

AN INQUISITIVE ENTREPRENEUR ON A MISSION TO BUILD A DISEASE FREE WORLD

AN INTERVIEW WITH SUSHANT KUMAR

FOUNDER & CEO OF GENEFITLETICS



We are pleased to introduce Sushant Kumar, Founder & CEO of Genefitletics. Sushant is a health-tech entrepreneur & passionate about helping busy folks unlock their health potential. He has founded healthcare & executive career services business in the past & authored two health publications. He is on a mission of building a disease free world. In this interview with Bio Patrika, Sushant talks in depth about his entrepreneurship journey.

Tell us about yourself and your company. What kind of Corporation is your business?

I'm a visionary entrepreneur, innovator and inventor who believes that a curious & inquisitive mindset is what will drive a person to create value for others. Having held leadership positions for two decades across diverse sectors & build business in healthcare & financial services, coupled with my own transformation struggle from being an obese individual to a healthy soul, puts me in a unique position to embark on a journey to help people improve their health.

"Attitude, competence & execution are three core pillars to conquer this world & bring positive differences in the lives of people. If you have these three, the sky's the limit for you."

I'm on a mission to build a disease free world by shaking hands with invisible forces at work inside our body- genes & gut microbes.

My company Genefitletics, is an evidence based biotech solution that sequences human & gut microbiome DNA to

decode health insights and biomarkers of more than 30 chronic diseases & analyze the interaction between food & gut microbes through saliva & stool samples to provide a personalized nutrition solution.

What is the problem you are solving & what is unique about your business?

52% of the global adult population is suffering from chronic diseases due to imbalance in gut bacteria, leaky gut & disturbed circadian rhythm resulting in chronic diseases (adding a ref will make this stronger!). Given the fact that 41 million people meet premature death globally, our current disease based model of medicine has been ineffective in dealing with chronic diseases.

The key stakeholders of the healthcare sector- doctors, hospitals & insurance companies do not make money until the patient remains sick & requires constant consulting & medication. Certain solutions which place antibiotics & surgeries over curing the patients, do long term collateral damage & have a cascading impact on overall health, thereby driving people towards life threatening disorders.

Our business replaces this current model with a human biology based model to understand how our body really works, how to run it optimally & fix the issues safely when something goes wrong.

Genefitletics offers unparalleled visibility into a human body to create a unique profile of biochemistry & microbial

community & make personalized adaptable & actionable precision nutrition recommendations for improving the health of its customers.

Genefitletics is not just a genetic sequencing test, but the true health mascot for its customers. Our recommendations are adapted to your changing microbial profile & examine it regularly, so as to empower you to improve your healthspan & buoyancy.

This deep understanding of genes & gut living inside our body allows us to recommend to each individual as to why they should eat certain foods, and why they should avoid certain foods based on their own individual biology, with the goal to prevent and reverse chronic disease.

How and why did you get started in this line of work?

I was born and brought up in a traditional & stereotypical environment, where you are tutored to play safe throughout your life, secure a job and lead a simple blissful life. I used to be a typical finance professional in a secured job environment, so my life was all about travelling to & fro from my home to office. I was never satisfied or happy with this mediocre job mindset and running after money in a rat race. Things took an upside turn, when I went to pursue MBA from IE Business School, Spain. After meeting folks from every corner of the world, I discovered that people are plagued with irrational and outdated healthcare practices, which were not helping them improve their health span. So I asked myself, "Can we envision a world which does not have any space for chronic ailments?"

I left with this thought when I came back from Spain. After witnessing a series of deaths of my loved ones in the family, and how others around them are impacted, I decided to build something that can help people become independent of any doctors & medicines & improve their healthspan. That same time, I was diagnosed with fatty liver stage 3 and I was obese and weighed 105 Kgs. I had to transform myself first, for making my vision a reality & helping people.

While through a strong motivation & following a standard calorie deficit diet & regular workout I was able to transform myself from an obese man to a healthy soul, my overall health took a backseat & a huge toll on my gut. This made me realise the real problem in the healthcare delivery model- it is not focussed on curing people.

Truly, the pharmacy companies are the biggest wealth makers, because whatever they're manufacturing in their labs is not supposed to reverse the chronic diseases, it's just helping people manage their disease symptoms. It is more like delaying the effects of a disease.

I was inclined to fix the current healthcare model with the objective of manifesting & building a disease free world. I wanted to figure out what it takes to actually reverse these human diseases. Not having a typical healthcare background was never my concern. I researched a lot of medical journals & scientific papers & all pointed out one common root cause of human diseases: the invisible army inside our gut- "the gut microbiome". We humans have only 25,000 genes, so how come the human body is such a complex system?

