

# people 5 matters

league the leadership and ready factory to make in india talent india's best companies

talent india's skilling industry in need of synchrony the god of big things talent to work for that tomorrow has come white papers roundtables india's best companies to work for-2012 leadership league

radioshow CEO as the l&d

twangouts chief talent officer study 2012

are you in the list?

CEO succession planning

talent is logging in are you?

the one thing

best employers 2.0 talent

talent break the silence

the industry of hr

where are the people?

2012 the year that was

the future of talent management hiring a CEO

m&a the indian way

talent beyond borders

2014 the year of turn around?

banking on women

adding madness to method

is india on track

best of 2011

the sales factor the industry of coaching

hr entrepreneurs talent

women are opportunity

the b-school divide

talent the god of big things

inside out

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labour violence-a blot on modern india

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CEO as the chief talent officer

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CEO as the chief talent officer

b-school ranking

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in india talent growth talent

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hr's 25 most wanted

talent growth are you in the list?

b school rankings 2013

the leadership factory

best companies to

productivity and

performance

space, time and the workplace

best of 2010 innovation from vision to execution

the intelligent organization

talent acquisition

times of change

conclave

On our fifth anniversary, a look back at some of the top trends and focus areas for the HR community

**SPECIAL STORY +**  
ARE YOU IN THE LIST

**BIG INTERVIEW +**  
R. S. SODHI, MD,  
GCMMF (AMUL)

**SUPPLEMENT +**  
LEARNING &  
DEVELOPMENT

So, What do you think about Scientology?

Err... I like Tom Cruise



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11 April

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Why are you looking so stressed?



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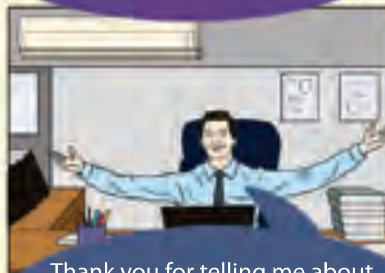
Thomas tools are short and have been reviewed by acclaimed international bodies for their rigour.



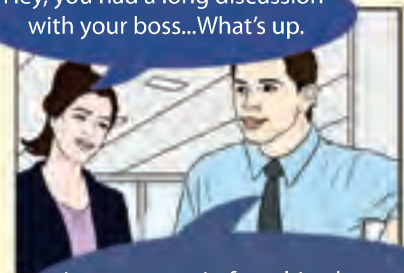
Hey, you had a long discussion with your boss...What's up.



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FEBRUARY 2015  
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ANIL SACHDEV  
ARUNA TELANG  
BHASKAR THYAGARAJAN  
DEEPA BHULESCARR  
DEEPIK GOYAL

DIVYA KOHLI  
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MAYOKUN ADUWO

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# Management Development Programmes

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Title of the Programme	Programme Coordinator(s)	Dates	Venue	Title of the Programme	Programme Coordinator(s)	Dates	Venue
Empowerment & Leadership for Women Executives	Anita Sarkar	Jan. 12 - 15	XLRI	Strategic Marketing Management	Sharad Sarin	Feb. 02 - 05	XLRI
Metrics for Marketing Performance Assessment	Basant Purohit & N Rajkumar	Jan. 12 - 15	XLRI	Advanced Corporate Strategy	Apalak Khatua	Feb. 02 - 05	XLRI
				Communication & Presentation Skills	Manish Singhal	Feb. 02 - 05	XLRI
A Strategic Decision Making Framework for Playing Business Games	Sumit Sarkar	Jan. 15 - 16	Mumbai	A Strategic Decision Making Framework for Playing Business Games	Sumit Sarkar	Feb. 05 - 06	Bangalore
Spreadsheet Modeling in Corporate Finance	Pitabas Mohanty	Jan. 15 - 17	Mumbai	HRM for Line Managers	M Srimannarayana	Feb. 09 - 13	XLRI
				Basic Leadership Skills	Fr.E Abraham,S,J & ISF Irudayaraj	Feb. 09 - 13	XLRI
Interpersonal Effectiveness through Communication Skills	Manish Singhal	Jan. 19 - 22	XLRI	Balanced Score Card	Santosh Sangem & Basant Purohit	Feb. 11 - 14	Mussorie
Creativity, Problem Solving & Decision Making	Tamonas Gangopadhyay	Jan. 19 - 23	XLRI	Leading Teams for Synergy	Manish Singhal	Feb. 11 - 14	XLRI
Effective Performance Management	Pranabesh Ray	Jan. 19 - 23	XLRI	<b>Strategic Thinking</b>	<b>Munish Thakur</b>	<b>Feb. 12 - 13</b>	<b>XLRI</b>
				Competency Based Recruitment and Selection	R K Premarajan	Feb. 18 - 20	Kochi
<b>Managing Technology &amp; Innovation</b>	<b>Trishit Bandyopadhyay</b>	<b>Jan. 21 - 23</b>	<b>Bangalore</b>	Beyond Coping: thriving under stress in the workplace	Manish Singhal	Feb. 16 - 19	XLRI
				Supply Chain Analytics	T A S Vijayaraghavan	Feb. 16 - 19	XLRI
Performance & Pay-Designing-Effective Incentive Schemes	L Gurunathan	Jan. 27 - 29	XLRI	Strategic Human Resource Management	L Gurunathan	Feb. 16 - 20	XLRI
<b>Land Acquisition in a New Policy Regime:Corporate Strategy, Legal &amp; Policy Perspectives</b>	<b>Tata L Raghu Ram</b>	<b>Feb. 02 - 04</b>	<b>Mussorie</b>	Mentoring, Coaching & Counselling for Personal and Managerial Effectiveness	ISF Irudayaraj	Mar. 02 - 05	XLRI
				PERSUASIVE PRESENTATION	Fr Francis Peter & Sunil Kr Sarangi	Mar. 06 - 08	XLRI
Designing Career Development Systems	R K Premarajan	Feb. 02 - 04	Bangalore	Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Skills	E S Srinivas	Mar. 09 - 13	XLRI

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# Letters of the month



PEOPLE MATTERS VALUES YOUR FEEDBACK. WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT THE MAGAZINE AND HOW CAN WE MAKE IT A BETTER READ. WRITE TO US AT EDITORIAL@PEOPLEMATTERS.IN



JANUARY 2015 ISSUE

## Rewind 2014

This is a really new perspective on otherwise normal news events. A very interesting read. Such human interest pieces are like a breath of fresh air. I particularly enjoyed the Mangalyaan and the democracy write ups. You should do more stories like this one.

- GUEST

You have established a very interesting co-relation between these events and the way they have been linked to HR lessons. Good read!

- PALLAVI

## One size DOES NOT fit all

I particularly enjoyed the article on total rewards. With the industry trends changing every year, it is great to have some insight about the scene. Even the trends to look forward to in 2015 were a great help.

- PRACHI KUMAR

## When crisis calls, you answer!

Tanvi, this was a great article and very well written. The parallels to real life were very engaging even when they were a cause of trouble for you. Hope you are doing well.

- GUEST

## Clarification

NTT DATA Global Delivery Services Ltd., is a leading IT services provider,

that considers nurturing the talented workforce through learning, an integral part of its business objectives. Continued global expansion fueled the intrinsic need to move to enhance employee-learning experience by providing the best in class training environment. CATALYS, the indigenous learning management system, is the backbone of the organization's learning needs. It provides training through various mediums. To enhance employee participation and engagement, CATALYS was gamified early 2014. This has helped to influence and motivate employees, and effectively drive behaviors to bring about desired results namely enrolment into programs, providing feedback, engaging in learning, contributing to exchange of ideas and building competencies. This platform incentivises participation, and motivates team performance. Badges, points, and team standings are regularly updated to engage and motivate employees to promote a competitive environment. NTT DATA Global Delivery Services Limited thanks People Matters to publish this rectification and clarify its perspective.



**L&D winning practices**  
**This is an exceptionally useful resource! It's good to see the processes and their benefits being recognized and rewarded along with the people who promoted it. Truly unique**

- CHETAN TIWARI

twitter

**Kunjal Kamdar @kunjal23**

#SocialHiring – Think like a marketer, act like a hunter via @Sarangbrahme & @PeopleMatters2 <http://bit.ly/1sXT08p>

**Siraj Shaik @DataJunctions**

@PeopleMatters2 #HR #analytics using Globaltalent #Data Junctions by @jeffweiner of #linkedin specially4HR with simplified plug-in provision

**VINAY Kr. SHARMA @vinaykrsharma**

Saving your organization from 'Learning Disability' <http://bit.ly/1J7kGf5> via @PeopleMatters2

**Anish Aravind @anisharavind**

@kurian\_anu @Ester\_Matters @PeopleMatters2 #TCSLayOff wondering if #result could've been #winwin can't we expect #Proactive stuff from #TCS

**Rakshita Dwivedi @Raks\_d**

Quotin Amitabh Sinha ' HR manager will understand tat R&R is not a program but a journey & a strategic biz goal. Via @PeopleMatters2 #fb

**Hans Dholakia @hansyoga**

@PeopleMatters2 External activity, however diligent, is vain w/o inner calmness. Inner calmness, however deep, is vain w/o dutiful action.

**Medhavi Gandhi @MedhaviGandhi**

And finally it's a wrap - an hour of smiling for the camera #entrepreneur #media @HappyHandsF would be featured in @PeopleMatters2

**Judy Ruth Bahirvani @JudyBahirvani**

Blog: The Dynamic Duo is Hardly a Joking Matter <http://bit.ly/158K9W6> via @PeopleMatters2

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## JOB MARKET RALLY

# India Inc promises 10 lakh new jobs in 2015



IT MAY BE A BUMPER new year for the job market, with India Inc planning to create close to 10 lakh new jobs and dole out pay hikes of up to 40% for best performers in 2015. The average salary increments may also be higher, in the range of 15-20%, as against 10-12% across various sectors during 2014. New-age sectors like e-commerce are likely to see relatively higher pay hikes. With GDP growth rate being pegged at near 5.5%, after sub-five per cent growth in recent past, businesses across sectors are expected to grow, experts said, and this should result in a strong job

market rally as well. In addition, India has the competitive advantage of demographic dividend which would, together with the hiring intensity, mark a new era of recruitment in the country. HR experts believe that the job market in 2015 is going to be in a strong hiring mode and companies are preparing themselves for aggressive recruitments across the board. In addition, there are expectations that a large number of global players would come to set up shop in India, thus creating a lot of job opportunities at leadership and other levels.



## E-HEADHUNTERS

# Executive search firms make e-commerce hiring a priority

TOP EXECUTIVE SEARCH FIRMS like Egon Zehnder International, Russell Reynolds Associates, Spencer Stuart, Michael Page International and Heidrick and Struggles International have helped fill corner offices at some of India's top firms, including most recently Vishal Sikka, who was placed as the chief executive of Infosys Ltd by Egon Zehnder. Now, as the action shifts towards e-commerce firms, many of who are expanding rapidly after recent rounds of fundraising, search firms are making a beeline to them for hiring mandates. Until recently, e-commerce companies and



start-ups mostly used smaller, boutique search firms such as LongHouse Strategic Consulting, Anzy Careers and Head Hunters India for hiring a majority of



## JOB HOPPING

# Eighty per cent of employees plan to pursue new career in 2015



CAREER DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS need to be improved internally by organizations to prevent talent exodus, as four out of five North American employees plan to pursue new career opportunities in the coming year, according to a poll by Right Management, the global career experts within ManpowerGroup. The findings indicate a workforce dissatisfied with their careers. This negatively impacts productivity and points to the need for organizations to provide more options for career development. "The improving economy brings in renewed job confidence and increased interest in career mobility. Employers should rethink how they motivate and challenge their employees to keep them engaged," Right Management Executive Vice-President Bram Lowsky said.

## Coal workers strike called off after marathon meeting with Piyush Goyal



Coal India unions called off their strike after marathon talks with Coal, Power and Renewable Energy Minister Piyush Goyal, who assured them that the government would protect the interests of the state-owned behemoth and its employees. Goyal intervened after talks between the unions and bureaucrats failed. The Centre has agreed to look into the demands of the unions by setting up a panel that includes

a senior Coal Ministry official and representatives from Coal India and the unions. The strike had pushed many power plants to the brink of shutdown. Coal supply had fallen to 40% as workers stopped work on Tuesday for a five-day strike against a clause in the coal ordinance that allows private companies to mine coal and sell it in the open market. The strike was the biggest protest by Coal India unions in nearly four decades.

K. Rai, Vice-President of BJP-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, said: "We have been assured that Coal India will not be privatized. Also, to look into our demands a joint secretary-level committee has been formed. It has our union members as representatives on it, too, and the report of this committee will be submitted within three months."

## Provident Fund makeover may bring down employee outgo

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation has proposed sweeping changes in practices as it looks to widen the social security net by bringing more people into its fold. It has suggested that the compulsory 12 per cent of salary paid by employees to EPFO be reduced or even waived for a certain period. In addition, the Labour Ministry has proposed scrapping Schedule I of the law governing EPFO, thus widening its scope to every establishment employing 10 or more people, down from 20 or more now. It's also looking to moderate the powers of scrutiny of its officers, set up an appellate committee and establish a multi-member tribunal to address grievances of EPFO subscribers.

## ING Vysya employees to strike on concerns about Kotak merger



The majority of ING Vysya's employee-shareholders have opposed its merger with Kotak Mahindra Bank. An EGM at ING Vysya's headquarters at Bangalore on January 7, in which 537 shareholders attended, informed the Board that the bank should be merged with a public sector bank. ING Vysya's Bank Employees' Union has expressed concern that

the employees' future "might not be safe at the hands of Kotak Mahindra Bank", The Hindu reported. The Union has also announced that if their demand for a tripartite agreement with Kotak Mahindra is not accepted by the ING Vysya Board, they would go on indefinite strike.

## Government to amend rules to check arbitrary suspension of officials

The Centre has decided to amend rules to check arbitrary suspension of IAS, IPS and IFoS officials and to bring in uniformity in procedure for conducting disciplinary proceedings against them. Information regarding suspension of an IAS, IPS or IFoS official by a state has to be immediately communicated to the Centre, said the rule proposed to be amended by the central government. The Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has written to all state governments and cadre-controlling authorities seeking comments on the proposed changes in All-India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969.

## TRIVIAM

### HRD ministry to draft new language policy for education sector



HAVING LEARNT FROM the controversy that erupted over replacing German with Sanskrit in the Kendriya Vidyalayas in the middle of the school year, the Union Human Resource Development Ministry is set to draft a fresh language policy for the education sector. A 17-member committee headed by Kapil Kapoor, former pro-vice chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, will look into contentious issues such as establishing a link language (read common language) for educational purposes besides promoting classical tongues such as Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu. There are, in all, six languages that have the 'classical' status.

The panel's broader brief includes reviewing the three-language formula, advise on use of international languages, examine the efficacy of government's current initiatives for promotion of various languages including tribal tongues, suggesting ways for preservation and restoration of extinct and near-extinct languages and drawing a road map for protecting and promoting cultural and linguistic diversity.

The panel apart from reviewing the three-language formula, would also examine the pre-eminent role of English in school and higher education. "Technical and professional education in our country is mainly taught in English. There is a strong demand for providing higher education in Indian languages as well and that should be looked into," said an HRD Ministry official, according to Economic Times. The thrust of the committee will be to promote Indian languages that are playing second fiddle to English, as far as education is concerned.



# GLASS CEILING

## Global 2014 Women Board Directors Census

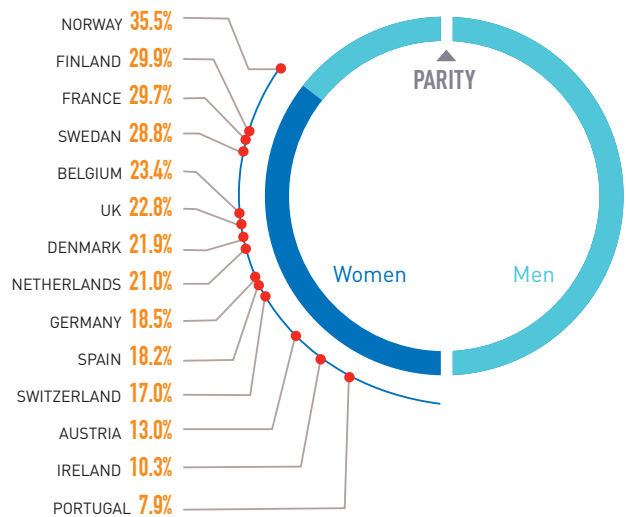
Catalyst took its 2014 census of Women Board Directors global in partnership with The Data Morphosis Group. The expanded census focused on women's share of board seats in stock market index companies across three regions and 20 countries, including the US, Canada, Europe (14 countries) and Asia-Pacific (Australia, Hong Kong, India and Japan). The amendment to Companies Act, 2013 requires every prescribed class of publicly traded and public companies in India to appoint at least one woman to their board, yet among the countries in Asia-Pacific, women's share of board seats in India is only 9.5%, compared to 19.2% in Australia.



### Among the findings:

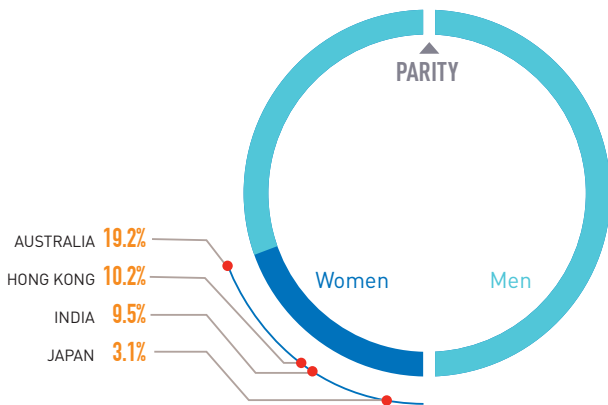
- **Asia-Pacific:** Women's share of board seats ranges from 3.1% in Japan (TOPIX Core 30 Index) to 9.5% in India (BSE 200 Index) to 19.2% in Australia (S&P/ASX 200 Index).
- **North America:** Women hold 19.2% of S&P 500 board seats in the United States; and 20.8% of S&P/TSX 60 board seats in Canada.
- **Europe:** Women's share of board seats ranges from 7.9% in Portugal (PSI-20 index) to 18.5% in Germany (DAX index) to 22.8% in the United Kingdom (FTSE 100 index) to 35.5% in Norway (OBX index).

### WOMEN'S SHARE OF BOARD SEATS AT EUROPEAN STOCK INDEX COMPANIES



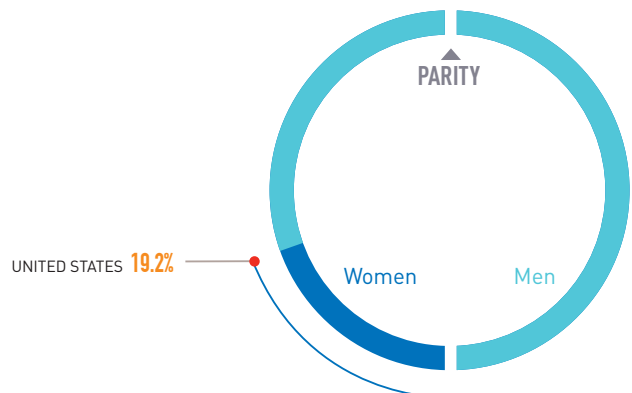
Data from October 2014. Europe is represented by the following indices, providing the percentage of board seats held by women across a specific number of companies: Austria—ATX index (20 companies), Belgium—BEL-20 Institutional index (20), Denmark—OMX Copenhagen 20 index (19), Finland—OMX Helsinki 25 index (22), France—CAC 40 index (40), Germany—DAX index (30), Ireland—ISEQ Overall index (48), Netherlands—AEX index (27), Norway—OBX index (24), Portugal—PSI-20 index (19), Spain—IBEX 35 index (35), Sweden—OMX Stockholm 30 index (29), Switzerland—SML index (20), and United Kingdom—FTSE 100 index (101). Data are provided by and published under license from Data Morphosis. Countries in the data set without stock market indices are not included.

### WOMEN'S SHARE OF BOARD SEATS AT ASIA-PACIFIC STOCK INDEX COMPANIES

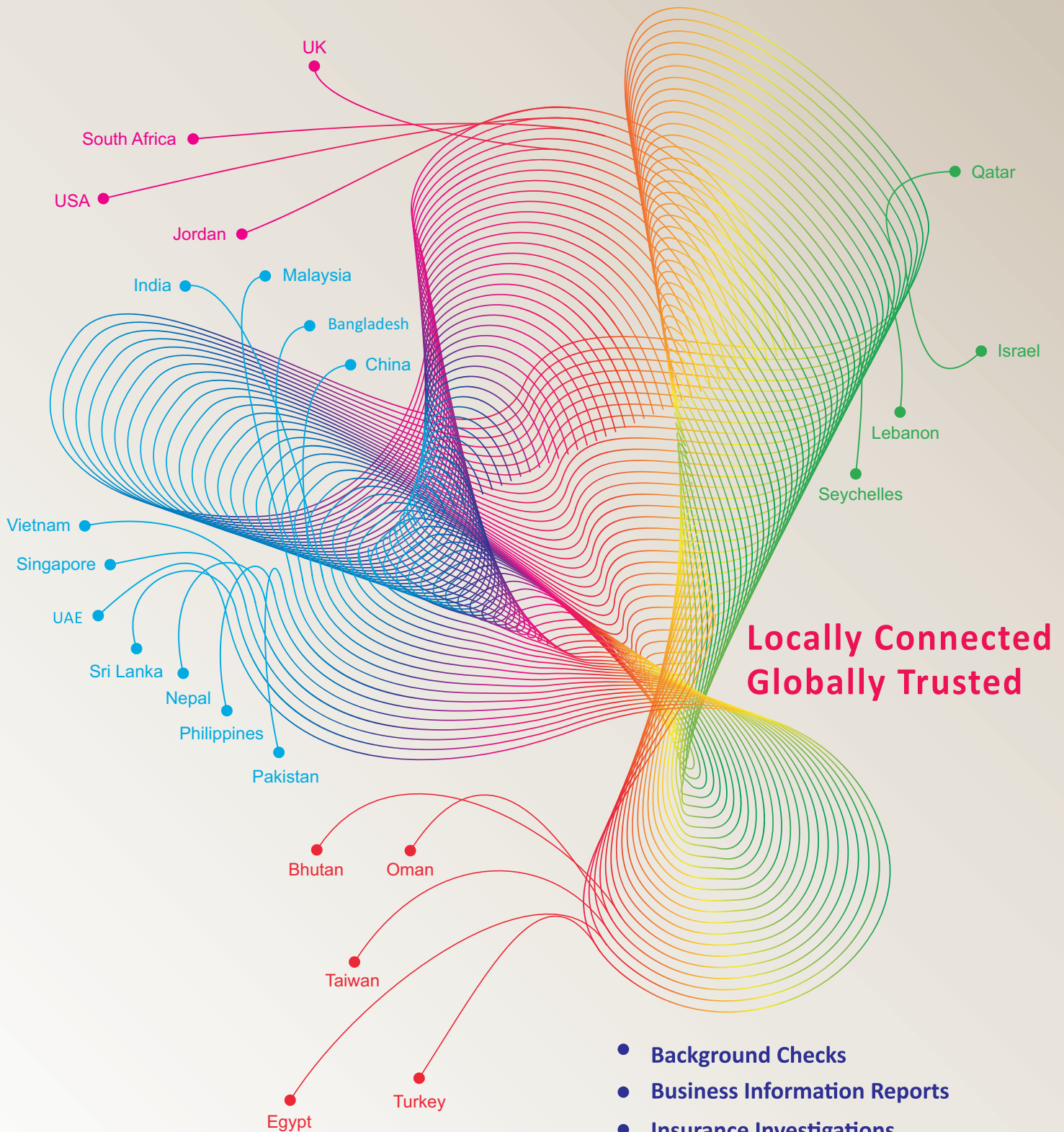


Data from October 2014. Asia-Pacific is represented by the following indices, providing the percentage of board seats held by women across a specific number of companies: Australia - S&A/ASX 200 index (202), Hong Kong - Hang Seng index (50), India - BSE 200 index (200), and Japan - TOPIX Core 30 index (29). Data are provided by and published under license from Data Morphosis. Countries in the data set without stock market indices are not included.

### WOMEN'S SHARE OF BOARD SEATS AT US STOCK INDEX COMPANIES



Data from October 2014. The United States is represented by the S&P 500 index and includes the percentage of board seats held by women across 500 companies. Data are provided by and published under license from Data Morphosis.



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# Towers Watson, Metis tie up for benefits brokerage

Towers Watson India partner Metis Insurance will now be renamed as Towers Watson Insurance Brokers



Towers Watson's Cecil Hemingway (left) and Andrew Heard (right) in Mumbai during the announcement of the joint venture with Metis Insurance

LEADING GLOBAL PROFESSIONAL services company Towers Watson has forayed into the employee benefits brokerage space in the country by acquiring a stake in Metis Insurance for an undisclosed sum. Metis will now be renamed as Towers Watson Insurance Brokers India. The services provided by Towers Watson will include the design, implementation, financing and on-going management of health, disability and other insured benefits. Sudesh Shetty, the founder of Metis Insurance, will head the new business. Metis Insurance was founded in 2003 and specialized in providing employee benefits (mainly health, disability, life and overseas travel) solutions to corporates.

It is part of a company-wide initiative to provide integrated global benefit solutions for multinational clients as well as to serve the needs of local organizations. "This partnership will focus on what our clients need in India today," said Sudesh Shetty, CEO, Towers Watson Insurance Brokers India. "Indian employers experienced one of the highest medical cost growth rates globally. While soaring general inflation accounts for some of the medical trend rate, it is still alarmingly high, and we are

keen to work with clients to devise innovative solutions to help manage these costs."

In order to gain more in-depth insights about what kind of implications the JV would have on the Indian business scenario and the overall talent outlook, *People Matters* spoke to two of Towers Watson's global leaders – **Andrew Heard**, Managing Director—Asia Pacific Benefits and **Cecil Hemingway**, Managing Director, Global Health and Group Benefits. Here are some excerpts from the interview:

**Q What prompted you to look at the benefits brokerage space? Why did you choose Metis for the tie-up?**

**A Cecil:** The benefits brokerage space is a very natural fit for us. It is core to what we do for our clients, to help them with their HR programs particularly in the compensation and benefits space, which we have been doing for many decades. We have been helping clients with benefits brokerage schemes in the large matured economies for very long and clients have basically approached us for help on benefits in other countries. It is entirely driven by client needs.

**A Andrew:** We wanted to enter India in a joint venture with an organization that had

the same value and focus as us. We have been in discussion with Metis for four years. We see them as an organization who have a very good cultural alignment with us and also have a strong local presence in India and the desire to expand. Most importantly, both organizations share a common culture of putting "clients first". They wanted a solution to help their clients who had expanded overseas and therefore Towers Watson was a great fit.

**Q How do you see this sector developing, now that the government has further opened the sector to foreign investment?**

**A Andrew:** This development is encouraging because it will allow for more healthy competition in the market and provide an opportunity for better services. We are very keen to take that bet and place it in the Indian market as soon as we can.

**Q What are the implications of this JV for the Indian market in terms of overall business and talent?**

**A Andrew:** The market is looking for a strong global player with a strong local presence. One of the benefits of this transaction with Metis is that it has a strong field presence in a couple of key locations with automatic access to experienced talent and we are looking to broadening out Metis' presence across India. This expansion will allow us to provide seamlessly integrated design, execution and management of employee benefit programs to multinational organizations.

**Q How do you see the space evolving?**

**A Andrew:** As per Towers Watson's latest Benefit Trends study, In India, 52 per cent employers are looking to improve attraction and retention in the organization. This was the No.1 objective for providing benefits to employees. 47 per cent are looking at improving the value of the benefits and interestingly 43 per cent were looking to improve employee well-being and 30 per cent were looking to control costs. A competitive and well-structured benefits program, is a very good tool to attract and retain talent and at the same time employers are looking to get a better return on the money they are spending on such programs. Clients want to optimize benefit costs, improve their perceived value, communicate more effectively and offer greater choice to their employees; and in doing so seek professional advice in building an overarching and articulate strategy. I think employers realize that ad hoc tactical initiatives need to give way to a structured all-encompassing strategy directly linked to business value. **em**

As told to *People Matters*

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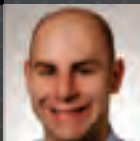
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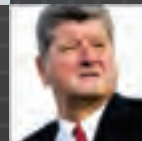
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## APPOINTMENTS

**DEEPAK PAREKH BECOMES NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIRMAN OF BAE SYSTEMS**

The India subsidiary of the global defence and aerospace company, BAE Systems, has named HDFC Chairman Deepak Parekh as the non-executive Director and Chairman. His association with BAE Systems started in 2010, when he was appointed a member of the company's independent advisory board. His appointment is effective from January 1, 2015.

