

Conjugation Between B Schools and Business

“So the other day, I was on the world wide web; anything you want to know, it's right there ... should I (as a priest) be worried about job security; I don't think so... you see knowledge is one thing, faith is another” - From the movie Spotlight (2015).

- BY S.AJAY KUMAR

Mansi is upbeat and poised to ace her campus recruitment interview scheduled in another half hour. She is primed and fully prepared in every respect, and has taken utmost care in grooming herself, the exclusive purchase of the crisp white shirt and the beige jacket included, even though she had gone excruciatingly close to exceeding the credit limit on her card. She realised that she had been standing in front of the long mirror in her hostel room for more than half an hour, though she was done brushing her hair - to ensure that not even a single strand of hair was out of place, ascertaining that her makeup was perfect, but not loud. At the same time, she was rehearsing the lines that she may have to answer, getting the pronunciation right. She had even bought the right lip shade and the eyeliner- a rare thing for her, to impress the interview board with her appearance alone.

Though she hailed from a small town, she has managed to excel in all her academic subjects ever since the days of her schooling and she was one among the top graded students in her MBA class as well. She lauded herself for keeping in pace with her peers who hailed from the metros, even though their confident demeanour and fluent English, intimidated her during the initial days at the B School.

Even though she was still not very confident over her spoken English, she

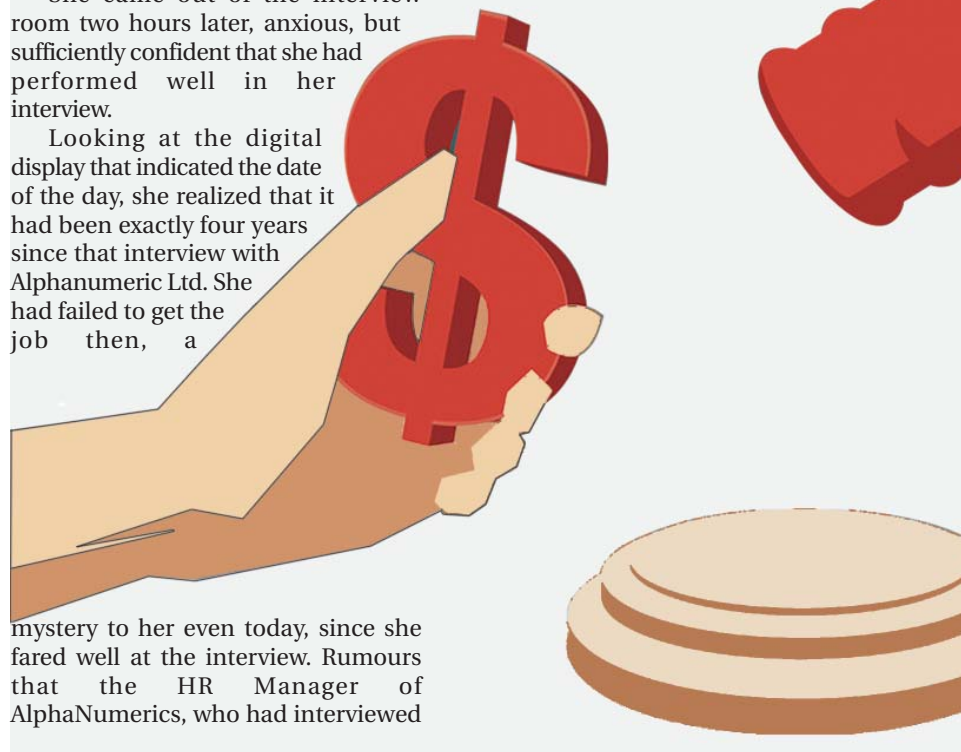
felt that she could ace the interview with her beaming confidence, her exuding energy, and her subject knowledge. She had fared well in the mock test and the group discussion held by the recruiting company. She hoped that her tryst as an intern with two leading MNCs in diverse sectors, would serve as the perfect icing, and the fleeting image of her parents' sheer delight when she announced the good news passed before her.

She came out of the interview room two hours later, anxious, but sufficiently confident that she had performed well in her interview.

