Manager". This was recognised by my boss, Mr. Ravishankar and the day he assigned this role to me was the most memorable moment in Vacations Exotica, more so, in my life. I will never forget that day and will fulfil my responsibility to the best.

Who is your inspiration in life and why?

I owe my deepest gratitude towards my better half for his eternal support and understanding of my goals and aspirations. His infallible love and support has always been my strength. His patience and sacrifice will remain my inspiration throughout my life. Without his help, I would not have been able to complete much of what I have done and become who I am.

What are your hobbies?

I love reading and travelling. As a young reader, I loved reading fiction. Now I read books on Travel. It helps me give insight on new destinations, means of travel within the country, local cuisines, people, culture, etc. I read magazines like Outlook Traveller, Lonely Planet, Condé Nast Traveller, etc. I wish to travel around the world.

Place you belong to and who all are there in your family?

I am born and brought up in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. I have a very closely knit family with my great grandmother, my parents, my husband and my son.

Any message for your colleagues...

Colleagues in an office form the strongest friendships they may ever know with each other. It's the right working environment that forms the best team. A strong positive environment is what moulds an individual to become what he wants to become.

KNOW YOUR FELLOW BALMER LAWRIEN...

How long have you been associated with Vacations Exotica and currently what is your role?

I have been working with Vacations Exotica for the last 5 and half years. I started as a Management Trainee and I am now a Manager and handling the leisure, channel as well as the corporate market.

What do you like about Vacations Exotica?

The 1st big reason why I love Vacations Exotica is Mr. Ravishankar and his idea of creating thoughtfully done holidays, along with his handpicked team of people who built Vacations Exotica to what it is today.

Secondly, it is the Support, Flexibility and Understanding given by the management to its staff. We are not just an employee or a number but we are treated like a family member of Vacations Exotica.

What is your most memorable moment in Vacations Exotica?

Memorable moment was when my reporting head started entrusting me with bigger roles and responsibilities and giving me an opportunity to handle their elite, VVIP customers. That was a defining moment in my career as I realised that I had started my transition from being an executive to progressing ahead in the company.

Who is your inspiration in life and why?

I have a lot of people and things that inspire me but the one who inspires me the most is Mr. Pradeep Noronha, Vice President – Marketing & IT [Tours – Vacations Exotica].

The reason being – despite his status in the company he is a person who will go out of the way to help anyone – be it work related or personal. He does not judge a person by their economic status and treats everyone with equal



Savia Fernandes
Manager, Channel Sales
[Tours-Vacations Exotica]

respect and dignity.

He has also been the guiding force in my career and has inspired me to be the person I am today in my professional life.

What are your hobbies?

I love watching movies, reading and especially collecting "Quotes" that inspire me. I also love baking.

Place you belong to and who all are there in your family?

I come from the land of Sun, Sea and Sand – Goa. I was born and raised in Goa. I have a small family which consists of my mom, dad and sister along with my pets Snowie, Poppy and Choti.

Any message for your colleagues...

Love what you do, be passionate and always go the extra mile. This will help you achieve greater success, recognition and satisfaction.

KNOW YOUR FELLOW BALMER LAWRIEN...



Ponvelraj K
Manager – Sales
[Tours-Vacations Exotica]

How long have you been associated with Vacations Exotica and currently what is your role?

I have been part of Vacations Exotica since February 2008 and currently am a Manager – Sales.

What do you like about Vacations Exotica?

I feel it's a very honest company; whatever we promise to the client we make it happen. We ensure that we give the same level of service to repeat clients. There is tremendous support for the honest. I always feel happy to receive good feedback because of the service we provide to the client. When I happen to meet some of my ex-colleagues, I find them happier to talk about Vacations Exotica and this makes me happy.

What is your most memorable moment in Vacations Exotica?

When I was selected for Australia FAM tour during October 2011.

Who is your inspiration in life and why?

Mr. Thiyagarajan is my inspiration in my life. He is so dedicated to the work he does. I have come across many teachers in my life but he made me what I am today.

What are your hobbies?

Biking, Listening to Music, Cricket & Tennis

Place you belong to and who all are there in your family?

I am from Palani – South Tamil Nadu. My family comprises my parents, my wife and my daughter.

Any message for your colleagues...

I always suggest them not to take emotional decisions. Be honest to the work you do.

KNOW YOUR FELLOW BALMER LAWRIEN...



Amit Chaudhary

Manager, Channel Sales
[Tours-Vacations Exotica]

How long have you been associated with Vacations Exotica and currently what is your role?

I have been associated with Vacations Exotica since 8th September 2008 and it has been a wonderful journey since then. I am working in the position of Manager, Channel Sales – North and East and my job is to identify new agents and PSA, retain them and generate sales.

What do you like about Vacations Exotica?

THE TEAM...Vacations Exotica; I am proud to be associated with the wonderful people who really inspire me.

What is your most memorable moment in Vacations Exotica?

When I got my first recognition in the company from Mr. Ravishankar on successfully achieving the target.

Who is your inspiration in life and why?

My dad, as he always inspires me by his saying "Beta kam kareja... Fal ki ichcha mat rakhaur kabhi kisi ka bura mat kama".

What are your hobbies?

Of course Travelling, Playing Cricket, Listening to Music

Place you belong to and who all are there in your family?

I belong to Meerut City and my family consists of my Dad, Mom, my wife and my elder sister who got married to a Merchant Navy Officer.

Any message for your colleagues...

LET ALL OF US PUT OUR HANDS TOGETHER AND BECOME THE NUMBER ONE COMPANY IN TRAVEL AND VACATIONS.

TALENT UNLIMITED

A young passionate couple of clouds were spotted melting in the arms of each other.
The elderly sun blushed, reminisced about its encounter with the moon last night,
And hid itself somewhere beneath the infinite skies.
The winds continued to gossip and tried to whisper these news to the deaf ears of the humans.

Down on the land, unable to decode the beauty around them,
People opened up their umbrella's and thought,
"Damn! Rain again.."

- Sidharth Udani, Logistics Infrastructure, Kolkata

Wishes against Ambitions

Wishing with both hands joined together, eyes closed & stressful expression on the face, sometimes head high praying to God and asking him or sometimes head bowed down and requesting him. But our hearts remain the same. It desires, with varied expressions for varied reasons.

Wishes have a broad category, from humanitarian blessings to conquests. Wishing for conquests are to those who have either done their best or to those who cannot do anything & day dream for destiny to smile on them. Ambitions, most of the time, is the way of thought for the confident and the perspective. Conquering desires with wishes is for the feeble. Desires bow themselves before ambitious.

What ambitions costs? They cost your peace, sleep, time, relations, even happiness, respect and self-confidence if unfulfilled. Ambitions ask you to drive, to thrive, to stretch yourselves entirely, even at times hurting others. Yet, ambitious proceed, why? Like a tiny flickering lamp far away in a dark dense forest, makes us so rapid and so eager, full of hope and delight that we ignore even our earth on which we are standing, we ignore pits, gravels, thorns that come on our way. Eventually hurting ourselves to reach out to the lamp. The path to the lamp can be, at times, deadly, which we ignore just by the glimpse of some distant faint light.

Yet, it's an adventure for many to risk themselves, to take on the fire for miles and miles, smiling and unaffected, may be in some hope or may be it's because of the new experiences of the new journey undertaken. Ambitions can really turn you crazy and take you to another world.

- Girish Chand Gupta, Corporate IT, Kolkata

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