



Pic: Martin Louis



**SIMPLE PLAN**

R L Shankar is a staunch advocate of technology and believes that it's the best way to impart education to students in this day and age

## MEET THE PROFESSIONAL SIMPLIFIER

He's got a simple approach to his teaching – to make lessons simple and straightforward. Dr R L Shankar, aka the Professional Simplifier, talks about his approach to keeping things simple and how he uses tech to *Seema Rajpal*

**I**t was the fourth of February when Dr Ramachandran Lakshmi Shankar took to the stage at TEDxGLIMChennai at Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai.

He received a rock star-like welcome that included loud cheers, which rose every time he made a wisecrack, and there were several of them. It was apparent that he is revered by the students. So, it shouldn't come as a surprise that the 37-year-old receives a rating of 4.97 out of 5 on his student feedback at Great Lakes, where he teaches Finance and Analytics. A lot of preparation went into that 16-minute TED talk, he tells us, much like the approach he adopts towards his classes.



**R L SHANKAR**  
Professor, GLIM

**AGE** 37

**WORK LOG**

With a consistent feedback of 4.50 and above, Dr R L Shankar, professor of Finance and Analytics at GLIM, Chennai embraces technology to enhance the experience for students. He is a visiting faculty at IIMs and even trains corporates



The faculty is more of a mentor now than teachers because all content is out there, we just need to make sure students are actively engaged with it

R L Shankar

sources for that. They are coming to you to be engaged with the content in a meaningful, challenging and inspiring way" says the Nagercoil-born professor. And technology should be embraced first for the teaching community to do this to the best of their ability. But what about the teachers who remain resistant to tech? "Technology and faculty are mutually exclusive. They are simply complementary to each other. In fact, teachers become more relevant when they know how to use technology," notes the IIT Madras graduate, confessing that he is an advocate of tech.

As there is so much content out there in terms of online courses, YouTube tutorials and more, it is natural for both teachers and students to feel overwhelmed. But Shankar draws attention to research, which shows that in reality, 50 per cent of student

subscribers watch only the first video and only 5 per cent finish the full portion. This is where the teacher steps in, providing the component of active engagement for the content that has been consumed. Apart from using technology in class, one of the techniques he uses is simplification, as he believes in making things simple, "but not simpler," echoing the sentiment of a quote attributed to Albert Einstein, 'Everything should be made as simple as possible, not simpler'. In fact, his friends back from his undergraduate days used to call him 'professional simplifier', just like the creator of the comic *Dilbert*, Scott Adams.

In his quest to disseminate knowledge, Shankar has delivered customised workshops to corporates like World Bank, Bank of America, and more. These kind of workshops are much in demand he says, as employees are moving away from just thinking of their salary or shifting jobs, to focussing on knowledge enhancement. But teaching continues to be his primary passion, he states, "It runs in the family," and he laughs while sharing with us that he comes from a family of teachers, lecturers and professors. And as a teacher, for Shankar, knowledge dissemination is as important as knowledge creation. "I'm just lucky to have found my true calling," he says, humbly.



**STOMPING GROUND**  
Professor of Finance and Analytics at GLIM, Chennai

**IF NOT A TEACHER, THEN WHAT?**

Shankar is a voracious reader. So if not a teacher, Shankar would have been a non-fiction writer

**TEACHING IT RIGHT**

- 1 Received a grant of \$7,500 by the New York University Stern School and NSE for the research on 'Low latency trading and co-movement of assessment prices'
- 2 Recently developed an economic capital framework for a NBFC with assets over ₹22,000 crore
- 3 Visiting faculty at IIM Ranchi, IIM Kozhikode, IIM Trichy and more

1,200

The number of executives Shankar has designed and offered customised programmes for