This led to a miraculous conclusion & believe that we humans have assigned the task of managing our health to trillions of microorganisms living in our gut having the number of genes almost 10^4 times those of humans. This further led to belief that it is these microbes who are decision makers in every aspect of human health. By optimising these microbiomes, humans can actually take care of their health without depending too much on medications.

Genefitletics was born with the objective of building a disease free world by sequencing human & gut microbiome DNA to decode health insights and biomarkers of more than 30 chronic diseases & analyze the interaction between food & gut microbes to provide personalized nutrition.

How do you deal with the stress of Covid-19?

To be frank, I never felt under stress during the pandemic! All I did was follow precautions & guidelines issued by the government & maintained a healthy immunity. I made sure that I spent 2 hours every day on my workout which boosted & energy level. Besides, speaking with various people daily & listening & solving their health problems gave me enough motivation & boost to keep going.

What is most important to you in a company?

Our business revolves around 3 pillars- customer, customer & customer. Solving customers' health problems & empowering them to improve their health span is the epicenter of our business.

What was the best part of business since the covid-19 started?

COVID-19 has led us to rethink & pivot our business model & build in additional offerings that can help people alleviate their health issues. It has also driven people's attention towards their health. As a result, they are now looking for something beyond medicines to cure them effectively.

How did covid-19 affect the way of doing business?

Covid-19 made us location independent & gave access to a multitude of resources & recruited people from different

parts of the world.

What service(s) or product(s) do you offer/manufacture?

Genefitletics is currently offering two solutions:

1. Curegenic- This is a comprehensive bio-intelligence solution that analyses customers' genes & microbiomes through saliva & stool samples covering Metabolic health, Disease risk estimation, Genetic predisposition to intolerances & allergies, Inflammatory activity, Predisposition to drug addiction, Digestive efficiency, Microbiome profile & Circadian Rhythm to provide personalized dietary recommendations
2. UP THE GUT- This product analyses customer's microbiomes through stool samples covering metabolic, digestive & neurodegenerative pathways to provide personalized dietary recommendations.

How does an individual benefit from your services?

Using functional analysis of human & gut microbial DNA, Genefitletics recommends a personalized diet for an individual along with unique recommendations which will,

- Focus on plant-based nutrition with personalized serving recommendations of animal and plant proteins and fats.
- Identify foods that are most aligned with his microbiome.
- Recommend a diet that will increase his energy and well being.
- Recommend a diet to help him achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Optimize his digestion and nutrient absorption.
- Optimize beneficial bacteria with probiotics.

End result: One can fine tune the function of his gut microbiome to minimise production of harmful metabolites & maximize production of beneficial ones, so that he can improve his energy levels, fine tune the immunity & prevent occurrence of chronic inflammation.

How do you advertise your business?

We do not believe that the healthcare business needs any advertisement. What the healthcare sector requires is, educating & information about dynamic science associated with human biology & overall health. We have been following this approach & engaging our users through our content & community building initiatives. One can find our blogs, articles, podcasts, and webinars on www.genefitletics.com and become a member for free. We also engage our community by organizing virtual events & challenges to help them with small tweaks in their lifestyle which definitely leads to development of healthy habits.

To what do you attribute your success?

My passion & innate responsibility to bring positive impact in the lives of people.

What are your company's goals?

To build a disease free world.

Do you work locally or nationally?

We work internationally, currently serving in India, Australia, Europe & Middle East.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

In the next 5 years, I see myself as a healthcare entrepreneur, who has brought a positive impact in the lives of at least 200,000 people by improving their health.

If you had one piece of advice to someone just starting out, what would it be?

Just focus on the customer's problem and how you can make the customer's life better.

Do you have any fond or interesting memories from your professional life you would like to share?

My first designated leadership experience, where I was asked to transform a de-motivated team with pre-existing internal team conflicts to a rockstar team & convert a dwindling business to a profitable one has been one of my most fascinating memories. This assignment helped me utilize my leadership to build strong teams, formulate innovative ideas, and implement advanced business models that have created new industry standards.

Who were your inspirations and mentors, both professionally and personally?

Professionally - Late John Deere, a pioneering social entrepreneur who not only established an empire of his own (Deere and Company), but also served the people of his soil, is my idol. He began his career as a blacksmith apprentice and realized that the reinvention of cast iron ploughs with highly polished steel could boost the productivity of prairie soil. Therefore, he started manufacturing these on a small scale and in no time transformed his enterprise into the world's largest agriculture and construction equipment manufacturer. I strongly align my strategy and thoughts with him, since I firmly believe that economic benefits & social responsibility should co-exist. With this ideology in mind, I am building Genefitletics to help people improve their health span.

