

# DR. SANJAY AGARWAL

DIRECTOR & COO, IJM INDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

**A PIONEERING MEGA-PROJECTS LEADER, SHAPING  
INDIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE LANDSCAPE**

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## COVER STORY 12

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**Daksh Malhotra**  
Managing Director  
Everest Blowers



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**Mukesh sanghvi**  
Managing Director  
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**Sanjay Agarwal**  
Managing Director  
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**Vimal Pillai**  
VP - Strategy & Marketing  
Clover Infotech

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### COVER STORY

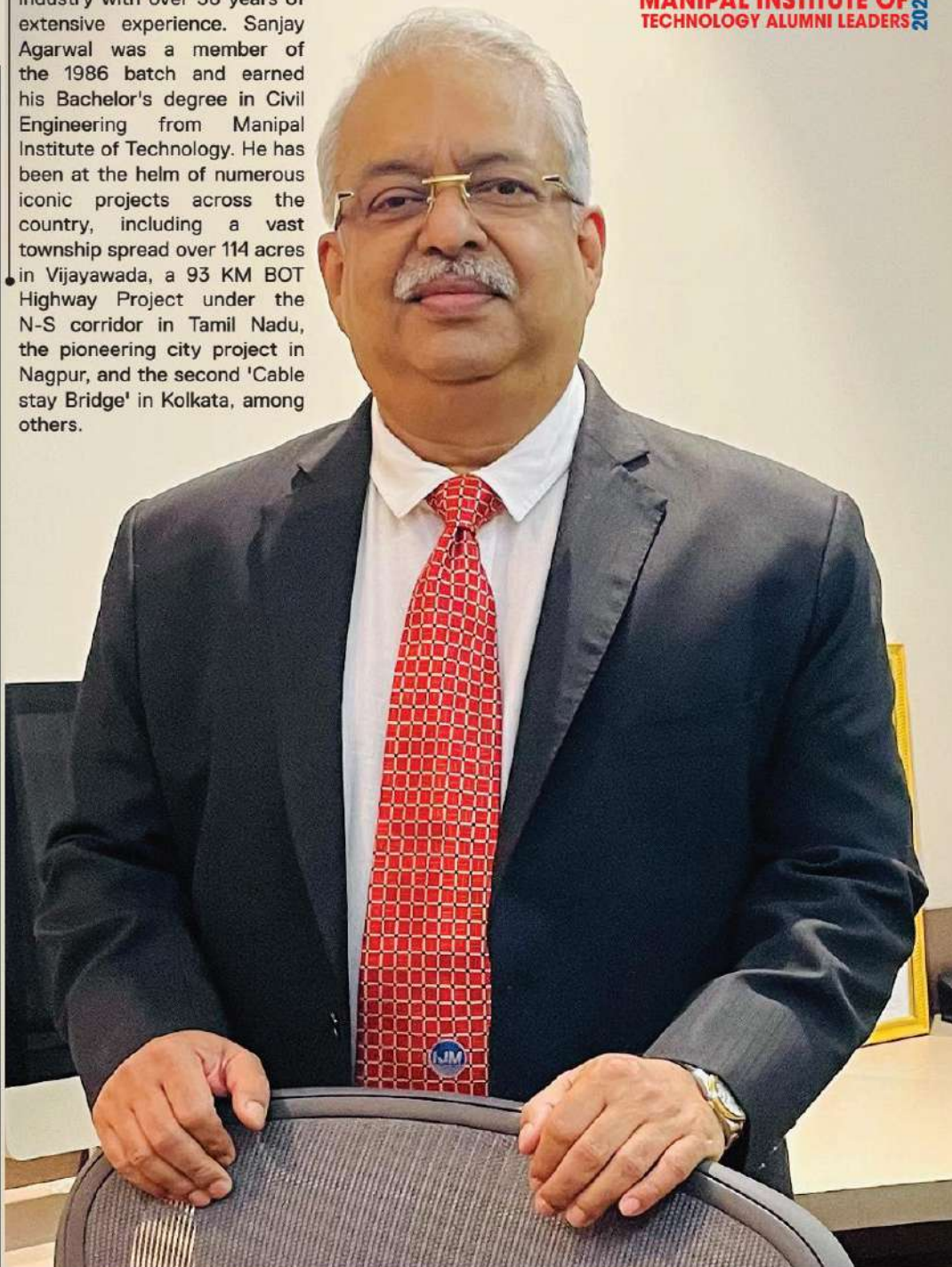
**T**he National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has achieved remarkable success in completing road projects in record time in recent years. One such project is the Solapur-Vijayapura four-lane 110 km road, where NHAI set a new record by laying 25.54 kilometers of road in just 17 hours and 45 minutes. This achievement was made possible by the partnership with IJM (India) Infrastructure (IJMII), the Indian subsidiary of a Malaysian multinational corporation. Dr. Sanjay Agarwal, the COO and Director of IJMII, played a crucial role in this project and has been a visionary leader in the infrastructure industry for decades.

