



MINOO DASTUR
PRESIDENT & CEO, NIHILENT

NIHILENT:

HELPING COMPANIES AROUND THE WORLD SUCCEED, THROUGH INTEGRATED CHANGE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Abhishek Dubey • The CEO Magazine

Nihilent is a global consulting and solutions integration company using a holistic and systems approach to problem solving. Headquartered in Pune, India, Nihilent has extensive experience in international business consulting, advanced analytics and enterprise IT services. Some of the company's key service offerings, which are driven by a design-thinking led approach include customer-driven digital transformation, organizational change management, predictive analytics & machine learning, data science, sentiment analysis, product development, blockchain, S4 HANA among others. The company's operations span North America, Europe, Africa, Middle East, Australia and Asia.

Spearheading the company's rapid growth at the current stage is President & CEO of Nihilent, Mr. Minoo Dastur. With extensive global experience across domains, he is a successful versatile leader. In the lounge with Abhishek Dubey – Senior Editor, The CEO Magazine, he shares his vision of creating a transformation in the world of emerging consulting process and making a difference to the lives of people globally.

When the company was formed? How did you / the company

generate this idea to set up this organization?

The company was formed in the year 2000 - a watershed year for Indian IT, which had delivered successfully on the Y2K challenge and helped avert the collapse of global commerce and trade. Nihilent was inceptioned in the wake of such a turnaround, in August of the very year. LC Singh (LC), our Executive Vice Chairman, was the pioneering founder, whom I joined shortly after. But we have really spent the last 18 years of our journey creating a fertile ground for likeminded professionals to bring ideas to fruition. We had observed that organizations were being presented with solutions that were technology-centric, and there was no mechanism to understand the dynamic nature of business. The question on their minds was 'how does one help a business manage change?' Our team decided to set up a creative consulting organization with a holistic approach to problem-solving, introducing change through IT, people and process interventions.

What are the differentiating Factors?

At Nihilent, we adopt a holistic design approach to problem solving. All our solutions and services are designed to gain insight into customers and engage proactively with them and overcome operational silos. We are one of the first Indian companies to have established a significant presence in South Africa at the start of the new

millennium. We were one of the youngest companies to have been appraised at CMMI Level 5 and certified as ISO 9001: 2000, in less than two years since inception. We have a state-of-the-art user experience lab, probably the first in India, which offers a full-fledged user experience testing, simulation/prototyping and ideating facility for customers and users. As mentioned earlier, customer centricity forms the core of all our work, with a strong design-thinking approach underlying each assignment.

Please share about your offices from where you run the business.

Nihilent is a global change management company. We are present in five continents and in more than 10 locations. In India, we are present in Pune (our HQ), Navi Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. Internationally, we have offices in the US, UK, Australia, South Africa and rest of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Say something about your clientele.

We have delivered leading-edge solutions to over 300 clients around the world and the number is increasing. Some of our top clients include the biggest African banks, a world leading petroleum conglomerate, a top Australian ICT company, the biggest media & entertainment conglomerate in Africa, one of India's major stock exchanges, among many others.

How does the company build a successful customer base?

Our customer base has been carefully built over the years through a deliberate focus on solving real-world end user problems. Our reputation for having a strong strategic and holistic business focus in each service we offer has resulted in our landing critical transformational projects with businesses across industries in different geographies. Our customers know that we always go beyond providing point solutions and continue to work with them till the benefits of the engagement are realized.



What are the most effective marketing initiatives or programs you have used to promote your business?

Our marketing efforts are aimed at getting our customers and prospects to experience the value of our offerings. In that light, we have conducted several live demos of some of our leading-edge solutions at several trades shows and conferences. We also invite prospects to our facilities and walk them through our capabilities and help them get an understanding of Nihilent's value proposition in a live environment. Our corporate film, a classic example of the emotional connect we have with our customers, went on to win the Cannes award in 2017.

How many employees are working here? What kind of culture exists in the company?

Globally, we have a strength of more than 1500 and are growing. Nihilent fosters a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Our associates are encouraged to think out of the box and exercise their creativity even in seemingly regular and repetitive tasks. Also, we recognize and reward stellar efforts on a regular basis and ensure that each individual's or team's success is held out for others to take inspiration from.

