

**“Sattva is not a job, it’s a calling.”**

I have to admit, I was a little taken aback. It was my first month at Sattva. Krishna (our CEO) had asked me to meet every single person at Sattva so that I could understand the organisation and the culture better.

Perhaps because I had spent all my career in the corporate world, I was a little sceptical about what the person had said. “A calling -- really?” I thought. But as he went on with his point, it did seem like the statement was true, not just for him, but for most others at Sattva as well. The kind of work he was able to do every day, the family-like work environment, the focus on impact - all of these had made working at Sattva a part of his identity.

Over and over, I heard the same words when I asked people to describe the culture at Sattva - “friendly”, “collaborative”, “supportive”, “people-centric”, “challenging”. It was lovely to see that the organisational values were alive and embedded in the culture, and not just words on the walls.

Over the next two years, I would personally see these values demonstrated, in multiple ways. And thanks to my role as the Head of the People function, the **People-Centric** value was what I saw demonstrated most.

An early joinee wanted to take a few months off to pursue a short-term course that was only indirectly linked to his work at Sattva. We not only part-paid for the course, but also part-paid him during his break (we later institutionalized this paid Sabbatical Leave as part of our Flexible Benefits Policy).

The world went into lockdown during the pandemic and many people struggled to manage home and work responsibilities. We shortened our work hours from 9 to 7.5 hours a day for a couple of months to help ease the transition. We also invested in mental health support for people who were struggling because of the lockdown.

Apart from being people-centric, Sattva also encourages and rewards **an entrepreneurial mindset**.

One of our team members became interested in maternal and new-born healthcare after her own experience of having and nursing a new-born. She explored the area further to understand how she could create more impact. Soon enough, her interest expanded to the larger area of healthcare. Over the years, her interest and the expertise and networks she built up resulted in her setting up and leading our healthcare practice area. In fact, we set up specialised practice areas at Sattva thanks to the impact and value she was able to create.

Similarly, another team member approached Krishna with a complaint that we were not focusing enough on enabling social enterprises. Krishna asked him to put together a business plan, and now he is set to lead the team that works with social enterprises.

This people-centric and entrepreneurial culture would not be possible if we weren’t also highly **learning-oriented** as an organisation.

One of my favourite Sattva stories is of the team member who was asked to fly to Mumbai and be part of a client presentation right on the day she joined. Though apocryphal, the story

demonstrates how much we trust people right from day one and believe in offering them experiences that help them grow.

At Sattva, we believe that most learning happens on the job, through hands-on experience complemented by feedback and reflection. Our learning and development initiatives focus on providing tools to support these experiences and enabling reflections to absorb the learnings.

Every year, a few people leave Sattva to study further at some of the best-known colleges in the world. Other organisations may consider people who leave for higher education as 'attrition', but at Sattva, we actually encourage it. We are clear that one of the ways we will achieve our mission of ending poverty in our lifetime is by creating more leaders for the impact sector. Our leaders spend a lot of time guiding our young talent on their career, sharing their own experiences and connecting them to leaders who can help them on their journey ahead.

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All of this may make you think that my job as the leader of the People team is easy.

If only.

Even though Sattva retains its small-organisation vibe, we have big ambitions. Over the last year and a half, we have grown the Sattva family by 40%, in the middle of a global pandemic (and we continue to grow at a dizzying pace). Integrating such a large number of new people into our unique culture when the entire organisation is working virtually is an interesting problem to solve. Retaining our flat and accessible culture even as we grow is a challenge that keeps me up at night. Balancing the needs of a fast-growing business with the well-being of our team members is something we are still struggling with (especially when the team members themselves are so passionate about the work they are doing).

But then, these are the challenges that make working at Sattva so much fun, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

I guess the person I spoke to was right - I've realised over the last two years that Sattva has become a calling for me too.

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Sattva has been working with various nonprofits and social organisations as well as corporate clients to help them define their social impact goals. Our focus is to solve critical problems and find scalable solutions. We assist organisations in formulating their long-term social impact strategy by strategically aligning with business to provide meaningful solutions to social issues.

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