



Mandar Pendse

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During his senior year at the University of Mumbai, Mandar Pendse did some soul searching. He was working toward a Bachelor's degree in engineering, but gradually came to realize that the business world looked more interesting to him. He decided to complete his engineering degree and enroll in the Master of Engineering Management program at Dartmouth. He envisioned the move as a bridge, he says.

The wisdom of this decision began to affirm itself while Pendse was still at Dartmouth. Among other challenges, he played a major role in engineering and building a Formula race car for the Dartmouth Formula Racing Team. The task was complex, arduous and unyieldingly deadline-driven. It encompassed research and development, project management, logistics, and multi-tasking. The stakes were extremely high: the car was faster than almost anything street-legal. The driver's safety and the school's ranking at the Formula SAE competition were riding on Pendse's decisions and performance. He had not anticipated learning about the business world from the racing pit, but as it turned out, this experience gave him an excellent taste of the breadth of responsibility involved in a general management career.

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Pendse was exploring a variety of career options when MBI recruiters came calling at Dartmouth early in his final year there. He hadn't heard of MBI, but an on-campus interview with one of the company's managers resulted in mutual interest. His interviewer spoke of opportunities for advancement, outstanding rewards, and an exceptionally dynamic management structure.

What ultimately closed the deal, Pendse says, was what he learned from his interviews at MBI's headquarters. He talked to several managers, including the CFO and a director. "I was happy with what I saw," he reflects. "I got a sense that general management was streamlined and fluid." This last point was particularly important to Pendse; he liked structure and methodology, but not bureaucracy. And he was about to try something new: MBI would be giving him the responsibility of marketing jewelry, a niche he hadn't contemplated during his job search. Could an analytical mind find happiness in that challenge?

"Absolutely," reports Pendse. A big part of his job involves asking questions and analyzing potential outcomes. "Can I target more segments of the market? How will a customer's gender affect response to an offer? Does this product lend itself to cross-selling?" On a typical workday, he might ask himself, "How can I

further control costs in the creative process? What can we do to increase customer retention? How can we improve inventory management?” Such thinking often yields good results — Pendse has developed a spreadsheet, for instance, that cut his inventory review time in half.

Asked to describe his breaking-in period, he muses that on his second day of work, he was handed a proof of a marketing brochure he had never seen before and was asked to sign off on it. “Why me?” he had asked, matter-of-factly. “Because you’re the manager of this program,” came the cheerful reply.

His learning curve was swift, thanks to some skillful teaching by co-workers. He has quickly developed an understanding of jewelry, and his suggestions for corrections to designs are often followed. Pendse is involved in both marketing and product development, both of which entail rigorously analytical and creative disciplines. His first test-marketing program “bombed” he says, but two months later, he had a big hit with a themed bracelet. “Product development,” he maintains, “requires knowing how to add value while keeping the pulse of the market. You find ways of maximizing profits from your successes and you learn from your mistakes.”

Pendse views MBI as “a well structured reward-for-performance culture; it is truly proportional, not only with money but with responsibility,” he says. He has passed the one-year mark in his job — a make-or-break point at which plans and implementations either bear fruit or die on the vine — and is happily powering along in high-gear, far and yet not so far from the Formula racing pits.