

Abhi Vyaakti

...Expressing Synergies

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ORGANIZE

COMMUNICATE

COLLABORATE



Message



Dr.M.Chidambaram
Director
National Institute of Technology



Management had its genesis the day, man landed on Earth. He had nothing to guide him except his intellect and the zeal to emerge, a winner in his struggle for existence. Since then it has been a continuous process of evolution for the discipline as well as its disciple.

The department of management studies has been an integral part of this institute for 28 years now. Its vision of nurturing managerial excellence with a humane perspective has produced some of the finest managers with cool heads and warm hearts.

The release of this E-magazine is a landmark in the glorious history of this Department. I wish them success in all their future endeavors and am certain that they will continue to illuminate the horizon of this institute with the same fervor and commitment.


Dr.M.Chidambaram

Message



Dr.J.Raja
Head Of Department



While penning this note it gives me immense pleasure to consider the publication of this e-magazine ABHIVYAKTI as a milestone in the glorious history of DOMS. This bi-monthly release would be a progressive step towards developing a superior image and also to strengthen our intellectual capital.

This e-magazine would serve as a common forum for the DOMS fraternity not only to express themselves but also to keep everyone posted of their accomplishments.

I invite all to contribute to this magazine in one form or the other and I am certain that with our sustained efforts we will make this endeavor a grand success.

Dr. J. Raja

AbhiVyakti, the E- Magazine of DOMS, is a progressive step in the direction towards building a strong industry- institute interface through positive synergies between student, faculty, alumni and industry. It is a driver which ensures a global presence for us not just as an add on, but as an intrinsic part of whatever we do.

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LIGATURE-05



November 13, 2005 was a red- letter day in the history of the department. The alumni meet was held in Hotel Ashraya International, Bangalore. The visages of Alumni and faculty beamed with joy and the ambience was filled with nostalgia.



LIGATURE-05 started with lighting of lamp by Dr.Punniyamoorthy, Head of the department and other faculty members. In his welcome address he urged the need for the formation of an active association for the mutual benefit of the department and the alumni. The proposal was acclaimed unanimously by the alumni, faculty and students.

Vinod from MBA I Year made a presentation to apprise the alumni of the myriad changes which metamorphosed the department. The state of art infrastructure, shift from semester to trimester pattern and 100 % placement were some of the achievements, which were highlighted in his presentation.

The alumni enlightened the gathering with their ideas regarding the vision and mission of the association. In addition they gave insights of corporate practices to students, which supplement the theory. They came forward to shoulder the financial burden of the department by proposing to set up a fund.

The luncheon provided ample time for all the invitees to savor the dishes at leisure and converse with each other. The post-lunch session was crucial as the purposes and action plan for the association were discussed.

The purposes of the association are

- Formation of strong Alumni network.
- Placement Aid
- Summer Projects
- Guest Lectures
- Up gradation of Curriculum
- Seminars
- Admission procedure of the MBA program

Representatives of the batches were elected to coordinate with their batch members to strengthen the alumni network.

This day will be remembered as the day when DOMS reached out to its family members binding them together in a common thread of shared past.



MDP Workshop



A 6-day MDP on Data Analytics for Business Decisions was held at DOMS, NITT from January 21st to January 26th, 2006. The MDP had 11 participants drawn from industry and academia. Dr.M.Punniyamoorthy coordinated the program. Dr.P.D.D.Dominic assisted him. The Director, NITT Prof. M Chidambaram, inaugurated the program. Dr.J Raja Head, DOMS welcomed the participants. The director stressed on the importance of statistical methods in business as well as technology.

The program was demanding and comprehensive, covering a wide variety of data analytic tools and their applications in management. It started with the rudimentary aspects of research like defining the research process, data cleaning and basic mathematical aspects of Matrices.