**NEW NETWORK 18 GROUP CEO**

A.P. Parigi has been appointed as the new Group CEO of Network18 Media and Investments. Parigi has extensive experience spanning many sectors including infrastructure, telecommunications, media and entertainment. He started his tenure on January 29. Parigi was earlier MD and CEO of Entertainment Network India Ltd.

**DHFL APPOINTS HARSHIL MEHTA AS CEO**

Housing finance company Dewan Housing Finance Corp. Ltd (DHFL) has appointed Harshil Mehta as the new Chief Executive and Deo Tripathi as the Chief Executive of Aadhar HFC. Mehta, who was managing director of Aadhar HFC, took charge effective 17 January and will be responsible for all businesses and operations of DHFL.

**G.S. SACHDEVA NAMED JUBILANT PHARMA CEO**

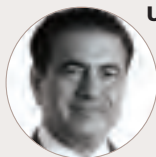
Gurupartap Singh Sachdeva was named CEO of Jubilant Pharma, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Jubilant Life Sciences. He will be based in the US and have the overall responsibility for operations and report to the Jubilant Pharma Board. Prior to joining Jubilant, he was the President at Sun Pharmaceuticals.

**OLIVER BILAL APPOINTED CEO OF BARODA PIONEER**

Baroda Pioneer Asset Management Company appointed Oliver Bilal as its CEO. Bilal's appointment will be effective from January 6, 2015. Prior to joining the company, Bilal served as the MD, Head of Sales and Marketing at Pioneer Investments, KAG, Germany.

**MERCK APPOINTS ANAND NAMBIAR AS MD**

Drug firm Merck appointed Anand Nambiar as its new Managing Director in place of Dr Claus-Dieter Boedecker who resigned from the office of Director and Managing Director of the company due to his desire to relocate himself to his home country, Germany.

**USIBC APPOINTS MUKESH AGHI AS PRESIDENT**

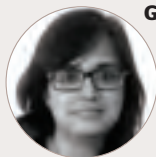
The US-India Business Council (USIBC) announced that the L&T Info Tech CEO, Mukesh Aghi has been appointed as its new President. Aghi will lead the council's strategic direction and policy priorities for enhancing bilateral commercial relations.

**ASHISH JOSHI NAMED NEW COO OF MARICO**

Consumer goods company Marico named Ashish Joshi as its new Chief Operating Officer for its Southeast Asia business. He joins the company from Colgate-Palmolive Thailand, where he was leading the customer development function. He was with Colgate-Palmolive for over 12 years.

**AMAZON HIRES VIKRAM RAIZADA**

Amazon has hired ex-ED and CEO of Tara Jewels, Vikram Raizada to head its jewellery segment. The company has serious focus on the high-fashion and lifestyle segment currently. He will be based out of Mumbai but splitting his time between that city and Bangalore. He will report to Vikas Purohit who is the Head of Amazon's fashion business.

**GEETIKA MEHTA APPOINTED DIRECTOR OF HR AT URBAN LADDER**

Geetika Mehta was appointed as the new Director HR at the online commerce company, Urban Ladder. Mehta has worked in the field of HR in several leading brands, such as Puma and Cadbury.

**SANDIP DAS STEPS DOWN AS MD OF RELIANCE JIO**

Sandip Das, one of the two Managing Directors of Reliance Jio Infocomm Ltd, has quit his position in the telecom company and has moved to a mentorship role in Reliance Retail Ltd, even as analysts are concerned about the delay in the roll-out of the fourth generation, or 4G, operations of the Mukesh Ambani-controlled company. Sanjay Mashruwala, Reliance Jio's other Managing Director, will continue to head the network roll-out division of the firm.

**NILESH SHAH QUILTS AXIS CAPITAL**

The MD and CEO of Axis Capital, Nilesh Shah, quit the firm to join Kotak Asset Management as the CEO. Shah was with Axis Capital for four years. Before Axis Capital, Shah was with ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund between 2004 and 2010.

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# Rajya Sabha 2016 holds the key to reforms



NDA needs to dominate the Upper House  
to get reform-oriented Bills passed

By Siddhartha Sarma

**F**or the NDA government, the past seven months have been as stormy in Parliament as they have been sunny and bright in the electoral arena. While the ruling alliance has gone from strength to strength in state elections, its attempts at passing reform-oriented Bills in Parliament have been stymied by a dogged Opposition, particularly in the Rajya Sabha (RS), where the NDA is still in a minority. Yet it is in the electoral victories that the NDA is likely to find a solution to this stalemate. We examine how a possible NDA majority in the Rajya Sabha by 2016 will impact on new Bills and, by extension, India Inc.

## Upper House, lower expectations

The NDA has 59 seats out of 243 occupied ones in the RS, of which the BJP has 43, much short of the majority. In a political climate where regional

parties like the SP and BSP are voting on the side of the UPA, the ruling alliance does not have the numbers it needs to pass Bills in the Upper House. However, the BJP is on a roll across the country, and won impressive victories in Jharkhand, Haryana and Maharashtra. Delhi is going to the polls shortly. All this will translate to more BJP legislators, who in turn will elect more party candidates to the RS. In Haryana two non-BJP seats which had fallen vacant out of turn have been filled by BJP candidates in December itself.

After Delhi, Bihar, which sends 16 members to the RS, will have Assembly elections in November 2015. By the end of June, 2016, West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, which send a total of 50 members to the RS, will also have elections. Going by the current political climate, the composition of the RS will be significantly altered to the advantage of the BJP by the middle of 2016.

Ever since it came to power, the BJP and its alliance partners have had considerable difficulty passing Bills in Parliament. Both the Monsoon and Winter Sessions saw successive Bills stopped by the RS. Four Bills of importance to industry were

passed by the Lok Sabha but rejected by the RS in the Winter Session alone. These include the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill, which itself replaced a September ordinance which was rejected by the Supreme Court; Companies (Amendment) Bill which was intended to make doing business more convenient; Regional Rural Banks (Amendment) Bill which would have increased authorized capital for RRBs and let them tap into funds in the capital market and the Payment and Settlement Systems (Amendment) Bill, which would have designated the Reserve Bank as supervisory authority for payment systems.<sup>1</sup>

The ruling alliance had an even harder time with the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill, which sought to amend the UPA's prized Land Acquisition Act, 2013. The amendments would mean relaxation of land acquisition norms for five sectors, including housing.

### The way ahead

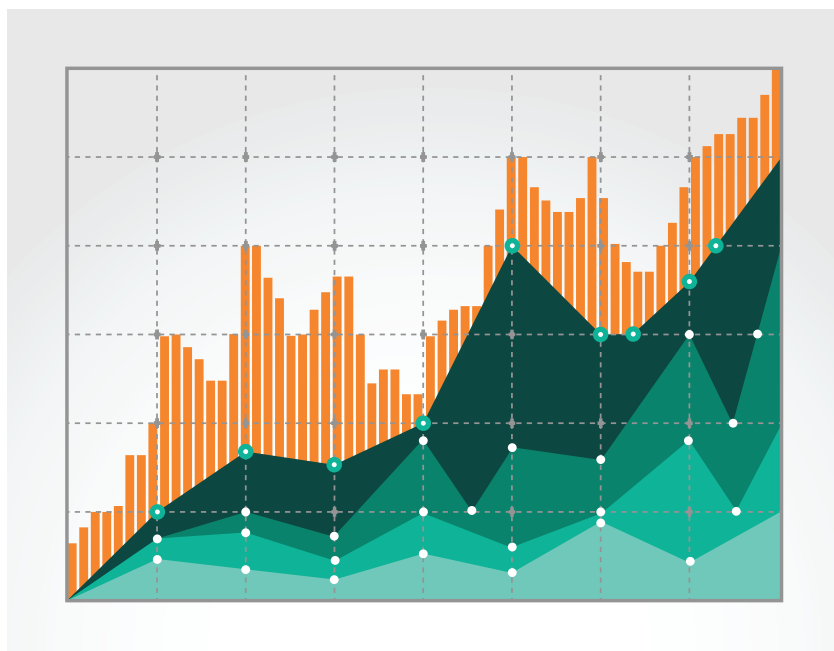
The NDA chose to pass some of the Bills by ordinance in the face of this standoff. These include the Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill and the Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Bill. The latter was introduced on October 20, 2014, and was re-promulgated at the end of the year, thus allowing the Coal Ministry to give 101 mines through auction in the first phase.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the Insurance Laws (Amendment) Bill, which was pending since 2008, was also passed through ordinance. It not only sees FDI in the sector hiked to 49 per cent from its current 26 per cent, but also benefits customers, including by curbing mis-selling of policies.<sup>3</sup>

The ordinance route might have been inevitable for the government, but it is not the end of the road for these Bills. They will need to be passed at the next session of Parliament, albeit in a joint sitting of both Houses. In which case the NDA has the advantage of its majority in the LS.

However, the ordinance route cannot be the universal option for every major reform the ruling alliance has in mind. For this, it needs a clear majority in the RS, which is likely to happen by the middle of 2016. If it comes about, the Modi government will finally have a free hand to introduce the reforms it has in mind. Beside reforms on FDI limits across sectors, which the NDA had promised in its manifesto, there are also other reforms expected from Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. It is likely that the contours of these will be seen in the Budget Session in 2015. However, major Bills will still be hotly contested in Parliament until such time as the BJP is in a strong position in the upper house.

According to Sunil Bhandare, advisor for government and economic policies at the Tata Strategic Management Group, the reform process will enter a decisive phase only in 2016-17. "By that time the BJP is expected to improve its position in the Rajya Sabha significantly, and this will facilitate the reforms being pushed forward," he says.<sup>4</sup>

Bhandare also believes that by then, with a consistent 6-6.5 per cent growth rate and a better fiscal situation, India will be back on track for growth



## If FDI increases due to reforms introduced by the government, it will be easier to conduct business across sectors

rates of above 8 per cent. If FDI increases due to reforms introduced by the government, it will be easier to conduct business across sectors. According to Rajesh Chakrabarti, executive director of the Bharti Institute of Public Policy at the Indian School of Business, Mohali, these reforms will also re-energise corporate performance. Meanwhile, the manufacturing and mining sectors will receive boosts if reforms on the line of the Coal Bill are passed without delay. These will set the pace for a comprehensive overhaul of the business environment through introduction of other reform-oriented Bills. If, in this climate, Bills like RRB (Amendment) and Payment and Settlement (Amendment) are also passed, the scenario for industry will improve in the near future. 📊

### Foot Notes

- <sup>1</sup> [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/important-bills-passed-in-winter-session-114122300895\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/important-bills-passed-in-winter-session-114122300895_1.html)
- <sup>2</sup> [http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/economy/cabinet-approves-ordinance-coal-insurance-bill\\_1260219.html](http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/economy/cabinet-approves-ordinance-coal-insurance-bill_1260219.html)
- <sup>3</sup> <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/insurance/analysis/four-ways-policyholders-will-benefit-from-insurance-bill/articleshow/45502280.cms>
- <sup>4</sup> <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/opticism-in-india-returns-as-modi-finds-his-footing/>

# TCS Layoffs: Eye opener for IT workforce

Workforce optimization is needed to keep up with changing business dynamics. Is the IT workforce ready for this?

By People Matters Editorial

**A**s the Facebook Group “We are Against TCS LayOffs” continues to grow with over 16,322 Likes and counting, TCS is feeling the heat of ex-employees that have been asked to go in the last few weeks. TCS employees held a protest march in Bengaluru on January 22 demanding government intervention in stopping the mass layoffs at the country’s largest IT company. The management sought to do some damage control by denying rumors of large-scale layoffs circulating on social media. There are wild speculations about the number affected — from 3,000 to 30,000. In its statement, TCS said: “Given the persistence of these rumors in the social media, we would like to place on record that TCS has not initiated and is not planning to initiate any large-scale exits of any section of its staff in any part of the organization.”

As an exception, TCS shared data on the actual number of “involuntary separations” over the last three years. “The involuntary attrition for the first nine months of this year has been 2,574 emplo-

yees, which represents 0.8 per cent of the total employee strength. The corresponding numbers for FY14 and FY13 were 2203 and 2132 respectively. The total involuntary attrition for the current fiscal year will be around 1 per cent.”

At the end of September 30, 2014, TCS had a total headcount of 3,13,757.

**There is a radical change in the foundations of employer-employee relations. The responsibilities shift from a parent-child relationship to an adult-adult relationship**



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## Unionisation of the IT industry is not the solution. It could kill this \$110 billion software industry by curtailing its ability to regulate itself

A Chennai-based group of professionals called the Young Tamil Nadu Movement has threatened to take legal action against the company for laying-off employees. According to the *International Business Times*, large trade unions such as the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) have asked software engineers to resist the workforce cut. In the interim, the Madras High Court restrained the company from terminating the services of a pregnant woman for a period of four weeks. The

32-year-old woman said in the petition that she was served termination orders on December 22, 2014, and she was to be relieved from service on January 21, 2015. TCS, on its part, said: "We haven't received any court order regarding this. TCS conducts its performance appraisal process in a fair and professional manner. In this situation, we will review the issues raised in a responsible and considerate manner."

There are many conversations that this situation brings to the table that are intrinsically linked to rapid changes in employer-employee relations, the socio-demographic fabric and in skills required for business. This is an eye-opener for the IT workforce. No job is guaranteed.

- The aim of a company is not to provide employment. The objective of any business is to bring short and long-term value to shareholders. In doing so organizations will strive to hire, retain, fairly compensate and nurture the best talent, because it makes business sense. The question that arises when there is a loss of balance in that relationship is: What if productivity, skills, performance is not according to salary package?
- There is a radical change in the foundations of employer-employee relations. The responsibilities and obligations shift from a parent-child relationship to an adult-adult relationship. The relationship should be mutually beneficial as any other bilateral agreement. Every year thousands of software employees leave their organizations. Why does nobody create an outrage when an employee decides to quit?
- Development is an individual's responsibility. While organizations should facilitate and provide opportunities for development, employees are responsible for their own skill upgrade. People who invest in themselves will always find a job. With innovation increasing, skills connected to digital and new-age technologies will be required. Whose responsibility is it to keep oneself updated with new skills required for the future?

There is no denying that layoffs are difficult and painful; whichever way it happens, it creates organizational pain. Leadership has a role to play to alleviate this pain by communicating, being transparent and upfront. Nevertheless, there will be pain. But unionization of the IT industry is not the solution. It could kill this \$110 billion software sector by bringing lack of competitiveness and curtailing its ability to regulate itself, which is the foundation for innovation and growth. 

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# Help your employees become stable-minded

**R.S. Sodhi**, Managing Director at Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), on Brand Amul, his inspiration Dr Verghese Kurien & more

By Anu Babu Kurian

**Q You have been with GCMMF for over 30 years. What have been your key learning experiences over the past many years?**

**A** When I joined Amul on 30th of March in 1982, my first job was to open a depot in Jaipur for sales and distribution. I had just graduated out of IRMA, Anand (with the inaugural batch of 46 students there) and had no commercial experience whatsoever, but was made the Branch Manager on the strength of my MBA. They had already posted a sales officer there, who had previously worked with Bata and had 12-13 years of work experience, who was also aspiring to be the branch manager. I was just 22 years old and the first issue I had to deal with there was an HR issue as I had to meet the expectations and challenges of managing the sales officer who was senior to me in age and experience. Whenever we used to visit offices, godowns and other distribution points, I never used to introduce myself and would let him do it. I learnt so many things from him, including how to make a phone call (in those days, there was no telephone) and talk to a distributor or retailer.

During that time, the concept of cold room took force. What changed his perception of me was the fact that I put together a project report on the technical viability of cold storage versus cold room, with commercial viability and other data. That was the turning point in our working relationship. Gradually, he started accepting me as his boss. That was when I realized that you get recognition or respect not because of your designation or college degree: You will get it only if you perform well. Always remember to respect people older and more experienced than you. It was one of my best working experiences even though I worked 12-15 hours a day and travelled a lot on work. After three or four years, I was

moved to Ahmedabad to handle a bigger branch, then to zonal office, head office, Group Product Officer and so on.

My key learning from my experience would be there is no shortcut to hard work. You cannot think that just because you are smart in showing off, you will be able to get ahead in your professional life. Only hard work pays in the end. Second, you need to have tremendous patience. What differentiates you from the rest of the herd which has similar technical abilities is your hard work and patience. Only then can you move up. This applies to everyone irrespective of the generation they belong to. Today's generation is very impatient. At least six students from IRMA joined Amul apart from me. But, some left after four years and some after seven. I still moved up and through the organization as it evolved since its inception.

**Q How has Amul managed to stave off competition?**

**A** We once asked Dr Kurien, who was chairman then, what we need to look for while hiring a person. He said, "We look for three things: Integrity, Integrity and Integrity." You might be educated and from a good family background, but if you don't have total integrity, you cannot get ahead in life. Either you have 0 per cent or 100 per cent integrity. There is no grey area here. If someone

**You get respect or recognition not because of your designation or college degree but because you performed well**



is not professionally honest, then it will be a big problem. That is how we managed to stave off competition.

**Q As the Managing Director, what do you look for when you hire someone? Would you say the same thing?**

**A** The thing about integrity is that you cannot make it out from an individual. Probably you would get an idea about it from his background, family and work. But, I think integrity stems from the culture of the organization and how tolerant we are. People who work in our organization know that we are very tolerant.

**Q If so, how would you define Amul's culture?**

**A** The culture of any organization is like a religion; it cannot be built overnight. The founders build the culture of any organization. In Amul, Dr Kurien laid down the culture. We don't hire laterally. All of our middle- and high-level managers have joined at the entry level. This is their first job. This is unlike e-commerce

## The fundamental job of an HR professional is to inspire people to contribute to the company's growth

companies, where there is a mix of several cultures from top to bottom and where everyone tries to make their culture the most prominent. People feel inspired and connected to the company and feel they are contributing to the organization. If your boss has a different culture and the subordinates have a different one, then you will not work as a team. Very few organizations have expanded overnight by inducting people from different cultures.

**Q You have been closely associated with Dr Verghese Kurien. What sort of influence did he have on you?**

**A** Dr Kurien was a remarkable man. He came from a privileged background — his uncle was on the Board of the Tatas and went on to become India's first finance minister; and his father was a civil surgeon in Kerala. He went to the US for postgraduation and could have done anything he wanted. But he ultimately made his way to Anand

in Gujarat. So, in order to achieve something, you must be willing to sacrifice.

When I used to be a branch manager in Ahmedabad, he would call every week for an update. He was a very hard taskmaster, but also encouraged his workers a lot, especially the younger ones. He was also very punctual. If you had an appointment at 10 am, you wouldn't dare to step into his office at 10:02 am. He always came to every meeting prepared and was very witty.

In order to build a world-class institution, he got together the best people with integrity, the best technology and gave complete freedom to all the workers. Even when we hired an ad agency, we left the job entirely to them. To this date, we see the ads when consumers like you see it.


**Q What is your advice for upcoming HR professionals?**

**A** Whichever company, industry or sector they join, they have to make the people more stable-minded. This monkey business of jumping from tree to tree (organization to organization) is not good and that culture is increasing. For this, HR professionals are also responsible. The fundamental job of an HR professional is to inspire people to contribute to the company's growth. They should be intrinsically devoted to the organization and not because they are getting a salary.

**Q Amul is a great brand. If you had to give pointers to other companies on how to raise one's brand profile, then what would be your guidelines?**

**A** Amul is a tool for earning a livelihood for the millions of farmers. They have reposed their trust in the brand. Second, we give the best quality product for the most reasonable price and it has become a trustworthy brand. A brand will be respected if it gives much more than expected. Faith in a brand is like faith in a religion. The year your brand becomes like a religion, you have achieved your goal. An organization can sustain a brand only if it has goodness embedded in it.

**Q What keeps you awake at night?**

**A** How to keep farmers satisfied. Since farmers form the backbone of the operations at Amul, keeping them happy is a major goal for us. The second thing that I am worried about is what to do with the extra milk that is produced. 

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# NUMERO UNO YOUNG GUNS OF THE INDUSTRY

ARE YOU IN THE LIST?



The winners of Are You In the List 2014 were announced at a glittering ceremony on January 22, 2015, in Gurgaon | **By Anu Babu Kurian**

**W**hen a former Human Resources leader transcended the HR space to become the CEO of a Fortune 100 company last year, it was proof that HR leaders can be anything they want to be. If you are wondering who the leader in question is, it is Mary Barra, the CEO of General Motors. Closer home, there are like HR leaders Dr. Santrupt Misra, Pankaj Bansal, Pratik Kumar, Ajit Isaac and Navnit Singh among others who have made the transition to CEO roles. HR has come a long way from fighting for a role in the Board to taking over the C-suite

themselves. As the Voice of HR, People Matters understood that the only way the HR community can make a difference to the C-suite is to play a critical leadership role itself.

Recognizing the need for the HR community to identify and encourage emerging leadership talent in HR, People Matters launched the Are You In The List? Initiative three years ago and received a stupendous response. This year, People Matters, in association with DDI, Cornerstone OnDemand, Jaipuria Institute of Management, Video Recruit and Stern India, launched the third edition of Are You

In The List? Awards, which has become the benchmark and standard for emerging HR leaders. Till date, more than 5,000 candidates have applied for the Awards. Eight months of preparation, tests and hard work finally culminated in a glittering ceremony on January 22, 2015, which saw the attendance of the HR community.

## **The Competencies**

More than 2,000 HR professionals across the country sent in their applications for the Are You In The List Award 2014. The applicants are in the age group of 26-35, have a minimum work experience of three years



ARE YOU IN THE LIST?

More than 2,000 aspiring HR leaders participated in an intense eight-month process to make it to the List

and are working in HR in their current role. There were five stages to the whole process. In Stage I, the candidates registered online with their personal information and took the Online Application Test. About 392 shortlisted candidates moved to Stage II.

In the workplace, cognitive ability — the ability to reason, draw accurate conclusions and make effective decisions — is the most predictive characteristic of one's success. Hence, in Stage II, the applicants undertook DDI's Adaptive Reasoning Test to assess their cognitive abilities. The ART is a brief online assessment test that uses figural reasoning content (a series of shapes and figures with underlying decision rules that the participant must solve). It tests one's ability to quickly adapt to change, learning agility and the ability to execute. The second part of Stage II was the Leadership Insight Inventory test that measured a candidate's leadership potential. Often used in conjunction with interviews, simulations and performance data, LII uncovers areas relating to making decisions, leading individuals and teams and personal orientation to leadership. The 112 qualified candidates proceeded to Stage III.

Though most companies want their HR managers to be strategic business partners rather than reactive process experts, research has shown that HR is not effective at strategic activities. This is where leadership development comes into focus. In Stage III, the shortlisted candidates underwent DDI's online leadership assessment test called Manager Ready. The candidates engaged in situations where they interacted with team members, took action and solved managerial tasks assigned to them. The real-world situations provided

an idea about the HR manager's leadership readiness.


Fifty shortlisted candidates from Stage III were required to answer pre-determined questions on the Video Recruit platform to assess whether they displayed the required competencies. Then that information was vetted by Stern India. In the last and final round, the jury selected the finalists and had a one-on-one meeting with each finalist to determine the final tally of winners. During the one-on-one, the Jury evaluated the finalists on the basis of their domain/technical knowledge, quality of experience and future potential. Unlike the earlier years, the ART testing for cognitive abilities, the vetting of insights and the final face-to-face interviews with the finalists were the new developments in the Are You In The List? Award process this year.

### What does the Jury think?

The HR function has transformed a lot in the last few years. In the past, it changed more slowly than it was required to. Today, the economic cycles are more frequent and more violent and that has put a tremendous responsibility on HR to change itself so that it can deliver in a better fashion and become a key player. Gajendra Chandel, CHRO, Tata Motors, said, "It is not just a service function anymore: it has become a key business player. In the past few years, I have seen colleagues in various companies who get into the nitty-gritty of business and figure out how business can be done better. They are going beyond the conventional HR. To that extent, I think this is an excellent initiative by People Matters. In the last three years itself, I have seen this initiative change — the way the applicants

or candidates are looked at and the way the Jury has been looking at candidates. Every year there is a big debate and discussion on what the competencies should be. The key task for HR would be to prepare the organization for violent changes."

On the other hand, fellow Jury member Rajesh Rai, Chief People Officer of Eicher Motors, said future HR leaders need to draw boundaries between the strategic and transactional sides of the function. "Every function has a strategic side and a transactional side. Therefore, the future HR leaders who make it to Are You in the List need to draw these boundaries. This is a journey and we are not looking for instant solutions. Today, we don't have boundaries when it comes into HR," he said. "Structurally and even philosophically, the whole core of the HR function should be defined very properly. Once you are a part of HR, you must have that thought leadership built into you. One of the other critical competencies that one should look for in future HR leaders is their ability to make the change over a period of time," he added.

Today, it is essential to groom the next rung of HR leaders who can take strategic business decisions using data and analytics among fast-changing market realities and demographic googlies in a technology age. And that starts with identifying the right set of emerging leaders. So, Are You In The List? 

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# HOW WE PICKED THE TOP EMERGING FUTURE HR LEADERS 2014

## STAGE I Inviting Applications

The application stage was a two-step process. Over 2,000 candidates registered online with their personal and demographic details and then undertook a test that measured their critical competencies

## STAGE II Testing Cognitive and Leadership Abilities

About 392 shortlisted candidates were tested on their ability to reason, draw accurate conclusions and make effective decisions using DDI's Adaptive Reasoning Test. Their leadership potential was also measured through DDI's Leadership Inventory Insight test

## STAGE III Leadership Assessment

The 112 shortlisted candidates took DDI's Manager Ready test to see if they are ready to take up managerial roles

## STAGE IV Video Round & Vetting the Insights

About 50 candidates make it to the video round, where they recorded their answers on pre-determined questions on Video Recruit platform. The insights from the candidates were later vetted and scrutinized by Stern India

## STAGE V Face-off with Jury

The Jury chooses the finalists and meets them on a one-on-one basis. The jury selects the final winners on the basis of the candidate's domain/technical knowledge, quality of experience and future potential

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**Aarthi Sivaramakrishnan, 30,**  
Pune | *Head-HR, Beroe Inc*

I'm a yoga practicing, marine life loving, karma believing, perpetually holiday planning HR professional. I'm a mother. I'm passionate about travel, painting, L&D and enabling women at work.

