



Mr. Ramiah Daniels

Director of Hospitality Paradigm - a hospitality consulting company and is an alumnus of the Oberoi Centre for Learning & Development with over two decades of operational expertise in the hospitality industry, including significant tenures with Oberoi Hotels, Leela Palaces & Resorts and Lalit Hotels.

An Economics major, Ramiah has attended professional development programs with Cornell University and IIM-A. His nurturing and creative management approach has won him much loyalty and respect from teams he has led in the past and this has further fuelled his desire to mentor outstanding hoteliers with professionalism, passion & integrity for their jobs.

A Successful Failure

Circa 1988, I was chosen for the Management Trainee Program of the fabled Oberoi Centre for Learning & Development aka OCLD, then known as Oberoi School of Hotel Management (OSHM).

Interestingly, the path to this successful selection involved a lot of drive, humility, diligence, and industriousness.

I had always aspired to join the hotel industry. In the 1980s, there were very few people who wished to truck with this industry, unlike now. I learnt of the OSHM during this time and updated myself on the industry and Oberoi Hotels with the help of available print magazines.

Gen Z (students and new industry workers) may have heard of such 'prehistoric times – the non-internet age' from their parents but may find it difficult to comprehend; for nowadays any thirst for knowledge is easily quenched online.

A distant relative worked at Oberoi Hotels, Bombay and I requested to be connected with him. I met him for the first time and went to his home to understand something about an industry I knew practically nothing about. He was most helpful and supplied me with magazines, newsletters, and brochures, etc., apart from tutelage on the Oberoi way.

IHM Bombay had a professor who was a family friend and I connected with her, to understand what the hotel industry was about. She was very kind to allow me to use the institution's library to study books on the industry. Lillicrap's Food & Beverage Service – a reference used even today, was one such book. I poured over all this reading with keen interest, making notes along the way.

All this preparation began a year earlier in my second year of graduation. I used this time to also prepare for GMAT and GRE as I was told this would be useful in the OSHM selection process. I simultaneously worked hard to develop my General Knowledge using library time effectively.

INDUSTRY SPEAKS

Come D-Day, I was all fired up and floated through my college selection (I was the only one selected from at least 100 students). The next stage was at The Hotel Oberoi Towers where I got through the group discussion, the written test, and then the pre-final interview. Having got through four stages, 3 months later I was called for my final interview with PRS (Biki) Oberoi and the board in Delhi, at The Oberoi New Delhi.

Of all the hundred-odd selectees called in for the final interview, I found myself shortlisted in the final 18. Imagine my dismay, when this final 18 were assembled at the end of the interview selection process and told that 15 of them had made the grade. I was among the rejected 3 candidates, who after seemingly getting through the 5th and final stage of selection, had to now fly back home downcast and woebegone, and take fresh stock of my life.

I analysed the reason for my rejection and figured that the uncertainty amongst the interview panel, of my passion and sincerity for the hotel industry, probably weighed heavily against me. Being an Economics graduate, my seriousness for the service industry was probably in question, and I realised that if I was still serious about OSHM, I would have to prove the next time to the Oberoi Panel that I meant business.

I joined a two-year course in Hotel Administration and Food Technology at Sophia Polytechnic, Bombay and during this time did my industrial training at Oberoi Towers, Nariman Point, and then at Sea Rock Bandra.

One year later, when the OSHM selection began, I requested my college to allow me to attend the 1st stage of selection... the rest is history and I sailed through all the 5 stages successfully and in Delhi was quite startled when at the final interview, Biki Oberoi told me I had put on some weight since my previous attempt a year ago!

And, that is how I joined the OSHM/OCLD batch of 1988-90. Interestingly, I was the only Bombayite selected for my batch. The learnings one may glean from my experience are:

Failures happen... They must encourage and exhort you to do better. Look at ways to convert failures into success. Many of us may achieve success without going through the failure stage and this is dangerous as it does not prepare us for the real world. Popular belief says that 'failure is bad.' You need to redefine this for your situation.

Analyse failure. Do not simply disregard it, as it could happen again in a different form unless you are able to fathom the reason for it.

Hard work, hard work, hard work. There is no better formula for success.

Focus on what you want to achieve. Keep your focus constant. Do not say 'I will try this and if it works - well and good, else I will do something else.'

Without **passion** for what you want to achieve, you are like an empty vessel. **Aspire for something by design and not by default.**

Succeed on your own... that is when you will have a sense of pride of your own achievements. Too often nowadays, I see family & friends asking for help and assistance in recruitment and jobs.

For Gen Z who has passed out this year from their catering schools, it is indeed a trying time. Many of you are waiting for the appointment letters you were promised during hotel selections done pre Covid-19, and many are still sitting out waiting for employment.

This is not your personal failure... it is the environment that has played a trick on you. Instead of rueing your luck, look at how you may use this time to upskill yourself or possibly join an organisation, even as a trainee instead of an employee - for the experience.

"Create your future instead of waiting for the future to create you."