The participants were introduced to various data analytic tools during the six day long program. The first two days of the program dealt with Multiple Regression, Multicollinearity problems and its eradication and Dummy Regression. Other data analytic tools like Conjoint Analysis and its application in product development and selection of brands, Discriminant Analysis with special emphasis on multiple discriminant analysis and its application in the selective inventory control and classification of debtors based on credit worthiness. Attribute based perceptual mapping using discriminant analysis was illustrated. Principal component analysis and its applications in share prices analysis were introduced. The sessions on factor analysis concentrated on the principal factor method as well as the maximum likelihood method. Various factor rotation techniques were also part of the sessions on Factor Analysis. Cluster Analysis sessions elaborated on the various clustering techniques and their applications in supply chain management and segmentation. The final session in data analytic tools dealt with Multidimensional Scaling and its application in brand positioning.

The MDP concluded with a session on Strategic decision model, detailing the utility of the combination of the Brown Gibson Model and Analytic Hierarchy Process for any strategic decision model and its application in technology selection. Daily lab sessions were also a significant feature of the program.

The feedback from the participants was encouraging. Most of them admitted that their understanding of the multivariate data analysis tools was clearer after attending the program. They planned to use these tools in an effective manner for their future research work. Dr CVRS.Vijaya Kumar, Asst Prof, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal appreciated the efforts taken in researching the intricate details of the algorithms. Mr.Amol Dutt, Business Consultant, Thorogood, Bangalore reiterated the importance of data analytic tools in developing business intelligence technology.





The valedictory function was presided over by the Dean Dr. Sivan (Industrial Consultancy and Sponsored Research), NITT. He reiterated on the importance of such MDPs in generating revenue for the institute. He elaborated his point of view by citing the emergence of IISc in consultancy and research. Dr.M.Punniyamorthy expressed his gratitude to the Head of the Department, Dr.J.Raja for his encouragement and unstinted support for the successful conduct of the program.

Encouraged by the response to the MDP the department plans to conduct the next MDP in the month of June. It will deal with advanced techniques in multiple regression like stepwise regression, backward, forward regression & logistic regression. In addition advanced multivariate techniques like canonical regression & multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will also be discussed. Apart from this multi- dimensional scaling using preference data, Canonical correlation & discriminant analysis will also be handled in the next MDP.

Alumnus Interview Transcript



Dr. J. Raja is an alumnus of 1985 batch of Department of Management Studies, National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli. He did his M.Com from Bharatidasan University in the year 1984. He joined DOMS in 1988 as Teaching Assistant and he is currently the Head of DOMS. He is an active member of ICWAI since 1998. Moreover, he has done his doctoral research in 'Performance evaluation of mutual funds in India' under the guidance of Dr.S. Ganeshan from Allagappa University in 2004.



The following are some of the excerpts of an exclusive interview with him....

Q1. MBA Graduates prefer the corporate world to teaching. Sir, what makes you so passionate about this sacred profession?

The job satisfaction in this profession is really high and the experience is truly enriching. It also provides me with an opportunity to broaden my intellectual horizon. Further there is also the pleasure of always staying in touch with young minds.

Q 2. Sir, you are from the class of '87 DOMS, NITT. In what ways has the dept equipped itself for the last 20 years to cater to the ever- increasing corporate demands?

The infrastructural facilities have improved a lot since our days. In those days our classes were held in the Civil Dept. It was only in 1990 that we shifted to the Silver Jubilee Building .The examination pattern has changed from semester to trimester, this has made the course more popular with the students, helping them to cover a wide range of subjects. The placement scenario has also improved a lot since our time. The intellectual capital has increased by leaps and bounds.

Q 3.Sir, it is said that, “Managers are born and not made.” Do you think that MBA is a prerequisite to a successful career in the corporate world?

MBA is not necessarily a prerequisite. There are many examples of successful people in the corporate world without an MBA degree. However MBA gives you a new way of looking at things. It broadens your horizons and helps you cope with stressful situations in a better manner. In today’s highly competitive world its important that you have an edge over the others in every possible way. An MBA program gives you just that.

Q 4. The Management Development Program conducted recently was a huge success. Sir, are there any plans of conducting such events in the near future?

We are planning to conduct Management Development Programs, Faculty Development Programs and national & international conferences in the near future. Apart from that we have plans of conducting management meets and seminars for the under graduate students of NITT.

Q 5. What is your most memorable experience in DOMS as a student?

I was a day scholar so; the time spent on campus was relatively less. But Snacketeria was our favourite hang-out and we used to have these heated discussions over continuous cups of coffee about just everything under the sun. Those were some of the most memorable moments in my student- life.

