Wipro Limited:

Building A World Class Ecosystem

"With ever increasing computing power and exponential technologies like artificial intelligence, new technologies evolve every few months instead of years. Wipro is known for its ability to spot trends ahead of the curve and closely engaging with the ecosystem is an important element to Wipro's innovation playbook. Startups are indeed at the beating heart of Wipro's strategy and we have built strong connects in the global startup ecosystem, over the last three years"

- KR Sanjiv, Chief Technology Officer, Wipro Limited

As Sanjiv looked out of his office window at the gleaming Bengaluru metropolis, he wondered about the vast amount of talent and innovation available in the technology ecosystem. Bengaluru, the city in question, was once called the Garden City for its vast green parks, but today, it was called India's Silicon Valley for its sprawling IT business parks.

As Chief Technology Officer of Wipro Limited and as a veteran of the industry, Sanjiv had seen Wipro grow into a global leader in technology - serving clients across a full spectrum of IT services, business and technology consulting, IT outsourcing and systems integration services and solutions. Building a world-class innovation ecosystem that included startups, expert networks, academia and external R&D ecosystem was just the beginning of this

exciting journey. Disruption was here to stay in the IT industry, and Wipro's leadership believed that the only way to track it and beat the disruptors was to become a disruptor. They knew, this wasn't just any other investment being made by Wipro. It was a strategic call that went to the core of Wipro's business. The only way to grow – and to do it faster than the competition – was to build a large, open innovation ecosystem.

Among all the channels, however, it was the startup-focused ecosystem that attracted the most attention. Wipro efforts took shape in form of two approaches to engage with the startup ecosystem. The first came to be known as the Go-to-Market (GTM) approach with startups under the CTO office - Open Innovation Function, which helped Wipro quickly integrate its solutions with startup offerings to serve its clients better. The second approach was taking minority stakes in identified startups operating in priority areas through its ventures arm, Wipro Ventures. A US $100 million fund launched in 2015 and based in Silicon Valley, Wipro Ventures invests in early- to mid-stage startups that has the potential to align with Wipro's business growth objectives. In both approaches, Wipro leveraged the capabilities of these startups for use within its own business units[1].

While the potential of the ecosystem was huge, Wipro had as many questions as they had solutions. Could a large global multinational like Wipro engage so closely with small and relatively nimble startups? How could Wipro create a synergy between companies that had different DNAs: they worked at different paces, had different work cultures, and had independent vision?

Further, what were the actual challenges of managing change, and getting a large enterprise to be agile and nimble in working with startups? What style of leadership was required? How could incentives be aligned? What was management's role? What were the different levels of maturity an organization must work through to be successful? What could be the relevant objective metrics of success for ecosystem building initiatives? What metrics worked and at what stage? Finally, a much larger question was how could different rhythms of innovation run in any organization, especially at Wipro that had succeeded with certain specific patterns of entrepreneurship and innovation.

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[1] Wipro was organized internally as multiple Business Units such as Banking and Financial Services and Insurance (BFSI), Healthcare and Life Sciences (HLS), Consumer Business Unit (CBU), Energy, Natural Resources and Utilities (ENU), etc.