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“Everything I Have Now is a Result of My Own Achievements, Optimism and Determination”, - Binay Kumar Singh, Singh Marine Management CEO

Dr. Singh's life is a prime example of the statement that one can be successful anytime anywhere, even among strangers far away from one's home country. He is one of those people who always seek opportunities taking no regard for reasons. In childhood, Dr. Singh had a dream like we all did. He wanted to become a Police Commissioner. And though his life turned out to be quite different, he has no regrets. “In my real life I have achieved much more than I could have in my childhood dreams”, - says Dr. Singh. “I am known all over the world as a CEO of Singh Marine Management”. Dr. Singh told *The Maritime Telegraph* how he found himself in Ukraine and how he managed to establish his own Crewing Company, which already has been in business for 15 years.

By the Black Sea...

In India it is much more difficult to enter into a higher education institution than in Ukraine. That's why when Dr. Singh was caught between trying his luck abroad or giving it a shot and trying to enrol in one of the highly selective educational institutions in his home country he chose the first option. One of his relatives was studying in Odessa, so that's why Ukraine was Dr. Singh's choice.

“When I found myself in Odessa, I felt some kind of inspiration and realized that that was where I was supposed to be”, recalls Dr. Singh. “I still feel elation. And though at first it was extremely difficult for me to be in a foreign country, still I don't feel that I am a stranger in Ukraine. On the contrary, I guess India is a more foreign country for me”.

At first he wanted to study at the Polytechnic University, but after meeting his fellow countrymen who studied at the Odessa National Maritime Academy, Dr. Singh decided to follow their example. No matter how you look at it, but young men are always interested in a well-paid job, and prestigious position of a ship master and white uniform with a cap are attractive too. Dr. Singh graduated from the academy with honours, obtained a doctoral degree in marine navigation, and set himself a goal – to assist seafarers in finding jobs aboard.

Dr. Singh's decision to link his life to the sea was practically spontaneous. There have been no seafarers or anyone anyway connected with this occupation in his family before. So Dr. Singh was a pioneer in this field. He worked at sea for a little while, and then decided to settle down ashore. He was interested to work in a recruiting agency since he was a student, and his first steps in business were as a partner in another company. Once the agency was in good standing, the other founders decided they could do well without anyone else's assistance, so Dr. Singh was left high and dry. Despite this unfairness on the part of his former colleagues, he gauged his strength and decided he was able to start his own business. He had plenty of necessary resources, potential, established contacts and enthusiasm.

“I have no regrets about how things turned out”, says Dr. Singh. “Everything I have now is a result of my own achievements, optimism and commitment. I am used to achieve everything on my own. When I decided to establish my own company, I was faced with another challenge: how should I

name my Company? My friends recommended to give my own surname to my company i.e. Singh Marine. It turned out well, a ship will sail the way you name it. In India the person's surname means a lot, and my name means a strong person in all aspects."

Business View of Mixed Crews

Singh Marine Management Agency cooperates with more than 20 corporate employers. And most ship owners have been maintaining partnership relationships with Dr. Singh for over 12 years, almost from the start of the recruiting agency. Among such "veterans" there are Anglo-Eastern Group, Fleet Management Ltd, Eaglestar Shipmanagement and others. Cooperation with other companies, such as Wallem Shipmanagement Ltd, started a few years ago.

Dr. Singh used to recruit Ukrainian crews, but then he figured out the strength of multinational crews. According to Singh Marine Management CEO, different nationalities complement and control each other, leaving no chance for any over-familiarity and monopoly of "I will do what I want" kind, which is to the detriment of the work aboard. If any crew member neglects his duties or commits a violation, the shipowner will be notified as per the ship regulations.

"I used to come across gross insubordination, when the lower-level officer threatened his superior that after the end of the voyage he would find him in their home town where they both lived, unless that officer stopped putting results of his work under a microscope", - says Dr. Singh."It may sound strange but a mixed crew makes the best team."