I had an engineering degree from Anna University and a PGD-PMIR from XLRI. I currently head HR for Beroe Inc. I've worked with ITC, the Times Group and as an independent consultant in the past.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** At this stage in life, while I grapple with the role of being a mother to a five-year-old daughter and a working woman, winning this award is a vindication of the fact that it is possible for women to play both roles successfully with the right enablers in place.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** My family values,

my educational background and the great institutions that I have had the fortune of being associated with have instilled people skills in me. Through my work experience, I have been groomed and mentored by great HR leaders and entrepreneurs.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Know the pulse and nuances of the business you enter into. Be well networked. Be practical and don't get hung up with theories and other rhetoric. Be genuine. Find the fine line between thinking with the heart and with the head.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** I think like the owner of a business rather than just an HR person. Business pressure makes me tick and I can be compelling without being aggressive. I also think I'm intuitive and practical. ☺

I am operations leader for the People and Change service line in India and head the International Business for the practice. Prior to KPMG, I spearheaded the majority of International Data Corporation's (IDC) India research. I did my PhD from XIMB.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It is an opportunity to stand up, be recognized, connect with like-minded people and decision-makers and learn from experienced HR leaders.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** Values embedded from childhood by parents and shaped by organizations

where I have worked helped me develop my people skill. Guidance from mentors and watching them closely as they managed people was also instrumental in this regard.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Values shape character and character defines destiny of individuals and organizations alike. As an HR professional, one wants to strengthen one's value system and the ecosystem in turn would take care of the rest.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** My research orientation founded in my doctoral education experience. My ability to bridge HR & strategy due to my education. My idea orientation and ability to innovate, which has been recognized time and again at workplace. ☺



**Dr Adwaita Govind Menon, 31,**  
Gurgaon | *Manager, KPMG*

I did my PGDPM-IR from XLRI Jamshedpur. I love dancing, watching movies, reading and travelling. I believe in excellence and making an impact in whatever role I take up.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** First, I'm happy that there is a platform to encourage HR professionals. The award will be a valuable recognition of my abilities and work in a field that I have chosen. It will reinforce my confidence in me and my belief that I am doing the right things in life.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** My experiences in my education, personal and professional life have been my best teachers. Also observations of other people in different situations have helped me learn. In my current role,

I have also been disciplined and conducted some people-related learning programs and trainings, which also have definitely added value to me.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** HR professionals have to wear different hats and need to find a balance between different roles they take up. It is a dynamic and sensitive area, so be true to yourself and to all the roles you take up in the field. Keep your ears to the ground.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** I can achieve short- to medium-term results while keeping in mind the bigger picture. This helps me find meaning in what I pursue in my professional and personal fronts. ☺

**Akanksha Agarwal, 28, Mumbai**  
*Manager-HR, Asian Paints*

I have a combined total of more than eight-and-half years of experience in the industry, in Business HR, Talent Management, Learning and Development as well as Factory HR.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?**

This award will certainly add to my credibility as an HR professional, because it will be proof that I have succeeded on an external yardstick apart from internal recognition. I look forward to the feedback on the assessments

that were conducted during the selection process as a learning input that will be useful in future.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** The two main factors that helped me the most in developing people skills essential in HR were exposure and experience, which go hand in hand. As a part of exposure, bouncing thoughts and concepts off my seniors and peers, I have found, adds many perspectives. Second, I have always asked for newer experiences in addition to my role. This has been invaluable in honing my people skills.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?**

Network — learning through conversations with people is a great learning resource under any situation. Treat your role as a dynamic concept: keep trying to find ways of working beyond your goals and grab any available opportunity to contribute and learn as you go along.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?**

I have made significant contributions in business impact intervention. I have a strong orientation towards learning and results. ☺☺

**Anil Agnihotri, 31, Pune**  
*Business HR Manager, SKF India Ltd*

A postgraduate from XLRI, I currently work in the Talent, Learning and Diversity Team for Asia in Marsh and lead talent initiatives for Marsh India.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It confirms that I have made a positive impact to my career as an HR professional.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** The learning curve at XLRI was quite steep. It was not about management education, but also connecting with a diverse group of people. Later, my stint in consulting helped polish my people skills.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?**

A passionate commitment to learning new things is a must. HR needs to engage with Business at all levels. Your knowledge and ability to structure the cases and policies in sync with business needs is necessary. ☺☺



**Anant Kasibhatla, 30, Mumbai**  
*AVP, Marsh India Insurance Brokers Pvt. Ltd*



**Akshay Chadha, 32, Gurgaon**  
*HRBP, Distribution-North India, Standard Chartered Bank*

I did my education across various cities. This varied experience has helped define me as a person. I have close to seven years of experience in consulting and business HR across organizations such as EY, MTS India and Standard Chartered.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?**

This award process is exhaustive and it puts a stamp of credibility to my career achievements. It will help me create a stronger personal brand and attain my professional goals faster.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?**

I have learned the skills of managing people by observing my bosses and from the experiences of others. Other important factors include remaining true to myself, transparent conversations and building long-lasting relationships.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?**

I regularly go back to MDI to interact with and guide budding HR professionals. My advice to them is twofold: create a personal brand which is more than your designation/organization, and understand the business and act as an architect, consultant and coach. Second, act as custodians of an organization's values and culture. You can be successful even if you are not a people person.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?**

I believe it is my experiences and strengths which define me. I have experience across consultancy and business HR. My key strengths include my being an achiever and learner; being strategic and positive; my key achievements such as Asia's Best Young HR Professionals award, being recognized as HiPo within a year; CEB case study on MTS and so on. I think all of these, when looked at collectively, define and set me apart from others. ☺☺



**Anjali Bhatia, 35, New Delhi**  
*Senior General Manager,  
 Experion Developers Pvt. Ltd*

I am an HR professional with more than 11 years of experience. I completed my PGDM from Symbiosis and graduation from St Xavier's College, Mumbai. I was born and raised in Mumbai. Values such as ethics and discipline were an essential part of my upbringing. I currently live in New Delhi with my husband and three-and-half year old son. To unwind, I enjoy reading, listening to music and driving on long trips.


**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It is a great personal achievement and acknowledgement for the work done so far. It also helps to reinforce my personal drive to continue to learn and develop as a professional.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** I believe I have been given great opportunities in my current and past roles, where I have had to work with different types of people, have been exposed

to many different leadership styles and have had to adapt to achieve results. I have learned to alter my communication style to connect with people. Feedback from supervisors and teams helped in this. Adapting my own style of coaching people has helped me develop my skills. So has my ability to listen.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Be open to change, be your own benchmark. Pace yourself for a marathon and not a sprint. Have fun while working, stay hungry and explore your potential.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?**

I have a flexible attitude; I never say no to learning; I have very high standards for work and constantly work to drive excellent results. I also have the ability to see the lighter side of things as it helps in times of stress. 


I am a PGD-HRM from Welingkar Institute. Given the opportunity and the right handholding, everyone can be successful and perform in their job. I previously worked in consulting companies such as SHL and Turning Point Training & Assessments.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It reinforces my abilities to continuously excel in what I do. It adds to my confidence as a professional.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?**  
 Being exposed to the development function from the beginning of my career

and certified in a number of psychometric tools, I worked with competencies and leaders for development. I'm also a certified coach.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Start any work by understanding the grassroots level and doing research around that before taking the next steps. Always keep the employee in mind before doing anything.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** My in-depth knowledge of various assessment methodologies; exposure to developmental methods; flair for working with people and believing that everyone can be a star; they just need some guidance and support. My exposure to consulting and corporate work also helped. 



**Deepa Bhulescarr, 35, Mumbai**  
*Manager-Talent Management,  
 Capgemini India*


I have over five years of experience across HR Business Partnering and specialist roles of Total Rewards and Talent Acquisition, Employee Engagement, Diversity and Inclusion. I love to explore and never let the learning drive stop. I get a high by doing meaningful work that adds value to people or organizations.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It affirms my faith in my skills and testimony to my learnings over the years. It is a privilege to be part of the coveted league and share the platform with other talented HR professionals.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** Mainly, my ability to connect with various stakeholders and build a relationship of trust. I prefer to

play the role of a partner in every assignment. This strengthens the connect with stakeholders. My ability to empathize with people also helps me in the longer run.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Play the role of a partner and strategic positioner in order to add value to your employees and the organization. There will be a lot to learn with the dynamics of human nature coupled with fluid business demands.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** A key differentiator for me has been my ability to be a credible activist. If I say I will do something, I don't sit on it. I build relationships based on trust and have a clear point of view on building business performance. 

**Divya Kohli, 29, Mumbai**  
*Deputy Manager-HR, Global  
 Rewards, Tata Global Beverages*

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**Ghanashyam Hegdekatte, 28, Mumbai** | *Manager, Mahindra Automotive and Farm Sectors*

After doing my MBA from XLRI Jamshedpur, I worked for M&M through the leadership development scheme — Group Management Cadre. After a short stint as Business HR, I got an opportunity to work in the Organization Development team of M&M AFS. I have also have been a part of Mahindra Farm Equipment Business. I'm a gadget freak (partly attributed to my two-year stint with Nokia before my MBA), love music and biking.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** A world of opportunities to learn from some of the best HR minds and also to contribute to the HR community. It is an opportunity to utilize these learnings to implement pathbreaking solutions in my area of work.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** Being part of Mahindra-AFS, I have got multiple opportunities to develop my people skills. I worked with people from multiple businesses and different industries across age groups and projects. Also, having a team means you unconsciously develop the ability to manage their emotions, aspirations and so on.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Be curious to learn things outside your area of expertise. There is nothing like “not my area of work”. Having this mindset restricts your growth. Also, believe in what you do. You'll then realize that unconsciously you are giving more than 100%.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** People call me Question Box. The mindset I have in terms of asking “Why” is my USP. It has helped me to go to the depth of the things and understand subjects in detail. I constantly remind myself that there is a need for me to understand business better than my business guy. ☺

I am HR Business Partner at Citibank. Earlier I worked with Hewitt Associates (Now Aon Hewitt) and Gail India Limited. I completed my engineering from Army Institute of Technology, Pune and post-graduation from TISS, Mumbai. In my spare time, I like to undertake long road trips, write articles on HR across different platforms and enjoy the company of my family.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** Winning the award is extremely important to fulfill one's own passion for access to the larger HR leadership network, tapping collective expertise and knowledge to amalgamate new ideas and contribute to growth of HR in business-critical functions. The process has been grueling so far and I have evolved in the course of this. It is also chance to advance the cause of the HR community and my professional growth.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** The profession of HR has helped me with the technical skills to understand human behavior in a structured manner. The courage to confront people issues, ability to diagnose the situation well from leading instead of lagging indicators. Most importantly, my faith in human goodness helped. I have received a lot of help on my way up and empathizing makes it easier to develop people skills. The interest in people development has to be genuine.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** The world around us is changing fast. It is not competition alone but collaboration that will drive innovation. Connect and establish strong

networks and leverage them to further the cause of the discipline and community. Ethics and execution are core skills that shall stand HR professionals in good stead.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** What makes one unique is one's own life experiences. My journey has seen a lot of personal setbacks and bouncing back. My core belief in human goodness and the will to succeed set me apart. My self-belief and desire to continue learning and collaborating with people set me apart. I am what I am but the world around me, my support system and deep sense of responsibility makes me unique. ☺



**Hargovind Adhikari, 35, New Delhi** | *AVP, Citibank*

A lifetime learner, collaborator and social media enthusiast, I truly believe that the more you share, the more you learn. A global citizen, a feminist and multitasker, I thrive on challenges.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It is the leading



**Kanisha Raina, 32, Pune**  
*Global Talent Partner-Research, IBM India Pvt. Ltd*

platform of knowledge exchange in the Indian HR community. The opportunity to collaborate with equally passionate HR professionals is my key motivator.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** Having an open environment growing up, where a Sunday breakfast meant discussing a political issue, made me appreciate and respect diverse viewpoints. I always use the positives in people.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Try to learn from every conversation, project and opportunity. Invest in your development. Read, discuss what you read and start voicing your opinion. Make use of social media — join webcasts. Read blogs to connect with HR professionals. ☺



**Pijus Kanti Das, 32, Hyderabad**  
*Manager-Talent Management  
 & HR Initiatives, L&T Metro Rail  
 (Hyderabad) Ltd*

Working as an executive assistant to VP and Head-Corporate HR and also as a manager in talent management and HR initiative. Slowly moving to business role. A cyclist and marathon enthusiast also.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It is an opportunity to know myself better. I will get a platform which will help me to fulfill my journey in 'Make in India'.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** There have been several factors in this regard, including taking up assignments across the country; knowing diverse backgrounds, history, culture of various states and understanding different needs for different people.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Excel in domain knowledge; value people; don't restrict yourself within HR only. Learn business.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** What sets me apart is I have worked across India. I have worked in five industries and have experience in strategic as well as operational HR. 🌟



**Mayokun Aduwo, 31, Bengaluru**  
*Lead HR Operations India and  
 South Asia, IBM India Pvt. Ltd*

My educational background is in computer information systems. I started my career as personnel in a commercial bank and then did my MSc in Information Systems and Management. I currently work on transformation programs and so on.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It will be a landmark in my career as an HR professional. The processes leading up to the awards have been rigorous and competitive. Being rewarded is, hence gratifying and will also justify my career move to HR.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** I have honed my communication skills, especially in speaking and listening. This enables me

to communicate in a better manner. Also, my listening skills help me understand the people's point of view. Empathy enables me to put myself in other people's shoes.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Understanding HR knowledge and theory is not enough, understanding the business is important. Also, one needs to work on acquiring analytical skills, problem-solving and consultancy skills among others.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** My USP stems from my exposure and my attitude. I have been educated in other fields like technology and accounting and I have also worked in different industries in different continents. This enables me to draw on knowledge of skills based on my background and experience. 🌟

help individuals, teams and organizations realize their true potential is another factor. The skills of negotiation, facilitation and coaching I discovered at Infosys.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Be a part of some business, any business. Nothing prepares you to be a better business partner than being in a business and experiencing its highs and lows. Read, write and apply concepts to develop a high-quality thinking ability.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** My engineering background plus three years of engineering work experience with Infosys, for one. My clear thinking ability helps me sift insights from the noise of symptoms. 🌟



**Kenneth Sequeira, 30, Mumbai**  
*Director-HR Strategy, IMRB  
 International*

I am an engineer by qualification, HR professional by occupation and a facilitator and people developer by passion! At IMRB, I develop and design talent initiatives towards the talent strategy of the company.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It is an opportunity to learn, interact and network with the best minds in the field of HR. It is a confirmation of my abilities in the space of Thought Leadership. It is also a challenge to scale new heights.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** The analytical thinking abilities I learnt in engineering applied to people issues. The desire to

I am a seasoned HR professional with more than 10 years of experience across diverse industries. I completed my graduation from Lady Shri Ram College and am a double postgraduate and have done MA in Psychology (OB) and MBA in Human Resources.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?**

It is the highest point of my professional life to date. It is a big recognition and visibility for a young professional like me and would absolutely be a moment to feel proud about. At the same time, it would



**Sakshi Khosla, 35, Gurgaon**  
*HR Leader, GE India Industrial Pvt. Ltd.*

I am an HR professional with more than 11 years of experience and hold a postgraduate degree in Human Resources. I have varied exposure in HR work teams and am very passionate about being in HR. I am an avid sports enthusiast and love adventure sports.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** The journey has been extremely enriching and winning is the icing on the cake. It would be my privilege to rub shoulders with the best in the industry across the country. It is also a great fillip to my self-confidence.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?**

I believe people skills are something very innate and the right kind of experience, exposure and education along with some stellar leadership from seniors and mentors have helped develop my people skills.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Be approachable, know the business and also let the business

also bring me a lot of responsibility to keep the HR flag up and stand for the values and beliefs that got me here.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** Diversity of experience has been a major factor. I have worked across diverse industries, multicultural environments and different areas of HR. This has helped me gain the maturity to handle diverse stakeholders and complex situations. My course in psychology has given me the extra edge in understanding human behavior better.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** Be business experts. Understand your business and the business leader or the CFO. Only then can you be a trusted advisor to a leader or employee. Have a high learning agility. Today's world is dynamic. One needs to continuously hone one's skills to keep up. Be grounded. Don't let intellectual arrogance creep in on you. Influence through personal credibility rather than authority.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** I have diversity in experience over a relatively short career. This has built maturity and domain depth across multiple areas of HR. Clear thinking and ability to sail through ambiguity is my forte. Curiosity and hunger to develop my skills are also differentiators.

My thinking is progressive and futuristic, combined with imagination and courage. I have a great passion for what I do — I love the field of HR and am 200% committed.

know the nuances of HR. Learn to work in the grey areas and take rational decisions. Spend longer stints in the organizations, which will help one get varied experiences in HR and also try and do a stint with business teams.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?**

My understanding of a situation and ability to manage it logically on its merits and demerits; end-to-end execution of projects and commitment to the turnaround time are my key USPs. My relationship management and networking skills also set me apart.



**Romit Mufti, 34, Mumbai**  
*Senior Manager-Human Resources, IL&FS Financial Services Ltd*



**Saumya Mittal, 33, Gurgaon**  
*General Manager-Talent Acquisition, PepsiCo*

I graduated in Human Resources from MDI in 2007. I am mother to a four-and-half year old daughter.

**What does winning the Are You In The List Award mean to you?** It means a lot to me in terms of establishing my professional brand in the highest form of HR. The process was also interesting and rich in learning.

**What are the main factors that helped develop your people skills?** My experience in handling large teams across factory and sales capability roles was a major factor. Coaching and mentoring by senior HR

leaders also helped, as did PepsiCo leadership programs.

**What is your advice for aspiring HR professionals?** HR is a science as much as an art. Leverage HR analytics to create valuable insights for business. Sustain business partnerships through solid business understanding.

**What is your USP/differentiator that sets you apart from the crowd?** My thinking and vision is out of the box. I have the ability to influence people to get work done, can multi-task and have a drive for results.



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ABHIJIT BHADURI



# The entrepreneur mindset in the digital age

New-age ventures have to engage with the larger world and be interesting to make an impact

**A**n entrepreneur is one whose dreams are bigger than his or her resources. These are people who dream of making a mark in the universe. They take risks, challenge the status quo and are not afraid of picking themselves up when they fall flat on their face. They dust their clothes and continue walking as if nothing had happened.

**The changing nature of work.** Besides full time work, now there is contract work, part-time work, freelance options and the option to be an individual supplier. Connectivity and the acceptance of telecommuting is letting lots of people dip their feet into the entrepreneurial pool with relatively small risks and then chuck the full time work once the venture grows to a certain scale. A working spouse is letting people take risks earlier. In the B-Schools there is a growing number of students who start their own ventures. With the notion of lifelong employment being a thing of the past, a lot of people are finding themselves taking up entrepreneurship earlier than their plan.

**The entrepreneurial mindset.** Some dream of getting away from the soul-crushing work done in a cubicle as an unknown cog in a giant wheel. It could be the freedom that comes from being your own master and pursuing a dream to change the world or a part of it. And of course the possibility of becoming the next Gates, Zuckerberg or Thiel.

Entrepreneurs have to be able to solve problems and make the world more convenient. They have to factor in technological shifts, demographic trends and regulatory matters. The analog world also had entrepreneurs from Henry Ford to Jamshetji Tata. In that world, apart from enterprise, the other three factors of production — land, labor and capital — were difficult.

For the digital entrepreneur, ideas

and innovation are at the core. Getting funding is a no-brainer if the idea is interesting. There is no barrier — not even age. Madison Robinson had the idea for light-up flip flops for kids when she was eight. Seven years later, she is a millionaire and her Fish Flops are being sold in national department stores like Nordstrom.

## Invite, innovate and be interesting


Entrepreneurs have to learn to engage people beyond the enterprise at all stages. Oculus Rift, made possible by crowdfunding, was bought by Facebook for \$2bn. In a hyper-connected world, everyone from the VC or potential employee is only a digital invitation away. The hyper-connected customer base is the best bet to take the message viral. The ability to build a network is an important skill.

People have to rethink and innovate around business models, marketing channels, and HR norms if they wish to scale up the way Airbnb, Dropbox and Facebook did. They followed 'growth hacking' which basically means the ability to quickly scale a product in creative ways. They have to solve big problems in a simple intuitive manner. Amazon moved quickly from selling books to now experimenting with delivering goods via drone. Innovation needs resilience. Agility and awareness of disruptive forces, quick decision making and ability to take risks can give the entrepreneur a huge head start.

Digital businesses are based on customer experience and innovation. Drucker defines entrepreneurship as using the tool of innovation to exploit change. When everyone with a smartphone is a media house, it is important to be interesting to stand out in the crowd. Richard Branson's larger-than-life persona rubs off on the brand. Steve Jobs' legendary skill in presenting ideas and obsession with design made Apple users



evangelists. Apple's announcements and product launches generate the kind of buzz no paid media has managed.

Digitization has redefined the possibilities of entrepreneurship. The barriers of the analog world are disappearing. Failure is getting to be less of a taboo — a sure sign that a society is ready to see the rise of entrepreneurs primed to make a mark in the universe. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ABHIJIT BHADURI** is Chief Learning Officer at Wipro Group

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## Envisioning the future of HR

All entrepreneurs have a vision. Vision is what drives us to take this crucifying path of starting on our own, instead of picking a more comfortable and secure option. It is a path full of sacrifices starting with oneself, followed by friends who understandably start giving up trying to integrate with your life, and family whose love is unconditional but are a constant source of guilt as you never feel you reciprocate enough. What makes these sacrifices worth it? It is the purpose, a dream if accomplished, which will make the difference to the group of people who matter.

My father was an entrepreneur, so was my mother. They were both children of the Spanish Civil War, the last of the classical European workers' revolutions that ended in a dictatorship. My generation was brought up with tremendous respect for what one has and while we had all the comforts and opportunities of a growing economy,

we were taught that one has to earn them and never take them for granted. I gained tremendous inspiration from my parents. My father had an enormous adventurous spirit—his love for travel and exploring new cultures was a reflection of his love for life. He had a great ability to connect the dots and a high appetite for risk. From my mother, I learnt to be caring, to always look for win-win, to collaborate, to be generous, to be curious and challenge oneself. These have not only been the foundation for who I am, but also are guidance for me today and always.

I have observed that I grow in chunks and not gradually. Looking back, it is these high intensity periods that have helped me evolve personally and professionally. After graduating in law, I landed in HR almost by accident while temping in a bank. I did a substitution in the HR team and that is how I found where I belonged. I worked across functions and roles in HR, but I realized that to grow in this function one

Crain's reported that 367 magazines in the US went out of business, while many shifted to online shutting down their print magazines. Still, against all odds, our business took off. During the initial years, one learns to be resourceful; every day is an interesting quest looking for pieces of the complex puzzle that needs to come together. The name, the logo, the design, the content, every single component needed to be perfect and we were doing everything for the first time.

There are many lessons from this last five years, both personally and professionally. This has probably been the most significant change in my life. You learn every day. As an entrepreneur, one commits many mistakes and eventually these become a source of unlimited learning.

The first real challenge I faced was to figure how to attract and hire people who will join our journey. Even though I was in the HR profession for several years,

## BUILDING A TEAM IS LIKE BUILDING A DELICATE ECOSYSTEM OF POWERFUL FORCE. IT NEEDS TO BE CRAFTED WITH STRATEGY AND CARE AND EVERY PIECE COUNTS AS IT BRINGS YOU CLOSER TO THE VISION

needs business acumen, so I decided to do my MBA at Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. That was my second & most radical growth spur. TCS hired me at a time when no company was looking at ISB for HR profiles.

How did I start thinking about People Matters? While I had several entrepreneurship opportunities earlier, it was not until the end of 2008 that I felt ready. I remember researching on several business ideas from baby food to online furniture and eventually I realized that my real passion was my profession. That is how People Matters was born. 2009 was not the most opportune time to start a business, clearly not a media business. In 2009 alone,

when it comes to recruiting for oneself, the story is very different. I remember connecting with headhunters, who would normally not entertain a company of our size at that time. One of the only few good things about starting a company during a recession is that competition for talent (while always fierce) is lower. I think as a hiring manager, you always know if the person will fit or not. Personal chemistry, alignment of values, the ability to work together while having fun – these are the things that I look for when hiring. Result orientation, personal drive and ambition, integrity, humbleness are very important attributes of our brand, so this should be part of the DNA of everyone who joins us.



Of course, some of the hiring did not go our way. In hindsight, I feel that it happened because the person was not the right fit for our culture and we went entirely by the candidate's resume and experience.

Building a team is like building a delicate ecosystem of powerful force. It needs to be crafted with strategy and care and every piece counts as it brings you closer to the vision. While it is great to get experts to help you craft the strategy, I have learnt the hard way that ultimately it is your brand, your team and your vision.

That takes me to the next important learning in my journey. I have realized that 'decision making' is a more of a muscle than a skill — One needs to exercise it for it to become stronger. In my HR roles, my job was to present options to business leaders instead of taking decisions. Hence, building that muscle of "decision making" was not natural for me. The team's feedback that delaying decisions was causing problems was a wake up call for me.

My team is my coach in many ways. Most of my journey as a leader has come from my team. It is their feedback, honesty and care that made me a better leader. People Matters was the first instance when people reported to me. For me, the shift was tremendous as in my earlier roles I had to work across teams as an individual contributor. I believe that people join your

journey to do their best and perform at their peak. So, as a leader, your role is to trust them, provide them with a safety net in case they fall and be their cheerleader as they grow. The most beautiful gift of these five years for me has been seeing people who have worked in People Matters grow professionally, fulfilling their potential.

I have learned a lot from other entrepreneurs as well. One advice, in particular, has stayed with me— Keep a "Not-to-do List" instead of a "To-do" list. When you start your company from scratch, you tend to be involved in all tactical

and operational work and that causes two major problems: You become a bottleneck and you don't allow the learning curve of others to accelerate. So, the solution is to get out of the way by keeping a list of things that you will not get involved in.

As entrepreneurs, we know our purpose. It translates into every single thing we do (and we do not do), the decisions we take, the actions we perform, where we spend most of our time and where we don't. It is the articulation of that purpose where we struggle. It is the obsession for the customer and the product that keeps you innovating, reinventing and focusing on delivering value for all stakeholders and keeps sharpening the articulation of the vision.

By 2012, we had built a relatively strong brand in the HR media space. We had partnered with many professional associations across the country and were working with big brands in the HR space. We also decided that it was the right time to invest in our digital platform, our multimedia & video capabilities and our tablet versions of the magazine. In May 2012, we raised capital and that fuelled the redesign of the print magazine, launch of our digital properties and investment in new capabilities both in multi-media and events. In just over two years, we have also brought new formats to conferences and events bringing innovation in schedule and session delivery.

The years 2012 to 2014 were periods of tremendous innovation and growth. We

launched our community leagues (Talent Acquisition Leadership League and L&D Leadership League) and conceptualized the first ever awards for functional teams in recruitment and learning; we created a calendar of digital events (Radio Shows, Tweetchats, Twangouts) by marrying social media platforms with content and our innovative approach to events; we launched TechHR Conference and Exhibition (the largest scale conference in Asia on HR Technology).

As we look at 2015 onwards, we realize that we still have a lot to do. We want to reach every corner of India, touching and building relationships with every business

## ONE LEARNS TO BE RESOURCEFUL; EVERY DAY IS AN INTERESTING QUEST LOOKING FOR PIECES OF A COMPLEX PUZZLE THAT NEEDS TO COME TOGETHER

and HR leader by inspiring, provoking and enlightening them and their teams. We also aspire to branch outside of India in the coming years.

As they say, when one desires something strong enough, the universe conspires to make it happen. There are many of our readers who have contributed to who we are today. Business and HR leaders who generously gave us their time to share insights and knowledge; the community, our readers, who kept sharing their feedback and helped us raise the bar; our partners who gave us the opportunity to dream bigger and bigger. A journey of building a brand for a community is a journey where everybody contributes.

At the core of it, lies our team. They are the key of our success and our secret sauce; they are the source from where future innovation, scale and growth will come from. A group of unconventional people who have given a part of their careers to build this beautiful brand and whether they still work with us or not, their legacy is there in everything we do. It is with their commitment and passion that the purpose can be fulfilled.

*With love to everybody in the People Matters team today and always for believing in this dream and for coming onboard to make it happen.*

**Esther Martinez Hernandez** EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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## FOCUS 5

Looking back at the last 5 years, we highlight 5 key focus areas that are as relevant for the HR community today as they were in 2009 | By Anu Babu Kurian





**T**he year was 2009. India, and the rest of the world, was reeling under recession and for many employees it seemed like the world had indeed come to an end. The collapse of the Lehman Brothers in September 2008 set off a domino effect throughout the world and turned out to be the most nasty downturn in almost 80 years. It was a time when businesses were scampering to save costs as financial markets took the worst possible hit; when employees were scared to jump ships; and it probably seemed like the worst possible time to start a company.

But, in the bustling city of Gurgaon in Haryana, a print magazine was born. People Matters took its first steps in the world of HR media and slowly and steadily brought best-in-class design and innovation to a niche industry segment. The goal: To create a movement in the HR community to raise the bar for the function.

For the past five years, People Matters has been covering a gamut of issues in the world of HR. Our endeavor has been to bring to the fore not only best practices and learning from what companies are doing but also to highlight core conversations that we believe business and HR leaders should have that will make a significant difference not only to their business but the society they operate in.

In this story, we highlight five of those stories. Issues that were landmark cover stories of yesterday and we think that they are still equally rele-


vant today. Here is a snapshot of the 5 cover stories that we will re-examine in the subsequent pages:

**India Skilling:** India will have a huge demographic dividend by 2020. But are we skilling our people fast enough to meet the demands of a growing economy? This is a topic we have covered in several issues and with the new government takes a new dimension.

**Shame - Labor Violence:** Labor relations continue to be the bane of India Inc. While companies are gung-ho on the economy and the new government who's bringing in the much-needed labour reforms, HR leaders need to revive their IR skills for building sustainable ecosystems in the workplace.

**Best Companies To Work For:** Year-after-year, we had published an issue to deep dive on the best employers in India. An opportunity for our readers to learn from the best and benchmark their companies. These companies that have shown time and again how they put their people first.

**Jobless Growth:** The problem of jobless growth may take a serious turn in the coming years if no progress is made in creating more jobs in the country. New hopes come our way with the expected reforms but will that translate fast enough into the required numbers?