Q 6. Institutes like IIMs, XLRI etc have a strong alumni network, which plays an active role in delivering guest lectures, summer projects, placements, mentoring and many other activities. As an alumnus of DOMS how would you address this issue?

A strong alumni network is the need of the hour. There is an onus on every alumnus to pay back to the department and regular correspondence should be maintained with the alumni to make this possible. We are working on it and the Alumni meet “Ligature-05” gave us a flying start in this direction. Soon DOMS would have a strong and supportive alumni network guiding it towards a brighter future.

Q.7.Sir, are there any plans to modify the admission procedure of DOMS in the near future?

The admission procedure of DOMS is strictly under the guidelines of Ministry of Human Resource Development. However, there are plans to conduct a combined entrance test for all NITs which offer the MBA program. Nothing much can be revealed about them at this juncture.

Q 8. Sir, would you like to convey a message to the students who wish to pursue a career in academics?

Teachers with merit, experience and commitment are necessary to keep the standards of education high. A lot of contribution has to be made by young people in this field. So, students aspiring for a career in academics should emotionally attach themselves with the subject they want to pursue so that they can reach the zenith of intellectual satisfaction in it and also gain the pleasure of spreading this knowledge gained.

Q.9.As an alumnus of DOMS, how do you foresee DOMS five years down the line?

Five years down the line I see DOMS, NITT as the best management institute in South India .Our vision of nurturing managerial excellence with a humane perspective will come true and we will acquire a global image of quality education.

Budget'06 Discussion



Chittu and **Kittu** are close buddies, meeting over a cup of coffee. The latest budget has kindled a discussion and here they go chatting.....

Kittu: Hey Chittu, what's up?? What are you thinking about?? Anything up your sleeve?? Or on your mind??

Chittu: Oh! nothing it's the same...financial crisis even before the end of the first fortnight.... I am pathetic at handling my personal budget...Do you know a place from where I could get a training to handle money?? I'd be indebted to you for suggesting it.

Kittu: Hey what are you saying?? Look at our finance minister. He has to handle so many things & does a really nice job out of it.. I think you should get inspired by him.

Chittu: Oh ya...Budget is out. I just forgot. You seem to be on cloud nine today.

Kittu: Ya, I am actually happy. I can now go on a long drive in my brand new car, enjoying delicious ice creams & cold drinks with a background score of *kabhi kushi kabhi gham* on my new mp3 player. It would truly reflect my sentiments about the Budget.

Chittu: Hey... hey... stop...stop...your list is really long. Have you won a lottery or something...??

Kittu: Actually it's the super Budget ...Excise duty has been reduced on small cars .So; all the major players in the small car business are reducing the prices. Same is true for ice creams & cold drinks. Customs duty has been reduced for Mp3 players too. So, you see I have my plans all set.

Chittu: What do you think about FBT? I was pretty sure it would be removed this time after the hype & hooplah it created in the previous budget.

Kittu: I thought so too. But the relaxations given don't seem to be too bad either. It prescribes an annual FBT exemption threshold of 1 Lakh per employee for contribution made by the employer to an approved superannuation fund.

Chittu: Hmm...Actually I was just wondering if I can now accept the touring offers that I have been rejecting all this time. Only a nut would have taken up a tour to pay 20% tax. Now that it is 5%, it doesn't seem to be that bad an idea.

Kittu: Good thought. Happy touring!! This budget has awakened the farmer in me. The farmer credit has become cheaper by 1.5%, the risk being borne by NABARD. Moreover the fact that the self help groups have been roped in, for more participation is encouraging.

Chittu: Do you think banks are going to reap any benefits out of this??

Kittu: Oh yes, An indirect benefit that banks can derive from the Self help groups is that they can promote & cross-sell products like housing small, small retail loans & small deposits.

Chittu: I agree, an efficient & empowered SHG network can do wonders to our rural population. Another aspect about which my boss was pestering me is the scope of expansion of service taxes. There seems to be lot of change in that area.

Kittu: Is there so much change in service tax area??

