

Creating Patents from Problems



A team of engineers who hoped to create something of their own, sat watching the outsourced pot controllers do their job. They felt resigned to follow a set procedure and move on. Kailash and his team were committed and seamless but fell short on the chance to show their true mettle. Something out of sync with the normal way, something offbeat.

Who knew that one glitch in their machinery could change it all. One dysfunctional machine could bring out the best in the ones operating it.

To those who don't work in these plants, a pot controller might not mean much. But to these engineers they are an indispensable part of the smelting process and their

performance has a direct bearing on the current efficiency and energy consumption. These pot controllers were bought from a vendor and as the pages of the calendar flipped they began holding the team back. It looked like a huge problem that could be solved only by buying new pot controllers, incurring a huge cost.

The only probable solution was worrisome. There had to be another way out. Have you seen how when people can't buy an appliance they need, they come up with their own makeshift version and it works with the same, if not better, efficiency? It was this simple everyday life observation that changed everything. The team of engineers, who always yearned for a new challenge, were asked a simple question, "Why can't we make it on our own?" They didn't have an answer. Which meant it was time for them to go looking for it.

The management was stirred by the team's enthusiasm and in return supported them with every possible help. The team had found its direction. They had the support. Now all they needed to do was to make it happen. It wasn't just a great thought. It was a greater effort that was put into the project. Meetings that lasted through the day and sometimes through the night became a regular occurrence. White boards filled with formulae and algorithms were a common sight. Brainstorms happened every day, and often every hour. The challenge had stirred a passion.

After weeks of slogging, the first draft was ready. But the path they'd set out on never promised to be easy. This was a beginning of the thought that no problem is impossible to solve. The team had now started to set examples at every step. They

explored new material and technology. They had pushed many boundaries, but their greatest achievement was yet to come.

They had 20,000 pages of coding which couldn't be deciphered by anyone apart from the makers. They converted it into a simple 10-page flowchart that was about to become a part of the company's and their own legacy.

The controllers are finally ready, all home-made, with love and care. The Aditya Birla Group now has a patent request in place. The team that relished a new challenge turned a problem into their biggest achievement and the company's pride in the span of a few months. This is the power of passion and commitment. When given the confidence and support, winners can emerge out of the most unassuming places. While they invented a new machine, they discovered their true selves.