**HR Technology:** As business models get disrupted, HR technology opens up new opportunities to solve those problems. HR professionals should seize the opportunity to lead this transformation. 





# SKILLING 500 MILLION PEOPLE BY 2020

If the government hopes to make any real progress with the Make in India campaign, then it should implement skilling programs on a war-footing

**T**he sun is shining brighter on India. With the economy looking up and the Reserve Bank of India's recent rate cut, things are already looking up this New Year. In September 2014, RBI said the country's GDP, which it estimates to be 5.5 per cent in the current financial year, will improve to 6.3 per cent in 2015-16. The one thing that the Indian economy has going for it is its rich demographic dividend. The advantage the country has over ageing economies like China and Japan is putting it in a position from where it can propel itself to the Big League of Superpowers. But, in order to be able to make the demographic dividend to its advantage, India must make sure that they are skilled and can contribute to the country's GDP in a positive way.

**INDIA IS POISED TO BECOME THE WORLD'S YOUNGEST COUNTRY BY 2020, WITH AN AVERAGE AGE OF 29 YEARS AND ALSO ACCOUNT FOR 28 PER CENT OF THE WORLD'S WORKFORCE**

Before we get into skilling, here's a snapshot of why it is important to understand the context of India's demographic dividend. Demographic dividend refers to a period—usually 20 to 30 years—when a greater part of the population is young and of working age. It essentially cuts spending on dependents, spurring economic growth.

With India expected to hit a headcount of about 1.4 billion in 2025, the country's population in the 15-64 age category is expected to skyrocket over the next decade, increasing the working age population from 761 million to 869 million by 2020. Essentially,

India would be experiencing a bonus workforce within the total population. Besides this, India is also poised to become the world's youngest country by 2020, with an average age of 29 years and also account for 28 per cent of the world's workforce.

According to Census India's population projections, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan will account for more than 50 per cent of the increase in India's working age population over 2011 to 2021. This is in contrast to the addition by the four affluent states—Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab and Gujarat—that would together add only 21.6 million to the workforce.

Harnessing the demographic dividend through appropriate skill development efforts would provide an opportunity to achieve inclusion and productivity within the country and also a reduction in the global skill shortages.

According to the United Nations, in the current decade, the working-age population will increase globally by around 600 million. The highest increase is expected in the Least Developed Countries that, by 2020 will have almost 460 million more persons in the working age than in 2011. Over the same period, the working-age population is expected to decline in the developed countries by almost 17 million.

More than half of the country's workforce is still working in the agriculture sector, which contributes around 15 per cent to the country's GDP. According to a FICCI report, only 2 per cent of the total workforce in India has undergone skills training.

## Flashback 2010 - India Skilling

While having a huge working-age population can be an advantage, it can also become a burden if the population is not adequately skilled.

In 2010, we addressed the growing problem of finding skilled talent in our July cover story 'India Skilling'. Four years ago, we wrote: "In an economy, where 90 per cent of jobs are skills-based, there are currently about 40 million registered unemployed people in India and probably another 260 million who are unemployed or underemployed in the age group of 18-50 years. Only 11 per cent of people in this age group have any form of vocational training and among these only a meager 1.3 per cent receives formal vocational training."

"In the 2010, the estimates pegged the incremental human resource required by 2020 to maintain 8.5 per cent to 9 per cent growth in the economy at a staggering 240 million across various industries. The number is staggering considering that the employment exchanges in the country managed to give jobs only to 200,000 out of 40 million registered unemployed."

It was to address this growing need that the National Skills Policy, which set a target of imparting skills training to 500 million by 2022, was formulated in 2009. Nothing major has come out of that apart from setting up of National Skills Development Council. The NSDC has planned to set up 1500 new ITIs and 5000 skill development centres across the country, as well as a National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) for affiliations and accreditation of the vocational, educational and training systems.

When the Narendra Modi government took over the reins from the UPA last year, it vowed to develop India's economy and the government made all the right noises with the Make In India campaign. Of course, the government is well aware that without skilled talent, the campaign and India's future will fall flat on its face. Hence, with a pro-industry stand, the Union government wanted to show the seriousness with which it dealt with the skilling issue and created a new ministry called the Skills Development and Entrepreneurship ministry, with the Prime Minister himself taking a keen interest in the progress made by skilling initiatives.

The Modi government wants to take the skilling projects to the grass roots level so entire villages and towns will also benefit. But while skilling and entrepreneurship is a key agenda for the BJP government and 37 Central ministries involved in skill development and vocational training apart from agencies such as National Skill Development Corporation and the National Skill Development Agency, efforts have been largely diffused with much of the workforce remaining unskilled or semi-skilled.

At present, only 10 per cent of the workers between the ages of 15 and 59 years have some amount of professional training in India, of which just an abysmal 2.5 per cent have professional training. In contrast, globally, an average of 60 per cent to 80 per cent of a country's workforce is skilled. In Korea, as much as 96 per cent of the workers have formal skill training.

There is no standardization of the required skills for a particular sector, leading to a fragmented and ineffective skill training curriculum. Sector-specific bodies with a skill remit such as the Sector Skills Councils have been set up, which reflects the need to shift towards demand-led provision of vocational training and education. The notion of having a degree has sunk in the mentality of the average Indian so much that it is difficult to make people realize otherwise.

In the meanwhile, the Centre is contemplating a skill development program for the armed forces personnel a year before their retirement for creating a pool of 'Master Trainers', Union Minister of State for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (Independent Charge) Rajiv Pratap Rudy has said. He announced it when NSDC and Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence signed a Memorandum of Understanding. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will take stock of all the various initiatives by the government for skill development, consid-

## AT PRESENT, ONLY 10 PER CENT OF THE WORKING POPULATION HAS SOME AMOUNT OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING IN INDIA, OF WHICH JUST AN ABYSMAL 2.5 PER CENT HAS PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

ered essential for the success of his pet 'Make in India' campaign. The minister asked the private corporate sector and the public sector undertakings to contribute to skilling initiatives of the new Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). He was speaking at the signing of the tripartite agreement between NSDC, NSDF and the Power Grid Corporation of India (PGCI). PGCI will contribute its CSR funds for national skill qualification framework aligned with skill development activities in the country. "We are lagging behind in skill development in India by at least 50 to 55 years. We have been focusing on education but not on skill development. The next 5 to 10 years are crucial to meet the emerging challenges in making India a great power amongst the comity of nations," Rudy said.

Integrating the large unorganized sector accounting for over 92% of employment into the mainstream — a problem that India shares with China — will remain the biggest hurdle for the government. While it is keen to push manufacturing into high gear, it also needs to design and implement skilling programs for 400 million people if they hope to make any progress in this area. This would be the Achilles heel. If they get it right, then India would be on its way to become one of the biggest superpowers in the world. For more updates, check out the Union Budget later this month that is likely to give a roadmap for the government's skilling program. 

## LABOR'S LOVE LOST

The July 2012 violence at the Maruti Suzuki plant at Manesar showed that good industrial relations with the workers will need more than just good labor laws

**O**n July 18, 2012, Maruti Suzuki India's Manesar plant was hit by unprecedented violence, which saw an HR manager being burnt to death. The violence broke out when workers met the management demanding the reinstatement of a permanent worker, Jiya Lal, who had been suspended that morning following an altercation with his supervisor. Lal, a Dalit, alleges that the supervisor made derogatory remarks about him. The workers were protesting about the fact that while Lal was suspended from duty for the altercation, the supervisor was merely asked to take a few days leave. That evening, a mob of workers attacked supervisors and managerial staff at the plant that saw nearly 100 managers, including two Japanese expatriates, injured. The conflict between the workers and the management had been simmering for over a year before the catastrophic

### THE GENESIS OF MOST STRIKES IN MANUFACTURING COMPANIES IS THE DISPARITY OVER WAGES BETWEEN PERMANENT WORKERS AND TEMP STAFF

events unfolded. In our cover story of August 2012, 'Shame – Labor Violence, A Blot on Modern India', we found that the Maruti episode had brought to the fore the challenges of employer relations in the manufacturing industry and reopened the debate on the larger issues of labor reforms. We attempt to capture some of them to showcase that it is an industry-wide trend.

**Pfizer:** In August 2014, drug maker Pfizer issued a lockout notice to one of its manufacturing facilities in Mumbai on the grounds of indiscipline and threats to management personnel. In a filing to the Bombay Stock Exchange, the company said that the proposed lock-out had been necessitated on account of several acts, as a result of which the company is of the belief that it has become impossible for the management to continue with the operations of the plant in a peaceful and productive manner. The Thane unit is the only unit of Pfizer in India and employs 212 employees.

**Hyundai:** In January this year, hundreds of employees of NVH India Auto Limited, one of the suppliers for Hyundai Motor India Limited, went on a sit-in-strike, after a South Korean national (learnt to be the company's managing director) allegedly assaulted an employee. A video, which was uploaded on YouTube, showed a Korean national standing on the victim. However, the authenticity of the video could not be ascertained. The video went viral on the social media. The issue started after the company suspended 15 employees for seeking basic facilities and permission to set up an employees union in the company.

**Coal India:** Half-a-million workers at Coal India and Singareni Collieries went on strike for five days on January 6, 2015, in the biggest show of union strength in recent years, to protest the government move to invite bids from the private sector for coal blocks through an ordinance that also permits merchant mining and sale of coal in the open market. Following the government's assurance that they will evaluate the enabling clause in ordinance, which will pave the way for

private commercial mining, the workers called off the strike. The unions are apprehensive that the merchant mines will not pay minimum wages or ensure workers' social welfare.

**Bajaj Auto:** In 2013, workers at the Bajaj Auto plant in Chakan were on a 50-day strike that ended on August 13. However, the tussle between the management and the workers had been going on for 15 months. The union had demanded reinstatement of 22 suspended workers, wage revision, and shares of the company at reduced prices. The management finally agreed to increase the wages by up to Rs 10,000 a month, but did not allot the workers ESOPs. Both the management and the union decided to withdraw all cases relating to the strike.

**Nokia:** When the Nokia plant shut down in Sriperumbudur after the company decided to wind up operations in India, its closure has given credence to "perceptions" of labour activism driving industry out of Tamil Nadu, a major industrial state, including suggestions that Apple's suppliers chose not to make iPads in Chennai. According to M. Vijayabaskar of the Madras Institute of Development Studies the number of strikes in the Sriperumbudur belt dropped from 110 during 2003 to 28 in 2013. The number of workers involved in strike came down by a fifth in the same period.

### What problems it brought to the fore

These incidents are just a few examples of issues that have crept up time and again and have become almost impossible to ignore.

**Pay:** Firstly, the question of compensation parity between management and the workers and also between the permanent workforce and the contract workers has become a sore thumb. The genesis of most strikes is demanding more wages. While companies continue to make record-breaking profits, they do not translate on the ground to its workers.

**Permanent vs contract staff:** For some industries like auto, the demand waxes and wanes and hence the industry prefers to hire a lot of temp staff. Traditionally, permanent workers were paid more than the contract staff. However, most labour unions allege that the temp staff performs all the tasks that a permanent employee does, but still are not paid accordingly. The Contract Labour Act stipulates that if the temporary workers perform same or similar kind of work as regular workmen, they will be entitled to the same wages and other benefits and service conditions as regular workmen. Hence, the workers are demanding the respective companies also take care of the social security of the contract workforce.

**Contract staff not under direct control:** The temp staff is never under the direct control and supervision of the establishment because they are indirect employees and report to a contractor. According to the current laws, it is the contractor who has to ensure that the temporary workers are provided with basic facilities like canteen, rest rooms etc.

### What's the status now?


The Industrial Disputes Act (1947) has rigid provisions such as prior government approval in the case of layoffs, retrenchment and closure of industrial establishments employing more than 100 workers. The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, states that if the job content or nature of work of employees needs to be changed, 21 days' notice must be given. The changes also require the consent of the employees.

In October 2014, the Labor Ministry has proposed the Small Factories (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Services) Bill to govern wages and conditions of work in small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The Bill envisages rules for wages, overtime hours, social security and appointment of factory inspectors in units employing fewer than 40 workers. The Act will reduce the red tape involved in compliance with the rules. It will allow the SMEs to employ women in night shifts based on the fulfilment of certain conditions.

## IN OCTOBER 2014, THE LABOR MINISTRY PROPOSED THE SMALL FACTORIES BILL TO GOVERN WAGES AND CONDITIONS OF WORK IN SMES

The Factories Act (Amendment) Bill will allow the States to raise the minimum number of workers employed to 20 where power was used and 40 for others, from 10 and 20, respectively. Based on the suggestions in a June 2011 report by an expert committee under former Planning Commission member Narendra Jadhav, the Bill removes prohibitions on women working on certain machines in motion and near cotton openers and allows the State governments to make rules allowing women to work night shifts in factories upon fulfilling certain conditions. It doubled the permissible overtime from 50 hours in one quarter to 100 hours and from 75 hours to 125 hours in certain cases.

In October 2014, Modi launched a Unified Labour Portal or 'Shram Suvidha', a transparent and accountable Labour Inspection Scheme, and portability through Universal Account Number (UAN) for Employees' Provident Fund members. He also flagged off an Apprentice Protsahan Yojana. Introduction of the labour identification number (LIN) and putting inspection on a unified portal will help bring transparency in the use of labor rules. The minimum wage ceiling for provident fund was also raised from ₹6,500 to ₹15,000. EPF and pension schemes are to be ensured for vulnerable groups.

A lot of labor reforms have been undertaken; there is still a long way to go. The question is: Will it be enough to solve the industrial relations problems in India? Most of the reforms are pro-industry and hence workers are worried that their voice will not be heard. 



# BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR INDIA - 2011

A Great Place to Work® Institute India  
and Economic Times Study

## DO YOU LIKE THE COMPANY YOU WORK FOR?

The Best Places To Work For List is an indicative barometer of the company's ability to attract employees

**L**ists always fascinate people. We always like to rate one thing against another, be it jobs, salaries or companies that one works for.

While one's career is usually in one's hand, the place we work in, the colleagues we work with and the bosses who ultimately have a major effect on your professional life also shape it. This is why selecting the right company matters as much as the role or the salary does.

Choosing a place of work is one of the most stressful decisions a person can make. Being recognized by employees as a Best Place To Work is no mean achievement as companies today recognize that it's a reflection of their commitment to create a positive and enjoyable workplace for the employees. These lists give prospective employees insights into what companies do to keep their staff satisfied year round.

In 2011, we published a Best Companies To Work For – India list, a study by the Great Place

to Work® Institute India and Economic Times.

Through our cover story then, we came to the conclusion that in a multi-generational workforce, it is the unique practices and work culture that make organizations a Great Place to Work®.

The Great Place to Work® framework is based on more than 25 years of research of the best workplaces across the globe from the employees' stand point of view. A Great Place to Work® is built through the day-to-day relationships that employees experience and not just some programs and benefits and the key common factor among them is trust. From the employee's perspective, it's very simple: If you trust the people you work for, take pride in what you do and enjoy the company of people you work with, you are in a Great Place to Work®. From the manager's perspective, a Great Place to Work® is the one where they achieve organizational objectives with employees who give their personal best and work together as a team in

an environment of trust. Trust is the defining principle of great workplaces — created through management's credibility, the respect with which employees feel they are treated, and the extent to which employees expect to be treated fairly. The degree of pride and levels of authentic connection and camaraderie employees feel with one are additional essential components. This fundamental model is universal and consistent year-over-year, country-to-country.

### What is a Great Place to Work®?

So what are the common things that the Best Places To Work for have in common? Here are some that popped up in my mind:

- They treat employees like grown-ups who can make their own decisions, whose ideas are worth exploring and grievances worth listening to.
- They help employees with their careers. Employees in such places never have a doubt about where their career is heading. Such companies have strong training programs or will send employees for such programs.
- They understand that people have lives outside of work. A person's life is not just defined by the professional life that she leads, but by the personal life and family time that she needs.
- They understand that every employee has a larger role as a citizen to fulfill. In fact, good companies will ensure that the employee can play that role through company avenues itself.
- They know that employees look for challenges in the work they perform. It's a deep survival mechanism that has allowed us to successfully adapt to new environments again and again over the millennia.
- People are waiting in line to join your company, which has the best people practices that help to attract the best minds of the country and the region. They would give anything to join the company.
- Turnover is low. If there is a lot of turnover at the entry and middle levels, alarm bells should ring. On the other hand, if people have been in the company for a long time, then you are looking at a healthy culture.
- Change is welcome. Not many people like change, but when change does occur, people are not put off by it. Leaders need to show the way by managing change with care and dignity such that even employees no longer dread it. Identifying the evidences of a great culture is all fine and good.
- There is no fear among employees. People don't fret if they say the wrong thing in front of the wrong person. Employees in an organization with a great culture can walk into the boss's office with a concern and know they will be heard.

### Why is it essential to be a good place to work?


It has long been established that customer loyalty alone pumps up company profitability. Likewise, it is employee loyalty that will see the company through in its growth and profitability phase. Today, employee retention and employee engagement have become more than just buzzwords for the

## A GREAT COMPANY IS A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN DO GREAT THINGS WHILE HAVING A GREAT TIME

HR community. Companies are seriously working towards making their employees like they are part of a growing family rather than just doing a tick-in-the-box exercise. Recent research by the Hay Group showed that engaged employees are on an average 50 per cent more likely to exceed expectations than the least engaged workers.

That in turn adds to productivity. Companies with highly engaged people outperform companies with the most disengaged folks – 54 per cent in employee retention and 89 per cent in customer satisfaction. These scores can be achieved only if the company is a good place to work.

Why do companies increasingly feel the need to portray that they are a good place to work? The Great Place To Work Institute is but one of the many lists in the market that showcase how employees rate their companies. There are many other lists as well like Forbes, Fortune, Glassdoor to name a few. If a recent ILO report is anything to go by, then the jobless growth problem has never really gone away. The report mentioned that at least 215 million jobseekers will be unemployed globally by 2018. With the threat of jobless growth still looming large, employees would do well to stick to the companies they work with rather than hopping around multiple places. In 2013, the Indian economy grew but did not create any jobs. That spectrum begins to look terrifying as the years go by as the country is poised to become the nation with the youngest workforce on the planet. If there are no jobs for the millions of millennials who enter the workforce, that could have large-scale implications not just for the companies but the society as a whole. Besides the larger economic implication, at a micro level, people like to be part of something that is bigger than themselves, something they believe in. Believing in the organization's core values is much more than just remembering the exact words.

Working in a 'great company to work for' is simple: a great company is a place where you can do great things while having a great time, with others who want the same. But things are not as simple as they seem. If every morning when you wake up, you feel good about going to work, then life is sorted. Otherwise, it might be a good time to start looking around. 

# 10 ICONIC COMPANIES THAT WERE BORN DURING A RECESSION

In this timeline, we feature companies that were born during a recession and against all odds became iconic brands



1837

## The Panic of 1837

It was a financial crisis in the United States that started a major recession that lasted until the mid-1840s. Historians have typically attributed it to a real estate bubble and erratic American banking policy.

1908



## GM

William Durant, leading horse carriage maker, tried his luck with a new technology — the automobile. It became a holding company for Buick and Oldsmobile, later acquiring Cadillac and Oakland, today known as Pontiac. Though it led global vehicle sales from 1931 to 2007, it declared bankruptcy on June 1, 2009. In 2010, the reorganized GM made one of the world's 5 largest IPOs ever and returned to profitability, with \$155.42 billion in revenue in 2013.

1907



## The Panic of 1907 (Banker's Panic)

It was a financial crisis that took place in October 1907 where the failed attempt to rein in the stock price of United Copper Company led to a series of bank runs and national panic. The failure of the banks and the trusts, particularly the Knickerbocker Trust Company in New York, led to a crisis of faith in the banking system throughout the United States.

1920

## Depression of 1920-21

It was an extremely sharp deflationary recession in the United States, shortly after the end of World War I. Returning troops adding to the civilian labor force, a decline in labor union strife and changes in fiscal policy, among others, were the contributing factors.

1923



## Disney

Founded on October 16, 1923, by **Walt and Roy O. Disney** as the Disney Brothers Cartoon Studio, it became a leader in the American animation industry before diversifying into live-action film production, television, and theme parks. Disney created Mickey Mouse in 1928. Soon, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* went on to become the highest-grossing film of that time.

1837



## P&G

In the Panic of 1837, candle maker William Procter and soap maker James Gamble joined forces to start a small household-goods business in Cincinnati, a risky move as it was at the start of a financial crisis. But they survived this trial by fire. Today, the company is present in 80 countries, has 135,000 employees and has recorded \$79 billion in sales.

1873

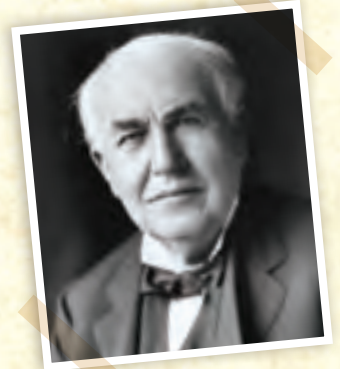
## Panic of 1873 - Long Depression

The Panic of 1873 began when the major investment firm Jay Cooke and Co. collapsed, causing the NYSE to shut down for days. The ensuing financial crisis lasted for six years. Economic conditions continued to remain poor until 1896.



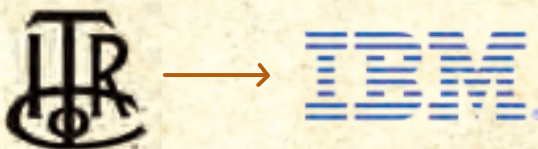
## GE

Thomas Alva Edison, the inventor of the light bulb, developed the first dynamos — devices that convert mechanical energy into electrical energy — in 1879. By 1882, Edison had entered the power generation business by forming the Edison Electric Illuminating Company. In 1892, GE was born after the merger of Edison's company with Thomson-Houston Company, another prominent manufacturer of dynamos and electric lights. Today, GE is present in more than 170 countries with 307,000 employees and revenues of \$146 billion.



1892

1896



## IBM

Three startups — the Tabulating Machine Company, the International Time Recording Company and the Computing Scale Corporation — developed technologies during this 23-year period that were in demand despite the weak economy. These three companies merged later to form the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company, which changed its name to IBM several years later.

1953

## The Post Korean War Recession of 1953

The recession from 1953 to 1954 occurred because of a combination of events during the early part of the 1950s. It was demand-driven because of a dramatic change of interest rates that led to an increase in pessimism about the economy.

1954

## Sports Illustrated

Developed by Henry Luce, the creator of *Time* magazine, the first issues lacked focus, covering both popular spectator sports and elite activities such as rugby. Hence, the magazine struggled in its initial years. After 1960, when Andre Laguerre took over as managing editor, *Sports Illustrated* focused on premier sporting events, allowing people to read more about what they had seen on television or read about in newspapers. It sells about 3 million copies in the US each week.



1971

## The Nixon Recession 1971-75

It began in 1969 with **US President Nixon** facing re-election. He had inherited a recession from Lyndon Johnson, who had simultaneously spent generously on the Great Society and the Vietnam War. Congress continued to fund the war, and increased social welfare spending. Nixon's other economic volte-face was imposing wage and price controls in 1971, which ultimately led to double-digit inflation. Then he took US off the gold standard in response to a run on the gold held at Fort Knox. However, this created inflation as the price of gold skyrocketed to \$120 an ounce and the value of the dollar plummeted. The result was stagflation and three consecutive quarters of negative growth.



1957

## Hyatt Hotels

Hyatt was founded by Jay Pritzker in 1957 when he purchased the Hyatt House Motel adjacent to the Los Angeles International Airport. Jay Pritzker and his brother Donald Pritzker grew the company into a North American management and hotel ownership company, which became a public company in 1962. In 1968, Hyatt International was formed and subsequently became a separate public company.

1957

## The Eisenhower Recession of 1957-58

The US government tightened monetary policy to years prior to the recession to curb inflation, but prices continued to rise in the US through 1959. The sharp worldwide recession and the strong US dollar contributed to a foreign trade deficit.



1980



## CNN

Founded by Ted Turner, it was the first all-news channel to provide 24-hour coverage. It expanded to a number of cable and satellite TV channels. Three major events helped shape its destiny. First, the only live television coverage of the launch and explosion of space shuttle *Challenger*; second, the rescue of 18-month-old toddler Jessica McClure, showcasing the impact of live video news and third, the Gulf War in 1991 where they were the only news outlet with the ability to communicate from inside Iraq during the initial hours of the aerial bombing.

1981

## MTV



Its original purpose was to play music that was not played by local radio stations. The launch aired footage of the countdown of the space shuttle *Columbia* and *Apollo 11*, and photos of *Apollo 11* landing on the moon with a flag featuring MTV's logo. It was acquired by Viacom in 1985 and has now become one of the biggest pop culture influences throughout the world.



1971

## FedEx

Recognizing the need for fast and efficient airfreight delivery, owing to a stint in the Army, Frederick W. Smith purchased a controlling interest in Arkansas Aviation Sales and founded Federal Express, now known as FedEx. On the first day of business itself, FedEx managed to deliver 186 packages across 25 cities in the US.



1975

## Microsoft

Microsoft was formed soon after the introduction of the Micro Instrumentation and Telemetry Systems (MITS) Altair, the first 'personal computer,' a build-it-yourself kit for hobbyists. Bill Gates and Paul Allen seized the opportunity to transform this early PC into a breakthrough — the Altair needed software, a programming language that could make it perform useful computing tasks. Gates was a Harvard dropout and began dealing with rudimentary computing languages. It was MS-DOS that changed the course of Microsoft's history.

1980

## Early 1980s recession

The recession from the late 1970s spilled over to the early 1980s. While the US and Japan exited the recession very early, OECD nations continued to face high unemployment. It was partially driven by the Iranian oil embargo which reduced US oil supplies, driving up prices. In response to this, the Fed raised interest rates to combat inflation, which in turn reduced business spending. The second quarter of 1980 was the worst since the Great Depression until the 2008-09 Recession.



1976

## Apple Inc

Apple Inc, formerly known as Apple Computer, was founded by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in California. Both had been friends since high school and had kept in touch despite dropping out of school and working for Silicon Valley companies. Wozniak had been dabbling in computer design and soon, on Jobs' insistence, he designed Apple I. But, it was not until the debut of Apple II at a trade show in 1977 that Apple really took off. Apple's fortunes had been tied to its founders, especially Jobs, since the inception. On October 5, 2011, Steve Jobs died from pancreatic cancer.

2000

## Early 2000s recession

It affected the EU in 2000 and 2001 and the US in 2002 and 2003. Though not that significant, it was predicted by economists because the boom of the 1990s (accompanied by both low inflation and low unemployment) had already ceased in East Asia during the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Economists later objected to the period being called a recession because industrial output shrank only for two quarters.

2001

## Wikipedia

It was born during the recent post-9/11 recession. Established in January 2001 by Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger, the idea for the free-as-in-freedom online encyclopedia was proposed by Richard Stallman in December 2000. As of December 2014, Wikipedia includes over 34 million freely usable articles in 288 languages written by over 50 million registered users and numerous anonymous contributors worldwide.



# HOW TO DEAL WITH GROWING PAINS

Jobless growth will continue to remain a major challenge for the global economies this year

**G**rowing economic inequality, more joblessness and severe weather are going to be among the top 10 challenges for the world this year, according to experts at the World Economic Forum. Persistent economic growth refers to the phenomenon where economies exiting recessions exhibit steady economic growth but there is a decline in the level of employment. This tends to happen when a relatively large number of people have lost their jobs during the recession and the ensuing recovery is insufficient to absorb the unemployed, the under-employed or even the newer members of the workforce. Har-

**OVER 200 MILLION PEOPLE ARE JOBLESS GLOBALLY. THE SCALE AND IMPACT OF THIS PROBLEM IS ACUTE IN INDIA**

vard Professor Larry Summers writes in an article that this global threat is brought on by technological changes and that “automation is certainly the biggest single contributing factor” to the problem.

“The transformations and job displacements associated with technological progress are happening faster, and may even be more dramatic in their impact than anything we’ve experienced before, and the task of providing a meaningful, substantial role for everyone is going to be hugely important. But I believe that this presents us with a huge opportunity to take advantage of current low costs of borrowing and under-utilized labor resources, and embark on large-scale projects to build and repair essential infrastructure in our developed and emerging economies,” Summers writes.

