

Interview de Sanjeev Rao – Intelligence économique et *business development* en Inde

Sanjeev Rao



Fondateur de [Gateway 2 India](#), [Sanjeev Rao](#) possède la double nationalité française et indienne. Diplômé de l'ingénieur des télécommunications en Inde et du MBA de l'INSEAD, il possède trois ans d'expérience stratégique au Boston Consulting Group (Paris, France) et dix ans d'expérience opérationnelle avec Alstom en *R&D*, *business development* et gestion de projets internationaux (équipe multiculturelle) aux USA et en Asie. Son entreprise, G2i, fondée en 2004 et située à Bangalore, accompagne les sociétés européennes à tirer parti de la croissance économique et du potentiel innovant de l'Inde dans la durée, tout en minimisant les risques *business* et culturels. G2I aide les décideurs européens en général, français en particulier, à trouver en Inde une nouvelle source de croissance et d'innovation, au-delà de la logique de bas coûts. L'entreprise accompagne aussi les sociétés indiennes dans leurs investissements en Europe.

IE-Lobbying : Vous êtes une personnalité du [lobbying](#) et de l'[intelligence économique](#) incontournable pour les entreprises européennes souhaitant se développer en Inde.

Vous

IE-L : Comment avez-vous été sensibilisé avec l'[intelligence économique](#) et le [lobbying](#) ?

SR: I believe that business intelligence and lobbying are the fundamental aspects of every business today. In India, like in France, professional networks, decision-making networks and most importantly, personal networks are extremely important sources of information and negotiation that we have to consider while dealing with clients.

IE-L : Quelle est votre définition personnelle de l'[intelligence économique](#) et comment l'articulez-vous avec une démarche de *business development* ?

SR: At G2i, we believe in the importance of information and being up to date with everything that happens in the business world, not only between India and France, but also between India and Europe. **For us, business intelligence means accessing the relevant information and using it appropriately for successful business decisions.** However, we believe only in an ethical and transparent approach towards business intelligence.

From all my past experiences I have learnt that the execution of a strategy is as important as the strategy itself, if not more so. This is the basis on which I founded G2i. The uniqueness of the Indian market due to its diversity and duality, combined with the speed at which things are evolving, makes the Indian scenario extremely challenging. Therefore, on the ground presence and access to the relevant professional and personal networks are critical factors to ensure success of a project, especially in a context where cultural understanding plays a major role. This ultimately helps us to be more reactive and focused on our clients needs.

IE-L : Que pensez-vous de l'initiative [IE-Lobbying.info](#) ?

SR: I really appreciate the initiative to put together such a site. I think it is a good resource of relevant information on business intelligence and lobbying. This would undoubtedly be useful to European decision makers, company heads and political leaders. It would allow a more holistic, and I think a more accurate vision of the operational and decisional making factors that traditional channels cannot always provide.

Votre profession

IE-L : Votre double nationalité française et indienne vous offre notamment un regard éclairé sur le marché indien. Quels sont les avantages d'une approche multiculturelle et comment en tirez-vous parti ?

SR: A research that we carried out indicated that more than half of cross-border projects between Indian and France fail because of a lack of cultural understanding from both sides. To me, in order to really understand another culture, one has to completely immerse oneself in it. For this you need to have lived with the people, studied with them and worked alongside them. My fifteen years in France has really helped me to understand the motivations, the decision-making processes, the issues that are really important, how the system works from the inside. This is a real asset in cross-border projects and in negotiations. The European clients are reassured because they know that I understand where they are coming from, having been part of their system myself. Being Indian, in India, also gives them the confidence that I can help them operationally in India and enable them to access the right networks and ensure the long-term success of their projects. At the end of the day, it is about people dealing with people.

IE-L : Quelle est la nature de votre coopération professionnelle avec [Véronique Queffélec](#) en Inde ([Euromédiations](#) / [Indiamediation](#)) ?

