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NJ Group: Foraying into the Asset Management Space with a Rule-Based Active Investment Model

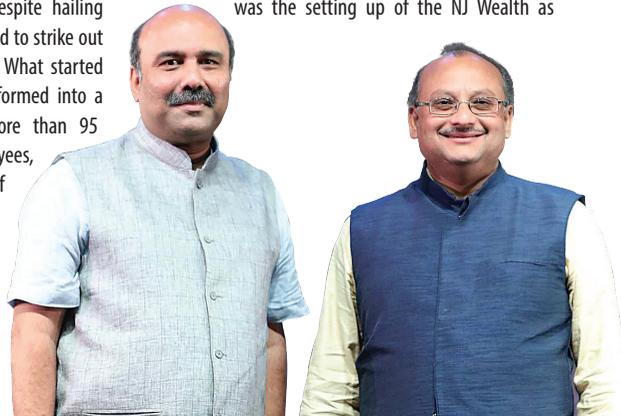
With an investor-first approach at its core, the NJ Group's foray into the asset management space with a novel mutual fund built on rule-based investing is the first instance of a pure distribution house launching its own mutual fund house.

The Mutual Fund industry is dominated by actively managed funds and participants that focus predominantly on active fund management. As a result, most MF investors' entire equity allocation is in actively managed equity funds. On the other hand, there is a growing opportunity in rule-based investing that has attracted a lot of attention and AUM in developed markets, which has somewhat been missing in India. Part of the 27-year-old NJ Group, NJ Mutual Fund plans to capture this almost vacant space in the Indian retail MF marketplace through its maiden fund called the NJ Balanced Advantage Fund, an open-ended dynamic asset allocation fund.

A ripple that turned into a wave: Incorporated in 1994, NJ India Invest Pvt. Ltd is the brainchild of two young and dynamic visionaries, Mr. Neeraj Choksi and Mr. Jignesh Desai. Despite hailing from business families, both decided to strike out and make a mark for themselves. What started as a modest beginning has transformed into a larger-than-reality now. With more than 95 workplaces in India, 1500+ employees, 20000+ active partners, and AUM of Rs. 115000+ crores, NJ today is a

force to reckon with in financial products distribution. The Group has created a niche for itself in bridging the gap between investors and financial advisors, and has been successfully giving a run for money to various financial product distributors, including some of the country's biggest banks.

The road to success: Although NJ has acquired great heights today, success did not come overnight to the NJ Group. Instead, it involved day-long toil and a lot of hard work for both Mr. Neeraj Choksi and Mr. Jignesh Desai. But in keeping with Leo Tolstoy's saying, "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time," the duo never lost hope. They tried their hands at various opportunities such as loan offerings, fixed deposits, and stockbroking, till it eventually started yielding returns. A major defining step in the NJ Journey was the setting up of the NJ Wealth as



Jignesh Desai & Neeraj Choksi,
Co-Founders-NJ Group

Mutual Fund distributors Network in 2003. It was a unique B2B concept where mutual fund distributors were recruited and offered a comprehensive business model. The one key factor that has stayed a constant behind the phenomenal success of NJ has been the shared camaraderie between Mr. Neeraj Choksi and Mr. Jignesh Desai, right since their college days.

Journey to the top: Headquartered in Surat, Gujarat, NJ today boasts of a sprawling 100,000 sq. ft. office and has bagged the coveted fame as one of India's largest financial products distributors. Besides growing in leaps and bounds, NJ has also been instrumental in contributing to society. The NJ Charitable Trust ensures that it brings about a change in whatever capacity into the lives of economically weaker sections of society. Also, NJ believes in employee welfare, and its practices are testimony to this fact. The head office in Surat is well-equipped with a library, a cyber cafe, a gymnasium, an auditorium, and a canteen that serves organic food to ensure an encouraging environment for work.

The many faces of success: Through its 27 years of growth and success, NJ has forayed into various businesses like financial services (Mutual Funds, Insurance, PMS, Loans, Direct Equity), Real estate, Information technology, Education, Interiors, and Wellness. Not only has the Group conquered significant heights, but it is also continuously setting new milestones for other competitors. Based on its tagline, 'Built On Trust', NJ has reached millions of lives and gained their trust with its products and services. To every aspiring individual who wants to make a cut above the rest, Mr. Neeraj Choksi and Mr. Jignesh Desai have just one piece of advice, "To succeed in anything, all you need is a big dream". In the future, NJ Group will surely set new standards of glory and triumph for others to follow with such spirit and dedication.

Venturing into Asset Management: NJ Asset

Management, formerly called NJ Advisory, has been a SEBI-registered portfolio manager focusing on rule-based active investments for the last 11 years. It is amongst the country's largest portfolio managers and currently manages over INR 3,000 cr for more than 3,400 investors. As one of India's largest mutual fund distributors over the last 27 years, NJ has gathered strong domain knowledge and a deep understanding of investor behaviour as a major distributor. This is what has equipped the Group for success in the mutual fund industry as a participant.

Maiden offering: NJ Balanced Advantage Fund: The first offering will be the NJ Balanced Advantage Fund, which dynamically allocates assets between equity and debt markets and seeks to deliver superior risk-adjusted returns. The USP of the NJ Balanced Advantage Fund is that it is ideally suited to current market conditions, offering a dynamic mix of equity and debt, which varies based on market valuations and other economic factors. With an investor-first approach at the core of its strategy, this offers the opportunity to calibrate exposure to equities and seeks to reduce the volatility experienced by investors when they invest in this fund.

While active rule-based strategies have become the in-thing globally over the last decade or so, and fund flows have evolved as an effective investment method, the category is still at a nascent stage in India. Venturing into asset management for NJ stems from the Group's firm belief that there is room for innovation in managing money, and a desire to extend its data-centric approach to its business to the investment function as well. Although by focusing only on smart-beta funds, NJ India aims to tread a path that only a handful of fund houses have dared to take so far, with a wealth of data and research at hand, the House seems confident of being able to handle the risks the market might throw up.