Economies experience cyclical as well as structural changes when they recover from a recession. In a cyclical economy, employment growth and decline follows the expansion and contraction of the economy. A structural change displaces many unemployed workers as their companies cannot recover fully. In cyclical economies, companies are able to rehire the workers when the economy stabilizes. The core industries remain strong and viable so that they are able to recover quickly.

Currently, more than 200 million people are jobless across the world. The scale and impact of this problem is pretty enormous and is particularly acute in India.

In 2013, the problem of jobless growth was staring the country in its face. In our April 2013 Cover

Story ‘Jobless Growth’, we found that the number of entrants into the workforce in the period 2005-10 was an average of 12 million per annum. But,



the country managed to create only 5.5 million jobs in the industry and the services sector during the period. This was a period when the company grew at an average of 8.7 per cent and above 9 per cent in three of the five years. While the new job addition in the five-year period was 27.5 million, the number of self-employed people also reduced by 25.5 million, leading to a net increase of 2 million in the employed population. More than half the workforce is working in the agriculture sector. But employment in the sector has shrunk from 57 per cent to 53 per cent in the five-year period from 2005-10. The agricultural sector itself is plagued by disguised unemployment. More than 15 million workers have migrated to bigger cities in search of work. Unfortunately, a lot of them become casual laborers and work in the low productivity construction sector. The high productivity sectors of manufacturing and the services, on the other hand, need a highly skilled and trained labor force. The lack of good talent is a deterrent for many companies, which have been lamenting about it for some time now.

According to the Economic Survey 2013, India could see as many as 16.7 million 'missing jobs' by 2020. India's high rate of informality in the job sector is a drag on its economic development and a source of considerable inequity. A strong correlation exists between informality (of jobs) and poverty in India. In organized industries, the jobs have shifted from regular to contract work resulting in casualization of labor. Manufacturing shed five million jobs, while services employed only 3.5 million workers during this period.

More than 200 million people were unemployed in 2013 globally, an increase of almost 5 million compared with the year before. Most of the countries across the world are finding it difficult to generate sufficient jobs to keep up with the labor supply.

The bulk of the increase in global unemployment is in the East Asia and South Asia regions, which represent over 45 per cent of additional jobseekers, followed by Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe. By contrast, Latin America added fewer than 50,000 additional unemployed to the global number – or around 1 per cent of the total increase in unemployment in 2013.

The recession in 2008 opened a can of worms and the job gaps have just become wider. In 2013, this gap reached 62 million jobs, including 32 million additional jobseekers, 23 million people who no longer look for jobs and 7 million economically inactive people who prefer not to participate in the labor market.

### Current state

The present government recognizes the need for skilling and employment and is pushing the 'Make in India' campaign quite aggressively. What is required is more than just a band-aid solution. They will need to work on more than just a high-profile campaign. A lot of work will need to be done on the ground level with reforms in the education sector, revisiting policies on apprenticeships and creating retraining opportunities.

Even China, which has seen rapid industrialization and usage of technology and automation, has seen a decline in employment in the manufacturing sector.

If the current trends continue, it will spell catastrophe for the world. At least 215 million jobseekers will be unemployed globally by 2018, according to an ILO report. The report further stated that during the period up to 2018, around 40 million net new jobs would be created every year, which is less than the 42.6 million people that are expected to enter the labor market every year.

This is particularly worrisome for India as the country is placing its bets on the rich demographic dividend and hoping to reap its benefits in the coming years. It is with an eye on the upcoming generations that the government has focused its attention on skilling. The global unemployment rate has reached 13.1 per cent and is quite high in the Middle East, North Africa, parts of Latin America and the Caribbean and Southern Europe.


### What can it lead to?

Severe unemployment is a social catastrophe. Idleness means loss of skills, loss of self-respect, plummeting of morale, family disintegration and socio-political unrest. Being out of work for more than six months can have a big impact on the person, her family and the respective communities.

## INDIA'S HIGH RATE OF INFORMALITY IN THE JOB SECTOR IS A DRAG ON ITS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND A SOURCE OF CONSIDERABLE INEQUITY

When they are out of work, workers skills can erode over time. This depreciation increases as time passes and it becomes more difficult for the person to find a new job the longer they are out of work. Being out of work may also reduce a worker's "social capital" – the network of business contacts that make finding new and good jobs easier.

If a person loses her job, she tends to earn less when she finds a new job and also tends to be in poorer health, prone to depression and suicide. At the individual level, research links increases in suicide, homicide, cardiovascular mortality and mental illness to high unemployment. In the end, communities also end up bearing the weight of the unemployed; the crime rates and violence in such communities tend to be higher.

It is not just the government's imperative that people in the country are given employment opportunities. It should be the duty of the corporates, be it private or public, to ensure that employment is not just a state subject. Unless the various corporates and the government work together on this, we will have a massive problem on our hands with no apparent solution. 

# TECH TALK: PREDICTING THE FUTURE

The top five HR technology radical shifts - Ignore them at your own risk

**T**he HR Technology market has hit \$15 billion and is still growing. This industry is exploding with startups in social and referral recruiting, talent analytics, assessments etc. The top 50 HR technology investment deals this year were over \$560 million and the top 50 learning and educational tech deals were over \$800 million, according to Josh Bersin, Founder and Principal at Bersin by Deloitte, leading provider of research-based membership programs in human resources (HR), talent and learning. Economic growth, changes in demographics, a growing skills shortage, and millennials entering the workforce, are the main forces driving the tremendous growth in this segment. Technology can be a potential headache for HR teams and boardrooms in 2015 as organizations grapple with the need to embed them in the new processes and systems at the speed business and employees are demanding.

All of these factors have been creating big disruption for HR departments over the last few

years. It is not new. What is new is the urgency in the need to recognize these changes is higher than ever before.

Last year when we wrote '*HR Cyborgs*' for our August Cover Story, we saw the possibility that HR managers will have wearable devices at their disposal and these devices will help them make talent decisions. This year, we track 5 radical shifts in this space to watch out for

**1. Technology for engagement not for administration.** There is a clear shift - HR systems will go beyond administrative systems of record. They will be the foundation for building the organization - from talent intelligence, to collaboration and culture, communication and engagement to employer branding. The changes in technology are going to have a far wider impact than just improving the HR processes. HR professionals need to leverage this opportunity by looking at HR technology throu-

gh the wider lens of workplace transformation. This also implies the integration of messaging and communication. Internal and external communication is integrated in HR platforms. They create an opportunity for two-way interaction thereby reinforcing the talent brand. Employees also co-create the messaging by being ambassadors of the brand internally and externally.

2. **New workforce, new ways.** By 2020, the median individual in India will be 29 years, making it the youngest country in the world. The workplace demographics are radically changing and HR will need to shift gears to support a very different segment of employee. This year, millennials will become the largest segment of the workforce for the first time. That will mean a shift on the mediums that HR uses to interact and engage with talent bringing social and mobile to the forefront. While there are apps for consumers, it is time for HR to leverage the power of 5.2 billion mobile devices and 1.6 billion smart phones. There is another trend that spins off from the demographic changes and business dynamics: The increase of contingent workforce and the need for alternative employment relationships. That will require organizations equipping themselves with systems and technology that support these new contractual relationships. Empowering all parties to maximize value: More self service for the user, more insights for the employer to manage work, projects and shifts the most optimal way.


3. **Using data for prediction not for explanation.** Data analytics will be key for HR to make a real difference to the overall business strategy. While many organizations have been collecting data for many years, they are yet to realize the predictive power of the data. In most organizations, finance and marketing departments are good at drawing out analytical data for their functions, HR is far behind with just 4 per cent of organizations effectively using predictive models for their workforce. There is where HR really takes on a strategic role and gets business recognition as they are presenting management data to support the HR requirements. Google uses predictive analytics to drive its people decisions. For example, Google's PiLab is a unique subgroup that no other firm has. It conducts applied experiments within Google to determine the most effective approaches for managing people and maintaining a productive environment (including the type of reward that makes employees the happiest). This shift will inevitably require many change in thinking about the business of HR. This year, we will see many more organizations adding data analytics capabilities to its HR teams, creating models and driving insights that optimize methods across HR processes.

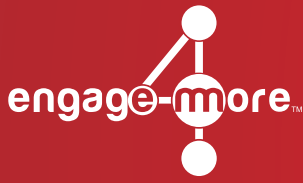
4. **Recruit like a marketer.** Last year IT major HCL Technologies launched a global talent acquisition campaign called #coolestinterviewer on Twitter. The campaign used the powerful social platform of Twitter to create a complete

recruitment engagement while amplifying "Employer Value Proposition" reach. Hiring became a two-way conversation on a social platform. Total engagement from prospective job seekers was 250,000. Ultimately, five candidates were shortlisted via twitter interviews conducted over 15 days with candidates from over 60 countries. A strong talent brand can significantly reduce the cost per hire, increase engagement and strengthen employer loyalty. Technology is today an integral part of the recruitment process and it is time to integrate social media across the board to video interviewing and virtual meeting tools and applicant tracking systems. Candidates expect a lot more from organizations – are your jobs on social? Are they easy to find on a mobile device? Can I interact and connect with people playing those roles today? Recruiters need to keep pace with the segment they are trying to hire from. Is your recruitment team mirroring your critical talent segments? This year we will see recruitment teams bringing onboard more tech-natives in order to be able to engage with Millennials and Generation Z.

## THE CHALLENGE FOR HR TEAMS WILL BE THE NEED TO EMBED NEW TECHNOLOGIES AT THE SPEED BOTH THEIR BUSINESS AND EMPLOYEES ARE DEMANDING

5. **Performance, Succession planning & e-governance.** Organizations need sharper focus on their current reality and the ability to create hypothesis for different business scenarios and predict its talent implications. Focus on productivity and innovation is driving a radical shift in the way we look at Performance Management. Bersin By Deloitte predicts 67 per cent of companies are planning to purchase new talent management software either for the first time or as a replacement for existing solutions. Traditional approaches and its systems are as not adequately supporting business requirements and talent expectations. Similarly, for succession planning, organizations will need to imbibe predictive modeling to continually improve their forecasts of marrying people capabilities, readiness and costs to business opportunities. Finally, an increasing focus on compliance, e-governance and the increasing risks related to people liabilities will drive even higher focus on building systems with scalable technology.

This year HR will need more investments. CEOs are aware that investment in people is the key to future success. We will see more and more of those words translating into action. As the HR function becomes more aware, more business-focused and empowered to take technology decisions, it will be able to deliver the business outcome that it promises. 



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# MEET THE STARTUP CLASS OF 2009

In this story, we capture the journey of companies that were born during this last recession

By Ankita Sharma Sukhwani

**T**he startup world is often fast-paced, chaotic, high-risk and frankly on the verge of insane. Yet, these characteristics are exactly what make it exciting. This is why people are willing to work 60-plus hour weeks with little or no pay. It is also why this often mysterious, somewhat dangerous and unpredictable atmosphere is able to deliver companies that grow at a remarkable pace, pushing creativity, innovation and disruption.

People Matters completed its fifth anniversary this year. As we celebrate this milestone, it also makes us curious to find out how other companies as old as us were faring. To find an insider perspective on the startup culture and challenges, we approached startups born of the tumult of recession and heard their stories. It is an eclectic

Corporate performance remained mostly subdued, while corporate profitability dipped. Recession also affected the investments made by Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) in the Indian stock market as they started disinvesting to meet their commitments abroad. GDP dropped and unemployment, always a significant problem in India, rose further.

However, in the midst of this gloom, bright and determined minds were at work on their dreams. Some had a personal goal to start a venture; others were addressing market or social needs. The recession proved to be a bane for established industry players, but it was to become a seeding ground for entrepreneurs.

Over this period, India saw a generation of entrepreneurs venturing into new or established

## THE RECESSION PROVED TO BE A BANE FOR ESTABLISHED INDUSTRY PLAYERS, BUT IT BECAME A SEEDING GROUND FOR ENTREPRENEURS

list. We reached out to entrepreneurs like Zomato in E-commerce, SOIL and iProf in education, Mettl in human resources, Applied Mobile Labs in mobile advertising and Happy Hands Foundation in social services. We then worked on putting together some shared wisdom.

### Starting out five years ago

It has been said that “when the US sneezes, the world catches a cold” and this stood true for India as well during the recession of 2008-09. Companies — among them lions of the financial world like Lehman Brothers, Bear Sterns, AIG and Merrill Lynch — faced massive losses or outright bankruptcy. Governments had to intervene to save businesses and banks.

The contagion spread across business sectors worldwide and recovery took its time. The Indian stock market crashed from a high of 20,000 to a low of around 8,000 points during this period.

territories, taking risks in an uncertain economy and rapidly carving a name for themselves.

These startups have proved that even a slow market and unfavorable conditions cannot stop a great idea supported by a strong business plan. As we probed into the culture of these remarkable organizations with our exhaustive conversations, and listened to the founders recount their experiences, some really interesting insights into the entrepreneurial mind emerged.

These anecdotes, touchstones and learnings, we believe, will be instructive for other startups who wanted to borrow a leaf from the books of these organizations. One can get primers to hiring the right people, maintaining a good team, making the right business choices and other decisions that can make or mar an organization's growth. We found lessons for ourselves among them. We hope you, the reader, will as well. Read on.

# THE TOP 5 CHECKLIST FOR ENTREPRENEURS

## THE HIRING CHALLENGE

With a new breed of leaders among the ranks of these entrepreneurs, the process of hiring has seen a change and the old methods have been discarded. Here are some new-age mantras that we discovered in our conversations.

• **The skill vs will quadrant.** While dealing with a candidate, if his skill and will are high you should go for it. If his will is high, but skill low, you might consider him. If his skill is high and his will is low, place him on

hold. If both are low, reject him.

• **Culture and value fit.** Will you enjoy spending an 18-hour long flight with this person? If the answer to this is a 'yes' then the culture fit criterion is fulfilled. If your company works under a defined set of values, a longer exposure to the person's career to judge his suitability is a good idea.

• **Stop-gap or long-term potential?** Does this person want the job as a stepping stone or is he genuinely interested in solving the same problem you are tackling?

• **Is he 'engaged' or merely giving a 'job interview'?** People who generally are more inquisitive and think on their feet are better than those who just answer what you ask them.

• **Genuine estrangement or a personality trait?** It is never wise to hire somebody very unhappy with his last employer and willing to join another firm on the rebound. People who move on for better prospects and growth are preferable to those who are unhappy with their employer.

## TALENT DECISIONS & DILEMMAS

There are equally complex challenges that emerge when you want to have a functional and responsive team. Talking to our chosen startups about their talent decisions and the dilemmas they faced, here are a few which stood out:

• **Temporary workforce.** Getting the right people together is crucial for any organization. A good hire at the right time can send the trajectory of your company upwards. Conversely, a bad hire can really set a startup back several paces. A number of companies have gone for a part-time or project-based workforce to work around this issue.

• **Personal connect.** Startups are small units with passions that run high as milestones are achieved. With such small teams, it is very easy to get attached to members. Even though a personal connect helps workflow, it might simultaneously hamper recruitment decisions. In the life-time of every startup, there are occasions when it needs to upskill and hire specialists or let go of employees. Personal connects can affect such decisions.

• **Not training enough.** Your startup might be cash-strapped and it could be a challenge to hire the best people. This also restricts your budget for training the employees to align them with the company's

vision, which in turn can have a great impact down the line.

• **Not firing quickly.** This was a concern and a lesson that was shared by the companies. If someone is clearly not a fit after a certain time period, you need to let them go. For smaller companies, HR situations are make-or-break.

• **Retaining talent.** Once the employees with the will have also acquired the skill, how do you retain them? This cannot happen by money alone. Some successful startups have modified their offerings to include ESOPs for their employees, ensuring that there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.

## BUSINESS CHALLENGES

Nothing can prepare a new company for the crests and troughs of the market. Our conversation helped us get some perspective on a few of these challenges and how to deal with them.

• **Getting married to your product.** Every entrepreneur has a grand vision for her product. However, reality intervenes once you enter the market. Aligning to market expectations and needs and evolving quickly and efficiently is very essential. Being fixated on your own idea of what the market needs can lead to an unsuccessful product.

• **Misdirected focus.** Startups sometimes

get misguided into setting up elaborate systems way ahead of time, which can take their focus away from the more mundane tasks at hand.

• **Legalities.** Indian laws are a maze of regulations both at the state and the national level and there are no clear guidelines available which can handhold your company through this maze right now. Having legal counsel is an essential requirement for any entrepreneurial venture. And it is not just legal regulations but also day-to-day business agreements which require legal knowledge.

• **Managing funds.** The eyes of the world are on entrepreneurs, and a number of

angel investors are helping and guiding promising ideas on the way to becoming full-fledged companies. However, not every startup is equipped to judiciously utilize that financial aid and plan for the long term. Burning through cash quickly is a risky affair and many companies, even after great funding, have folded due to lack of visibility on the use of funds.

• **Workplace politics.** You will need to ensure that no one is playing 'grab this ground'. There are a lot of times when people try to grab space and protect it from others, especially to monopolize the limelight. Startups should not tolerate politics. Period.

Some of the biggest businesses in the world today started off as entrepreneurial ventures. Companies like GE, P&G, IBM, Microsoft, Disney and various others started off during times of recession. Some dared to dream big, while others were happy just to make a difference in the society through their ventures.

But these companies proved that any business adversity is smaller than the will to make a difference. And it is this passion to make a difference that drives us here at People Matters. As we speak to other companies in their fifth year, we are optimistic that we all will go on to create wonders in our own might. 🙌

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# EVERY COMPANY SHOULD HAVE ITS OWN HIRING CRITERIA


Hiring the right people to fit the organizational ethos is vital if a successful company wants to build for the future, says

**Deepinder Goyal, Founder & CEO, Zomato**

**W**hile working at Bain & Company, I noticed that a lot of my colleagues would queue up to view the stack of menu cards in the cafeteria during lunch hour. We couldn't take the menus to our desks since people generally lost them, which caused inconvenience to everyone. To save

been exhilarating, but I believe our biggest achievement lies in building an exemplary team and retaining, even today, the culture we set out with.

We have been very lucky to have a team of over 1000 Zomans, most of who share the company's vision. While hiring we prioritize a cultural fit, which for us means

been our hiring process. In the early days, we were hiring rapidly. Looking back, I think we should have hired at a slower pace, with a more thorough process. This is something we keep emphasizing on. Today, over six years down the line, I know we've made good progress. From tapping social media to launching trial weeks and leadership programs, we are trying it all to find the right talent. We've realized that often, to find the right talent, you need to use some slightly non-traditional means of hiring. Our biggest challenge right now is to continue expanding our teams at the same pace as the company while getting the right talent to come aboard. 

*(As told to People Matters)*

## A SERIES OF CONVERSATIONS ACROSS VARIOUS INTERNAL SETUPS GOES A LONG WAY IN HELPING YOU PICK THE RIGHT TALENT

them all that trouble, I just scanned the menus and put them online. This small intranet website got a substantial number of hits from people within Bain. That is when I realized that a business could be built around scanned menus, and thus the very early form of Zomato was born. My then colleague Pankaj (Chaddah) came on board and soon we went live with menus for 1,200 restaurants in Delhi NCR in July 2008. By the end of that year this had gone up to 2,000. I don't think I set out with an agenda to be to be a leader or to be in this industry in the first place. I am an engineer: I guess the tech aspect comes easily to me. Also, I have always been entrepreneurial by nature. Zomato was just driven by a need that we had. The first few years, after we quit our jobs, were fine: we were focused on putting together a strong tech product that was bridging a gap in the market. Things became intense once we raised some funds and hired a team. That kind of intensity and sense of urgency makes sense if you're solving a problem. The experience of going from zero to coverage of 22 countries has

someone with the right attitude and willingness to pick up the skills we require as we scale up. Some personal attributes, such as a keen ability to learn new things, being a people person, honesty or self-motivation are difficult to train into people. We do not judge people on any skillsets except those which are tech-related, since we strongly believe that any skill can be acquired with the right attitude.

Hiring someone isn't simply a predefined interview process. A series of conversations across various internal setups goes a long way in helping you pick the right talent. Every company should have their own make-or-break factors when it comes to identifying a hire. For Zomato, it is zeroing in on someone who fits well within the organizational culture. A potential Zoman must have a can-do attitude, be willing to get their hands dirty, have a likeable personality, and must share the organization's values. Over time, we've come to realize that there are two kinds of people – the ones who want to learn, and those who don't. If, as a community, we can bring together the former, we've won half the battle. Probably one of our biggest areas of learning has

**ZOMATO** is a restaurant search app providing in-depth information for over a million restaurants across 22 countries

**EMPLOYEES** 1000 +

**SECTOR** Consumer Services



# WE HAVE A HIGH-SPEED ENTREPRENEURIAL ENVIRONMENT

A combination of experienced leaders and passionate young people give the venture a unique dynamic edge, says **Anil Sachdev, Founder & CEO, School of Inspired Leadership**

**A**s a college student, I dreamt of India becoming a strong economic and spiritual power and wanted to contribute to that. Through my journey from Tatas and Eicher to the creation of SOIL (School of Inspired Leadership), I always followed a cause which consistently provided the energy to make the impossible, possible.

The first part of my life was about creating role model companies. The second was about helping other companies do the same and the last part has been to work on building next-generation talent through education. The inspiration behind SOIL comes from the basic idea that India has immense resources but poor leadership. And wherever there is leadership, it is of a singular kind focusing on making money rather than running a business while contributing to improve the country. So instead of blaming all our problems on poor leadership we thought about starting a new program for education which teaches responsible management. Our offerings have a deep commitment to making a difference and turning India into a role model.

In all the companies that I have built, the team has been a combination of a few experienced leaders who share the same vision and fresh passionate graduates open to learning. This has been a very successful combination which has worked for SOIL as well. From every passing class, we choose some students who share our values and are capable of working within our team.

When SOIL began, we identified top faculty across the world who had taught at Harvard, Stanford and other global business schools and were independent consultants. There were also top industry leaders who had the passion of giving back to the students. We invited them to come and teach at SOIL. My own network established across years of work also helped me in choosing the right people for different roles.

If I look at the mistakes we have made

from the talent perspective, most have them have been because of a mismatch in values. There were people who came with a different set of ideas about the education sector. People sometimes choose academics because they assume this will give them a lot of leisure time to work on other aspects of their life. At SOIL, however, we

## THE INSPIRATION BEHIND SOIL COMES FROM THE BASIC IDEA THAT INDIA HAS IMMENSE RESOURCES BUT POOR LEADERSHIP

have a high-speed and rigorous entrepreneurial culture. We also have the highest standards for research. Traditional notions of some people, therefore, were belied.


Also — and this, I am happy to say, has been rare for us — someone might not have been as keen to join our organization as he was to leave his last one. I never consider it wise to hire somebody unhappy with his last employer and willing to join my company on the rebound.

Our biggest business challenge was that we chose not to get government approvals and opted to create a completely different kind of educational institution. We associated with some of the best companies across different industries to form a consortium.

Rather than a degree, we provide a co-branded certificate to our students with our industry partners. It was a very high-risk situation of not affiliating with any government body, as most Indian parents are uncomfortable with the idea of their children not getting a degree at the end of an education course.

Also, we have had a very tough time trying to find the right faculty on a full-time basis. We are even contemplating to

solve this in the near future with a comprehensive training program for industry leaders who are interested in moving to the education sector.

Finally, I would say that there is great joy in starting out as an underdog and moving on to compete with the best names in the industry and making a difference in the way companies do business. 

*(As told to People Matters)*

**SOIL** with its legacy in Higher Education, aims to build inspired leaders with character, competence and enthusiasm

**EMPLOYEES** 100 (40 Full-time)

**SECTOR** Higher Education & Consulting



# HARD WORK IS DEFINING FACTOR FOR US

An optimum combination of attitude and aptitude is what Mettl looks for in prospective employees, says  
**Ketan Kapoor, Co-founder & CEO, Mettl**

I come from a family with a very old services background. However,

my first job was in a start-up and I think that is where the seeds of entrepreneurship were sown in my mind. The energy of the place, the innovation in products, the culture that they were trying to promote in the organization and the belief that whatever they were doing would change the world in a small way, was a huge motivator.

probability of having a great journey that will keep you and your team motivated is fairly less.

I think the optimal mix for a startup is a three-people team: one for business, another for the product and the third for the technology. When we started out, we were a two-people team who focused on the product and business. We got our third musketeer a little later and he has been heading our technology wing ever since.

Our idea behind hiring a person is to find the best candidate globally. We mainly choose a person based on attitude and aptitude. Aptitude is about the competency of the person in the present, his abilities and his skills. Attitude incorporates a smart and hard-working approach and whether he needs constant guidance and supervision.

In our team, hard work is the defining factor. It does not matter if a person is

portfolios simultaneously. However, in the journey of a startup, there comes a time when you have to focus on hiring specialists as opposed to generalists. In the graph of any company, it becomes imperative to hire specialists in every function, be it marketing, technical or any other. And I think that is something we could have done sooner in our own journey.

- The other point I have in mind relates to the psyche and DNA of the founders. It depends on them to decide both their focus on being a product company and the time when one should start ramping up sales. However, this is a decision which companies take down the line. In our case, we could have decided to do this three or six months earlier than when we did. It is only now that we have ramped up our sales and got the right team together.

It is difficult for companies to move to a data and analytics-driven culture, but these days taking decisions based on them is necessary. For smaller companies, HR is a make-or-break situation. A good hire at the right time can alter the trajectory of your company and make shoot up, whereas a bad hire can really set you back in time. There are so many things that every company wants to do. It is about choosing your battles wisely. 🍌

*(As told to People Matters)*

## UNLESS YOU ARE THINKING BIG AND AIMING FOR THE STARS, THE PROBABILITY OF HAVING A GREAT BUSINESS JOURNEY THAT WILL KEEP YOU AND YOUR TEAM MOTIVATED IS FAIRLY LESS

Even though I left that organization in due course, the idea of starting something of my own remained. I made a personal goal of starting a company before I turned 30. I kept trying until I succeeded in this.

To be honest, the fact that we were starting the company during a recession has never really crossed our mind. While the recession was indeed on everybody's mind in 2009, we felt our business idea addressed a strong need and that if we didn't make our move, some international brand or the other would, and fill up the space. That has happened to other ideas in the past.

At Mettl, our ambition from the beginning has been to become an organization that is on the top globally. Unless you are thinking big, and aiming for the stars, the

from an IIT or IIM, as any level of aptitude can be lost if the person lacks the will to work hard. An individual from a humble background can become a force to reckon with if he is hard working. So, for us, hard work trumps credentials, aptitude or capability. We also have a lot of entrepreneurs in the company. Even if they fail or do not achieve the desired success in their venture, it gives them the right attitude and we welcome more such people in our midst.

Every entrepreneurial venture makes mistakes, learns from them and moves on. The following are some of the things which we as a company could have done differently.

- Generalists help take the company off the ground, managing different

**METTL** helps companies measure talent through the use of assessment products for recruitments and training

**EMPLOYEES** 78

**SECTOR** HR Technology

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# WILL IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SKILL

The company has based its hire on the criteria that will trumps skill and quality must be of global standards, according to **Mrigank Tripathi, Founder and board member of Applied Mobile Labs**

I always knew that I would become an entrepreneur one day. When I returned to India in 2008 and looking at the mobile ecosystem, I realized that cell-phones could have several uses which had yet to be explored. That's when I started Voicetap (now Applied Mobile Labs) to provide mEducation over operators. We got some good talent that was available thanks to the recession. Our foundations were built by the first bunch of people who came in and they stayed with us for a long time. When it comes to building a team, especially in a young organization, I have found that will is more important than skill. Someone with will can be taught the skill, but skill is wasted if there is no will to exercise it. We hire for will — either demonstrated or existing. It is even better if there is skill to complement it. However, we ensure that we build people. My message to my managers is always: "You won't be given bigger shoes to fill until your team steps up to fill your shoes." This helps everyone in the chain grow. When hiring, I don't look at resumes. I look at four key things:

tive people think on their feet and are better than the ones who merely answer what I ask them.

Over these years, we made two mistakes that I should mention. One was focusing on things which we need not have at those points during our growth. When the company was two years old, we set up an elaborate review system with detailed requirements for each level — when we were not even 30 people strong. We spent a lot of effort and energy on things we did not really need. Another mistake was not firing people quickly enough. At the beginning, I used to give a lot of chances to people, even those who were clearly not fit to continue with us after the first three months. That was a mistake.