Chittu: Yes, 15 new services have come under the tax net while expanding the scope of 12 existing services like banking & ATM transactions. Exemption has been withdrawn from 6 others. I was just wondering if this could have an inflationary impact.

Kittu: Got it!! But a similar increase in the service tax in 2004 from 8 % to 10% wasn't inflationary. I wonder why this one should !!!!!

Chittu: You seem to make sense. I just hope you are right. But, you can't deny the fact that a tax on ATM transactions is going to hit the common man hard.

Kittu: Ya, you are right. But, see another important aspect of this budget is that PC has given great importance to infrastructure development. 96% of the Golden quadrilateral is complete!! Moreover, the Bharat Nirman initiative is all set to keep the infrastructure companies busy for sometime now..



Chittu: Remember the “India Shining” campaign of BJP. I guess India is brightening up at a good pace & we can actually feel the glow everywhere.

Kittu: So, now what is your idea about handling money??

Chittu: Really, now I know that I just need better & systematic planning to maintain my personal budget. Who knows by next month even I might start “shining”

Kittu: Hey its good to see you back to your bouncy self.... so how about treating me to another cup of steaming coffee.... cant seem to get enough of it!!!!

Chittu: Hey sure.....

Club Activities



Finnacle

Finnacle was born with the vision of igniting the passion of finance among students and to provide a platform to discuss and debate on various topics which come under the gambit of finance. It also equips the students to capture the miniscule events in the corporate world.

Jayan from MBA I Year gave a brief lecture on Sensex, its calculation; interpretation etc. It was followed by a discussion on mutual funds and its emerging importance in the investment market. This was attended by twenty fin-enthusiasts and it helped them to get familiarized with stock trade activities.

Infinit-e

It is a bunch of budding IT freaks willing to fire their thoughts across a group of people from varied academic backgrounds. The purpose of this club is to apprise the students about changing IT world and to build and manage knowledge with a focus to develop holistic personalities.

To revive this club and also to extend the horizon among other streams a quiz was conducted. The questions of the quiz varied from the basics of computers and Business Intelligence to current topics like E Biz, Security and ITeS. Eighteen people participated in the quiz and they were divided into teams. It was great to see people from different areas of interest mingling together, forming synergies within the team in their quest to get past the other teams.

The team comprising of Deepesh, Vishaka Rajan and Vijay from MBA II Year won the quiz.

Persona

Managing the human capital is the most difficult task .This club helps the students to unravel their hidden talents and to solve problems tactfully. It provides a platform for the students to build harmonious relationships.

The initial event was a birthday game. With only non verbal communication persons in groups have to stand in increasing order of their date of birth. It tested person's ability to cope with situations, deal tactfully and provide solutions. It also identified personal qualities like leadership, understanding other person's view point etc.The second event was singing .Each group was given a topic. Every group had to sing a song based on the topic .Topics included poverty, illiteracy, anti-dowry etc.This event tested the spontaneity and ability to communicate in most effective way.

Article

- By Reuel David



WANTED: 2 MILLION ‘SUITABLE’ GRADS FOR IT JOB JAN’2009

India has made IT and ITeS its forte over the past decade. Every business paper or magazine talks, on a frequent, almost weekly, basis, about a TCS or an Infosys announcing new and bigger deals with Fortune 500 companies. Also the growth in the sector is not restricted to the “Biggies” or “Tier I” companies but the smaller (Read: smaller in number of employees and sales turnover) companies too are making their mark on the Global IT Outsourcing map. That India is on a roll in the IT sector, especially ITeS and BPO is no new news.



Every business leader in every IT company is now talking about their growth in the coming years. Each one has charted out specific domains in which they see themselves specializing and the amount of growth that they expect in the coming years. The sheer optimism that is widespread in these views sends out a clear message. India is going to consolidate its leadership position in the Global BPO Market and also make dents into the more product and maintenance oriented IT market (Read: remote infrastructure management, application development and maintenance and so on).. All this is the good news.

The Bad News:

The BPO/ITeS Sector is facing shortage of employable talent. Not that the talent is not there, but the people aren’t “Suitable” to the various needs of the job. Since there are no systems in place to plug the Demand/Supply mismatch, sustaining the explosive growth of the sector depends largely on how the industry will cope with what S. Ramadorai, CEO of TCS calls “The mismatch between Availability and Suitability”. The growth ambitions of the all players talking about “Moving up the value chain” will no doubt be hampered by the lack of suitable talent.

