

## JP - Profile

Joseph Patel was 26 when left One September, the company he co-founded, to work on a farm in Malaga, Spain. The company wasn't in trouble. In fact, the advertising business that he started in India was thriving. Patel was the one who wasn't. The always-on Mumbai work culture was taking a toll on him.

"I had no life," Patel says. "I realized at that point that I could do the exact same thing for the next 10 years, and that thought scared me. I was like, 'I'm 26 now. Is this what life is going to be like forever after? There has to be more to it.'"

Patel spent a month in Malaga before returning home. A year later he was back in Spain, ready to start his next venture. With a TEFL certificate in hand, he was teaching English in Madrid.

Some entrepreneurs are simply driven by money or the opportunity to be their own boss. Others are passionate about sharing their ideas with the world and improving their craft. Patel is in the latter camp. It's this mindset that led him to leave One September, but also inspired him to move to Spain and later to the U.S. to pursue a master's degree in advertising from Boston University.

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Teaching English was just step one in launching a new career in a new country.

"My objective of being in Spain long term was to find a way to get into advertising, which was incredibly difficult to do given the economy," Patel says.

He was a teacher with Milingual, a social learning company that facilitates one-on-one and small group lessons in more informal settings like cafes and bars.

"I loved their business model," Patel says.

However, his entrepreneurial instincts told him that the company could do more. After cold emailing the CEO about his ideas, Patel accepted an invitation to the office to elaborate.

"I showed him a 110-slide presentation on what I think the company can do better and he liked it, and he said, 'I'd like to work with you,'" Patel says.

He became the company's creative director, overseeing its marketing and branding strategy. Ultimately, the itch for something more came over him again. After a year at Milingual and six years of working post college, he was ready to learn something new and get back into the kind of work he was passionate about.

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Patel has been as much of a learner as he is a doer for most of his life. At his father's recommendation, he read Robert Kiyosaki's *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* and *Retire Young, Retire Rich* as a teen.

Patel's father is a serial entrepreneur whose ventures moved the family between India and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. His businesses have spanned industries including perfume manufacturing, commercial food production, and online language learning. Some businesses have been more successful than others and Patel observed first-hand what not to do.

"If you're solely focused on providing value to people – like my father's been doing – you're going to run losses. It's an NGO." he says. "There needs to be a healthy balance."

Patel took his father's experiences to heart when he started One September with three friends from advertising school. All had a few years of agency experience under their belts and skills that complemented one another.

"We realized that we came with all of this passion for advertising from ad school about things we wanted to create, about ads we wanted to make, about messages we wanted to send out, and how we wanted to make a difference," Patel says. Noting the emotional impact that creative work has on an individual he adds, "advertising is just a business that requires you to tirelessly give 100 percent of yourself so that somebody else can make money. So we said, 'why not us?'"

Within a year, One September took on clients, hired more employees, and moved to a dedicated office space. As the company grew, Patel's passion for it diminished.

"My brain would shut down the moment I reached the office," he says. "Creative only took up 15 to 20 percent of my workload. The rest of it was stuff I hated. I used to look at Excel spreadsheets, look

at accounts, do client servicing, business development, administration, HR. And that's when I realized that I have to change something before I became a liability."

After his return from Malaga, Patel sold his share of One September to the three remaining partners.

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With several years of work experience behind him, Patel is not the typical advertising graduate student at BU—many of whom enrolled immediately after their undergraduate programs. Although he's a bit impatient and is experiencing some *déjà vu*, Patel thinks it's too early to pass judgment on the program.

"It's rewarding from the perspective that a lot of age-old habits are being challenged," he says.

Boston University's advertising program might also be the foundation of Patel's next venture.

"One of the biggest reasons that I wanted to do the advertising program, and I stand vindicated in that regard is that I'm just learning so much about the United States and advertising in the American perspective," he says. "American culture is just in itself so different from what I've experienced before."

He's still unsure if American culture is enough of a draw to keep him here after he completes his degree.

"I'm a little homesick for Spain," he says. "It makes practical sense to stay here, I think, and I probably will, but I also know that at this moment I would love to go back to Spain if I had the chance."

One thing is for certain in Atwane's future. Entrepreneurship.

"One hundred percent," he says. "It's addictive."