When it comes to AML, our growth mantra is simple: focus on people and their growth. If they grow, everything in the company grows along with them. A salesman becomes better: we get more sales. A tech guy becomes better: we have improved products. An admin and HR person becomes better: we have improved systems. We have a flat structure. I take my calls with my team, do my work with them, eat and party with

**APPLIED MOBILE LABS** works towards enhancing customer acquisition for brands and campaigns through its applications

**EMPLOYEES** 35

**SECTOR** Mobile Advertising

the most happiness is the fact that I have, so far, helped some 80-odd people grow and become leaders in whatever they do. Ten of them are entrepreneurs now, and all of them have performance standards above the industry average. I have sleepless night whenever I get the feeling that their learning has stopped. 🧠

(As told to People Matters)

## OUR FOUNDING BLOCKS WERE BUILT BY THE FIRST BUNCH OF PEOPLE WHO CAME IN AND THEY STAYED WITH US FOR A LONG TIME AFTERWARDS

- 1. The skill vs will quadrant:** If his skill and will are high, I go for him. If his will is high, but skill is low, I might consider him. If his skill is high but will is low, I place him on hold. If both are low, I reject him.
- 2. Cultural fit:** Will he fit in with the company and what we stand for?
- 3. Stop-gap or long-term potential:** Does this person want the job merely as a stepping stone to something else or is he genuinely interested in solving the same problem we are trying to tackle?
- 4. Is he 'engaged' or giving a 'job interview':** I have found that more inquisi-

the team. We have also added a unique form of communication and bonding. We have an open 'crib session'. Everyone has to voice a crib openly about anyone or anything in the company, and it needs to be resolved then and there. That gives a huge sense of empowerment to the people. For today's generation, it is a big thing if they can get their voices heard, acknowledged and, most important, acted upon. Beyond this, we have our regular open house sessions, buddy systems and so on.

Personally, it is imperative that I grow my people and that is something that keeps me awake at night. What gives me



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# WE LOOK FOR PASSION AND ENERGY IN NEW HIRES

We started out as a three-member team, but quickly realized that we needed to fill the skill gap of having core specialists from both education and technology domains, say **Sanjay Purohit, Founder & MD & Hannah Arora, Vice President-Ecommerce, iProf**

**S**anjay always believed in a grand vision of the world and wanted to make an impact in his own way. The mobile telecom industry was still nascent around the time he graduated out of IIM-A. He was completely fascinated by the impact he saw it was going to make. He joined the sector and worked in it through the cellphone revolution. Having seen that, he was constantly on the lookout for a similar experience in other sectors. Around that time, the education industry was yet to be introduced to wireless and mobile technology. When tablet devices were introduced, he finally took the plunge and started iProf.

We were a three-member team at first but quickly realized that we needed core specialists from the education domain. We always regarded ourselves as a technology company rather than an education company and treated education as a sector we served. So we hired education experts and created a technology team proficient both at building platforms and dealing with business-to-business relationships.

sectors in 2008-09. It kept the attrition rate low and, simultaneously, got us talented resources.

However, as the economy improved, competition in the market increased and retaining talent became quite a task. But in the interim, we had built a reputation, which made it easier for us in managing our workforce. The two main attributes we seek in new hires are passion and energy. We believe an employee with low skills but high will is better than someone with high skills but a low will to work. We look at building a group of people who believe in our philosophy and are extremely passionate about what they do.

In the beginning, we were a small group of people. As their leaders, we were still learning the ropes of management as we went along. In the lifetime of every startup, there are various occasions when a company needs to upskill and hire specialists. With such small teams, it is very easy to get attached to team members and even though a personal connect could help work, it hampers recruitment

## HAVING LEGAL COUNSEL DOES SOUND LIKE A NICE THING TO HAVE BUT IS AN ESSENTIAL DAY-TO-DAY REQUIREMENT FOR ANY ENTREPRENEURIAL VENTURE


Education and healthcare sectors do not usually get affected by recession. However, other industries do. This situation helped us hire suitable people across

decisions and makes it difficult to let go of older employees and upgrade according to changing needs.

Also, we underestimated the legal requirements of starting a business in India. Indian laws are a maze of regulations, both at the state and the national level, and there are no clear guidelines to help a company through this maze right now. Having legal counsel might sound low-priority, perhaps even a luxury, but it is an essential requirement for any entrepreneurial venture. And it is not just legal regulations but also day-to-day business agreements which require legal knowledge.

Every startup also needs to keep in mind that a first-time product will need a number of spins before it becomes market ready. Being fixated on one's own idea of what the market needs can

lead to a lot of disappointment. Every new leader needs to think on his feet. Strategies and action plans need to be restructured and amended over time. We too changed and modified our offering almost three times in the last few years to include new technology as the market evolved. A number of new companies have met their demise because they could not maintain their relevance in the industry with the products they offered.

The last thing is about managing funds. Startups are low on funds and they need to be mindful and judicious in the way they use this money. Burning through cash with little or no thought has led to the closure of many ventures. There is no better way of impacting lives than through education and we see that happening within our own business. There is great scope of growth in the coming years and we will keep reinventing ourselves to maintain our relevance over the years. 

(As told to People Matters)



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**EMPLOYEES** 250+

**SECTOR** Education



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# TEAM MEMBERS' QUALITIES BUILT OUR REPUTATION

One of the most original new players in handicrafts, Happy Hands relies on specialist members and learning experiences to carve a niche, according to **Medhavi Gandhi, Founder & CEO of Happy Hands Foundation**

I was introduced to the world of craft through a brief internship with UNESCO on its project with the Crafts Council. Interactions with artisans made me realize that at no time during our education were we introduced to the beauty and rich heritage of India. I met many artisans willing to sell their work not for its value, but at a price which would fetch them basic subsistence. When the son of a lac bangle maker said he never wanted to do what his father did — that was my inspiration. I resolved that one day this son would be running a lac bangle enterprise, earning much more than what his father did and his son would never dishonor his profession.

I also met some very hardworking women who had learned the local language, even though they were not Indian. They lived away from their families while working to train artisans at making better designs. It was that moment, when I felt, “Why aren’t we recognizing these crafts?” which led to where we are today!

Midway through my work, I also came to know about Kamala Devi Chattopadhyay — a pioneer in her own way. If it wasn’t for her vision, we would never have had an NSD, or the Performing Arts Museums or even a Crafts Council! Her vision created a legacy of recognizing culture. She is my inspiration. By continuing her work, I too aspire to leave a legacy of culture and innovations in art, for future generations.

Happy Hands, I have to tell you, wasn’t a planned thought. As soon as the idea occurred to me, I resolved to work on it immediately after graduating. While I mobilized artisans to become our partners, friends helped us get registered and find volunteers.

After we formed Happy Hands we approached PepsiCo’s Frito Lays division which was launching a line of food products with Indian flavors. Together we created an ‘alternative’ street within a mall with crafts, folk performances and workshops. The response was encouraging and ever since we’ve moved ahead with

increased support from the public. This was when we sat down to brainstorm on projects and activities we would do at rural and urban spaces.

We depended entirely on founding members at the beginning. We later hired people from our social circle who were interested in what we were doing. Our talent model has mostly been part-time employees. We’ve also outsourced work to other entrepreneurs.

In a way, the recession actually helped us because there were a lot of volunteers who were taking a break from work. In fact, one of our Board members today was still looking for a job back then. He brought his unique strengths when he joined us.

Each member of the core team or advisory board is a specialist in his area. The abilities of the people we associated with eventually created our reputation for quality work. We’ve had a lot of people who initially came to volunteer, then decided to do it regularly and finally became part of the core team.

## THE BEST INNOVATION ON THE TALENT FRONT IS TO HIRE PEOPLE FROM MULTI-DISCIPLINARY BACKGROUNDS AND HAVE SMALL TEAMS

We keep evaluating our performance in the past and examined wherever we have gone wrong. I would prefer to call those aspects we could have done in a better way ‘learning experiences’ rather than ‘mistakes’.

We’ve hired some wrong people in the past and have seen resources going to waste on people who did not deliver. We have learnt from that. Our working model has undergone a change. From a marketing-based model, we now conduct enterprise sessions for the artisan cluster so that they can learn and manage on their own.

I believe it’s better to impact 50 people so that they are able to inspire and motivate others in their community, rather

than impacting 200 people who do not even remember your intervention after a year’s time.

The best way to gather talent is to hire people from multi-disciplinary backgrounds and have really small teams of people who complement each other’s skills. You get better delivery that way. It helps if you let the team know what they are responsible for and what results you are looking at. It also helps a lot if the execution team participates while planning interventions. This motivates them to achieve the planned results.

Our journey has been one of learning and of constant excitement at discovering new people and cultures, engaging with them and producing quality work! 🌟

(As told to People Matters)

**HAPPY HANDS** works towards the revival of folk arts and crafts, empowering rural artisans and building potential in women and young people to lead community development

**EMPLOYEES** 4 [core team] + 80 artisans + 12 community leaders

**SECTOR** Art & Culture



# HOW DID THE WORD ENTREPRENEUR ORIGINATE?

We were curious to find out the origin and the root of the word that defined us these past five years. In our research, we found that the word 'entrepreneur' had many different definitions across the centuries. We present to you a short timeline on its origin and history



## 13<sup>th</sup> century

The word entrepreneur comes from the 13th century French verb 'entreprendre', meaning "to do something" or "to undertake".

## 16<sup>th</sup> century

The noun entrepreneur had emerged to refer to someone who undertakes a business venture.



## 1800s

Economist Jean Baptiste Say, who is widely credited with introducing the term, used it to refer to individuals who create value in an economy by moving resources out of areas of low productivity and into areas of higher productivity and greater yield.



## 1730

The first academic usage of the term by economist **Richard Cantillon**. He defined an entrepreneur as someone who undertakes a business venture with no guarantee of profits.

## Mid-1800s

Mid-century, economist John Stuart Mill describes the entrepreneur as someone who assumes not only the risk of a business venture (as a capitalist) but also the management of the business venture.



## Late 1800s

Economist Alfred Marshall emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurship by tying the resource component (from Say) and management component (from Mill) together. Marshall claims that four primary factors are necessary for production: land, labor, capital and organization.

## Early 20th century

According to Joseph Schumpeter, an entrepreneur is willing and able to convert a new idea or invention into a successful innovation. In his words, "the function of entrepreneurs is to reform or revolutionize the pattern of production."

## Late 20th century

The concepts of social entrepreneur and intrapreneurship gain ground. Social entrepreneurs are the reformers and revolutionaries described by Schumpeter, but with a social mission. They make fundamental changes in the way things are done in the social sector. Intrapreneurship, on the other hand, refers to entrepreneurial ventures within the organization.



## Mid-20th century

The ability to find and profitably introduce new and better products, services and processes was recognized and included in the entrepreneur's job description.

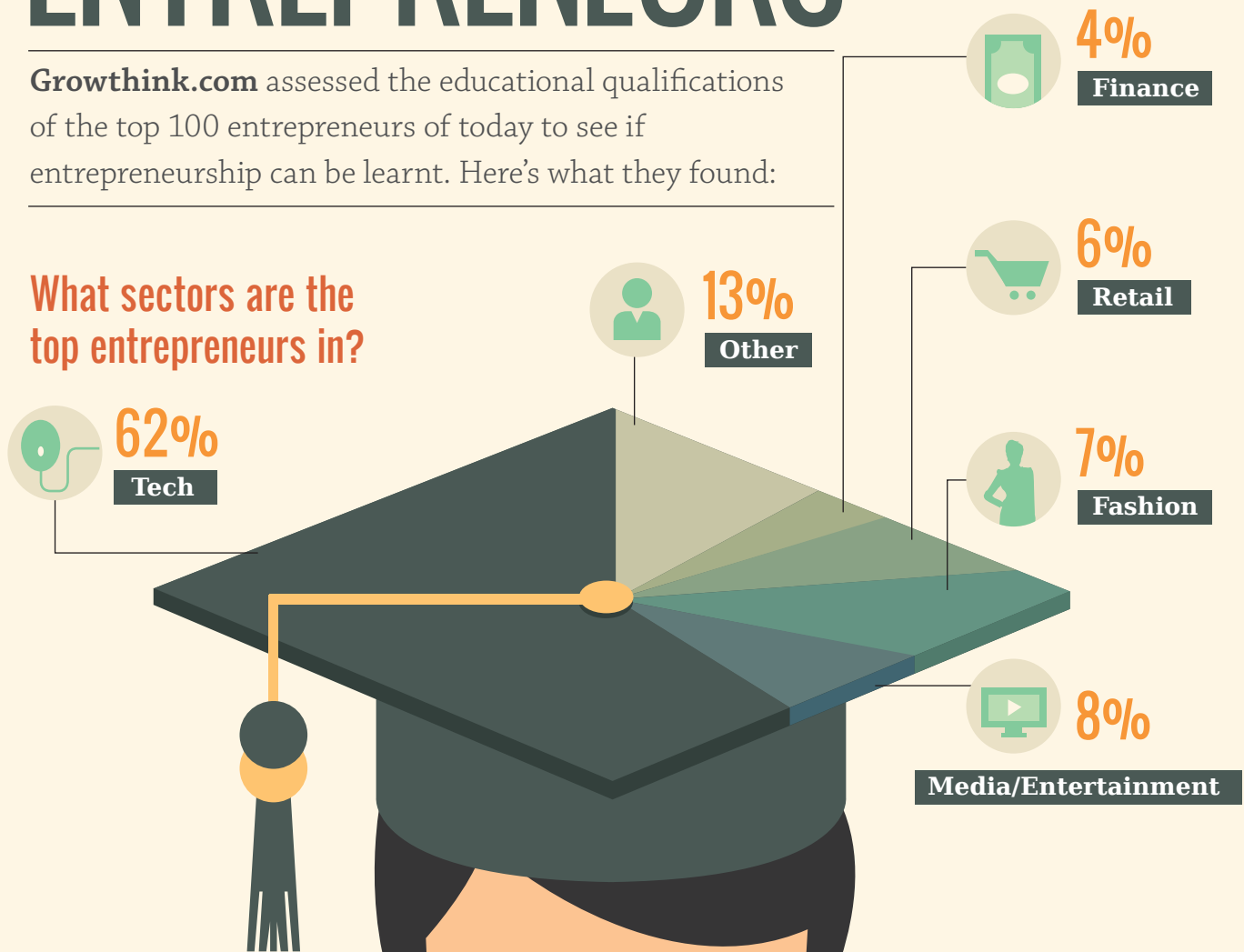
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# EDUCATING THE GREAT ENTREPRENEURS

**Growththink.com** assessed the educational qualifications of the top 100 entrepreneurs of today to see if entrepreneurship can be learnt. Here's what they found:

What sectors are the top entrepreneurs in?





## Public versus Private High School



**67.4%**  
attended public  
high school, while

**32.6%**  
attended private  
high school



While only  
**10%**  
of Americans attend  
private high schools,  
**33%**  
of top entrepreneurs did

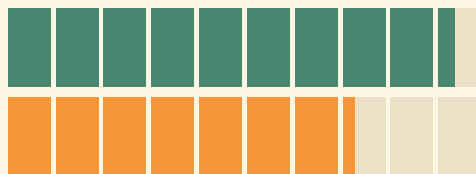


**Only 1 top entrepreneur was home-schooled:**

David Karp, the founder of Tumblr, was homeschooled for three years, after his first year of high school. He never earned his high school diploma.

## Who attended college?

**93%** of top entrepreneurs  
attended college, but only



**72%** of them graduated



This means that **23%** of  
top entrepreneurs dropped  
out of college, which is less  
than **33%** of Americans  
who drop out of college



**15%** of top entrepreneurs  
earned their MBAs. This is  
triple the **5%** of those in  
the general workforce who  
have earned MBAs.



Scan the code  
to find out  
which 100  
entrepreneurs  
were selected

Q &amp; A

# Investing in people-focused technology

**Darren Jaffrey**, General Manager EMEA & APAC, HireVue, talks about truly believing in a people culture, digital technology in HR and the revolutionary scope of talent analytics in the coming times

By **Lipi Agrawal Khandelwal**

**Q What have been the key learnings in your journey from software and consulting into the development of SaaS, HCM and other hiring technologies?**

**A** This journey has taught me a lot more than I can talk about, but the first thing that strikes me as an HR technology service provider is that you need to identify those organizations where people really do matter. A lot of companies say that people are their biggest asset, but only a few really believe it. Some companies only give lip service to this thought. My goal has always been to identify those companies that really believe it, because they are the ones who adopt HR technology with a leading edge, eventually making it mainstream. It's very easy for organizations to maintain a status quo ignoring the changes or improvements technology can bring about in their functioning and their people practices. However we seek to work with organizations that really embrace a people culture and invest in them.

In HR a lot of sensitive information is held by individuals, making it an area where security and data privacy is incredibly important. The appetite for new technologies has gradually increased such that now nobody would question putting personnel practices on cloud, but when I started it was a bit more challenging than it is now. HR has come a long way since and organizations are now realizing the difference HR technology can make to their core business. Organizations are a lot more confident on investing in people-focused technologies.

**Q What makes some organizations really believe in a people culture and work accordingly?**

**A** Some organizations clearly understand the linkage between a great workforce and a great balance sheet. People are the most expensive assets any organization has and also the most valuable ones. A strong people-oriented culture is the best



**When an organization continuously invests in recruiting, developing, rewarding and managing great talent, it automatically reflects in their business metrics**

way to maximize their value. When an organization continuously invests in recruiting, rewarding and managing great talent, it automatically gets reflected in their business metrics. Organizations that really create this linkage are the ones who tend to make an investment in people technologies and processes. In short, it is very difficult to have a great business without great people!

**Q What drives this culture? How important is the role of a CEO?**

**A** Ideally, it's the CEO who sets such an agenda. The reason why some companies do it more than others is because some CEOs believe in it much more than others. One can tell the importance an organization places in its people by knowing the position of the seniormost people's person in the organization. For instance, if I look at the board of Air India and if they have a Chief Talent Officer, it tells me something good about them. Whether or not an organization has the concept of a Chief People Officer/Chief Talent officer somewhere in its C-suite of an organization, clearly reveals what that organization thinks about its people.

**Q How do platforms/technologies like HireVue enhance the recruiting process?**

**A** Video/digital interviewing is fast becoming mainstream technology because of reduction in cost and an increase in the effectiveness of talent. The principal ways in which such technologies benefit organizations are:

**Increased productivity.** It allows recruiters to view a lot more candidates, creating a larger talent pool from which they can make their hiring decisions.

**Enhanced efficiency.** According to our research, our users have reduced interviewing time by 40% by using digital technology. This converts into faster hiring.

**Reduction in cost.** The first two factors, in turn, result in reduced cost per hire. Our users have reported around 24% reduction in overall cost per hire after adopting of digital technology.

More high performers. A more valuable aspect for organizations is that now they are able to hire more top performers, who are likely to stay with them longer. According to a research we did last year, those organizations are now hiring 13% more high performers. So they are not just making great hiring decisions but getting high performers who stay with them significantly longer than earlier.

To ensure they stay with the organization, we use predictive talent analytics to hire the right cultural fit. It is easy to identify good candidates based on their qualifications, CV and so on. The bigger challenge is to determine if the candidate fits into the organization's culture. Consider a fresh graduate from a top institute. Organizations like Google and Bank of Baroda may be looking at candidates like that, but their organizational cultures are extremely different and that is where a bigger call needs to be taken.

**Q What do you think these predictive technologies hold in store for HR in future?**

**A** HR is certainly going to be the next big adopter of analytics. The wave of technology adoption here began with applicant tracking systems, moving on to performance management, succession management, rewards and benefits and so on. All of that has now created a vast amount of data which needs to be understood using analytics, further helping organizations drive their businesses forward.

Analytics is going to be the next great wave of HR technology adoption, as great repositories of big data already exist in organizations and there is only a need for mining that to understand their employees better.

We help organizations hire better by turning such data into meaningful business applications. We also look at profiles of the individuals hired and map them with 15 attributes related to speech and behavioural data collected as part of the interview and video filming process. We look at this data to identify high performers amongst existing individuals and then bring back those attributes into the application system so that when candidates apply they are automatically scored against previously successful people. This also shows that HR is beginning to adopt the concept of recommendation engine for talent selection, developing algorithms to understand that if you hire someone who has been productive for you then you should also hire other similar applicants. This will revolutionize talent pooling and selection processes.

## Great repositories of vital data already exist in organizations and they only need to mine that to understand their employees better

**Q What capabilities would HR professionals require to keep pace with this evolution?**

**A** Increasingly, HR professionals will need to have an analytical view of the workforce more than just a purely human view (which is of course equally important). Soon there will be people within the HR department whose responsibilities will include mining the data, analysing it and using it to predict outcomes. The number one job role in the US today, that of a data scientist, didn't exist two years ago. Young people coming out of MIT and similar institutions seek to be one as there is so much that they can do to harness data. Now, this doesn't mean that HR professionals need to become data scientists, but they surely need to become a lot more comfortable with data than they have been in the past. **PM**

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**DARREN JAFFREY** is the General Manager of HireVue in EMEA & APAC. He is responsible for strategic planning, business operations and management of all customer facing functions across the region. Previously Darren was SVP, International for Taleo and Chief Operating Officer of MrTed, both leading lights in the HCM SaaS marketplace.

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SUNDARA RAJAN

# What way are Talent Assessments headed?

Specialized tools and common competency frameworks are some of the mechanisms which are all set to become more prominent



The last few years have been an exciting period for Assessment Practice in India. A number of new entrants have brought in different and newer approaches, making the industry more vibrant and competitive. What should we look forward to in this space in the days to come? Here are my thoughts, looking into the crystal ball.

**More demand for specific, decisive results.** There is increasing pressure on managers to decide quickly while choosing people they want on their teams. Considering the lack of employable talent and the increasingly widening demand-supply gap of talent, there is a big need for the tools to become a decision aid and become specific in their output and decisive in the results they provide. We expect the market to emphasize on the capability of the tools to provide greater granularity and specificity in results rather than merely on the general characteristics of a person. We also expect a greater use of visualization and a shift from the current text-centric reports to visually communicative reports in 2015.

**Greater demand for specialized tools.** The trend of using multiple tools to assess an individual, to ensure that the decisions are correct and actionable is gaining ground rapidly across the world. We expect this trend to make its way into India from 2015 onwards. Traditionally, the emphasis in India has been on technical skills. As the promotion velocity increases in the Indian corporate world, pushing younger managers into positions of greater responsibility, the need to assess their emotional intelligence apart from their cognitive and behavioural capabilities has increased. We anticipate that the Indian industry will shift to a suite of tools to assess and measure cognition, behavioral fit and emotional intelligence of the candidates.

**Assessments across the board.** We anticipate an increasing use of specialized assessment tools at pre-interview stage at




all levels of management, moving from the current practice of using such tools only for select positions. Compared to the salary packages and the increasing cost of a wrong hire or a wrong fitment, the cost of assessments has shrunk. There is a sharp increase in the relative affordability of assessment tools and we expect this trend to accelerate in 2015. Assessments across the board should gain momentum over the year.

**Consolidation of frameworks.** In the last three years, some of the large firms have consolidated multiple competency frameworks across group companies to provide a common, organization-wide, unified, company or group-specific managerial competency framework. Creation of such a common framework for all managerial positions introduces a common language within the organization and provides a framework spanning Talent Acquisition, Talent Development and Talent Management and helping the entire employee lifecycle management process.

We anticipate this trend to accelerate with large organizations or groups going in for unified competency frameworks. As a result, the relative importance in assessment has shifted from measuring technical competencies to managerial ones.

The need to assess young managers' emotional intelligence beside cognitive and behavioral capabilities has increased

**Death of time and distance.** The increasingly shorter decision cycles in business are reflected in the assessment space also. There is a great emphasis on getting the results of the assessment on an ever shortening lead time. The advent of connectivity has already made distance irrelevant, as most of the well-known tools are now available online at a click of a button. 4G will provide opportunity for assessments to be delivered on an almost real-time basis.

We will see changes in delivery, consumption and use of online assessments, given the enormous tech upgrades that are sweeping the Indian market. 



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**SUNDARA RAJAN** is Director of Thomas Assessments

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# Tackling the hiring beast

## People Matters TA Leadership League

The eight winning practices in this year's TA Leadership League demonstrate how Indian organizations are leveraging new models and technologies for tackling the hiring challenge

By Vikram Choudhury



**T**he People Matters' annual TA League brought together several cutting-edge practices across the course of 2014. Eight practices were rewarded at the conclusion of the league, in association with Aon Hewitt, Cornerstone OnDemand, Talview, Cocubes.com, Deloitte and Great Lakes Institute of Management. They reflect ingenious uses of social media, assessment methods, and candidate sourcing. At the same time, they demonstrate greater leadership commitment in this severely competitive space.

The selection process was rigorous, beginning with companies submitting their best practices. Of these, three entries in each category (Candidate Experience; Diversity; Employer Branding; Talent Assessment; Social Hiring; Recruitment Engineering and Most Popular Best Practice) were

shortlisted. The winners were picked from the shortlist by the Jury and announced on December 11, 2014, at the TA League Annual Conference in Mumbai. We present the eight best practices and what made them this year's winners:

### Meeting challenges at Bajaj Allianz

Bajaj Allianz faced two critical diversity challenges — to have more women employees across the country, and to include skilled and unskilled workers in politically unstable regions such as J&K. The company targeted improving its women employee base from 16 per cent to 20 per cent. Its campus hiring strategy was chosen primarily to improve its gender diversity numbers. Of its management and executive trainee hires, 50-60 per cent were women. Bajaj Allianz also partnered with a central government initiative called 'Udaan' to address the hiring problem in risky locations. Before these initiatives were implemented, the TA team acquired permission from both the Managing Director & CEO of the company. The business case was built mostly out of the market demand and the impact of these approaches on hiring and overall business revenue. The company's L&D team also intervened to create a structured learning process for each candidate hired under 'Udaan' and the Executive Trainee process. Bajaj was able to grow its business in the J&K region as well as improve its diversity numbers substantially.

### Employer rebranding at Bosch

Well-established as a manufacturing unit in the talent market, Bosch was finding it difficult to create a credible presence in the IT talent market for which it was recruiting. Most good talent pools were looking to join the IT/ITES industry. The company needed to establish its credibility as a place offering high-value jobs and great careers. Volume hiring was a key challenge. Moreover, skilled talent was spread across India and not localised. Bosch was finding it difficult to abolish its cost centre and low cost unit perception in the talent market.

It decided to focus on hiring quality talent and provide great careers and also become a profit centre executing high-end and high-value work. Bosch could have improved its existing talent brand and associated processes. While it was cost effective and low risk, it also meant little impact. Instead, Bosch focused on creating a niche talent brand through innovative approaches, through a segmented branding strategy. It formed a cross-functional taskforce comprising HR, Marketing and Communication teams. External branding was done through campus hiring, academia connects, and strategic tie ups at the fresh talent levels. At the lateral levels, the focus was on referrals and making existing employees ambassadors. Bosch also rolled out an alumni initiative. Not only did it successfully shed its earlier image in the market, it experienced an unprecedented low attrition of top performers of 1 per cent.

### Rebranding in a different segment at Intel

While employer branding was always serious business at Intel, it needed to rebrand itself in a different talent segment, from a 'Semiconductor Company' to a 'Computing Organisation.' While it commanded a good brand in its established market, repositioning that image in a different segment was a challenge. The company's EVP is based on 3 pillars — Great People, Great Company, and Great Technology. The new brand positioning for the company was in an already busy talent market and competitive pressures were high.

The company rolled out several targeted initiatives to create a strong employer brand, including a software talent market community on LinkedIn, showcasing Asia talent opportunities to other regions, one-on-one conversations between leaders and candidates and company-supported employee referral program. The referral program is notable because it involved an 'outside ERP' approach through social media to target referrals with the aid of marketing campaigns and videos. When the company measured pre- and post- branding metrics, such as talent flow data, engagement, and attrition, it showed truly remarkable outcomes.

### How Lenovo solved diverse challenges through social hiring

Lenovo, a diversified high-tech company, needed highly skilled people for its entirely different product lines, thereby limiting cross-functional synergies. Thus it had to work with several recruitment partners, each specialising in an individual area of hardware or software. It was causing a fragmented and expensive recruitment model. Lenovo was also unable to tap into the passive talent pool effectively. Rolling out an RPO model meant high costs, especially at the leadership hiring levels. So Lenovo created a leading-edge social hiring model. It bought a LinkedIn Recruiter access to leverage on the existing recruitment pool. The social media platform was connected with its recruitment management tool, thereby ensuring a single repository of candidates across sourcing channels.

