

# 40-plus and rocking the start-up world

Mid-career professionals leave their comfort zones to take the entrepreneurial plunge

**VIRENDRA PANDIT**

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For professionals, age often turns their biggest adversary.

In the era of start-ups, where 20-somethings rule the roost, 40-plus professionals may seem the unlikeliest people to start their own businesses, given they are already leading a comfortable life, well ensconced in their respective careers.

But quite a few choose to move out of the comfort zone. Their passion has no expiry date; and in mid-life, they see not a professional crisis but a new opportunity to launch their own venture.

Srikanth Lingidi, founder-CEO of car rental company ApnaCabs, an aggregator of the famed *kaali-peeli* (black-and-yellow) taxis of Mumbai, felt he had had enough of running a technology consultancy company in the US for 10 years.

At 40, he left his job as president of PeopleTek. Putting to use his 15 years' experience, he launched ApnaCabs, the only government-licensed aggregator offering government-mandated fares, after he got a licence

in December 2015. "We offer a unique physical security device installed in the taxis to ensure women passengers' safety," Lingidi told *BusinessLine*.

## Expansion plans

With 1,700 cabs already aggregated in Mumbai, he now plans to expand this "sustainable business" to New Delhi, Hyderabad and Pune.

Pradeep Singh, 59, founder-CEO of Vidyanext, had quit his job as General Manager at Microsoft with similar plans. Educated at IIT-Delhi and Harvard, he first founded Aditi Technologies and Talisma, followed by Vidyanext in 2010, which provides personalised mathematics and science tuitions to school students.

"We aren't a tuition company but a laboratory for technological evolution of a new market offering home tutors. Next year, we will expand to some other cities," said Singh.

Vidyanext provides a network of tech-enabled tutors to students – within a 10-minute walk from their homes – in Bengaluru. The next stop is Gurgaon,



**Age no bar** (clockwise from above) ApnaCabs founder Srikanth Lingidi; Carzonrent founder Rajiv Vij; and Orahi's Arun Bhati (file photos)



with four centres. The company's co-founder Will Poole is a former VP of Microsoft and MD of Unitus Seed Fund.

## Transport revolution

Rajiv Vij started car rental company Carzonrent in 2001 at the age of 42, after having worked in Hindustan Motors and ITC.

Now, at 57, he plans to create a platform to "revolutionise" the urban transport system in a couple of months.

"Almost 70 per cent of cars in a city often remain idle. During

the odd-even experiment in Delhi, we found that some 50,000 car owners exchanged, shared or loaned their cars to others. We want to monetise these idly parked, personally-owned, self-drive cars," he said.

Prior to founding SyberPlace, Urvesh Goel was the Director of Global Invoicing at Convergys Corporation and Amdocs.

Then, at 45, he founded SyberPlace, which he describes as a *mandi* (marketplace) for over 5,000 merchants for the delivery of electronic goods.

By Diwali 2016, he plans to ensure the delivery of 80 per cent of orders within four hours across many States.

After working as a software expert for 18 years, the last being at Ericsson, Arun Bhati founded car pooling firm Orahi at the age of 42. The company recently acquired Delhi-based OddEven, launched in December 2015 by its 13-year-old founder Akshat Mittal.

The new economy does have plenty of space for entrepreneurs across all ages.