We need to first understand what this *suitability* is. Given the needs of the hour in the ITeS and BPO companies operating with team-based/project-based models, there is a need to find not just talent to fit into the process but also to match the *personality requirements* of the job. What I am referring to when I say personality requirements are those qualities that help the employee to excel in his job, given the unique model of working in these companies, those which enable new recruits to become future leaders.

These qualities include: the knack to learn quickly and efficiently execute new concepts, such as demanded by frequent process shifts within the company; the ability to be a team-player (sure everybody says so in their resume but since the primary reason for entering this industry is its monetary remuneration, not many follow it in spirit as they are busy jacking up their bonus); the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently; the capability to lead a team and motivate team players; the understanding of the nuts and bolts of their company/industry so that they can contribute with their minds and not just hands; and many more. Though it would be expecting too much of a new comer to have all these qualities, the person should, at the least, exude confidence in learning these qualities.

The qualities mentioned above can be attained by a proper understanding of what the company expects and desires from the new comers (and existing employees). Thus there is a need to put this message across to the young talent in the country so that they can build these personality traits and come prepared for their jobs in the industry. There is a huge gap between what the companies expect from their employees and what the employees expect from their jobs. It is this gap that is leading to the “Availability Vs Suitability” mismatch. We now get onto how this gap can be plugged.

Plugging the GAP:

Before pondering on how to close this gap, it should be pointed out, as has been reiterated by many analysts and CEOs, that there is a need for an industry-wide cooperation and collaboration among all interested parties in order to successfully plug this gap. These parties are the corporates, the recruitment agencies, and educational institutions.

Let's look at what role each of these parties can play in the bid to close the gap.

The Corporates:

Though I mention each interested party's role separately, I would like to mention that whatever be the number of parties in the collaboration, it is the corporate that has to play a central role and give direction and meaning to the entire exercise. Having said that, I now outline what should be the role of the corporate individually.

The HR function of the corporates seems to concentrate more on internal issues, such as training, career planning etc. Emphasis on recruitment and collaboration with recruitment agencies and academia is needed. Corporates had been outsourcing the recruitment process to many recruitment agencies, which contributed in the gap arising in the first place. The corporates need to play a more active role in this outsourced process. They can do so by, occasionally lending their HR and Techies to the agencies to conduct "Employability Workshops". The aim of such workshops should be to create awareness among the young graduates about the requirements of their company and the industry as a whole. Such workshops can be conducted at various educational institutions, especially at those where the corporate intends to go for campus recruitment, as well. Apart from these partnerships with academia for conducting seminars, conferences, and lectures needs to be looked at. Though such partnerships aren't new, their focal point needs to center on clearing the myths, about the required skills, in the minds of the students.

Recruitment Agencies:

A large number of these agencies seem to be concentrating on basic training, be it technical or personality development. Their aim in doing this is to get the maximum number of candidates their jobs, whether they are suitable for them or not. One can't really blame these agencies as they get their commission from the corporates for getting people into the company. Perhaps the corporates could change this. An added clause, in their agreement with the agencies, granting a commission based on the performance of the candidate or on his future promotions will get the agencies thinking about their job. Such a clause will make them go beyond the basic skills training and impart enduring skills which make the candidate suitable for the job.

Academia:

They still have to wake up from their sleep. It is common knowledge that the curriculum taught and the skills required don't match, and that the rigors of studying (read cramming) leave little time and energy for the student to think about improving his personality (read communication, interpersonal, and team playing skills). Employability workshops and monthly seminars by the corporate honchos would go a long way in helping the students think beyond basic skills and acquire the enduring skills. A yearly tour of a corporate campus would get the point across to the students. Also, as a few institutes have already done, setting up a *career development cell* would help. The activities of such cells need to be on helping the students think more closely about areas where their strength lie and then build on these areas.

