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When I started Jocata in 2010, I had just left a stable job at Deloitte in New York City to return to India and start a technology company, becoming the first entrepreneur in my family. During my trips back to India, conversations with bankers and well-wishers kept circling back to the same idea: the need for a data-led, technology-first approach to banking that made intuitive sense.

But while the instinct was right, the reality was far more complex. It took us some time to win our first major client. What kept us going was conviction and clarity. From those early days of gut calls and long nights to today, being a 650+ strong company working with 50+ financial institutions across India, ASEAN, and the Middle East, the journey has been anything but linear.

From building an industry-first AI-led MSME behavioral score (SWARA) to developing Sumpoor – India's First MSME Economic Activity Index with Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), enabling a dynamic insight into the sector and helping assess over 1,50,000 MSMEs for our clients, it's been deeply rewarding to watch the sector evolve from the ground up.

I've always believed that a key part of building a business is trusting your instinct and then working diligently to prove it right. While much has changed with the rise of India Stack and the growing digital confidence of MSMEs, the fundamental challenge

persists. Since COVID, more than 75,000 MSMEs have shut down. The closures have been rising every year; a stark reminder of how fragile growth can be.

Even among those surviving, many are struggling to grow. In FY25, 40% of the micro businesses saw revenues stagnate or decline. Only 14% of MSMEs retained more than 80% of their customers. Just 9% of MSMEs retained over 80% of their suppliers.

The issue isn't always funding or credit access. It's often a "Know Your Business, Know Your Ecosystem" problem. Do you know which customers are quietly declining? Which suppliers are hurting your margins? Is your HSN categorization, correct? Are your consultants filing returns on time? These details matter and knowing them continuously is crucial.

As the ecosystem becomes digital and interconnected, every data point becomes a signal that is increasingly going to be interpreted not by people but by algorithms: lenders, partners, buyers, suppliers, advisors. When the lens is purely machine-driven, MSMEs are bound to get misread. But here's the truth: in today's data-driven world, instincts, no matter how sharp, can leave you behind or lead you astray.

That's why we built MSME Saathi – to reflect your business story back to you, using the data you already have, but rarely get to see as clear, actionable insight. MSME Saathi helps you look outwards too. Your suppliers, buyers, and broader ecosystem play a critical role in your stability and growth. The initiative helps you see not just what's working, but what's quietly slipping. It's a mirror, but it's also a guide.

Your business is not just a balance sheet. It's a voice. A signal in the data that can unlock credit, build trust, and even shape impactful policy. The real opportunity lies in blending that intuitive understanding of the business with intelligence drawn from the data, so that we don't just scale businesses, we build engines of transformation for the entire ecosystem.