Looking at the digital display that indicated the date of the day, she realized that it had been exactly four years since that interview with Alphanumeric Ltd. She had failed to get the job then, a

mystery to her even today, since she fared well at the interview. Rumours that the HR Manager of AlphaNumerics, who had interviewed

her, hailed from New Delhi, and had studied in one of the IIMs preferred to hire a candidate with a similar background seemed to hold true today. The company had not hired anyone from her institute, but had hired in significant numbers from the IIM Campus located in that very city, and had even offered higher packages than usual. Almost all those IIM graduates vacated their positions in a matter of a couple of years, to join a leading



MNC in the same city, in coveted positions, since the experience they had gained at Alphanumeric served as the perfect launch pad.

Mansi had decided to stay back in the city to decide her own destiny. She recounted the days of her struggle, doing odd jobs, so that she could afford the boarding at the PG she was staying. She had worked all seven days, and at the same time scoured every avenue for a suitable job. She accepted the offer of a hitherto unknown company as the HR Head, disregarding the meagre pay for the learning experience that this opportunity provided her. She soon realized that the concepts that she had assiduously learnt at the B School were completely different from the actual industry practices. This automatically implied that she had to vastly improvise on those very concepts and suitably modify them to build and deliver business benefits. The owner of the company played a largely supportive role, and, thus, added meaning to her role and tenure at the outfit.

She managed to land the job of her choice, since the HR Manager of her employer, the competitor to AlphaNumerics, was impressed that she had single-handedly managed the HR operations of a company that boasted of a workforce of a several hundred. That he was from a small town and had completed his B School from a non-IIM institute also seemed to have turned the tide in her favour.

The illustration of Mansi is a one off episode of several examples across the length and breadth of the country- where

there has been a sudden and rampant mushrooming of Management Institutes. Candidates like Mansi assume that an MBA from a non-IIM



ZUBIN ZACK

Director and Chief Recognition Strategist, O.C. Tanner India

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B School, which is otherwise reputed, and, internships in the leading MNCs are alone sufficient to fetch them plum jobs. However, the reality is vastly different, since the job market is neither uniform in the sense of catering to the graduates' subject specialization, nor, is the education imparted at the B School largely relevant to the practices in the Industry.

Apart from the minor percentage of MBA graduates from the premier Management institutes, who are rewarded with top of the line campus placements, there are several like Mansi, hailing from small towns, arrive at the metros with fire in their bellies, aspiring for a good job, but somehow, fail to make the cut in campus placements. They are thus forced to fend for themselves in an otherwise uncompromising metropolitan society, where everything carries a larger price tag.

While a few return back to their native homes, and try to procure jobs there, some stay on to battle the odds, and pick the first job that comes their way that pays them salaries just about sufficient to stay afloat in the city, work

six days a week with some workdays stretching even to fourteen hours. Unlike our protagonist, who had an understanding boss and a good work environment, in most of the cases, the top management treat their employees as work horses, make them work in cramped cubicles, and, circumvent the legal obligations that entitle the employees to privileges such as leave and yearly increments. Though, many of the MBA graduates consider this ordeal as a part of the learning curve and maintain their focus on the job of their choice, the job market is always driven by the prevalent economy, and not everyone gets the break that they were seeking so desperately.

Human Capital interacted with a few professionals from the Industry, as well as spokespersons from some of the leading B Schools to comprehend the imbroglio that is casting a divide between the theology of the Management Institute and the wants of the corporate world.

Zubin Zack, Director and Chief Recognition Strategist, O.C. Tanner India, one of the most trusted names in Employee Engagement and Talent



MRINMOY MAJUMDER
Assistant Professor
Goa Institute of Management

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Recognition in the world, stated, "According to a recent ASSOCHAM study, most of the 5,500 B schools in India are producing sub-par graduates who are largely unemployable resulting in these pass-outs earning less than Rs 10,000 a month. He further stresses, "the issue that needs to be addressed is, what can corporates and B-Schools do to make candidates well-trained employees", thereby impressing the need for an inclusive participation by the two entities to churn out better talent.

Speaking from a B School perspective, Mrinmoy Majumder, Assistant Professor at the Goa Institute of Management (GIM) quoted, "whether B-school grads are delivering as per the industry expectations or not, is a debate that has been in vogue for years. The problem is not limited to that; the problem is the assessment of content of MBA education." Expressing his sentiments that management education failed to focus on the functional elements of the corporate arena ever since it came into being, he added, "strategy is best suited only when implemented properly at all levels. The need for assessment of MBA content must be at two levels:

immediacy and strategic. The core courses need to focus on the functional and cross-functional spectrum of an organization."