Dr. Sanjay Agarwal's career in infrastructure development began in 1986 when he worked as an Assistant Project Manager in IRCON, a government undertaking. He later joined IJM Corporation in 1996 and successfully executed the Desa Sri Puteri mega building project. As the head of IJM India Infrastructure, he has been involved in numerous iconic projects, including a township in Vijayawada and a BOT Highway project in Tamil Nadu, among others.



Dr. Sanjay Agarwal, COO & Director of IJMII, is a distinguished figure in the industry with over 36 years of extensive experience. Sanjay Agarwal was a member of the 1986 batch and earned his Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Manipal Institute of Technology. He has been at the helm of numerous iconic projects across the country, including a vast township spread over 114 acres in Vijayawada, a 93 KM BOT Highway Project under the N-S corridor in Tamil Nadu, the pioneering city project in Nagpur, and the second 'Cable stay Bridge' in Kolkata, among others.

**CEO** *Insights* **TOP 10**  
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After voluntarily retiring from IJMIL, Dr. Sanjay founded Team Universal Infratech (TUIPL), which became an award-winning company. In 2019, IJM Corporation acquired TUIPL, and Dr. Sanjay was appointed as COO of IJMIL, later becoming the whole-time director. His dynamic and tech-savvy approach, along with his ability to find India-specific solutions, has made IJMIL a trusted partner of NHAI.

Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, the Solapur-Vijayapura road project was completed ahead of schedule, showcasing Dr. Sanjay's leadership and expertise. This project is one of the largest contracts awarded by NHAI on a design, build, finance, operate, and transfer (DBFOT) basis and is a significant milestone for IJM in India.

Recently, CEO Insights team had the chance to engage in an exclusive interview with Dr. Sanjay Agarwal, highlighting his journey and achievements in the infrastructure sector.

**What motivated you to enter the Construction & Infrastructure industry? Please share your journey and what continues to inspire and drive you in this field today.**

The inspiration behind entering the Construction & Infrastructure industry stems from my father's influence, who was an Indian Railway Engineer engaged in impressive rail projects like bridges, tunnels, and railways. Witnessing his work and experiences during my early life fascinated and motivated me to follow in his footsteps and become a part of the construction world.

After completing my graduation, I was thrilled to receive my first job opportunity in an Indian Railway Construction company as an assistant manager. This excitement led me to forgo the chance to pursue a Master's degree at South Dakota University (US). I worked on significant projects like the Kapurthala Coach Factory in Punjab, a major rail bridge over the river in Tatanagar, and an elevated flyover in Jakarta. These experiences provided me with hands-on project knowledge and paved the way for an opportunity in the Malaysian Construction industry in 1994.

Joining a prominent piling company, PILECON Geotechnics, as a project manager, I successfully executed over 20,000 piles in specialized conditions, including facilitating the construction of the first high-rise building in Kuala Lumpur and offshore piling for the Dry Dock at Johor Bahru. Subsequently, I was selected by IJM in 1996, where I found leaders with a strong vision for infrastructure growth in

India. I was groomed and mentored to contribute to IJM's construction endeavors in India, and that's what continues to drive me today.

**Tell us about your leadership style and the key factors that have contributed to your success?**

My leadership style revolves around collaboration and inspiration. I believe in working together with my team, delegating tasks, and setting an example to motivate them. It is essential for me to show that I genuinely care about my team members and their well-being.

Direction, Vision, and Support are the cornerstones of my leadership approach. I firmly believe in the saying, 'Failures are stepping stones to success.' Embracing failures and learning from them is crucial to growing and achieving success. I encourage my team to have the courage to start again after setbacks, as it strengthens their determination to succeed.

