

Elements of excellence to bring about a 'C' change

Suresh Narayanan, MD of Nestle India, recently shared with students the lessons that he has gleaned from the third letter of the alphabet

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He steered the company through a period of crisis, but Nestle India MD Suresh Narayanan called himself an unlikely example of a corporate captain while delivering the convocation address at the Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurugram.

Narayanan also shared with the students his Cs of excellence, which include compassion, continuous learning and contentment. The other ones are:

Clarity

It's important to know one's purpose in life, according to Narayanan. "Your purpose in life is not just to be a great corporate captain or entrepreneur or make millions of dollars, have four houses, six Ferraris and

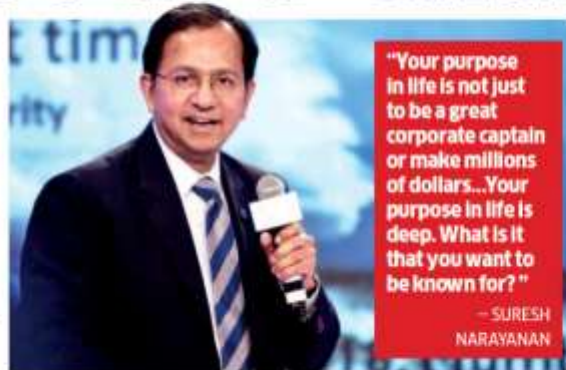
a beautiful wife or handsome husband," he said. "Your purpose in life is deep. What is it that you want to be known for? And that clarity is important."

Narayanan feels that life is too short to be stuck in a job you don't love. "If you are not passionate about getting up in the morning and going to work, change your company. Change your vocation because that is not what life is meant to be," he said.

Competence

Quoting one of Kabir's dohas, Narayanan said, "*Jaati na poocho sadhu ki, poocho ijiye gyan. Mol karo talwar ka, pada rehne do maayan* [Don't ask a saint his religion, ask him about his knowledge. Value the importance of a sword than the sheath that holds it]."

He added, "The problem is that we are always talking about the outer



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— SURESH NARAYANAN

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ity". "Courage means [being] gentle, firm, respectful and yet being able to say there is a better way," he said.

Narayanan told the students that in a meeting room they would come across three types of people. The first kind are the ones who come, have tea and biscuits and leave. The second is the naysayers, who are important to push you forward despite the hurdles. And the last ones, the ones to be wary of, are the jingoistic ones. They will applaud you as your designation expands, but they will be the first ones to disappear in a crisis.

Narayanan urged the class to be in neither of these categories and to form a voice of their own.

scabbard and not the sword. The sword is your competence. Integrity and ethics can only come your way if you have competence."

Credibility

"As sure as a sunrise, as clear as a pond, no nasty surprises," that's credibility according to Narayanan. "We seldom focus on credibility. We focus more on technical skills. What is credibility? It means that when someone sees you they say that I can trust this person," he said.

And it doesn't come from the institutions that one has gone to. "You could have gone to institutions like Harvard, Stanford and MIT, but still lack credibility. You need to build this day by day, step by step. In difficult times, nobody is going to ask you for your gold medal. They will ask if you can be trusted," he said.

Courage

Courage is not telling your boss that he is an idiot. Narayanan calls that "a career-limiting move, sheer stupid."

Concentration

"You are a millennial generation. You are a multitasking generation. You can eat, drink, study, Whatsapp, and multitask. And yet it is important in your life to concentrate because if you focus on one thing at a time and if you do it well, you become an expert." Narayanan told the young audience. "It has been shown by science time and again that those who multitask are the least efficient because human beings are not meant to be machines. They are meant to be human."



The story can be read online [here](#).