SR: Veronique and I, due to the nature of our businesses, complement each other well on certain common projects. My focus remains on the business and administrative aspects while Veronique focuses on the political and lobbying issues of our collaboration. This approach uses both our Indian and European networks to ultimately help our clients succeed in their Euro-Indian strategies.

However, we believe that business goes well beyond the traditional meaning. Although it remains our main focus, we use our networks and lobbying to not only fulfill our obligations to our clients, but also keep the larger picture of corporate and social responsibility in mind.

IE-L : Dans une précédente interview, [Dilip Cherian](#), fondateur de [Perfect Relations](#), confirmait les dires de [Véronique Queffélec](#) sur l'importance de la prise en compte des spécificités historiques, politiques et culturelles en Inde... Qu'en pensez-vous ?

SR: India is a subcontinent that is unique because of its diversity, paradoxes and contrasts. It is quite similar to Europe, actually. For example, in a business context, the strategy to sell a product in the Scandinavian market will definitely not be the same if the market was Spanish. In India, there are lots of exogenous factors, which are often critical. They need to be identified beforehand, so the importance of preparation should not be underestimated.

I would also like to add that Indians base a lot of their decisions on intuition and gut feel. An Indian would always prefer to work with someone with whom he is comfortable on a personal level before taking it to the business level. That is why the Indian corporate scene continues to have the strong presence of family businesses despite having imbibed the more occidental styles of working in the recent years. This combined with the sense of spirituality that most Indians have is sometimes difficult to understand from a Cartesian approach to business.

So I agree with Veronique and Dilip completely; in the Indian context, being aware of and understanding all these elements is extremely important.

IE-L : Comparativement à la France, quel est l'état du marché dans le domaine de [l'intelligence économique](#) en Inde ?

SR: See, if we really go to think about it, India and France really are similar in many ways. This is not obvious because we often tend to emphasize and highlight our differences due to our perceptions and the lack of real knowledge about each other. We are both quite proud of our past and our culture and we love to have an intellectual element in our discussions, and how can we forget, we both love our food!

In business as well, both in India and in France, a lot happens through networks and lobbying. It is all about knowing the right people. But given India's magnitude and diversity, an informal approach is the best way to get the most out of these networks. A structured approach towards business intelligence is only just beginning in India and hence we still have some ground to cover before reaching the European levels of business intelligence and lobbying.

IE-L : Existe-t- il une offre de formations supérieures en [intelligence économique](#) et lobbying en Inde ?

SR: Yes, there are a few courses but as I said this is a recent phenomenon, especially in India. People are only just beginning to realize the importance of specialization and the use of a structured approach in business intelligence.

Ouvertures

IE-L : Que pensez-vous de l'approche européenne des affaires ?

SR: For me, I don't think there is one homogenous European approach to business. It depends largely on the culture of the country, which varies vastly from place to place. For example, I see a major difference between the British and French approaches, having worked in both environments. The English are ready to take risks with India (Yes, I agree India used to be a British colony once) and this has allowed them to really develop and leverage the India advantage quite early. As far as the MNC's are concerned, most of the European companies have taken a position in India, irrespective of the country, as they realized the potential long ago and also had the financial muscle to make the necessary investments over a long time. However when it comes to the SME's it is really interesting to note that France has still a long way to go, even compared to other continental European countries like Germany and Italy. Another key area is student exchanges where France and India still have to develop more collaboration, since it is at this level that perceptions are broken and cross border networks are built.

I feel that one of the main reasons for this is a mutual worry and confusion in the understanding of each other. . But all of this is changing slowly. As you know, India is spoken about quite frequently among the French media these days and is now one of the five priority countries for the French government. The effects are being felt in India as well because the Economic Mission is also taking a lot of initiatives to bringing us closer to work together.

IE-L : Participerez-vous au [Second forum Euro-Indien](#), à Goa, du 3 au 5 avril 2008 ?

SR: I feel this is a good initiative for Euro-Indian collaboration and yes, I plan on attending the next one in April.

IE-L : Merci beaucoup pour cette interview.