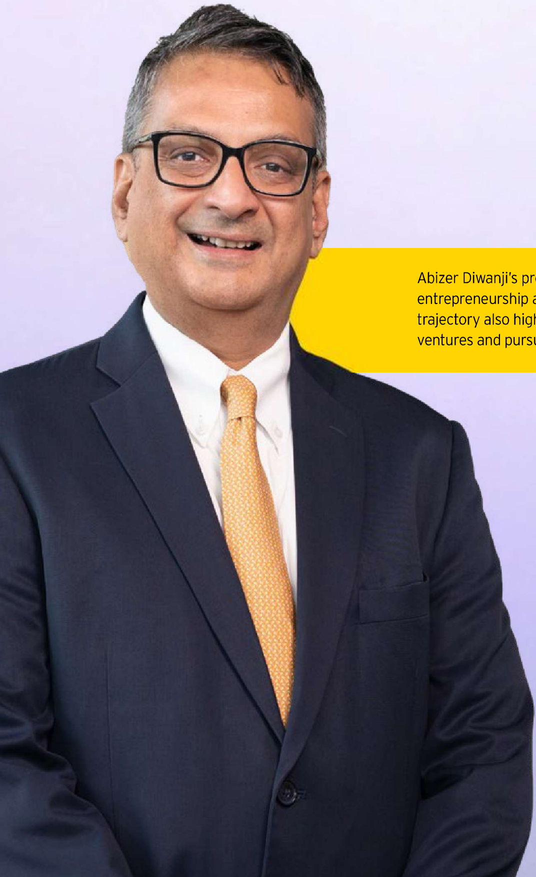


Abizer Diwanji's professional journey reflects how curiosity fuels entrepreneurship and how the courage to take risks builds trust. His career trajectory also highlights the firm's support for leaders in building their own ventures and pursuing their passions.

A legacy of **curiosity, courage and trust**

Abizer Diwanji
Founder, NeoStrat Advisors LLP

Moving from the certainties of reviewing accounts into the fluid worlds of consulting, deals, restructuring and, ultimately, entrepreneurship, Abizer Diwanji's is an extraordinary career. At EY, he helped build a differentiated restructuring practice, demonstrating how courage, preparation and trust can create new markets rather than wait for them. That same instinct for reinvention led him to establish NeoStrat Advisors in 2024—a venture designed as a strategic node across M&A, restructuring, fundraising and mediation. For Abizer, starting anew is not a break from the past but a continuation of a lifelong pattern of professional evolution.

Curiosity helps one rediscover self

Abizer Diwanji's career does not follow a path; it follows curiosity. From a rank-holding Chartered Accountant to a market-shaping leader at EY, and now the founder of NeoStrat Advisors, his journey is best understood as a series of reinventions, driven by an urge to explore and evolve.

In the late 1980s, career choices for a commerce graduate were limited. Chartered Accountancy or an MBA in India or the US were the dominant pathways. Abizer, who graduated from Sydenham College, chose Chartered Accountancy, drawn less by convention and more by an intrinsic fascination with numbers. "I love numbers, and I love accounting," he says. For him, numbers were anchors, bringing definitiveness to a world of opinions and hypotheses.

Financial constraints ruled out an MBA, but curiosity made up for it. Over time, he would go on to lead and mentor MBA graduates at EY, a reminder that intellectual hunger often outweighs credentials. "With the right level of curiosity, you keep exploring, rediscovering yourself and evolving. That is what shapes someone into a professional," he reflects.

His early years with an EY member firm (1989–1993) laid the foundation, instilling discipline and rigor, but more importantly, a value system centered on doing the right thing for the client, even when inconvenient. Precision backed by integrity became central to his approach.

What followed was not a linear climb but a deliberate zigzag across roles as a professional. Each move was driven less by ambition and more by inquiry, understanding what each function does and the problem it solves.

Numbers remained his compass. "You can have a vision, you can have an abstract thought, but numbers lend definitiveness to it, especially accounting," he says. This belief shaped his emphasis on diligence and discomfort with narratives not grounded in data.

His advice to younger professionals reflects this mindset: stay inquisitive, try everything and avoid rigid paths. "I can only share advice that I follow. Otherwise, there is no point."

> *"People management is by far the most important thing, especially stakeholder management. That is something I am slowly improving at."*

Beyond boardrooms

Abizer's curiosity extended beyond professional roles. He stepped away from corporate settings to work on urban redevelopment projects, far from the boardrooms.

