

Puneet Gupta Steps Down as CEO After Clensta's Acquisition

Category: Business

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Puneet Gupta, Founder and CEO of Clensta, announced via a personal LinkedIn post that he is stepping down as CEO following the acquisition of Clensta, a personal care innovator best known for its waterless technology solutions. While final deal terms remain private, Clensta was last valued at \$36 million by Amazon, as per sources familiar with the matter. JM Financial is understood to have advised Clensta as its investment banker.

This transition marks the end of a decade-long journey that saw Gupta move from aerospace and defense innovation to building one of India's most recognized tech-backed personal care brands. Under his leadership, Clensta grew from a lab-stage idea into a multi-category company with global reach and institutional interest. In his post, Gupta reflected on the lessons of scale, resilience, and timing – stating that he now enters a phase of “reset and reflection,” and hinting at future projects in venture-building and authorship.

A Founder's Journey Few Can Match

Before Clensta, Puneet spent 8 years building an optoelectronic company serving the Indian armed forces. From night vision to tactical gear, his engineering innovations helped secure global attention-including offers from players like Reliance Defence.

But in 2016, Puneet took a bold leap. He moved from battlefield to bathroom, founding Clensta with the idea of solving hygiene for soldiers without access to water.

Partnering with IIT Delhi, he launched the now-patented Waterless Bathing Technology, followed by Waterless Shampoo and many others. These innovations quickly found favor in hospitals, disaster relief, and space-constrained environments.

A Brand That Connected at Scale

As Clensta expanded across D2C marketplaces and multi-category retail, it caught the attention of several global VCs, PE firms, and strategic players – including **Amazon**, which had valued the business at **\$36 million**.

In 2023, the brand made headlines again when **Parineeti Chopra** joined Clensta as a partner and brand co-builder. The association went viral across social media and press, signalling a strong consumer resonance with Clensta's mission and story.

Often referred to as “**the waterless man**”, Puneet Gupta helped shape Clensta into a category-defining personal care company that blended sustainability, science, and national purpose.

Quiet Signals and a Clear Arc

The brand also drew attention when a former senior executive from **Mamaearth** joined Clensta as Co-founder. The executive exited in 2024, citing a difference in long-term alignment with the strategic direction Clensta was heading toward. Puneet's recent announcement now completes that arc.

A Moment of Reflection, Not Retreat

In a world where founders often glamorize the hustle, Puneet's LinkedIn post stood out for its honesty. Reflecting on his military-honed mindset, he admitted:

“I used to believe jab nadi aayegi tab pul banayenge. I was wrong.

You don't build the bridge during the flood. You build it before."

He also revisited his talent philosophy:

"I thought learning, earning, and recognition-what I called LSD: Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Durga-was enough to retain people. But I was wrong. Great companies are built on processes, not passion alone."

Without going into detail, Puneet acknowledged that the path wasn't always smooth – and that building an enduring brand requires facing difficult truths.

"The founder must be the last to leave. You take the hit. You hold the line. You leave the light on."

What Comes After a \$100 Million Journey

Puneet Gupta now enters stealth mode. After cumulatively building a Defence-first B2B and B2C company valued at \$100 million, he steps into a phase of deep reset. While the details of his next chapter remain undisclosed, he has hinted at an upcoming book – a reflection on what it truly means to build scale, where valuation doesn't always translate to personal financial outcomes. It draws from the untold journey behind building \$100 million+ companies, and signals a possible return to venture-building – this time with sharper capital strategy, founder alignment, and market timing at its core.

Having raised capital from institutional investors and attracted interest from global VCs and strategic players like Amazon, Puneet brings rare clarity into the complexities of fundraising, founder dilution, and alignment. If he chooses to support early-stage founders in the future, it's likely to save them years of wasted effort – and offer the kind of strategic insight only hard-won experience can provide.

The question he leaves open – “What does a founder pursue after such a long stint” – is one the startup world will be watching closely.

An Award-Laden Legacy

Puneet and Clensta have received some of the country’s highest recognitions:

National Entrepreneurship Award (Govt. of India)

Entrepreneur of the Year (NewsTV18)

TiE Lumis Excellence Award, Business World Young Entrepreneur, Times 40 Under 40

UK Tech Rocketship, ET Rise Startup of the Year, PwC LevelNXT Disruptor Award

Recognized by **Saudi Aramco, US Embassy, and CII**

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From Founder to Force

Whether building for the Army or the Indian consumer, Puneet Gupta’s north star has remained clear: solve real problems, with precision and purpose.

As he steps down as CEO, Clensta’s journey serves as a reminder: in the end, every founder is a salesman – whether it’s defense tech or a bottle of shampoo. It’s not about what you sell, but how you build.

