

## Candid with tara singh vachani 01 Sep2015

Posted by MADHUMITA PRABHAKAR

The founder of Antara Senior Living indulges in a conversation about what she loves about her job, why she dislikes prolonged meetings and things that inspire her the most in life



Quite often, when in conversation with an entrepreneur, I tend to ask this question; what inspired you to pursue a particular idea? Or who inspires you the most? And, the interesting observation I've made here is, while some quote books which inspired them or veterans who paved the way with their ideas, sometimes, inspiration is a conversation they have had in a casual meeting with a stranger. For Tara Singh Vachani, the founder of Antara Senior Living, the idea to start a community in India's senior living space came through one such conversation. "Ideas come best to me when I am engaged in a conversation with someone. And a prime example of that is the evolution of Antara," she recalls.

Vachani founded Antara Senior Living in 2010 and began building the first community in Dehradun. Apart from the place holding an emotional connect for her (it being the hometown for her mother and grandparents), initial research and survey among her potential buyers indicated that the location bode well for them (buyers). "There were three reasons I chose this location. First, the presence of a Max Healthcare unit at a nearby location. Second, we realised that most of them wanted to live away from the urban life in old-age, and third, it is located close to the airport and metro. There are ten flights in and out of Dehradun every day,

” she points out. Set to be operational in early 2016,

the Dehradun community houses 218 apartments ranging from 1,900 square feet to penthouses of 9,000 square feet. “In fact, to ensure the safety and wellness of our residents, apart from being located close to a tertiary hospital, we’ve also designed several in-built features such as on-call doctors and nurses, senior-friendly facilities that include subtle night lighting inside apartments and outdoor and indoor activity centers such as badminton and tennis courts, spa, library and more,” she shares. Despite adopting a cookie cutter approach by positioning Antara Senior Living as a hospitality business, a key challenge that Vachani and her team grapple with is being perceived as a real estate or development company. “From what I see the understanding and recognition will happen only once we are operational,” she adds.

Priced at Rs. 1.23 crore to Rs. 8 crore, Vachani’s venture is typically targeted at high net worth individuals, and each sale involves a significant investment of time and resources in identifying a prospect and building a relationship with them. With such effort also comes an occasional downfall which Vachani sees as her barrier to success. “There are only two things that tantamount to an unsuccessful day. One, if I have not been able to close a deal with a promising buyer or if the prospect has signed an agreement and is now having second thoughts,” she says and adds, “At such times, I go back and try to understand what went wrong so that I don’t repeat the same mistake again.”

An entrepreneur, an individual

Vachani as an entrepreneur is quite candid and certainly not beyond admitting that she is still learning the ropes. That observation was made from a casual question I asked her; what is the one thing you look forward to in a day at work and otherwise? And, sans hesitation, she says, “I am a very meticulous person. A typical day for me starts as early as 9 a.m., when I prefer to have some time for myself to meditate and check mails. Then, I schedule review meetings with every department on Mondays and Tuesdays because my team travels to Dehradun through the rest of the week,” she says. The one thing she doesn’t look forward to, even as meetings comprise a large share of her daily work, is extended meetings or a large number of people present in one. “One, it distracts you from getting work done. And two, everyone has their eyes on you and at such times I want to be an observer more than a leader,” she says.

Her idea of unwinding is to travel and learn something new. “I enjoy getting away from work once in a while. Sometimes, even a good book or movie has the same outcome,” shares Vachani. With the community at Dehradun set to launch operations in less than a year, Vachani is in no hurry to expand Antara to other locations in the country. “I’d rather not grow in multiples and focus on quality and service levels. I’m currently looking at opening five communities in the next decade and even consider foraying abroad,” she reveals, on a parting note.