Different cultures and mentality enable the crew to learn from one another. Singh Marine finds jobs not only for officers, but for ratings as well. Current typical crew pattern on ships flying foreign flags is as follows: officers are Ukrainian nationals, ratings are from the Philippines, India or Indonesia. Dr. Singh believes it is more efficient and prudent to mix crews, so that Ukrainian ratings have a chance to find jobs, which is not easy to do nowadays. Besides crew members of different ethnic background will be able to make up for shortcomings of each other. For instance, Indian and Filipino seafarers will make up for insufficient English skills of Ukrainians, and Ukrainians will bring in their professionalism and leadership skills. According to Singh Marine CEO, this balance will make the crew perfect and operation of the ship more efficient.

Be a Decent Human Being When Dealing With People

Mutual respect and benevolence are the key determinants of Singh Marine Management company policy. The company's CEO prefers to find an individual approach to each applicant and to communicate with each seafarer before and after the voyage.

"I consider my work to be successful only if the seafarer says thank you after his return from the voyage. We do not follow the scheme adopted by some agencies today – to assign a seafarer to the ship and forget about him. Those who work with our agency know that I will answer the call 24 hours a day", says the company's CEO. "I always do my best to be a decent human being and I like to be treated likewise."

When selecting employees for his company Dr. Singh pays attention not to one's qualifications or work experience, but to one's personal qualities in the first place. The most important qualities in his opinion are diligence and decency (though it is hard to verify during an interview), determination and proactive approach. Singh Marine will prefer an active and progress-oriented applicant full of new

ideas, than someone who is neither fish nor flesh, who checks his watch all the time counting down minutes till the end of the workday.

“I have never employed people with vast experience”, - says Dr. Singh. “Once people have accumulated a lot of work experience, they lose interest in their occupation. That’s why I prefer to hire employees without experience and teach them according to my requirements.”

The company’s CEO shakes his head as an answer to the question about opening branches of Singh Marine in other cities. “There is no need for that at the moment. If we need a seafarer, for instance, from Kherson or Nikolayev, we can hold an interview and settle everything over the phone, and invite him to visit our office once there is a job proposal. It does not take much time to travel within Ukraine”, says Dr. Singh, - “so I think there is no need in more offices. One can always find opportunities.”

Is There Life Outside Work?

Dr. Singh admits that it is not easy to work with people. Outside work the company’s CEO dedicates his time to music. His father played Indian accordion, so Dr. Singh decided to follow his father’s example and to learn to play accordion. He is also fond of music and even takes singing lessons. “Maritime intermediary services are a profession, and music is my passion”, - says Dr. Singh. “Everyone must find time for oneself.”

Dr. Singh likes both classical and popular music. He sings in Russian, Ukrainian, English, Hindi and Italian. His favourite songs include *Why Is My Heart So Anxious; Girls, Tell This to Your Friend; What a Moonlit Night, Felicita, By the Black Sea, My Way, You Are So Beautiful*, and other soulful songs.

Singh Marine Management CEO has no patience with bad habits. As the saying goes, a sound mind is in a sound body. So whenever he has free time, Dr. Singh dedicates it to sports – crossfit, yoga, dancing, and occasionally swimming. Head of the maritime recruiting company rarely has time for quality recreation. His last business trip was to Cyprus (Limassol). “This was the first time when I managed to combine recreation with business”, says Dr. Singh, - “and it was great! It feels like it is easy to breathe in Cyprus. It reminded me of Odessa”.

Dr. Singh confesses that he doesn’t miss India much, and don’t even think about return. Now Odessa is his home, by the side of his loving wife and son. He first get acquainted with his wife-to-be at a New Year’s party and realized at once that she was meant for him. She accepts his busy hours and frequent business calls. According to Dr. Singh, workdays are for work, and weekends are for the family.

When asked whether he would like his son to follow in his footsteps, Singh Marine Management CEO smiles and shakes his head: “No. And he does not want either, seeing how much I have on my shoulders. Once I got a call from a seafarer. He had thirty minutes left till the flight, but at the airport they refused to let him onboard. I had to contact our agents and settle the matter all through the night. My son sees how busy I am, so he is not very eager to take my place.”

Dr. Singh started out in a foreign country among strangers, but he succeeded both in business and personal life. What is his secret? He says that in order to achieve your goal you must remain optimistic and love your work. Don’t wait for the world to beat a path to your door. No pain, no gain. If you want success, come and take it!