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The India network: The entrepreneur

Rajeev Agarwal, 39

Residence: Bellevue

Employment: Suzuki Motor; Frigidaire; Microsoft, 1993-2000. Co-founded MAQ Software in Redmond in 2000.

Hometown: Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

Education: Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur; Iowa State University, M.S.; University of Michigan, MBA.

Philanthropy: Provides computer training to schoolgirls in MAQ's neighborhood in Mumbai. The company hires professional educators to provide the training done in its computer lab on Sundays.

Quote: "In high-tech we have to constantly learn. We work very hard to make that happen, extremely hard. That's the challenge – it is XML today, it was HTML three years ago. Networking technology was different, now it's Wi-Fi, tomorrow it's WiMax. Some people will adapt and grow, take advantage of the experience, others won't."

AGARWAL NEVER HEARD of the vaunted Indian Institute of Technology until high school, and then his counselors discouraged him from applying. "They said nobody really gets into IIT; you're just wasting your money even with the application form," he recalled.

But the hard-working son of an attorney and a teacher beat the odds, graduating from the school in 1986. He got a job in a Suzuki auto factory in India and within a month realized life had more to offer than translating Japanese blueprints into English.

Agarwal attended graduate school in the United States, where half of his IIT graduating class ended up. He joined Microsoft just before the company took off in the 1990s.

"If you talk to my father today, he will say he did not want me to leave because he knew if I left I probably would not come back. He did not want to lose me," Agarwal said. "But frankly, at that time the economic opportunities in India were very limited."

Now he visits India at least four times a year to see family and the Mumbai office of MAQ Software, which he incorporated the day he left Microsoft.



KEN LAMBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Rajeev Agarwal incorporated MAQ Software the day he left his job at Microsoft. A native of India, he is a U.S. citizen who now works in Redmond but travels frequently to India, where most of his staff works.