

COVER STORY

Lessons from a student entrepreneur

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MANY people have a view of university education as one that will help them gain the relevant paper qualification to get access to the world of employment, preferably launching into professional careers.

While the paper chase instills knowledge-seeking skills and proves one's ability to attain a certain level of intellectual capacity, the university experience provides much more beyond academics and may open doors that lead to the business world, turning job seekers into job creators.

Javendra Kumar, 24, is proof that immersing oneself in the total university experience and taking advantage of the opportunities and facilities on campus have helped him to become a successful student entrepreneur.

Due to graduate this October with a Bachelor's Degree in Civil and Environmental Engineering (Honours) from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), the lad from Ipoh, Perak founded Javen Global Enterprise — a T-shirt printing services company — in his second year of studies.

From a modest one-man operation, Javendra now has a shop at the university student centre with a team which services not only the community at UKM but also tertiary institutions across Peninsular Malaysia. He has attained many achievements and has been named as UKM's entrepreneur icon by the university's Centre for Entrepreneurship and SMEs Development.

Recently, he was part of a group of 30 students from public higher learning institutions in Malaysia who attended the Youth E-Commerce Programme (YEP), a collaboration between the then Higher Education Ministry and Alibaba Business School to produce young e-commerce entrepreneurs. China-based Alibaba is the largest e-commerce organisation in the world with 549 million users.

The stint exposed students to the ecosystem of e-commerce business.



If you want to be successful, you can be — it's all in the mindset.

JAVENDRA KUMAR,
Javen Global Enterprise
founder and managing
director

BACKGROUND

Javendra said his journey has been a series of incidents which has led to his "true calling".

Coming from an average income family, Javendra's parents — particularly his mother — harboured ambitions for him to become a doctor.

"After scoring straight As in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examinations, I was offered a place at Kolej Matrikulasi Pahang to pursue a pure science course. I thought that would be the best choice in order to pursue a degree in medicine at one of the public universities.

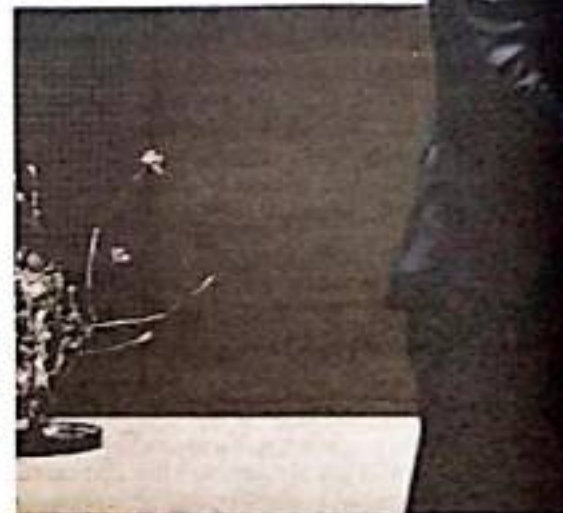
"But after matriculation, I was offered to study biology at UKM. I accepted the place in UKM but changed the course to civil engineering to please my mother as she wanted me to pursue a professional course. I wanted to read law and though my father was agreeable, I didn't want to burden him further as my brother and sister were studying at private institutions," he added.

With an affinity for science but not so much for mathematics, Javendra struggled hard to be up to mark in his studies.

"I love to memorise things and I hated maths. I am not that IT savvy either. But engineering classes were filled with maths — mainly calculus, statistics, algebra, autocad. I studied really hard and managed to get an IJM scholarship that is offered annually. In my batch, only two students were awarded the scholarship. It reduced my financial burden and made my parents happy."

During his semester break, Javendra worked with IJM at various project sites including the Mass Rapid Transit project.

"It was during this time that my dad died and I had to be independent financially. My mum is a housewife and I can't be dependent on my siblings. So, once my semester started,



Javendra Kumar at the closing of the YEP program. Education Ministry secretary-general Tan Sri.

I decided to look for opportunities to generate extra income," he said.

BABY STEPS

Javendra started looking for part-time jobs on or nearby campus and he toyed with the idea of a carwash business but that did not pan out as he did not have any money to invest.

"It was at this same time I was appointed head of UKM Rukun Negara Secretariat. We organised a few events and programmes, and needed T-shirts. I surveyed the prices of existing suppliers in UKM and found them a bit pricey. Then I compared the prices of other suppliers outside campus and realised that



Pitching at the Makerthon Challenge held in conjunction with the Global Entrepreneurship Community Summit.



Speaking at the E-Commerce Mastery Forum at Asia Pacific University in Bukit Jalil, Kuala Lumpur.