The platform simplifies the multi-functional challenge and provides access to the passive talent pool. Other benefits included significantly lower hiring costs, talent brand lending itself to the product brand, and higher offer acceptance rates. It is also helping the company build a rich database of talent for the future.

### Sapient's candidate experience focus

Candidate experience has been a focus area for Sapient from the beginning but after the 2009 economic crisis, the company's employer brand had dipped. Brand recognition and number of referrals were low, time to hire and no-show rates were high. Some of the prime challenges with the hiring process included candidates dropping out between hiring stages or after offer and skewed ratio towards direct applicants than referrals. As a

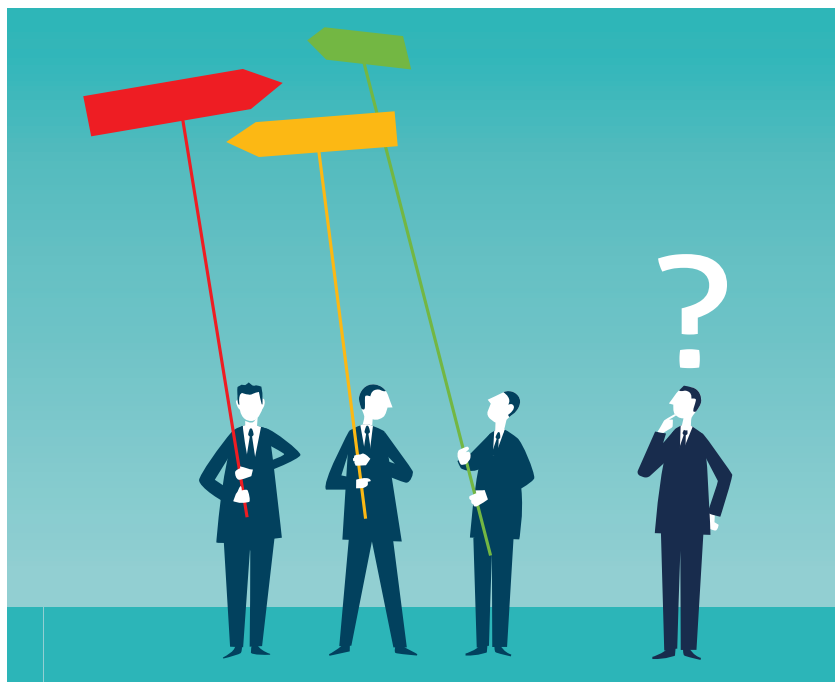
result, the cycle time was high, as was cost.

Sapient identified that its talent brand problem was trickling down to actual business and revenue issues. Adding more recruiters to the hiring team or creating better brand campaigns would have been stop-gap measures. Sapient decided to make a long-term sustainable solution to the problem. Among the measures were naming its recruiting coordinators as 'Experience Stewards', shifted their attitude towards overall experience. After building a solid business case by showcasing the "voice of the candidate" survey feedbacks, Sapient radically altered its hiring approach. Not only did this improve its brand image in the market, it also doubled the number of candidates fighting for a position compared to the past.

### Wipro's total overhaul of talent assessment

Wipro faced a three-pronged challenge driven by changing customer market expectations. These were: the demand trend evolving from transactional to consultation work, changing operating environment, and new leadership expectations from the business. Wipro needed

The selection process was rigorous, beginning with companies submitting their best practices in seven categories, from which three were shortlisted in each category





adaptive people prepared for this. Failing to have them meant a direct impact to the company's bottomline. Wipro was in need of transformational leadership, delivery efficiency and higher successor-to-leader ratio. Quick-fix measures included assessment of past performance to identify key people, or augmenting performance data with a personality tool to better predict success during business transformation. Wipro, however, chose to deploy a comprehensive assessment model with a long-term view to creating a sustainable talent management model. Wipro created a talent assessment team to align employee aspirations with organizational goals. A talent ecosystem was created, comprising a published talent assessment policy; role and competency frameworks; detailed assessment designs and training academies. Role and competency frameworks were also created. At all points, the business leadership was kept in the loop. Almost immediately after this new principle was put in place, Wipro saw improvement in revenue, repeat customers, lower cost of delivery and a pool of ready-to-move-in leaders.

### End-to-end hire process transformation at WNS

Being a rapidly growing global business process management (BPM) company, WNS hires thousands of employees every year. It had to reinvent its recruitment strategy in the face of changing talent market conditions to ensure that it continues to recruit high-quality talent. Re-engineering its recruitment process was an


ambitious aim that involved effective database management; reducing cost per hire; improving the source mix and finalizing best-fit candidates. Also, the challenge was to ensure that it was done in a scalable manner.

While WNS could have hired an external product expert for a solution that could streamline the end-to-end recruiting process, it was unable to find an end-to-end service provider that could match the unique set of needs. WNS, thus, decided to develop a customized in-house solution. The initiative involved setting up a sourcing centre of excellence (CoE) to source candidates from Facebook, LinkedIn and other social and referral platforms. The company also researched and improved its existing hiring process to enhance the overall candidate experience, including candidate registration, interview process execution and joining formalities. Technology was the backbone of the entire re-engineering process. Using the power of technology, WNS put its strategy in action with the launch of E-Recruit and Tablet hiring app tool. The results of the initiative were evident in terms of database quality, sourcing mix, candidate satisfaction and recruitment efficiency.

### Branding through customer experiences: the SPI way

SPI Cinemas had to define its employer brand and embarked on a conscious initiative involving the leadership and staff. It had to break away from its 'just another entertainment services' image in the talent market. The involvement of leaders and staff was done through two key channels. The first channel, 'Power Lunches', involved the opportunity to lunch with the CEO. The second initiative was to standardise the employee life-cycle with the employee experience.

The Power Lunch initiative aimed at defining the key levers of the company's employer brand. It involved rewarding outstanding performers by capturing video bytes of their families and their employment experience. SPI also built an experience team to understand the complete customer lifecycle to determine points where consistent customer experiences are required. The company rolled out a pilot program of both initiatives with stringent auditing programs to streamline and formalise the process. The resulting engagement, both in the internal and external talent market, translated into several outcomes. Among them were higher manpower demands, shorter time to fill and more referrals.

These winners show how effective practices are those that respond to change the best. Look forward to the next edition of the League in June this year. 

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From innovative delivery channels to more fruitful collaboration with learning service providers, a look at some of the most striking developments in the L&D space today and in future

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# FROM THE WORKSHOP TO THE WORKPLACE

New approaches and more effective concepts are prompting organizations to shed traditional modes of learning

by **Vikram Choudhury**

**T**he L&D industry in India is among the most dynamic service spaces in India. A number of factors – new concepts, changing workforce composition, and the growing influence of consumer technologies – contribute to the dynamism and activity in this space. As the industry continues to transform both in the way services are delivered and demanded, organizations are seeking ways to translate lessons from the workshop to the workplace.

The industry of learning can broadly be categorised into three distinct consumer segments – the traditionalists, the beginners and the torchbearers. The traditionalists are organizations in which learning delivery has remained mostly unchanged in the last 10 years. Such organiza-

provider to collaborate and develop a learning strategy that aligns with the company's business strategy. Thus, learning in India is finally moving towards a real consulting model. Service providers are responding to this demand trend by building consultative capabilities.

Customization and contextualization have become key. The days of over-the-shelf training modules are over. G.S. Ramesh, Chairman of learning service company Layam Group, believes that there are a number of useful and practical lessons rooted in Western concepts, as long as they are tailored to meet the needs of an Indian organization. Contextualization to fit the needs of an organization and the general cultural environment is a growing trend in L&D services. The new generations of the workforce, through their unique learning habits and consumption patterns, are causing shifts in the way learning interventions are designed. New delivery mechanisms have come up in the market, driven mostly by the social media and mobile revolution.

At the strategy level, most organizations will be focusing heavily on some specific aspects of talent management. Learning services, accordingly, will be tailored to meet these needs. Pallavi Jha, Chairperson and Managing Director, Dale Carnegie Training India believes that leadership competencies, employee engagement, senior leadership development and high potential development will be among the key priorities for organizations.

## **Customize and contextualize**

Learning providers in India reveal that more and more conversations with HR or learning Heads are beginning to revolve around customized learning. Off-the-shelf solutions are disappearing as everyone is asking for contextualisation of content. While learning service providers are importing tactics and techniques from other regions, these are rarely getting implemented in their

## **Learning industry is increasingly shifting to a consulting model as companies develop strategies with service providers**

tions are still heavily reliant on instructor-led and event-based training. The beginners are organizations which are starting to scale, and feel the need to put together formal learning mechanisms to sustain growth. The third segment is of highly mature learning organizations, which are pushing up the maturity of the learning industry in India. While a large part of the service market comprises traditional learning services, the other segments of the market are where most of the action is taking place. Technology-based learning continues to grow and evolve. Besides that, the growing maturity signals a move toward consulting-type learning services.

Guillaume Gevrey, CEO of the learning service company, Concept 2 Competence says that companies are now looking to sit with a learning service

original form. Organizations are already sitting on large sources of learning content. Conversations with service providers are beginning to revolve around how to contextualize content to suit a particular audience.

The involvement of HR leaders in the learning process has become greater than ever before. They are much more willing to share their business strategy with the learning service provider to jointly develop a strategy. As a result, the traditional relationship of a service provider with a learning organization has shifted from vendor to partner.

### Gamify traditional delivery channels

A lot of the buzz around gamification is about perceptions of technology. While technology and IT solutions are a necessary prerequisite, gamification should not be looked at merely as the implementation of technology. True, some gamified platforms are heavily technology reliant, but a number of concepts have emerged with minimal dependence on technology. Gamification, thus, needs to be looked upon as a concept rather than a technology. Some of its ideas are actually tried-and-tested learning solutions, but packaged and delivered in modern forms.

The power of storytelling is already established, and service providers are bringing this concept to the learning organization through technology. For communication-centric roles, learning through storytelling techniques is especially effective. A lot of organisations can benefit from these techniques for their frontline, sales, business development, product- and project-management staff. With little or no technology involvement, gamified learning through the art of storytelling can become a great way to transfer lessons.

Another key gamification technique gradually picking steam is the concept of quizzing, a technique which triggers the competitive spirit in an individual. Organizations, however, have a perception bias on how quizzes are designed and delivered. Rather than view it in the traditional sense as an event-based activity delivered from an individual to a group, learning service providers have created quizzing techniques in various forms. These quizzes keep participants engaged and are conducted even during campus hiring.

### Adopt new learning frameworks

Several new learning delivery channels have emerged riding the wave of social media and mobile phones. Rajiv Jayaraman, CEO and Chief People Officer at the learning service company Knolskape, recom-




**Gamification needs to be considered as a concept rather than a technology. Some of its ideas are tried and tested learning solutions packaged and delivered in a new form**

mends that a good learning framework for any organisation can be the 3Ps – products, programs and platforms. In each of these key delivery areas, organizations are looking to customize content and delivery to meet key result areas.

Social and mobile integration has become a common requirement while choosing learning service providers. Aruna Telang, Manager, Consulting Services-Asia, Skillsoft, reveals that organizations have started exploring means to provide multi-modal learning to its employees. Learning content is generated and propagated through social and mobile channels in multiple forms, including blogs, wikis, podcasts and videos.

One may definitely conclude that a lot has happened in the past 12 months in the learning and development space in India. In fact, some believe that in a few areas of learning delivery, services in India have become as evolved as those in Western economies. As the coming months will reveal more changes in the market, the L&D space in India is on a steep maturity climb. Raj Dam, Learning Evangelist and Founder of Playday believes that consolidation will likely pick up in this market in

the coming months. Many M&A events and introduction of more global players in this space is likely.

For an organization looking to employ a learning service provider, five key things will be critical in the decision-making process. First, a service provider's intent to offer consultation. Buying decisions will also greatly depend on a service provider's intent and conviction to demonstrate results. Third, the ability of an organization to customize and contextualize learning that will make the difference between a buy and no-buy decision. An organization's intent to offer social and mobile-based solutions will also be a great deciding factor. Finally, a service that offers solutions for the complete spectrum of learning needs of an organization may end up becoming a more fruitful relationship compared to a piecemeal approach. 

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ARUNA TELANG

# Meaningful learning is the way of the future

As business participation in learning increases, it is time to move toward delivery and channels that can show impact

Participation from business has become a norm in the learning and development (L&D) function in Indian organizations. As a result, CXOs, CMOs and CFOs are much more actively involved with the L&D of the enterprise than ever before. Consequently, the focus has automatically shifted from plain vanilla learning delivery to meaningful learning. Another remarkable trend in the learning market in India is the change in learning workflow in most organizations. Previously, learning delivery was based purely on the workflow of receiving budgets at the beginning and allocating them to learning channels such as classroom, e-learning and so on. The involvement of business has made the learning function a business function like no other, where the current and desired states are assessed, and training demand is estimated before the allocation of budgets. These moves are a step in the right direction for the learning market in India because it signals a stage in the progress towards maturity.

Millennials are just out from college and don't want to be in a classroom. Learning delivery has to accommodate a system that doesn't need only this kind of training experience

Scalability has always been an issue for organizations in India. The problem is much more pronounced for those which are diversified across geographies. As a result, the market for technology-enabled learning, which allows an organisation to put together a scalable learning platform, continues to expand.


A key question which business leadership asks from a learning initiative, nowadays, is business impact. The question of value is primary before any learning delivery happens and business leaders as well as the ROI are watched and monitored much more closely than before.

Several other trends are shaping the delivery of learning services. Organizations are consequently looking to employ a service provider that can act as a long-term guide and consultant to align the demand and delivery sides of learning needs. Some of the delivery side trends include the following:

**Event-based to continuous learning.** Learning is rapidly moving away from point-in-time to continuous. Ensuring that an employee learns at each and every stage of the employment cycle is an effort that requires good understanding of several factors. The first and foremost need is an assessment of the current state of technology in the enterprise. Once this is done, an organization can implement a scalable learning infrastructure that enables multiple modalities of learning and integrates learning seamlessly to workflow. For example, the millennials who are rapidly filling up the workforce are just out from their academic environment and no longer crave to be seated in a classroom. The learning delivery has to accommodate a system that does not require only this kind of training experience.

**Multi-modal learning.** The new channels of effective learning include videos, podcasts, wikis, blogs and so on which allow it to be part of the learner's everyday workflow. Delivery, thus, needs to change fundamentally, transforming into these new types of multi-modal learning which are both dynamic and receptive to new content and delivery mechanisms. Skillssoft, for example, has a social learning network for the enterprise called inGenius which has similar functionalities of common social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. The social channel allows users in the system to share knowledge, evangelize on specific areas of focus or topics and be subject matter experts, interacting in the same way as open social networks.

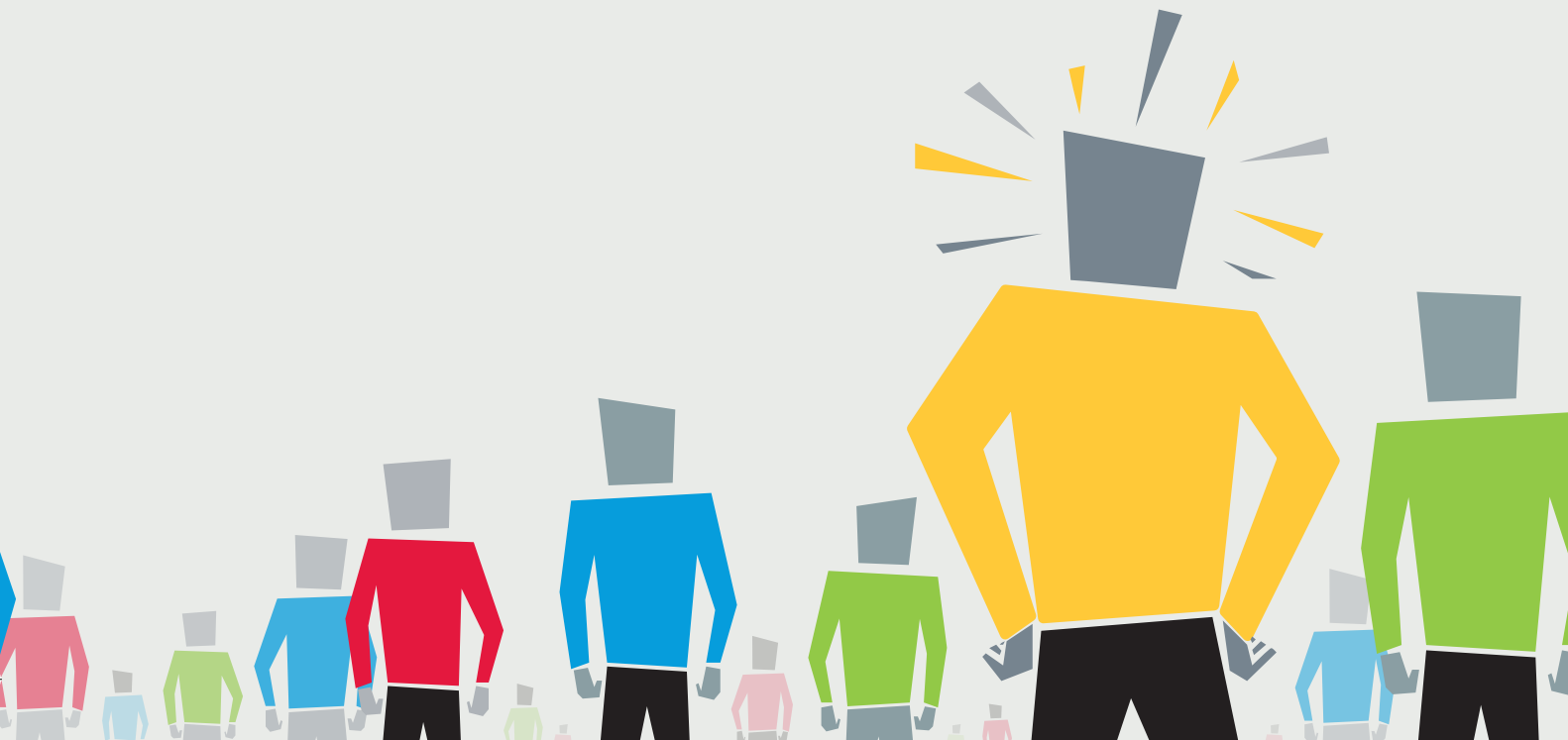
Big data analytics has become the key to identifying how effective a learning provider can be at meeting an organisation's current and future needs. A solutions provider with millions of existing users and years of experience and expertise offers a great advantage to organisations with rich insights gleaned from millions of data points and how they can be used to align learning to business results.

When building a learning strategy, start with the organisation's 3-5 year business goals and identify the key capability gaps and what it will take to reach desired results. This will lead the organization to implement learning that is meaningful and effective. 

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ARUNA TELANG** is Manager, Consulting Services - Asia of Skillssoft

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G.S. RAMESH

# Western ingredient with Indian flavor

Training tools and content need to be structured keeping our own needs and culture in mind

With an enormous workforce seeking suitable employment, the Indian L&D domain is undergoing drastic changes. As globalization took place, we started focusing on resource and development of human capital. With increased emphasis on measurable performance now, the trend has largely shifted from conventional delivery approaches. To keep pace with the cutthroat competition, organizations are now more interested in imparting skills that are specific to the key result areas of their human resource and measure their performance at workplace for a given skill. As opposed to the classic picture of training that companies usually bear in mind, the interest in training and development activities now stems from the learning speed and the ability of individuals to achieve the level of competence required by their organization.

**Choose a provider who delivers end-to-end solutions and encompasses everything, from need identification to implementation to knowledge transfer**

The organizations, on their part, are now looking far beyond just a well-executed training intervention. What they need is a quantifiable change in skill, knowledge and attitude which will result in good returns for them. I feel this paradigm shift is only for the good because it has results in people coming out of the process-oriented mold that had set earlier and becoming more result oriented.

A major concern is the failure of learners to transfer their newly acquired skills and knowledge to their work environment or apply them well enough to achieve a satisfactory performance. The new trends in L&D are slowly but promisingly creating learning transfer at workplaces which will address this transfer failure.

In my view, L&D is a lifeline for a manager or a leader. It is more important to learn to use L&D services effectively rather than merely sell-

ing them as training programs. It should be a complete package that delivers learning as well as transfer of knowledge, since the latter is necessary to complete the learning process. L&D's proper application is what must be sought rather than its fantastic delivery alone.

When we talk of L&D, the mantra is 'creating intrinsic and extrinsic motivation'. It is true that most organizations only have budgets for training interventions and not for 'learning transfer,' but as they realize the inherent inefficiency of such solely one-time deliveries, I'm sure they will make provisions for the application aspect as well.

Another major concern that is becoming increasingly conspicuous is the use of western training tools and content that do not go well with the Indian masses. The need of today's market is a well-researched and tailored content that keeps in mind our people, the specifics of our work culture and the unique requirements that emerge because of these two factors.

To make this happen, organizations have to lay more emphasis on creating a learning atmosphere to make their training interventions a success. The relevance of the run-of-the-mill programs should be reconsidered. If it is observed that they do not offer any post-training support, their implementation should definitely be questioned.

As businesses are evolving more rapidly than ever, the 'hire-train-deploy' model is coming into existence, wherein training plays an indispensable role in deciding the success of individuals and thus, by extension, the company.

The emergence of e-commerce has created opportunities for plain undergraduates and this is what has necessitated the use of the hire-train-deploy model. So it is highly essential to choose the right L&D service provider.

While choosing a provider, the key factor should not be delivery alone. A service provider who may have an excellent track record of high-end deliveries may fail to achieve any learning. One needs to focus on a provider who delivers end-to-end solutions and encompasses everything, right from need identification to implementation to transfer of knowledge to action at workplace.

Unless this complete package is offered, training will become something of an antique formality and most companies would refrain from wasting resources on such futile ventures. Hence I would like to strongly prescribe western ingredients with Indian flavor, keeping in mind the specific requirements of the workforce in this country, for the L&D domain to give just the right direction to Gen 'X' and Gen 'Y'. 🇮🇳

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**G.S. RAMESH** is Chairman of Layam Group

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RAJIV JAYARAMAN

# View learning through the 3Ps

Products, programs and platforms will collectively lead to a learning service provider's ability to show business impact

**T**he learning and development (L&D) space in India is witnessing three key trends which are redefining the shape and nature of L&D delivery. These trends are driven by several factors. First among them is the growing realization that L&D delivery is only effective when the lessons stick. Second, it is important that learning is delivered in a form or shape that can get people hooked. Finally, an effective L&D delivery system also depends on the most efficient utilization of technology resources. Accordingly, most of the movements in the L&D space in the coming months will be around the following three areas.

**Gamification:** Gamification has become an important way of thinking for L&D delivery in organizations owing to the rapidly changing nature of

## Learning systems that can offer opportunities for first-time managers at their initial stages and provide early warning signals will be in demand

the workforce. The new-age workforce has a short attention span. Therefore, engaging its members is a challenge for any organization. Gamification provides the answer by offering a schematic that holds an individual's interest for a longer period of time.

**Anytime-anywhere learning.** It has its roots in the fact that 90 per cent of anybody's learning happens on the job. Action learning, therefore, has become much more important than event-based learning. L&D organizations across all industries are exploring the concept of anytime-anywhere learning.


**Skill analytics.** Most L&D interventions appear to function like a black box from where participants emerge without the organization having the faintest clue about the actual impact of these interventions. An organization, however, wants to know the exact nature of impact an L&D investment makes on its workforce. Skill analytics

make calculating and understanding this impact possible. Not only does the organization track the movements in skills, but also finds the capability to make future plans based on skills through solid skill analytics.

The space of learning and development can be viewed through the 3Ps — products, programs and platforms. The trend of opting for simulation-based products will become big over the coming days as more and more organizations realize the need to build more engaging L&D content for their employees. At the same time, workshops and similar interventions are built around products to enhance their impact on the participants, a major step in customization. Lastly, learning platforms are increasingly becoming gamified so that learning itself becomes a habit.

The trends in the learning market reflect some distinct needs that organizations have at present and will continue to have in future. First, learning is necessary at both the individual and group level. Second, accurate insights have become a necessity. Third, organizations also need insights about their leadership and its style of functioning. Learning services, therefore, are moving toward meeting these demands. For example, gamified platforms have a greater ability to provide true insights about employee engagement or leadership response to specific situations compared to surveys. In addition, the increasing depth of analytical products are allowing companies to mine progressively deeper insights from ever larger data sets, making predictions such as a leader's response to a situation more accurate.

Learning products are becoming much more aligned to real-life situations. For example, people who become first-time managers face several challenges both from the teams as well as a radical shift in the job design. Consequently, first-time managers need attention and learning at the very early stages of their taking up a function. Unfortunately, companies typically move very late in their response to training first-time managers. Learning systems which can offer opportunities for first-time managers to learn at their initial stages and provide early warning signals for the organization to grasp will be in demand going forward.

Finally, mobile learning will really pick up in 2015. A big part of the buying decision-making process will involve the ability of the vendor to offer mobile capabilities. Besides that the buying decision will depend on the ability of the service provider to demonstrate impact. In fact, in the coming months more organizations will select L&D service provider based on their ability to show business impact. 

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**RAJIV JAYARAMAN** is CEO and Chief People Officer of Knolskape

# iLeap First Time Manager Program

## What is iLeap?

iLeap is an integrated and intense new-age, experiential program focusing on the development needs of First Time Managers. This award winning program helps participants make the crucial leap from being an individual contributor to a manager who leads a team and influences a variety of stakeholders to achieve higher goals and extra-ordinary business results.

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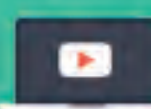
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Immersive Gamification & Simulation

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TAMAL BHATIA

# Recognize and reward learning

Successful learning mechanisms understand and relate to varying individual needs within an organization

**W**e all remember school for different reasons, irrespective of academic performance. Some of us were plain straight A students, and then we had the lesser mortals who found achievement all the same, albeit in different endeavors with or without encouragement from institution or society.

If we take this simple premise that each individual finds his or her own reasons for moving in a direction, then the million-dollar question to ponder on is: what is it about the learning environment that drives people to achieve or not, and how can the diversity inherent in organizations be used to create learning that sticks, is useful and leveraged. Some food for thought (and consumption)!

**The learning process needs to create touch points that generate interest for the individual beyond simple outcomes like attending a program or workshop**

**Learning** – a process. The most fundamental reality that learning is a process and not an outcome needs to be acknowledged. Of course, the outcome of the learning process is to result in better outcomes for organizations, but how we achieve that depends on organizations investing in the process as much as the desired outcomes. Thus, the achievement of learning credits needs to be a process and not just a tick mark against a name for completion and numbers.

**What's in it for me?** People partake in learning when they see value enhancement at an individual level and the creation of organizational value as an extension of that. The learning process needs to create touch points that generate interest for the individual beyond simple outcomes like attending a program or workshop.

**Everyone like to play.** But what is the game, is the question that begs to be asked. If it is skill and knowledge only, then only the Federers and Serenas are eventually going to be interested. So clearly one needs to move beyond top talent and find a way to engage the diversity that like to play


the game, not just for winning but for the love of the game itself.

**Gamification?** This is about the participant experience that fulfills the WIIFM in a multitude of ways, allowing for all levels of participation and creating the eagerness to play, with not just the outcome in mind. This is something that can easily be forgotten in chasing leaderboards or just black-and-white outcomes. The bedrock of the gamified process is engagement and pull by exciting different participants in different ways, by creating and fostering an environment that caters to the different needs of participants. A simple example of this would be someone whose objective is to be first vs. someone who seeks to apply the knowledge of skill in a real situation. A gamified environment would meet both these needs seamlessly and many a time allow for interplay of both, rewarding and recognizing both.

**Rewards and recognition are a very primal human need and gamification of the learning process would address the needs of many**

**Gamification and technology, real time R&R.** How people will play is just as important as what the game is. Technology allows for realtime fulfillment of the gamified process, incentivizing participants to play the game for reasons best known to them. It creates a level playing field to the extent that people want to engage with the learning process just as much as they are interested in the outcomes, creating the win-win that is critical.

Rewards and recognition are a very primal need and gamification of the learning process would address the needs of many, building the blocks of a learning organization driven by individuals and a pull sentiment as opposed to a push from others. This in turn will building ownership and commitment.

In my experience, organizations that are going to succeed in this endeavor are those who consume and practice the key tenets of building an engaged learning environment, creating multiple reward and recognition touch points. Everyone likes a game and likes to play; the question really is whether you want to play as an organization! 