Personally- Jeev Milkha Singh, a super athlete who took India to an altogether different level in the Olympics, is my role model. His never give up attitude motivated & inspired me to transform myself from an obese nerd to a healthy soul. My life's philosophy with these lines once quoted by him- "Hard Work, willpower & dedication- for a person with these qualities sky's the limit."

What would be your alternative career choice if not Genefitletics?

My career has always been focused around solving problems that can bring a positive impact on the lives of people. If it had not been Genefitletics, I would be building something unique for the agriculture sector, given the fact that Indian agriculture sector needs technology & supply chain revolution to improve the realization of crop proceeds that accrue to farmers.

What is something your friends and colleagues don't know about you?

A lot of my friends & colleagues do not know that I am a table tennis player & at one time wanted to pursue my career in sports.

What's something unique you keep on or around your workspace?

I live & work from the Himalayas. The best part is we are close to nature & are surrounded by snow covered mountains for at least 6 months in a year. Imagine what would be your motivation & energy level, if your workspace is surrounded by lush green trees, orchards & mountains.

What were your greatest professional challenges along the way and how did you get past them?

In one of my most challenging leadership assignments way back in 2010, I was asked to set up an organizational transformation in an existing business unit, which was plagued by differences in team members that was jeopardizing business interests & impacting our top line. Until I managed to create an environment of trust & motivation for the team, the division was doomed to fail.

Using my previous expertise in team-building & conflict resolution, I clubbed incompatible members in smaller teams within the larger group and created a system of incentives that forced them to cooperate and function together as a unit. This strategy worked wonderfully and we could perceive a striking difference in revenues in a span of 6 months. Over the next 3 years, we not only grew revenue by 25% month on month, but also optimized operational cost by automating the entire workflow.

Could you comment on how promising would precision medicine be in the future? And what would be the most important challenges that we may face with precision medicine?

Over the decades, a traditional model of medicine has been used to set an agenda for medical research! This disease based model of health believed that as long as the affected body part(s) could be fixed, the problem would be solvable, and hence no need was felt to address the root cause of the

disease. Medicine never acknowledges the malfunctioning of the gut, which could be the root cause of all these problems. Not to mention the high price tag & long term damage this outdated model has produced.

Since 1970, we have been witnessing new challenges to our health including rise of metabolic disorders, autoimmune diseases, impact on our immune health & diseases of ageing & brain such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's & Autism.

In India alone, 9% & 25% of the total adult population suffer from Type 2 diabetes & cardiovascular diseases respectively. If we talk of digestive disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome, Acid Reflux & GERD, 10% of Indian population is affected.

Clearly, the current disease based model of medicine has failed to effectively deal with chronic diseases & have placed doctors, hospitals & insurance companies above patient cures, since they do not make money until patients are sick & require constant care & medication. Pharmaceutical companies make billions from sick subscribers by providing symptom management through medication rather than cure.

The current healthcare system in India needs a revolution. The current outdated model needs to be replaced with a human biology based model to understand how our body works, how to run it optimally & fix issues sustainably without any collateral damage.

The answer lies in decoding gut microbial DNA. Gut microbiome is linked to every chronic disease be it diabetes, depression, obesity, heart diseases, cancer, digestive issues such as IBS or even mental health issues such as Parkinson's.

India holds a promising future when it comes to application of gut microbiome.

We need to move away from managing symptoms of chronic diseases and focus on unmasking the root causes of chronic diseases. The best way forward is to leverage huge datasets that can help us predict the advent of diseases and use Artificial Intelligence to provide dietary interventions.

In the next 5 to 7 years, we could envisage more gut microbiome research based businesses being set up to provide data driven solutions, which can help us move from subscribing to drugs & surgeries to gut microbiome based personalized dietary intervention unique for every individual.

With increase in adoption rate, the cost of getting a gut microbiome testing would decrease & make it more accessible for the general public.

Tell us about the events Genefitletics organizes and what you are hoping to achieve?

Genefitletics works on a gamification model where we motivate & incentivize people to improve their gut, physical & mental health. Over the past 18 months, we have conducted workout challenges, nutrition competition & circadian rhythm challenges to improve the health of people.

Besides, to enhance the knowledge base of people about gut microbiome & genomics, we have also conducted webinars, question & answer sessions & gut health focused podcasts.

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