I feel it is the corporates who should initiate the above ideas. In a time when the IT industry as a whole is undergoing a job-churn, with many companies having an attrition rate in excess of 20 %, the corporates need to understand that the amount of time and money spent on training candidates is not justifiable anymore. The above ideas and

collaborations with recruitment agencies and academia would not only improve the quality of the talent the corporates get but also reduce the amount spent on training and developing the newly recruited. Cooperating with agencies and academia is nothing new for the corporates as the following case illustrates.

Case in Point:

At the initiative of the Institute of Entrepreneurship and Career Development (IECD) Bharathidasan University, Streams Informatics Pvt Ltd (a Chennai-based recruitment agency) and e-Serve (a well known MNC with BPO/ITeS interests in India) came together for student placement in e-Serve. Their collaboration is simply about each one owning one step of the recruitment process. IECD conducts the qualifying test to shortlist candidates from affiliated colleges of Bharathidasan University; Streams Informatics conducts group discussions and selects candidates for personal interviews; and finally, e-Serve conducts the interviews and recruits the students.

This venture is commendable and makes the job of each partner simple and focused and we no doubt need more and more of such ventures. However, future ventures of such kind need to have the following characteristics. Firstly, the initiative for the venture needs to come from the corporates themselves. The corporates should no longer assume that the academia and agencies will get them the *suitable* talent. It is up to them to ensure that each partner in the process is focused on developing the student in the areas of personal and technical talent. Secondly, they need to move from the recruitment/placement stage and start at the training and development stage of the recruitment process. Even before visiting a campus for recruitment, the corporate should have invested in the campus, in the form of lending its people for workshops, seminars, and lectures, and made clear its needs and expectations from the students. Finally, the corporate should make one of its own personnel, preferably from HR, in-charge of the entire process. This would ensure that the process is carried out in letter and in spirit.

The increased role of the corporate in such partnerships would ensure that (a) the focus of the entire exercise is shifted from getting jobs for students to placing suitable talent in the company, (b) students get a clear and unequivocal message about what the job is and what skills the corporate expects from them, (c) and the academia and the agencies will better understand the requirements of the corporates and hopefully, change their curriculum/processes to help their students fulfill them.

To conclude, given the amount of time and money invested by the corporates in training their new recruits, the methods mentioned above would definitely be more profitable and sustainable in the long-run. I am sure every HR manager in every ITeS / BPO company would give his right hand to have a steady flow of suitable graduates willing to work in their organization and grow with the tremendous growth that is inherent in this industry and become future leaders when the company needs them the most.

Article



- By Deepesh R

SELF HELP BOOKS: IS IT REALLY WORTH IT?

Many of us might have gone through at least one self help book in our life. It could be to bring about an overall development in personality, to be better at what we are doing currently or simply for the heck of it. So I thought of writing an article on the same, to gain or impart a new perspective. After all, meta-thinking does throw light on a new line of thoughts. This article is not to convey that the self help books are a total waste of time and money. Nor would it be praising their usefulness to sky high levels. The trigger to this article came from a discussion I had with a friend of mine who deplorably despised the usefulness of such books. That discussion set my mind to analyze whether these books are just filling up a need felt by lost souls or do they really enhance one's life in the real sense of the term.



So to start with, let us first define what are these Self Help Books? This will help me to limit this article to a clearly defined line of thought so as not to give rise to any bone of contention. *The first "self-help" book was – indeed - titled "Self-Help". It was written by Samuel Smiles (1812-1904) and was published in 1859. Its opening sentence is: "Heaven helps those who help themselves", a variation of "God helps them that help themselves", the oft-quoted maxim that appears in Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanac.*

The term self-help can refer to any case whereby an individual or a group, such as a support group, betters itself economically, intellectually or emotionally. The connotations of the phrase often apply particularly to psychological or psychotherapeutic nostrums, purveyed through the popular genre of the "self-help" books and self-help personal development movements.

The concept of self-help has been extended to other realms as well. For many people, self-help has become a way of saving cost especially in legal setting.

With self help services available for routine legal matters, domestic processes, medical solutions, fix it solutions etc things have really come a long way from what they were.. However, the opinion being expressed in this article would be limited to the books that fall within the definition stated above in italics.

