

TECHNO DIVA

A passion for electronics and a savvy business sense helped Devita Saraf shatter the notorious glass ceiling in her field and emerge victorious. Hi! Blitz tunes in to her success story.



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walls, digital signage, touchscreen/interactive displays and telepresence. Vu has stores across India in the leading malls, with Display Experience Centres in 20 cities nationwide.

"Launched in 2006, Vu Technologies, a US-based brand, was introduced into the Indian market to change the way luxury viewing was perceived in the television segment. Today, Vu Technologies has carved a premium space for itself in the home entertainment systems market with innovative, fresh and appealing products, making it a preferred choice for television buyers seeking a luxury experience. Since its inception, Vu Technologies has become the purveyor of luxury in the LED television segment," she emphasizes.

Yet the road to success was never easy. "I remember dealers complaining to my staff that although the product and after-sales service was great—they were afraid to keep stock because they thought the company would wind up if I got married and had kids!" says the still single Devita.

Notwithstanding such criticism she forged ahead and rose to all the challenges in her way. Thanks to her unflinching efforts, the brand has sold over 100,000 televisions in India till date (mostly from their range or larger sizes) and is the No. 1 brand for corporate displays in the country.

Vu Technologies boasts of a truly impressive roster of clients, including The Oberoi Group, The Taj Group, The Marriott Group, The Ritz Carlton, Standard Chartered, Citibank, ICICI Bank, State Bank of India, HSBC, Jaguar, Audi, Tata Motors, Toyota, Microsoft, IBM, Tata Group, Aditya Birla Group, Godrej, Shoppers Stop, Vero Moda, the Indian Navy, Maharashtra Police and Doordarshan, amongst others.

"I run an organisation that thrives on change, energy and entrepreneurship," she says. "I encourage employees to be creative and reduce hierarchy by providing an equal platform for all."

For her efforts, Devita won Zee TV's Youngest Achiever Award at 26 and three years later won the Indo-American

Born with the proverbial silver spoon in her mouth, Devita Saraf was never content to play the role of a rich Marwari industrialist's daughter. "I always aspired to be a powerful person and even attended my first press conference when I was four-years-old!" she states.

Her father, Rajkumar Saraf, chairman and CEO of Zenith Computers, the second largest personal computer manufacturer in India encouraged this drive and attitude by grooming his daughter for a career in the corporate world. "He always treated both my brother and me equally and even ignored the advice of his corporate friends when they discouraged him from investing in my business" she avers.

Dressed chicly and stylishly this 34-year-old businesswoman exudes an air of confidence that has assisted her in her ascent to power in a notoriously sexist arena of electronics. "Being in a man's job doesn't imply that you dress and behave like a man," she laughs. Her love for fashion and design has often been chronicled in the media. Inspired by powerful women across the world, she has her own distinct style that is structured yet feminine. Coming from a background of understated elegance, she prefers to invest in select pieces such as the Hermes sari that are fashion collectibles. "My style can be defined as modern sophisticated and I love to add colours to my work wardrobe."

After studying Management of Technology at the University of California, Berkeley, she completed her business degree from the University of Southern California followed by another course at the London School of Economics. "When I came back to India, I felt like an expat in my own country as living abroad had made me a global citizen."

Devita joined her family business at the age of 21, becoming Director of Marketing at Zenith Computers, but was yearning to start a venture on her own. "I always wanted to do something different and cutting edge since I'm a techno crazy person. I loved videos and content as well as high-end luxury products. So it seemed logical to create a product that merged the two," she says.

At age 24, she started Vu Technologies—a premier brand of luxury televisions and at 29, co-founded the Pittsburgh-based Vu Telepresence Inc. As the CEO and Design Head of Vu Technologies she has almost single handedly in a short span of six years made the company the most valuable television brand in India after Sony, Samsung and LG in the high-end TV segment for consumers and corporate clients.

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Devita and her team have built a business worth ₹100 crore in the area of LED televisions, ultra HD TVs, super TVs, corporate displays, video walls, digital signage, touchscreen/interactive displays and telepresence.

Society's Most Outstanding Woman Entrepreneur Award. Devita was recently invited by Wharton Business school to be a part of their panel on Entrepreneurship.

No, this dynamic entrepreneur though driven, does not spend all her time on the shop floor. Her extra-curricular interests run into several pages. Devita strongly believes that being an entrepreneur should not make you into a dull Jane. A global jetsetter she loves to travel to exotic destinations. She thoroughly enjoys all forms of the performing arts including dance, theatre and music. She is a trained Odissi dancer. She has also earned a 3-term teacher's diploma in Ikebana from the Ohara School, Japan, and learnt jewellery design from the Indo-American Institute to design fine jewellery of her own. Devita is a member of the international hi-IQ society Mensa and an Executive Committee member of FICCI—India's largest trade association making her their youngest executive committee member.

She writes an Op-Ed online column for the Wall Street Journal, on topics from recession to innovation to the Indian education system and more. Multi-tasker, multi-faceted, but always brimming with boundless energy, her unbridled enthusiasm for life itself is an inspiration for most young women let alone her achievements.

"I'm glad I broke the mould and stepped out of a cookie-cutter kind of existence that awaited me on my return to India and pursued my dreams," she concludes. On the personal front she says, "Although I get tons of male attention in my job and I'm comfortable with my single status I'm looking for a man who is interested in me as a person not a celebrity or CEO. Family values, mutual respect and love are paramount. Earlier as my business was growing I had little time to devote to a relationship, but now I can make that commitment and hope to settle down eventually. Trouble is I'm looking for a guy smarter than me!" she trails off with a laugh.



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