What are the major milestones for the company since founding?

In the span of 18 years since inception, Nihilent has evolved a lot and continues to, be it in our capabilities that address customers' challenges or as an organization. Like I mentioned, within 18 months since inception, we were appraised at CMMI Level 5 and certified as ISO 9001: 2000. We are a quality conscious and process-driven company, which means that all our deliveries are sustainable and strike a right balance between creativity and processes. We have added new capabilities that are a mark of the digital era, like data visualization, advanced analytics and machine learning, S4 HANA implementation, by acquiring three companies between 2014 and 2016, viz. GNet Group (now Nihilent Inc.), Intellect Bizware, and ICTEAS (now Nihilent Analytics Ltd.)

What is the business problem it hopes to solve with its solutions and offerings?

Nihilent seeks to help organizations address their business problems holistically, rather than specific issues. If a business needs to leverage data for better insights, we provide advanced analytical solutions, and link it with deep learning & AI, while also leveraging the data for organizational transformation.



Why would you like to share your journey in this special edition?

I believe that The CEO Magazine offers a great platform to showcase the best of corporate India. Nihilent has been at the forefront of many change management initiatives in India and around the world, and its story needs to be told to a wider audience. As a new CEO, it is also an opportunity for me to show case to the world our philosophy and ethos, and how we are poised to be a major disruptor in the days to come.

What was your journey like to get where you are?

I'm a biochemist by qualification. Chemical engineering and biochemistry always fascinated me. At the start of my career, IT was nowhere on my radar. There came a situation when I had to write software myself for a biochemistry project I was working on, due to lack of pertinent systems back then. But it was really the allure of the systems approach that beckoned me to the world of computers. Back then, the focus was not really on a language or a platform, but on how to solve a particular problem. I began my career in the information systems industry in 1983, working on most aspects of system development and consulting. Then TCS happened. After spending a decade and a half, I realized that the time was ripe to transition to building a change management organization. With visionaries like LC Singh and others, it was a risk worth taking. The journey with Nihilent since 2000 has been fantastic to say the least.

What is the best thing about being an entrepreneur?

The best thing about being an entrepreneur is the way it lets one evolve as a professional and a human, not very unlike the company one leads. It also lets the entrepreneur breathe life into the company. Similarly, no other role in the corporate setup can offer the infinite challenges and opportunities that entrepreneurship can.

Please tell us about Road Map and Future Plans of your organizations.

Our company's tagline says 'Evolving Ideas'. - Naturally, we will go where they take us. With a clear focus on evolving as the leading provider of Consulting, Analytics and Technology, we will continue to live up to our position as an integrated change management company driven by the customer of the future.

Awards & Recognition

- Management Consultancy of the Year 2018 - CEO Today
- Cannes Dolphin for Exceptional Corporate Film - 2017
- SAP APJ Partner Excellence Award - 2017
- SAP Quality Award for Fastest Implementation in Africa - 2016
- CIO Choice Honor and recognition - 2016
- Red Herring Asia Top 100 - 2011

About the Spirit

Minoo Dastur, President & CEO

Minoo, a Chartered Management Consultant and an MBA, Minoo joined LC Singh to Co-found Nihilent, and is President and CEO.

In his role, Minoo oversees strategy and operations of the company, and has also specifically involving himself in key delivery assignments when required. He is an executive member of the Board of Directors and has been responsible for executing the groups expansion and consolidation plans.

Minoo started his business career in the early 1980's and has worked in the information technology industry for nearly four decades. He worked on path breaking technology game changers like WANG in the early years and moved on to building complex commercial applications when he joined TCS. Growing rapidly he consolidated delivery and business acquisition as he executed a strategy aimed at creating synergy and consolidation by establishing and heading the Corporate Banking Group and was a key player in the evolution of the BFSI vertical. In the mid Nineties he established TCS's operations in South Africa when this new market first opened to the world and negotiated the conversion of the local agency/representation into a firm joint venture for TCS with Dimension Data (who many years later became an investor in Nihilent). Later, he was also responsible for establishing the Corporate Marketing group for TCS at the head office.