



## Ajit Prabhu, Chairman and CEO, QuEST Global

0 0 0 0



A seasoned entrepreneur, Ajit Prabhu co-founded QuEST Global Inc. with Aravind Melligeri in 1997 in New York, with the vision of developing engineering expertise that ranges from concept to product realization. Aravind Melligeri was working with Ford Motor when he met Ajit who was with GE Corporate Research & Development Centre, Schenectady, NY. The business was launched in a one room office in Schenectady, New York with one customer and just a credit card. Today, the organization employs over 7000 people across nine countries and has a turnover of more than \$300M

*"We are delivering the dual advantage of capable capacity along with cost optimization through our local-global working model"*

**Q: QuEST has been in the ESO space for close to two decades now. When you started you were just two people and now you are close to 7000. What made this aggressive growth possible?**

A: We work with leading product and system companies in the various verticals we operate in and build long term strategic partnerships with them. This strategy has worked well in attracting top talent as well. We believe in a global workforce and hire local talent in every geography we support our customers in. In this way, we are managing to be highly responsive to our customers. We are delivering the dual advantage of capable capacity along with cost optimization through our local-global working model.

**Q: Yours is an engineering services start-up that has grown by leaps and bounds. What kind of organization culture works for you?**

A: At heart, QuEST is a highly aspirational organization. Being an engineering company, we are very inquisitive as well. This aspirational and inquisitiveness blend has led to a culture of hunger and humility because we know we don't have all the answers and our mission is to find out how. All these manifest themselves in eight well-defined attributes that define the organizational culture. We are therefore open and transparent, continuously developing, accountable, customer focused, driven by team work, intrapreneurial, speedy and change champions.

Learning requires an open and transparent culture where people share their experiences, best practices and lessons learned. As a company, we continue to evolve through that learning and adapt continuously. We operate in a global business and team work is paramount across geographical boundaries. Customer-centricity is essential for any business. Customer preferences and priorities are constantly changing. We too have to be change champions—not just observers but drivers of change and finally, we have to be intrapreneurial, take calculated risks and get the job done.

**Q: What are your plans for QuEST for the next five years?**

A: Our 2020 goal is to continue to build a customer-centric company serving hi-tech customers across diversified sectors. Having crossed the USD250 million mark, an accomplishment only one in 1000 companies achieve, the question is how to build a billion dollar company focused on providing engineering solutions. Building a globally diversified team of over 20,000 engineering professionals passionate about engineering and adding value to our customer's products, projects and processes is part of the agenda as well.

**Q: As an entrepreneur, what are some of the challenges that you have encountered in your journey?**

A: Starting a business in the US requires one to be either a citizen or a green card holder. I had neither. I was still on an F1 student visa in the US in 1997. The first hurdle therefore, was convincing or finding a person who was willing to help me get the business off the ground. The problem was that no one believed me. My brother introduced me to Aravind Melligeri, his classmate, who had entrepreneurial aspirations and also happened to have a green card, to partner with. Partnership with Aravind turned out to be great. He took care of the finance, IT and general administration, while I took care of sales and delivery. It was a match made in heaven.

The second challenge was money and networking. At age 27, having gone to the US with USD 60 in my pocket, I had no established business network or family roots with deep pockets. Aravind and I began the business with a credit card and learned the business along the way.

Lastly, I knew our customers and knew how to solve their engineering problems. At the same time, I did not know how to manage finance, IT, and all the 'intellectually not that satisfying work'. My partner helped me stay focused on what I was good at. He was the heart of all support. Without him I would have probably shut down the business.

**Q: What do you think is your company's edge and how do you think this is an added advantage in your business?**

A: It has evolved over time. In the early stages: It was knowing customers and knowing how to solve their engineering problems. Today it is quite different. I am fascinated by companies like GE and Bosch, who have been in business for decades. I am quite eager to learn about how to build a scalable and a sustainable company. That inquisitiveness is deeply ingrained in the culture of QuEST. I always believed in human intellect, surrounding myself with people who are smarter than me. I believe I am able to attract global talent and develop a shared vision and give them empowerment and space to explore their potential.

**Q: What are some must have traits budding entrepreneurs should have to succeed in their venture?**

A: Do not be afraid of failure. It is okay to fail but it is not okay not to try. I would advise entrepreneurs to surround themselves with people who are smarter than themselves and build a complimentary team. They must be ready to have no work-life balance! It is not going to be an eight-hour job. It is also important to be humble and understand that they will not have answers to all the problems they encounter. Finally, they must learn to shrink time in everything they do. Time is the most important commodity. I would advise companies not to get paralyzed by the planning. They must apply their collective judgment and make a call.

## MEMBERSHIP

## Already a Member

[Members Exclusive](#)
[Member Directory](#)
[Member Showcase](#)
[Case Studies](#)
[Face to face](#)
[Members News](#)

## Become a Member

[Membership Benefits](#)
[Eligible Criteria](#)
[Membership Enrollment](#)
[Membership Fee](#)
[Membership Code of Conduct](#)
[Join Now](#)
[FAQs](#)
[Post a Trade Lead](#)