

That's What SHE Said: Inspirational Tear Jerker Warning

The rumors, events, people, and stories keeping the Mesa interesting

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SANJIV PRABHAKARAN AND AJAY BALACHANDREN

Come Sit by Me...

WARNING: Inspirational Tear Jerker

Spring 2008, Southern India. When Ajay Balachandren boarded an overcrowded train heading home on holiday, he had no idea that the trip to visit family would change his life forever. Ajay, an engineering student, was accidentally pushed from the typically overcrowded boxcar, landing on the tracks and suffering a horrific neck injury. Ajay was left quadriplegic.

Fast forward to last week when in walks Sanjiv Prabhakaran, local CEO of Bytes Inc. Turns out Bytes Inc. is one of Ajay's employers. Yep... that's right. Ajay, unable to move his arms or legs, utilizes a voice recognition system to work on his computer. Cómo? Sanjiv explains it is like a grid or matrix on your screen. Ajay commands the cursor to move to certain coordinates and then dictates the data that he wants entered. "Kinda like battleship," I ask? Yes. And Sanjiv responds that you couldn't believe how fast Ajay works. Hmmm... an example? "It takes the average person one minute to enter 2 business cards when typing, Ajay can do it in about 3 minutes using voice recognition. Damn! Crankin' it. When Sanjiv first hired him, Ajay was working on simple data entry for CRM. More confident, he worked his way to Excel File and Macros. (Not even gonna pretend I know what Macros means.)

On Sanjiv's first visit with Ajay in India back in 2014, a year after hiring Ajay, he remembers tearing up on his first encounter. But Sanjiv quickly recognized the "pure energy inside Ajay" and that nothing was going to get in this man's way. Does anyone see a correlation here? Ajay is a fighter. His decision to find a solution, which allowed him to remain productive and provide for himself financially was life changing. Through his work he has been able to build his confidence. His mother and sister have been by his side, helping him with what we may view as simple, but to Ajay have been meaningful and helpful tasks, like turning on the computer, changing his positions and doing a bit of quality control by helping proofread his data entry.

With the opportunity to support himself financially, Ajay has a great sense of self-esteem and knows his self-worth. These combinations of strong will, family support, and physical therapy has helped Ajay find the determination to heal and his family now see the first signs of mobility in his fingers. Sanjiv delivers this news with a huge smile and you can sense the pride he feels for his employee. He hopes to raise awareness first here in San Diego via the Rotary Club and then world wide about Ajay's story and similar triumphs.

I look forward to Sanjiv's future visits to the café to learn of Ajay's progress both physically and career wise. I also look forward to the stories of others who have found the strength to overcome their physical challenges and continue to work. And I can't wait to hear of the amazing individuals who employ them. Listening to Sanjiv it is clear both are gaining so much from this meaningful experience.

Always,
Amanda



Amanda Caniglia

Amanda earned a degree in political science at UC San Diego before embarking on a career teaching languages and dance. She is a self-described "networker extraordinaire" and co-owner of Bella Vista Social Club and Caffè, located on the bluffs of the Torrey Pines Mesa. Leading researchers, CEOs, and top graduate students frequent the café to talk science and surfing. You want to know what's really going on around The Mesa? Ask Amanda.