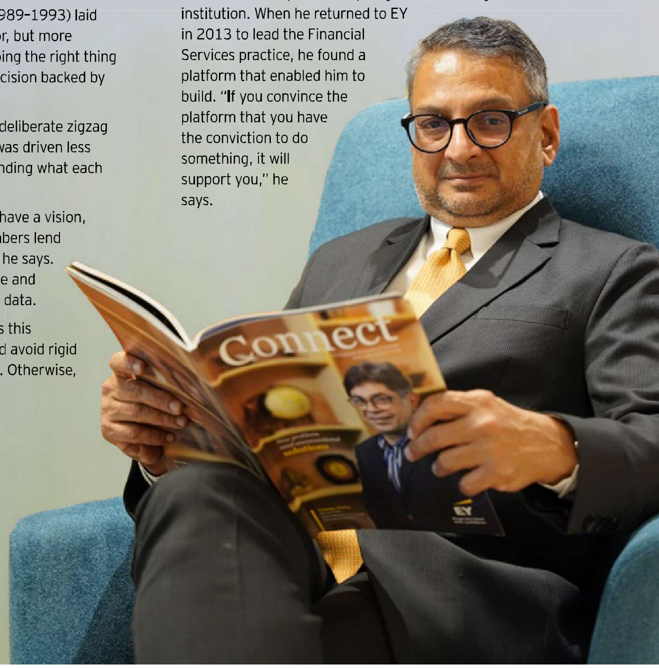
The experience broadened his understanding of leadership. Between corporate India and its agrarian base lies a vast urban middle navigating dignity and opportunity. Engaging with this segment expanded his view of impact.

Across phases, a pattern emerged. Abizer did not merely accumulate experience; he rediscovered himself. Curiosity led him into new arenas, while reflection helped him decide which strengths to carry forward. He learned that influence is situational and that maturity lies in knowing where your impact is highest.

His repeated reinvention—playing the role of a CA, consultant, dealmaker, restructuring leader and board member—set the stage for entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship and the courage to take risks

For Abizer, entrepreneurship began within a large institution. When he returned to EY in 2013 to lead the Financial Services practice, he found a platform that enabled him to build. "If you convince the platform that you have the conviction to do something, it will support you," he says.



> *EY gave me both latitude and accountability. That balance, with trust paired with performance pressure became critical to scaling the business.*

This became evident in the creation of the restructuring practice in India. At the time, restructuring was largely equated with insolvency. While others waited for legislative triggers, Abizer envisioned a broader approach spanning financial restructuring, operational turnaround, debt advisory and special situations.

Under the firm's leadership, he had autonomy with accountability. Losses were questioned, but methods were respected. "Never did they come and say, this is how you should run the practice," Abizer notes.

His most visible leap came with founding NeoStrat Advisors after retiring from EY in 2024. "It is difficult to give up an organization where you have a position which gives you market value," he admits.

NeoStrat was designed as a strategic, partner-led platform working across M&A, restructuring, fundraising, mediation and policy advocacy. Its philosophy, "creative destruction," emphasizes applying the right intervention at the right time.

What stands out is the continued association with EY. Abizer remained involved post-exit and received early assignments from the firm. "That kind of incubation," he says, "is unprecedented."

Trust: The invisible currency

If curiosity shaped his decisions and entrepreneurship defined his building, trust sustained his journey.

Across deals, boards and mediation rooms, he emphasizes one principle: outcomes move only when trust is earned, not claimed.

This understanding deepened during his work on a redevelopment project, where families had to exchange their only asset for a promise of a better future. "If trust is placed in you and you do not execute, the consequences are severe," he says.

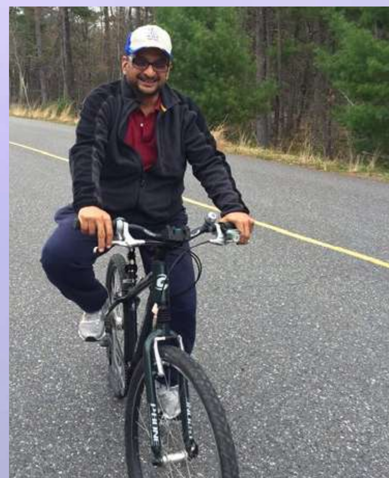
His years at EY reinforced this belief, particularly the firm's discipline around objectivity and separation of roles. "You can move fast only if the floor is firm," he says.

As finance becomes more technology-driven, he believes trust will remain central. While AI and intermediaries will enhance efficiency, trust will continue to anchor decisions and systems.

Building on strengths

Abizer believes leadership requires acknowledging weaknesses. Reflecting on the growing financial services at EY, he says, "When you drive financial services, you capitalize on your strengths and let go of your weaknesses."

Outside work, routine provides clarity. Early morning cycling offers solitude. "So, I cycle to the gym every morning... it strengthens my ability to think." Music, particularly old Hindi songs and English classics, help him reset.



Looking ahead, his focus is not on scale but on staying mentally active and contributing through training, mediation and policy advocacy. "Let my mind die only when I die," he says.

In a world of accelerating change and fragmented careers, Abizer Diwanji's journey offers a counterpoint. Reinvention need not mean rupture. Entrepreneurship need not mean scale. And leadership, at its core, still runs on the enduring currency of trust.