

Our Guest of Honour

Engineers' Day - 2019

Hon. Dr. Anand Deshpande

Founder and CMD,
Persistent Systems, Pune



Dr. Anand Deshpande is the Founder, Chairman and Managing Director of Persistent Systems since its inception and is responsible for the overall leadership, strategy and management of the Company.

Dr. Anand Deshpande born on 7th May 1962 in Akola, Maharashtra, was raised in the BHEL township in Bhopal as his father was an engineer at the government enterprise. He completed his 11th higher secondary from Bhopal and had a strong academic performance.

However, his grades and IIT-JEE took him to IIT Kharagpur and he started with Aerospace Engineering. After two years, Anand changed his stream to Computer Science and completed his B. Tech. (Hons) in Computer Science & Engineering. And further completed M.S. and Ph.D. in Computer Science from Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA.

He was introduced to the world of databases in 1983-84. He worked on a database project for queries by example, which was new then. Job opportunities for computer science graduates weren't as exciting, and many IITians chose to go abroad for higher studies. Anand went to Indiana University.

At a conference in Germany in 1987, Anand met Umesh Dayal (now at Hitachi) from Digital and Computer Corporation of America, Boston. Umesh came onboard Anand's thesis committee and soon, Anand was attending a lot of conferences and was very well networked.

Prior to founding Persistent Systems, Anand began his professional career at Hewlett-Packard Laboratories in Palo Alto, California, where he worked as Member of Technical Staff from May 1989 to October 1990.

Anand has served numerous positions at various professional and non-profit organizations viz. NASSCOM's Executive Council, ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) India, where he was the first President, SEAP (Software Exporters' Association of Pune) and Pune Chapter of CSI (Computer Society of India), CII's Pune Zonal Council and as a Trustee in the Computer History Museum.

As part of the research labs, Anand's job was to deal with data-related areas specific to programming environments. This was sort of the next step around compilers. Basically, Anand was working on programming in large issues integrated with the compiler (in version control).

Six months into the job, Anand was asked if he wanted to convert his visa to an H1, or get a green card. Anand decided to leave.

When he was at Indiana University, one of Anand's friends co-applied for a small business grant with him. Three months before Anand came to India, the duo won a \$50,000 government grant based on some of the work Anand had done for his dissertation. His friend decided to start the company in the US and Anand decided to work on it from India. That was how he got his first project.

French businessman Francois Bancilhon who was at HP and worked in the same lab as Anand asked him about his future plans. "He said that if I write from India (once I'm back in India for good), he'll give projects to me. That's how I got my second project."

Both projects were in the field of databases - one was building a query optimiser for the processor of an assembly machine.

Journey of Persistent Systems

Persistent Systems was incorporated by Anand's parents in Pune in May 1990 while he was still in the US. "We called it Persistent Systems because we were working on systems that are persistent, which is databases."

In March that year, the Government of India had set up the first Software Technology Park (STP) in Pune. It took Anand six to eight months to get a spot in the STP. He applied for a bank loan of about Rs 4 lakh which took six months to get approved. His loans, however, could not be disbursed due to changes in regulations.

At this stage what Dr. Anand Deshpande says : "My machines had arrived but due to lack of bank guarantee, it was sitting in the airport and I had to pay demurrage. Thankfully, I got my tax refund from the US then and I could use that Rs. 2 lakh to set up the company. We also borrowed the remaining Rs. 2 lakh from friends."



Office set up 1990



Anand with his team in early days of Persistent Systems

Persistent Systems' third customer was Microsoft, and migrated assembly code from 16 bit to 32 bit for a FORTRAN compiler. Soon, Persistent Systems had HP, Illustra and some other top database companies as clients.

Persistent had about 100 people in 1999, and no dedicated sales team. Now in the year 2019, Persistent, a globally recognised IT company rolls on smoothly with its team of 10,000 + working engineers all over the world.



Anand with his team at Persistent Systems US HQ

Over the last 28 years that his company Persistent Systems has been in existence, 56-year-old Anand says his role has constantly evolved, something that has kept him on his toes. And the excitement, he adds, is unparalleled.

As a true technology visionary, Anand's strengths lie in identifying and investing in next-generation technologies and encouraging internal entrepreneurship to ensure that Persistent Systems stays at the forefront of technology innovation.

Anand has been the driving force in growing Persistent Systems from its inception in 1990, to the publicly-traded global Company of today.

Currently, he serves as a Trustee of Persistent Foundation, Member of the Dean's Advisory Council in the School of Informatics of Indiana University, and Member of the Executive Committee of MCCA.

Anand is a founding member of iSPIRT, India's first product think tank, started with the vision of creating a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem in India. Anand is also a founder member of Inter Institutional Inclusive Innovations Center (i4C). i4C is an independent, non-profit entity which acts



Persistent & Microsoft

as a platform to pro-actively scout, showcase and handhold technology innovations, especially aimed at the base of the pyramid. With members of his family, he has established DeAsra Foundation (<http://www.deasra.in>), a non-profit entity which focuses on creating self-employment at scale.

Anand is married to Sonali and they have a daughter and a son.

Award received by Dr. Anand Deshpande -

1. Entrepreneur award at the Brihan Maharashtra Mandal Convention in Atlanta, USA in 2005
2. Recipient of the CSI Fellowship Award in 2007 for outstanding achievement in the field of Information Technology.
3. Awarded the career achievement award of the School of Informatics at Indiana University, Bloomington in 2009 and serves on the Dean's Advisory Council of the School of Informatics of Indiana University.
4. He was awarded the IIT Kharagpur Distinguished Alumni Award in 2012.
5. He is also been awarded the "Maharashtrian of the Year" award by Maharashtra Times.
6. Business Today, a leading business publication in partnership with PwC has named Anand to its 2016 "Best CEO List". They find Anand's vision as "...technological innovation that has emerged not just as a savior but also as one of the greatest levers of growth, even during a downtime."