Making a classic corporate scenario from the optical lens of a Management school, Aakash Nagpal, Director, Corporate and Careers Services, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon, quipped, "increasing creativity and innovation is a strategic goal for CEOs of large, medium and small sized companies. To actually get something going in these companies, they need people who are actually capable of driving ideas, but in most of the cases, existing employees are already stretched by the work in hand."

Dr Sanjay Srivastava, Vice Chancellor, Manav Rachna University, held the view that the Industry's dynamic and liquid outlook are also anticipated to vary across multiple dimensions. He added, "Expectations from MBA graduates vary widely across the sectors, and whether, they are recruited as freshers or experienced managers. Many companies complain that MBA graduates' excellent theoretical knowledge is not matched by sufficient interpersonal and

supervisory skills." In the light of his interaction with the Industry vis-à-vis the outgoing MBA batches, he also said that these graduates have been perceived as arrogant, hold high expectations of career and salary potential, and thus the difficulty of fitting them into established teams and career systems. He said, "Another dimension is of employers' recruitment operations which are market driven, and hence short term in response to fast-changing markets and technologies. Companies expect specific mixes of skills, and the mix can change rapidly. Most companies are looking for people with senior management potential. They also want people who can be effective quite rapidly. Thus, it's a daunting task for B Schools to predict the specific and general expectations from corporates, and design and deliver programmes to meet these expectations."

Majumder from GIM further said, "These courses should enable students to focus on the rudimentary details of corporate functioning. The advanced courses are at the strategy level, something that will be relevant only after five years in one's role. The



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problem comes when MBA grads think these advanced courses are an immediate necessity and things, but obviously, surprise them when they enter the organization.”

He carried the view that it could be tackled by way of bringing about a transformation in delivery of the course content and delivery of the course, and his opinion was that the teaching pedagogy needs to create a blend between concepts taught by teachers and practitioners.

Replying to our query over the role

of the Industry to nurture and groom B School talent, Akash Nagpal added that they should involve themselves collaboratively with the Management schools and conceive accelerated leadership programmes. He also suggested that the Industry must onboard fresh talent to don these roles, and take the organization to the next level. Complaining that corporate does not assuage do time or resources for such activities, he impressed that there is a strong need to have a meaningful engagement with B schools. He further

said, "They need to move up the value chain from merely a one-time transaction of placements, to have a year-long engagement. B schools and corporates need to partner throughout the year from training the people initially, to allowing them to solve some live problems, and finally make a choice of who fits the culture and recruit", thus highlighting the aspect that it takes two to tango.

Zubin Zack, envisaged a three-point approach for the corporate to adapt. He laid out his views as mentioned in the box.

He also added that the B-Schools need more involvement and participation by the leadership teams of corporates and make it an integral part of their culture.

He also pointed that the laxity on the part of the Management Institutes for not involving themselves with the leadership teams of corporates and insisted that they make it an integral part of their culture and thus focus on quality of exposure and experiences for their students. He further chipped in state that the connection between B schools and corporates is intertwined, and, it is where a student becomes a corporate executive eventually. He quoted "there is a need to work together as it is the input, and if the quality or quantity of the input is not as desired then the same will influence the outcome for the businesses. B-schools need to encourage students to take up corporate projects, gain more work experience and have several corporate executive interactions through various mediums."

The role of the corporate world in nurturing B School talent was best expressed by John Reed, the former Chairman of Citicorp. Speaking during the Academy of Management's Distinguished Executive of the Year award in 1999, he said, "The business community knows full well that business schools perform a useful function [in] sorting potential hires," he added, "The schools sort out from the general population, those who are more ambitious, more energetic, more willing to subject themselves to two years without income.... But the real question is: Do you give these students a set of skills that is going to serve them well over their careers?*" **HC**

*- www.strategy-business.com/article/03305?gko=527bd

The Corporates' Role

More than just education, a company should be part of nurturing and supporting B-school students through the years; this would include assisting with their projects or be part of voluntary mentorship programmes. For a corporate, this is beneficial as it is a learning of a new generation and their likes, thinking, approaches and feedback.

One to One mentorship programmes for students with senior corporate executives works wonders. These interventions should be structured, monitored and a part of the executive performance measures. This must be an ongoing interaction by the student through the year. It could also help the student understand different departments or processes of the company.

Corporates have to have their processes, systems, policies and training to meet the needs of the students. Corporates need to understand and fine-tune their culture and working atmosphere to attract students so that they can hone their skills and working styles.