

Agility & Innovation: Great Lakes' Answer to the COVID-19 Pandemic

To respond to the challenge, the Great Lakes Institute of Management came up with 'Term Zero', an online learning series



Dr Bala Balachandran

WITH the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, like most educational institutions, we, at Great Lakes Institute of Management were forced to temporarily move all our classes online. The pandemic presented us with the unusual challenge of using digital methods to impart learning, and motivate and prepare our students in the new academic year.

Our solution to this was 'Term Zero', an online learning series designed to provide current and in-coming students insights and perspectives from prominent educators, scholars and thought leaders.

What we wanted to achieve with Term Zero was – that we would go beyond the usual of-

fering, offer meaningful avenues for our students to engage with our faculty and each other, prepare them for the upcoming recruitment season and appreciate a variety of perspectives about how 'management' works in the real world through insights from industry stalwarts and academic luminaries.

Term Zero was rolled out in four phases. The first phase was the 'Global Thought-Leader Series', which had my colleagues and peers from Universities such as Yale, Harvard, North Western-Kellogg, Chicago-Booth, New York University, etc. delivering lectures on topics that included leadership, design thinking, ancient Indian history, finance and economics, innovation, business strategy, etc.

The second phase was titled 'CXO Connect', a series of webinars by globally renowned CXOs of companies such as Accenture, TCS, Nestlé India, Infosys, etc. who spoke about the issues that companies and their employees face in this day and age, best and next practices, troubleshooting and problem solving. These sessions further enhanced the understanding of the competitive corporate landscape and the level of skill and resource-

fulness that professionals are expected to bring to the table.

The third phase was our annual 'Successful Women in Management (SWIM)' initiative which showcased and felicitated successful women who have blazed a trail of excellence to break the glass ceiling and reached dizzying

heights of excellence in their chosen fields. Our 2020 edition featured inspirational lectures from personalities like Indra Nooyi, Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw and Preetha Reddy.

The fourth phase, the 'grand finale' week, saw yet another fabulous line-up of speakers from different walks of life – ace cricketer Rahul Dravid, actor R Madhavan, Wall Street Journal's best-selling author Prof. Vijay Govindarajan were among those who dazzled our students with their fine words of wisdom and thoughts on life.

The overwhelming response from our students to the set of activities in Term Zero left us in little doubt that we had done something right! Not only had we responded strongly to the challenges posed by the pandemic but had also stayed true to our core value – constant improvement through continuous innovation.

(The writer is Prof. Bala V. Balachandran, JI Kellogg Distinguished Professor of Accounting and Information Management, Northwestern University. He serves as the Founder, Chairman & Dean (emeritus) of Great Lakes Institute of Management, India)