Having a clear vision and mission is paramount for a leader. When you are confident in your vision, it empowers you to work effectively with the team, supporting and directing their efforts. I encourage my team members to use their collective strengths and grow as future leaders.

Leadership and management serve different purposes and require distinct skill sets. Leaders inspire and influence others, while managers provide direction and guidance.

As a leader, I take on the responsibility of guiding others to achieve their goals. I am not afraid to take risks and face challenges, understanding that overcoming obstacles leads to success. It is crucial for leaders to earn the trust and respect of their followers. The ability to persuade others to believe in the company's vision is key to effective leadership.

Integrity is the foundation of my leadership style, and I believe that self-centeredness is detrimental to leadership. A true leader genuinely cares about the success and well-being of their followers.

**How would you characterize IJM India Infrastructure as a company? What is its market standing, and what sets it apart as a unique selling proposition (USP)?**

IJM India Infrastructure is an organization that stands as a wholly owned subsidiary of IJM Corporation Berhad, a Malaysia-listed conglomerate with an impressive 1.5 billion turnover. Over the last two decades, IJM India has made a significant impact and established a strong presence in the Indian



infrastructure market, particularly excelling in the build operate transfer mode in the highway sector. The key factors contributing to our growth and sustainability include robust leadership, a relentless pursuit of excellence, sound governance, strong delivery capabilities, and highly dedicated and talented teams that continuously strive to innovate and find new solutions.

Our larger projects are secured through our parent company and executed by IJMIL. We take pride in being regarded as the premier build operate transfer (BoT) operator in the country, a reputation that others envy. This success is a result of our impeccable talent, abundant resources, and state-of-the-art equipment, all of which enable us to live by our motto of 'Delivering Today Building Tomorrow.' Clients find comfort in working with IJM because they are assured of project delivery within stipulated parameters, regardless of any challenges that may arise.

To sum it up, IJM India Infrastructure is a highly regarded organization with a strong position in the market, known for its expertise in the build operate transfer mode for highways and a consistent track record of successful project delivery.

**As the Director & COO, what key factors do you consider when crafting impactful corporate strategies?**

Creating effective corporate strategies is a foundational aspect of successful planning, development, and implementation, ultimately enhancing the company's credibility. As COOs, clear communication of objectives aligned with the company's values and mission is crucial. Effective strategic leadership entails loyalty to the organization, judicious use of entrusted power, transparency, problem-solving skills, willingness to delegate, and instilling passion for the job while showing empathy towards others. Additionally, it involves being self-aware and adeptly managing essential elements like values, opportunities, and capabilities, all of which must align with the company's vision.

**How do you maintain the company's competitive edge in the market amid tough competition, particularly in the infrastructure business?**

To stay ahead of competitors, it is essential to focus on existing customers and enhance service levels by being more responsive. Delivering high-quality products and services on time and within the stipulated cost is crucial for defending the market position and

building a competitive advantage. Understanding the competition, meeting customer expectations, and offering unique value propositions are vital aspects of achieving success.

Additionally, staying updated on sector developments, continuously investing in new technology, and upgrading human resources play significant roles in maintaining the company's competitiveness. These measures ensure that the company stays afloat and continues to thrive amidst the challenges posed by competitors in the market.

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**What are your plans for the next five years, and what impacts do you aim to create through your future goals?**

While I am set to retire in three years, my vision for the future involves taking on the role of a mentor in the industry. I aspire to share and contribute my wealth of critical experiences with upcoming leaders, emphasizing the importance of ethics as the essence of success. My objective is to empower aspiring leaders to bridge leadership gaps, tackle significant challenges, and align core strategies with senior leadership. This approach has proven to be a successful mantra for me, and I am excited about working towards this meaningful objective.

**What guidance would you offer to aspiring leaders entering this industry?**

As an upcoming leader, always prioritize ethics as it is fundamental to achieving success. Be ready to step up and fill in leadership gaps, tackle significant challenges, and align core strategies with senior leadership. Effective communication and collaboration are essential qualities for a COO, as these traits encourage others to work with you. Additionally, develop the ability to make quick decisions, as delays in decision-making can seriously impact project timelines. Embracing these qualities will pave the way for a successful and fulfilling journey in this industry. 