



Vigneshwar Kalyanasundaram New, Unknown, Just Right!

His name is a tongue-twister even for Indian people, so everyone just calls him "Vig." The abbreviation works everywhere – and is also a much better fit for someone who speaks six languages, was born in India, grew up in Indonesia, studied in the U.S.A., and works in Germany. To name just a few parts of his nomadic life. If it was a book, it could also be called "Vig in Search of Adventure." Because the young man from Kerala, the most southern tip of India, gets a kick out of the unknown and new: "I get bored easily," the exuberant 27-year-old openly admits. "I get a kick out of jumping into cold water – I much prefer it to a warm shower."

The unknown was also what brought him to Continental. "I had my university qualification in mechanical engineering under my belt, the idea of getting a doctorate in my head, and four or five job offers from the industry on the table," Vig enthuses. During his interview at Continental, he was asked whether he wanted to go to Germany. He replied, perplexed: "I don't speak any German!" – "That doesn't matter," he was told, "you don't need to. English will do." Working for an automotive supplier that actively brings together people with completely different backgrounds? "That sounded like an exciting work atmosphere," recalls Vig.

So he packed his things, moved to Hanover, and started in the trainee pool at the Continental headquarters. For six months, he had the opportunity to find out what he wanted in the company – and what the company wanted from him. "It's great for people who want to try something new," says Vig enthusiastically. The trainees organize their training themselves: learn everything imaginable about tires, build networks, spend time in a plant. "For me, that worked really well," gushes Vig. Once the internship had finished, the fast talker, who thinks even faster than he talks, decided on a job as an engineer for Tire Development in Research and Development at Continental Commercial Vehicle Tires. "We are a comparatively small, dynamic unit," explains Vig. "You get an idea of what colleagues in other areas are doing, everyone wears several hats at once." He himself works in the Asia-Pacific team on the introduction of radial tires in the fast-growing Indian market. At first he had reservations, found the task too obvious for an Indian person. But he is enthusiastic about the great responsibility he is given: "A fantastic project," says Vig with bright eyes.

But no sooner had Vig found his place in Hanover, than his world was turned upside down again: "Completely unexpectedly, I was given the opportunity to coordinate a project in India," he explains. Without hesitation, he packed his things again: "I had no time to mull it over," he says grinning. And so Vig worked for three months in Modipuram, in a thoroughly rural area around 100 kilometers north of Delhi. It helps that he speaks Hindi. And his personal strength helps him to deal with changes: "The new environment, new challenges, new responsibility – that excites me!"

Back in Hanover, he is now looking for new challenges – in his projects, but also outside of work. "I am currently in the process of getting my driver's license so that I can better explore the area." His U.S. license is not recognized in Germany. "It's not so easy to learn something you can already do!" smiles Vig.



He is also learning German "on the side" from taxi drivers and kiosk vendors – and in the cricket club. "I'm Indian, so I have to play cricket," he says with a smile. He probably also has talent – even if it wouldn't have been enough for him to go professional among the millions of cricket players in India, as Vig says with a grin.

Vig spends half of his working hours in meetings and neighboring offices; the rest of the time he sits at his desk in front of the computer. He thinks his developer job is great: "There are completely different people and task areas in a concentrated space here, you have countless options." Boredom doesn't stand a chance. For Vig, it's not the products' image that counts, but the work on it: "Tires are not sexy, but the development is exciting. There is so much going on beneath the surface – the rubber alone is a world of its own!"

Being creative, contributing new ideas – and doing something that not everyone can do: that is what makes Vig happy. And that's what life is about for him: being happy. "I don't want a cool title, I'd rather have a cool job." And that he has found in Tire Development, which is why one thing is for certain: Vig wants to stay in Research and Development for now – and certainly at Continental.