So to start with, let me again reiterate the question. How helpful are the Self Help books to the general population? How effective are books like '*Change your life in Seven days*' by Paul Mckenna", "*Steve Chandler's, 100 Ways To Motivate Yourself*", *The Seven habits of Highly Effective people* by Stephen Covey, or our "*You can win by Shiv Khera*". Come to think of it. Is it so simple that by following the guidelines mentioned in a 300 – 400 page book, you can become a millionaire, a Bill Gates, a Michael Dell or a N. R. Narayan Murthy? Did the great leaders of the past and present, sportspersons or any achiever fieldread these books as a prerequisite to their accomplishments? Point to ponder, isn't it? Hmm..!!

Another point worth thinking about is that, whether the authors of these Self Help books were successful at all in their lives. It could just be that the book is the only success in their lives. A principle could be applied to the *Self Help Industry*. The most successful people it produces are the next generation of Self Help Gurus. While many of the famous Gurus did succeed in other areas first, there are thousands of little gurus (gurettes?) out there who are just copying the model - having been unemployed or in a dead-end job beforehand. Sure, they do tinker with the basics, but they all talk about the same things: *goal setting, visualization, affirmations, time management, taking action* etc. Don't we know all these? It just comes down to the color of their book, or the title of their seminar to be a potential hit. For them, the Self Help Industry certainly works.

Now, each year, tens of millions of self-help books, audio series and seminars are sold. Isn't it worth pondering that if they were that effective, everyone who reads them should have become a CEO of a multinational company?

In the hindsight, the people who might have read these books seriously and then failed, might have ended more frustrated. These books build up the belief that they can succeed, so by not becoming a millionaire they have failed - that they have not lived up to their "potential."

Sure, one can become a millionaire. One can also climb Mount Everest. One can become a great husband or wife. There is nothing stopping you. But is all this likely to happen with all of us? The effort required to achieve all of these is not always considered. When people buy a book for Rs 150, they are given the impression that it is the success they are buying, not just a few hundred pages of paper. It's just like the advertisements that one see on the television promising a washboard flat stomach if you buy one of their machines. Overweight people are made think that they are buying the body, not the machine. But they are never told the years of hard effort and sacrifice that they may have to put in. And of course, the models used are definitely a treat to one's eyes. Perhaps the central problem with the Self Help Industry is that it implies that everyone should be successful - and then success is defined in quite limited terms. Money is usually the big one, but this is contrary to many religious beliefs which view surplus wealth as a destroyer of the soul.

If one looks at any self help book, it is very rare that one finds statistics in Self Help books, even less on their covers. You will never see "95% of readers of this book have more than doubled their income in the last year." Instead, you are offered *testimonials* - short statements from people that the book has helped. A *testimonial* is a very effective way of marketing and seems to work because they are about real person. You feel a connection with the person.

"If they used the techniques to find their true love, surely I can too," you think. But testimonials fail to look at the bigger picture. Isn't it a superb Marketing strategy to boost sales of these books.

The following example gives a good analogy.

“If you were to write to 100,000 people and tell them that they are going to win the lottery within the next year, the chances are at least one of them will. Thus, that person may feel that you predicted - or even caused - their lottery win. You can then ask them to endorse your book "How to Win the Lottery" and they will, honestly, explain that they won the lottery with your help. The same principle applies. If hundreds of thousands of people read a success book, the chances are that a few of them would have become successful anyway. They may have learned a couple of things that they didn't know before. But that tiny percentage can be used to imply that it works for everyone”.

So to conclude, this article was not to despise the self help books and label them as a waste of time. It was just a food for thought that I thought of penning down. I am not penning down the advantages of these books as they are already all over the place, be it in the form of promotional campaigns of various books or the advertisement that we see in various media. Using these books is always left to one's discretion. And as mentioned in the above example, these books do provide a new perspective, a new way of living or an innovative way of doing certain things that might be more effective. However, the way to achieve success is not just limited to that. There are many factors that might have to be encountered on ones way to success.

I would like to emphasize here that I am not taking a stand on this issue, but just expressing a different perspective. However, the point is, as they say, “Hard work is the only way to success”. But help in any form, even in the form of a book or suggestions are always most welcome. Ain't it?



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