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

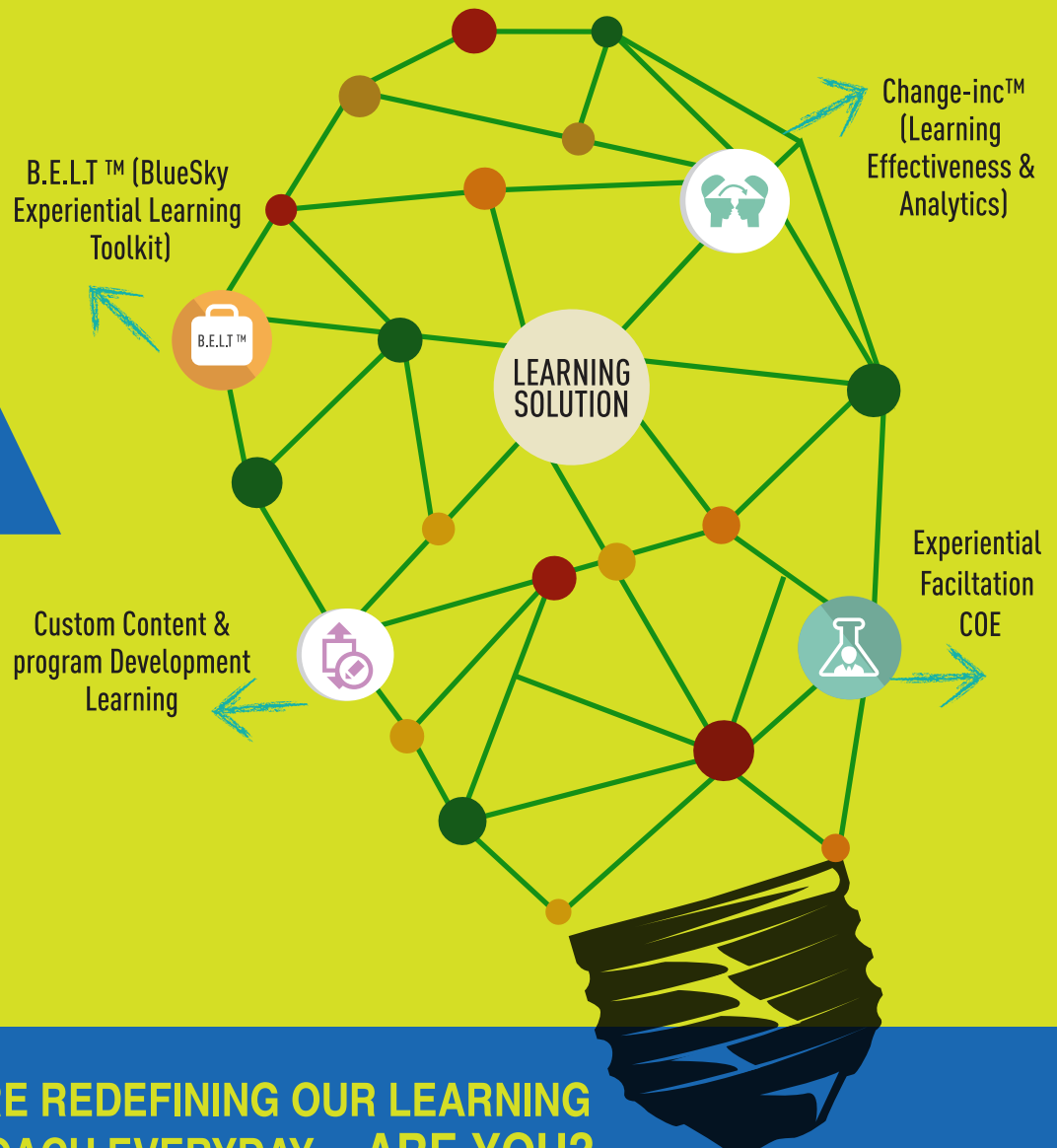
**TAMAL BHATIA** is Founder-Change-Inc of BlueSky Learning

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# Effective learning needs context to grow

Technology-based learning is on the decline, making way for learning based on context

In the past few months, the trend for technology-based learning is actually observed to be receding in the L&D space. This is remarkable because in the recent past, technology has been the centre of focus in this space in India. As a consequence, some of the initiatives involving self-learning or web-based learning are losing steam. Organizations have realised that their investments in learning technology have not paid the right dividends and therefore they are starting to question their value.

There are two primary reasons for this decline. The first is that most companies do not invest in a community manager to customize content or optimize the learning process. As a consequence, the lack of stickiness or engagement translates into participants dropping out of learning programs or organisations not realizing the benefits they had expected from these programs when they opted for them. The second reason is that L&D technol-

Indian organizations are much more willing to discuss their strategy with an OD consultant to identify gaps and work on building a strategy to plug them

ogy implementation comes at a cost. A large-scale L&D platform implementation, for instance, can translate into costs of more than \$1 million. The adoption challenge is a primary one for any organization. Even after implementing the best technology, employees within the enterprise may not adopt the new platform, thereby making the investment useless. Also, maintenance is a large point of consideration while implementing a platform. An organization may need to employ dedicated resources for maintenance and upkeep. On the other hand, if the maintenance is done by the service provider, that too comes at a large cost. Organizations have become wary of these issues.

The trend, therefore, is now towards contextualization of learning content. Most organizations

already have an ocean of learning resources in various forms, but it is important that the content is structured and delivered to the right audience in the best form. Customization and adaption of content is one of the first things organizations are looking to implement. They are also seeking the real impact of learning on behaviours and metrics and are actually looking to target specific behaviours and outcomes in collaboration with the learning consultant. These trends in combination are driving a positive change in the learning market in India. As a result, the coming months will see a real professionalization of the L&D function in the country.

Organizations in India are much more willing to discuss their strategy with an OD consultant to identify gaps and work on building a strategy to plug them. This is a positive move because the Indian market has finally moved to the stage of maturity needed for real consulting opportunities. In fact, what the market will be looking for from an OD consultant in the coming months will be its ability to bring consultative guidance to the table. Organizations will be looking to their consultant to help them find answers to questions such as how to get to the desired state or how to measure the impact of learning.

Until now the effectiveness of an L&D service provider was measured in the number of PowerPoint slides that were presented at training sessions. That has fast disappeared as organizations are looking at several other options to make learning interventions more effective. In the near future, an OD consultant will be helping an organization in two primary areas.

**Role-play frameworks.** Role-playing has been very effective in driving key behaviors an organization targets. OD consultants are offering organizations either readymade role-play situations or customized modules that can trigger exactly the kind of responses that an organization is looking to drive in its staff and leaders. The wave of customization has hit hard, and providers are happy to offer customized solutions to clients.

**Partnership models.** Organizations have stopped looking at OD consultants as vendors, which they did in the past, and are instead looking to employ them more as partners to build and execute specific strategies in future. L&D service providers are, consequently, raising their services to identify the real needs of a business and build a learning framework. ☞

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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INDRANIL  
CHAKRABORTY

# Storytelling: A skill that needs to be rekindled

We have all grown up on stories. It's time to harness its power in business

A concept rapidly picking up pace across the world of business is storytelling. Business storytelling is a simple yet effective tool to harnesses the power of stories to connect, engage and inspire. Stories have excited, moved and taught us many things while we were growing up. The earliest stories, expressed as cave paintings, predate the birth of language. We all remember leaning in to listen to stories told by our favourite uncle or aunt when we were young.

That storytelling is useful only for entertainment is a myth. It is an invaluable tool to inspire, influence and provide insight in a business context. This tool needs to cross over to the business side of life. And this can only happen when L&D leaders understand its power and bring this skill into their organizations.

**Narrative enquiry technique can be used to understand what lies behind the annual employee engagement survey numbers and what learning styles actually work**

While the art of good storytelling is a helpful skill for anyone, it is most necessary for professionals for whom communication is crucial. Frontline, sales, marketing, business development or product presentation roles are among those where storytelling skills come in handy. Storytelling is also a competitive advantage for anyone who likes to connect, engage and inspire. In today's work environment, the growing dependence on collaboration has made communication central to both survival and success. Let's take a few situations where the ability for great communication is important for any leader.

We are all creating networks internally and externally all the time. We meet people and introduce ourselves and we hope to build a rapport. We hope people will remember us after they have met us. Most of us usually introduce ourselves like a mini-resume "born here, studied there, worked

there and there and now here." The problem with this approach is that the listener hears 15 to 20 such mini-resumes every week. Why should they remember us and, more importantly, what should they remember us for?

We recommend the use of **connection stories** while introducing ourselves. Connection stories are short relevant real life stories about us which create a hook in the mind of the listener and also let them infer something about our character. For example, a story from my childhood about how I had created a comic circulating library and made some pocket money can leave the listener with an understanding of my entrepreneurial drive. And as we know, character always trumps credentials.


A second example is what we call **clarity stories**. Leaders are always coming up with new ideas and approaches they would like to bring into the organisation. Getting everyone else to understand and remember these ideas is a difficult thing, especially when what is being

**Storytelling is an invaluable tool to inspire, influence and provide insight in a business context**

proposed is a change. Clarity stories help people connect with the bigger picture and understand the reason for the change.

Other kinds of stories that are useful in business are called **influence stories** — used when we need to overcome old entrenched views and make way for the new — and **success stories**, for communicating business values without using stereotypical case studies.

Story listening is a very powerful way of understanding "what is really going on". For instance, organizations can use this narrative enquiry technique to understand what lies behind the annual employee engagement survey numbers. This technique can also help L&D leaders understand what really works when it comes to the learning styles of an organisation.

We believe that while well-run workshops and training programs are a great way to understand and begin the journey for learning a new skill, we need to ensure that the learning is taken from workshop to workplace. The best way to embed business storytelling skills is to conduct practice programs for at least 6 months where practical on-the-job activities can be used to reinforce lessons. 

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**INDRANIL CHAKRABORTY** is the Founder of communications consulting firm StoryWorks

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PALLAVI JHA

# The (re) evolution of L&D in 2015

To solve talent scarcity, learning must deal with both the how and the why in a smarter way

**L**earning and Development (L&D) has emerged as one of the main differentiators in our knowledge economy. As more companies recognize this, more time, effort and investments are being made in it. A host of new ideas, theories, tools and methodologies aiming to improve the L&D managers ROI, resource utilization and end results have emerged. The past year saw some budding concepts of 2013 grow into major and this gave us a good insight into what should be prioritized going ahead. The goals for L&D have not changed drastically, but rather the focus is on meeting the same or similar primary objectives in newer ways with smarter methods.

The main questions are what and who to focus on developing? We examine the key issues and challenges that HR faces today, from improving employee productivity, motivation and communication to lowering attrition. Moreover, what can be done to optimize L&D efforts?

**Talent professionals are now looking at formulating high-potential plans to develop bench strength and focus on grooming not only current leaders but also the next-in-line**

## What to focus on

To cope with the talent-scarce scenario that is one of the most pressing HR issues, the main areas to invest in for 2015 are:

**Leadership competencies.** Organizations are increasingly facing a leadership crisis where the skills for critical thinking, engaging others and visioning are in short supply. The ability to communicate the larger organizational vision, connect with all employee levels and generate buy-in has necessitated that leadership capabilities be the core competency that L&D focuses on in the coming year.

**Employee engagement.** As per the Dale Carnegie Employee Engagement Study 2014, 54% of the Indian workforce is not fully engaged at work. Disengaged employees tend to be poor performers, stirring up resentment, which leads to employee attrition. L&D departments have traditionally tried

to increase engagement in a number of ad-hoc ways, but now the trend of implementing complete engagement solutions is increasing significantly. These holistic solutions include assessments, company-specific analysis, benchmarking and targeted interventions followed by pulse surveys.

## Who to focus on

**Senior leadership.** Millennials are increasingly defined by their love for autonomy, focus on merit over tenure and aspiration to be part of making a difference. There is a big gap in their learning patterns and preferences compared to that of older management. Developing senior leaders will help the multi-generational workforce get clear direction and role-modeling from the top.


**High potentials.** Most leading organizations already have a high performer program in place to reward, recognize and retain the best, but many of them are not consistent in their plan for high potentials. HR finds itself struggling to replace managers and leaders who have moved on from the organization. Talent professionals are now looking at formulating high-potential plans to develop bench strength and focus on grooming not only current leaders but also the next-in-line.

## Optimize, optimize, optimize...

**New forms of delivery.** Employees should know not only what to learn, but also how to learn. Organizations rely heavily on Instructor-Led Training, along with the use of various audio-visual aids and reading material. The use of newer, more technology-oriented mediums of delivering enterprise learning is still nascent in India. These cost-efficient solutions could be better for self-paced learning but are hampered by poor connectivity and have shown reduced efficacy during simulations or live practice applications.

Live Online Training combines the best of both worlds. It is capable of including virtual teams, peer learning and demonstrative exercises as well as cutting down on extra costs like infrastructure and transportation.

**Partner selection.** L&D investment should strike a balance between measurable impact and program cost while addressing learning needs. Up until now, talent managers were adopting a pick-and-choose selection from several vendors to meet diverse requirements. But we are seeing a shift toward a more one-stop-shop approach — choosing consultative partners who can assess and provide services across levels, locations and competencies.

Learning professionals must work closely with their corporate heads to set the right goals, assess the important gaps, choose the ideal partners, technology and programs to develop their people. With the support of these, L&D can reinvent the way organizations view talent development. 

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**PALLAVI JHA** is Chairperson and Managing Director of Dale Carnegie Training India



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RAJ DAM

# Firing the competitive spirit through quizzing

As companies struggle with engagement and measurability of learning, quizzing provides a highly effective alternative

There are distinct trends that the L&D space in India is witnessing. The first trend is of digitizing learning content. An increasing number of companies are looking to provide digital learning content to their employees, administered through several forms and channels. This trend is majorly seen among large traditional companies. The second trend, mostly seen among VC-funded companies is of creating formal LMS systems. These VC-funded companies are now out of their startup mode and looking to formalize their learning system as they enter a new phase of expansion and growth. The pharma and manufacturing sectors are showing trends of creating centres of excellence as part of their L&D strategy. A number of these companies are setting up these centres of

The biggest benefit of gamified quizzing is it can keep the competitive fire burning in participating individuals as they are intrinsically motivated to showcase their skills


excellence for their most crucial business-impactful functions such as sales or product centre of excellence. The ITES sector is investing heavily on platforms for achieving specific objectives, such as onboarding a large pool of recruits or getting new recruits up to speed within a desired timeframe.

The market of L&D in India comprises both the big boys with comprehensive learning systems and the small and medium product companies with specialized products. There is peaceful co-existence between both sets, because both are serving different market needs. There are even some players who cater to one specific aspect of learning. For example, there are learning services or products specifically for documenting KYC norms in a bank. The market space will likely see some consolidations through acquisitions in the coming months.

The market for quizzing within the L&D space has great potential to grow in the coming months. Typically the consumer market views a quiz in traditional formats made popular by TV shows, such as KBC or Bournvita quiz contests. But the definition and purpose of any quiz is far deeper than that, and hence the manifestations of application of concepts can also change. A quiz is any form of competition which can fire an individual's competitive DNA. It is an assessment of an individual's knowledge and an opportunity to showcase abilities. The space of gamified quizzing is likely to pick up by several notches. The biggest benefit of gamified quizzing is that it has the capability of keeping the competitive fire burning in participating individuals as they are intrinsically motivated to showcase their skills and demonstrate their abilities across the length of a learning intervention.

The space of gamified quizzing has very interesting manifestations in the field of employer branding. Companies can actively use this platform to engage with students in campus and maintain a top-of-mind recall across an extended period of time. Such initiatives are delivered both through online and offline channels, and quizzes demonstrate that they are great channels to drive engagement with any learning initiative. One example of such an initiative is the popular Mahindra Auto contest. Quizzing platforms are also used to drive employee engagement and build intellectual capital in an organization. Many companies across the industry are looking to employ some form of quizzing platform to drive new skills or introduce new technical or functional capabilities among employees. Lastly, companies also use quizzing platforms for policy awareness. These can be administered both by online and offline channels.

Two key learning challenges plague organisations across industries — engagement crisis and measurability. Engagement crisis refers to the phenomenon when participants in an initiative are unable to dedicate their attention and motivation to the lessons. The measurability crisis refers to the inability of organizations to understand how much of learning delivery is reinforced among participants and how best to measure the impact.

Companies which are serious about driving change through learning are actually creating specialized roles to facilitate their transformation into learning-oriented organizations. For example, companies are creating specialized roles such as 'HR Transformation Officer' to facilitate the change management effort needed to introduce new talent management paradigms. The first and foremost is the ability of the learning provider to have strategic conversations. 

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**RAJ DAM** is Learning Evangelist and Founder of PlayDay



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## 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2015

### TOTAL REWARDS CONCLAVE 2015

**ORGANIZER:** People Matters

**VENUE:** The Leela Ambience, Gurgaon

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** CHROs, HR leaders, Business Leaders, C&B Specialists

**EVENT THEME:** The Changing Spectrum of Rewards

**SPONSORS:** Mercer, BI Worldwide, ESOP Direct, Peoplecart and Qilo

## 11<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> February, 2015

### LEADERSHIP FORUM 2015

**ORGANIZER:** Nasscom

**VENUE:** Grand Hyatt, Mumbai

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** Decision Makers, CEO's, CXOs, CHROs, HR leaders, business leaders, HR professionals

**EVENT THEME:** The World in 2020: Building the Digital Future

## 15<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> February, 2015

### WORLD HRD CONGRESS - 23RD EDITION

**ORGANIZER:** World HRD Congress

**VENUE:** Taj Lands End, Mumbai

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** Chief HR Officers, VP - HR, Director - HR, Chief Talent Managers, CEO, HR Heads, HR Managers,

Head - Training & Development, Industry Leaders from different sectors, Line Managers

**EVENT THEME:** Connecting Minds, Creating the Future

## 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2015

### EDGEFARM-CII WR HR CASE STUDY WRITING COMPETITION

**ORGANIZER:** Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)

**VENUE:** L N Welingkar Institute, Mumbai

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** B-School Faculty, HR Professionals

**EVENT THEME:** EdgeFarm - CII WR HR Case Study Writing Competition for B School Faculty

## 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2015

### L&D LEADERSHIP LEAGUE HALF DAY CONCLAVE - MUMBAI CHAPTER

**ORGANIZER:** People Matters

**VENUE:** Palladium Hotel, Mumbai

**WHO SHOULD ATTEND:** CHROs, HR Heads, CLOs, L&D and Training Heads and Senior & Mid-level HR Managers

**EVENT THEME:** Aims to promote knowledge enhancement and development of L&D professionals and encourage peer-level best practices sharing

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ELANGO R

# Always bet on (the new) black

Startups are always an option, provided you embrace these learnings and negotiate the pitfalls

Every year, based on trends, the color of the year is decided. You must have heard about 'Marsala' being the Pantone color of 2015. But you and I both know all of this is just masala (pun intended). Black always remains everyone's favorite go-to color and that is what entrepreneurship has become lately — the new black. Be it a fresher or someone going through a mid-life crisis, anyone and everyone seems to find their true calling in entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship is depicted as an express train, a ride of freedom, flexibility, fame and fortune. It is the new 'F', the new social status that everyone, their uncle and their neighbor want. Starting up is the new fad. Working for a company these days is plebian and having a traditional job is oh so not cool.

When People Matters also decided to join the bandwagon I personally decided to roll up my sleeves and get cracking on what the fuss is about this new 'F'. Unlike other articles where I share my thoughts, this time around we decided to go out and talk to people who have been there and done that. We reached out to both people who succeeded and failed as entrepreneurs.

People who succeeded were happy to have us associate their names with their entrepreneurial ventures. Among those we interviewed were, Anirban Das Blah, Founder of Kwan Entertainment, a talent management and entertainment firm; Nitin Dheer, who in 2009 started Inqubex that provides HR advisory services to corporates across industries and Nikhil Joshi, who while pursuing an Engineering degree founded SNIC, an industrial engineering consultancy in 2006.

We also had many of those who failed gracefully share their struggle, learning and stories with us. We have stayed away from sharing their names and instead focused on sharing what's more important: their words of wisdom. Among those who tried their shot and didn't quite make it was a young gentleman who started an online portal that sources domestic help in the Mumbai & Delhi regions; a middle-aged lady who tried sustaining an online bakery and a colleague of mine who tried his hand at entrepreneurship twice before returning to the corporate scene.



## You have to be courageous enough to step back if need be and let someone more competent run it

We would like to thank each of the above ladies and gentlemen for sharing their personal journey with us. Here are excerpts from conversations and key takeaways. We hope this article serves both as a reality check as well as a guide for aspiring entrepreneurs.

### Why entrepreneurship?

Dheer remarks: "At every social gathering I am approached by people who are in good, successful jobs, but are fantasizing about this utopian world of entrepreneurship. In reality, to my mind people who I see as successful in making the transition are those who do not fantasize about this too much. Rather, they go about executing the plans."



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I couldn't agree more. I have personally seen some of this behavior close at hand as an investor and mentor. It makes me tired because people want to jump on to this bandwagon for all the wrong reasons.

Anirban Blah says: "A lot of people do it for the wrong reasons. They believe they have an idea that everyone is dying to get their hands on! Hence, 90-95 per cent of them fail. The other reason people do it is for greed. These are the wrong reasons to be entrepreneurs. The right reasons to go down this path are when a lot of research has been done; you have something to offer that is not available in the market and you have the ability to marry the two."

"I was attracted to entrepreneurship when I gave my first job Interview because I did not like the way my 'to-be' boss interviewed me. Knowing that I wanted to be my own boss led me to start my own venture but it did not really drive me," says Joshi. "About six months later when we hired our first two employees, I suddenly felt responsible for two families and the future growth path of two individuals. I understood that my drive for entrepreneurship has the ability to make a difference in people's lives by the actions and decisions that I take every day," he adds.

My take: you have to truly believe in it and more importantly live by it. Entrepreneurs see what others can't, do what others won't, and accomplish what others dream. Simply put, entrepreneurship is a way of life.

### Biggest learnings

Blah says his biggest learnings are that you are only as good as the people who are with you, and culture is everything. "It is the single most important thing to focus on," he adds. As the HR head of an organization that takes its culture seriously, I completely stand with him on this one. For Dheer, the biggest learning is to not take anything for granted and, borrowing a line from Hollywood: "The only easy day was yesterday."

Through his experiences in the past eight years, says Joshi, he has learned not to get too excited by success and not to get disappointed by failures as both are the stepping stones to business success. Also, he adds that learning has to be continuous for everyone in the firm.

### Challenges faced

Dheer's description of the challenges he faced is short and sweet: "The biggest challenge has been to attract and retain quality talent." A major concern indeed. We all know the 'I, me, myself' attitude never works. Great things are seldom achieved alone. "Those people who think they know everything are a great annoyance to those of us who do," said Isaac Asimov. Be self-aware, be honest where you need help and reach out for it. Now that we have heard from those who are still living their entrepreneurial dream, let me share what those who had to walk away from it had to say. Not too many people are open to talking about their failures, and that is why I have great respect for those individuals who shared their experiences with us.

### Pearls of wisdom

Recall I shared a team member of mine has gone down the entrepreneurial path twice? His take on what he learnt from each experience is: "Have the right people on board with you and be ruthlessly professional, to the extent that you have to be courageous enough to step back if need be and let someone more competent run it."

**Seeking money too early, honey.** This young acquaintance of mine had no idea he was heading vroom towards doom, as he had his eyes set on the money first. His biggest advice to others: "Follow your passion rather than following the money. The true entrepreneur is a doer, not a dreamer."

**Flak for being a jack.** Advice from the baker: "Do less and do it well." She personally spread herself too thin by being too ambitious from the beginning itself. "Constantly apply the 80/20 rule and don't start too many things. What are 20 per cent projects generating 80 per cent revenue? Do not be a jack of all trades. Instead, do what you love and love what you do. You know you're doing what you love when Sunday nights feel the same as Friday nights," she says. Sounds perfect, doesn't it?

**Indecisiveness.** Destiny is made during the moments of decision-making. I believe that if life

## If your startup fails, it's worth spending time to understand what went wrong. That's the only way you're going to improve the odds of making it next time

gives you lemons, you should make lemonade. So get over the indecisive stage and start cracking.

**No money honey.** An entrepreneur without funding is a musician without an instrument. Get the finances in place and build a pipeline. Think through about reserve funds, know how long will you last and so on.

**Skill and will.** Successful entrepreneurs go above and beyond in everything they do. They know that without the right skill and will to achieve their goals, there won't be any 'extra' in their 'ordinary.' With a low business IQ, you're going down the wrong path for sure. This is the most widely acknowledged cause of failure of startups and what many second-time attempters shared with me as well.

The above shared experiences are, hopefully, a good enough beginning point for startups. Remember, if your startup fails, it's worth spending time to understand what went wrong. That's the only way you're going to improve the odds of making it next time. And there will be a next time for sure! But don't do it because it's the in thing. Do it because you love it and want to be in it. Saying "no" and walking away is never in fashion, but it's sometimes the best thing to do.

Good luck. Look forward to hearing from you. 🍌

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ELANGO R.** is Executive VP Emerging Geographies SBU and Global CHRO at Mphasis

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### People Logic

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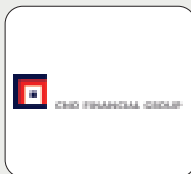
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# Blogosphere » OSCAR DE MELLO



At the cusp of the next quintet of the decade, let's anticipate the new slew of disruptions that will revolutionize our environment

## Revolutions for the next quintet

**A**s 2015 heralds the second quintet of this decade, saying that this is a good time to introspect is an understatement. Gifts — and the grief — the previous five years presented us with do need thinking about. How innovations that were once a figment of science fiction became disruptions, then necessities. The consequent changes in mindsets and behavior that opened up new directions: some good, others where the jury is still out.

Making resolutions would be an overstatement. Given the pace of change in personal and corporate lifestyles, needs and expectations, we don't want to make promises we aren't sure about keeping, right?

However, fundamental questions would stay. When will the new political management start walking its talk? Will new opportunities start to knock on our door? Are our people happy, engaged or resigned (pun unintended)? The answers won't come from resolutions but from the revolutions that will happen in the next quintet!

- **Celebrating diversity.** The continuing digital spread will encourage voices from some unexpected quarters. Ladakh. Sub-Saharan Africa? It would no longer matter that the voice is from someone differently abled, male or female. Physical presence and old barriers like language, culture or time of day will become redundant. The celebration of diversity will be the next big disruption.
- **Humans plus technology.** The Internet of Things will keep perfecting the conjoinde of digital intelligence with human genius. Grunt work — earlier outsourced to sweat-shops in third-world countries — will be insourced to an app. Sorry, Gurgaon, it's time to start working on your next innovation! The fight to rise — and stay — above the machines will be the next big people revolution.



### Going by technology's linear direction, by 2020, HR would end up divided into two fundamental aspects: Strategy and Operations

- **Teaching HR to technology.** To manage people, using tools that are relevant to them will be vital. HR leaders will have to enhance their understanding of technology to teach it deeper human elements of HR! Going by technology's linear direction, by 2020, HR will be divided into Strategy and Operations. Actually, HR is neither linear nor so simplistically straight-lined. Technology will learn more about HR!
- **Customer-influenced leadership.** Successful businesses will be about customer engagement. Leadership and strategy will flow from this. How to think like the customer and for, about,

with or event ahead of them. Customers will seek value and be smarter than ever. So beware: the cost of poor service will be the next big killer.

- **Elephants can't dance.** It's already acknowledged that it's not the biggies but the smaller players who will drive change with single product or limited portfolio offerings run by small groups of radical thinkers who won't hesitate to change their minds in a blink. Quick, agile, close to the ground (read customer). Now is the age of small ideas.
- **Elephants can dance.** They'll just have to learn the new steps. Pressured for profits and lower costs, large corporations will look at smaller players to do things faster and cheaper, while keeping tabs on quality, compliance and the customer's changing needs. They won't have other options — apart from dying, of course! Redoing megalithic structures into smaller, more autonomous units would encourage innovation and agility. Some of these units would only need funding and get moved off the books to keep costs down. Larger organizations will evolve into aggregators of entrepreneurship.

Revolution in the next quintet of years will bring about revolutionary friendships seemingly impossible today. Alliances, technology and solutions. Quick, specific and agile. One egg, in one basket, at one time. And leaders will no longer juggle 10 colored balls between two hands. Leaders will develop ten hands that hold one ball each — and not very firmly either. 🐘

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**OSCAR DE MELLO** is Director of Just Hull and the former Country Head-Reward Information Services of Hay Group

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# CONNECT, COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE



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