

Hot Start-up: 'Once the pinch starts.... '

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Started in 2011, Bangalore-based Cabis Labs (Chemical And Biological Industrial Services) is a research-based, technology and product development [start-up](#) for the pharmaceutical industry.

It is also a contract research venture primarily focused on drug discovery, development and manufacturing of pharmaceutical and pharma intermediates including specialty chemicals, APIs, and research chemicals.

Dr Rajesh Kavali, MD and co-founder of Cabis, was a former [scientist](#) with [Syngene International](#). He has also been a scientist with Sigma Aldrich and Zydus Cadila.

"Bureaucracy," says Dr Rajesh, "is a major hurdle while establishing [start-ups](#). Even for a small licensing chore you need to bribe a few people. In the US, if you want to establish an enterprise, there are organizations that are very supportive and they do not charge a penny. Such set-up is not available here in India. Even the Government doesn't support new ideas, and it doesn't understand the concept of entrepreneurship. Taxation eats away a lot of money in a [start-up](#)."

He adds that approaching banks for funding is difficult even with great projects in hand.

"Biotech [start-ups](#) take a minimum of 4 to 5 years to see returns. Profits come post that period. Most investors crave for immediate returns and are impatient," he points.

Cabis bagged its first project only 2 years after its inception.

"Our greatest asset is intellectual property. During the first year, it was all about groundwork, getting the projects, meeting and networking with people," reveals Dr Rajesh.

Its first project was with Sigma Aldrich, whose support he very much cherishes.

"We have also approached US companies. They can fund us, and we can exclusively work for them with mutual agreements including IPs," he shares.

He says that in today's high-tech world, it is crucial for [start-ups](#) to have their own web presence.

"Without a good branding, professionally crafted website, or even an email ID for that matter, one can go nowhere in the business world," Dr Rajesh notes.

He mentions that Mr Somasundaram, MD of Supraveni Chemicals, an enterprise worth Rs 20 crore, was a great motivation to him.

"Once the pinch starts, success automatically multiplies. When success multiplies, there are many who want to throw stones. But we have taken it up as a challenge," he opines.

He states that he has learnt to be extremely patient in the biotech field.

"Success will not happen in a year or two. It is important to maintain funds and a steady cashflow. It is crucial to minimize your desires and not needs. It is better to set shorter goals which will boost self-confidence. There is a lot of sacrificing that an entrepreneur has to make. He or she has to be ready to even sweep and clean the floor at times. But one has to learn to enjoy being an entrepreneur. Everybody in a [start-up](#) needs to work for its growth because everybody is an owner in it. Each individuals' idea should be respected," he explains.

Talking about the industry's recent trends, he points that many companies are working on curing diseases at early embryonic stages in humans.

"Companies in the US are already working on this, but not in India. Some gene expressions happen at a particular age. Certain diseases, however, can be controlled at embryonic stages when the expression happens during this stage," he observes.

Dr Rajesh is an avid reader and loves playing badminton.

"Entrepreneurs should read as many books as possible, whether it is on entrepreneurship or management or self-help books. Once you are able to convince yourself, you will be able to convince anyone, and that is going to boost your confidence," he ends.