Monday Motivation: 'Entrepreneurship is about staying the course'



Nilesh Gupta, Managing Director, Lupin.

Summary
Why true entrepreneurship isn't about overnight success, and how leading by example remains Lupin MD Nilesh Gupta's guiding principle for long-term growth

Since his younger days, Nilesh Gupta's interactions with his father, Desh Bandhu Gupta, revolved around everything from national policy and public health to business strategy, science, global affairs and ethics. He also learned about spirituality and meditation, besides the world of Lupin and pharmaceuticals.

"My father spoke as passionately about drug affordability as he did about manufacturing quality, nurturing talent and the responsibility of entrepreneurs to society. Those conversations shaped how my sister Vinita and I see our role today—not as owners but as custodians of a legacy entrusted to us," says Mumbai-based Gupta, 52, Managing Director, Lupin.

The pharmaceutical company was established by Desh Bandhu Gupta in 1968 at a time when India was still importing basic medicines. Over the years, Gupta saw him tackle crises of all kinds that taught him the importance of being resilient and doing the right thing. That guidance has been instrumental in leading a team that strives to make quality healthcare accessible across the country. DBG's journey, alongside the evolution of the Indian pharmaceutical industry, is captured in Made in India that was released earlier this year.

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"My father's story exemplifies what can be accomplished when determination is fuelled with purpose. You don't need perfect conditions to begin—just clarity of purpose and willingness to persist. The biggest lesson for me is that entrepreneurship is not about overnight success; it is about staying the course through uncertainty and setbacks," he says.

Gupta talks to *Mint* about mentorship and why he believes in a hands-on approach.

Who do you consider your mentor?

I had the privilege of watching my father not just lead the company, but also actively mentor leaders, my family and others from so many walks of life. Having a front-row seat to his leadership allowed me to learn how he navigated immense challenges, including the existential crises that Lupin faced. His guidance and the vast number of lessons he imparted continue to steer both my personal journey and our vision for Lupin's future.

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One major insight you worked on with your mentor's guidance?

My father taught me early on that no business model can be relied upon indefinitely. He was deeply supportive of change. The lifespan of strategies is continually shrinking and organisations must evolve proactively to remain relevant over the long term. That belief has shaped how we have steered the company's journey, moving from APIs to simple generics and now to complex generics, biosimilars and innovation. Each transition has required us to anticipate where healthcare needs are heading and invest ahead of the curve. He also believed that successful transformation goes beyond strategy—it is fundamentally about people. To navigate change, one must keep strengthening the team and be surrounded by capable, motivated individuals aligned with a long term vision.

What does being a mentor mean to you? How do you mentor your colleagues at work?

The biggest aspect to mentorship is how to create a founder's mindset—a deep sense of ownership—in our people. And how do we get our people to create real impact. When mentoring colleagues, I follow a hands—on approach and stay deeply engaged. I place strong emphasis on open learning and accountability.

What's the one positive work routine that you have imbibed from your father?

One principle my father lived by—and passed on to me—was leading by example rather than instruction. He encouraged dialogue and thoughtful decision-making, whether in life or in business. I was shaped as much by how he lived - his discipline, respect for science and deep care for people. He treated those who left the company with the same dignity as those who stayed, which is why so many remain lifelong well wishers of Lupin. That value stays with me. This built on the foundation of respect, science-led thinking, and value-driven leadership which I inherited directly from him.

Monday Motivation *is a series in which business leaders discuss their mentors and their work ethics.*

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About the Author

Shail Desai is a freelance writer based in Mumbai. Over the last decade, he has been following the latest in sports and the outdoors. He was awarded the Red Ink Award in 2018 for his story on football in Kashmir that was commissioned by Mint. He is an engineer and lawyer by qualification, degrees that taught him that he wasn't cut out for either. Writing has taken him places and the thrill of the chase is what he enjoys the most. In the past, he has held full-time positions at The Times of India, Hindustan Times and Hotstar. Freelance writing has handed him the liberty of travelling and chasing the stories that have his interest. Besides conventional sports, he has a special interest in endurance sports such as ultra running, mountaineering, trail running, open water swimming and adventure sports, and is in awe of athletes who pursue these disciplines. He is at home in the mountains and looks for the next excuse to travel there, preferably for extended periods of time. He wants to be a lifelong student of writing.

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