

Guest Editorial

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What do organizations look for in new employees?

Today we live in a society that is characterized by speed. The speed at which human knowledge is created is increasing exponentially. The ubiquitous internet has fueled this growth in many ways with far reaching consequences than the printing machine.

Business entities and organizations are growing and changing at a rapid pace. The 'velocity' of business is increasing every day. The knowledge that we gain is becoming obsolete faster than ever.

Given this rapid change engulfing our environment, it is but natural that graduating students looking for a job are confused about understanding and meeting the expectations of prospective employers. On the other hand, organizations are looking for new recruits who can come up to speed quickly and integrate well with the culture.

Enough newspaper articles have appeared about how today's graduates are 'unemployable'. Eminent business leaders including Mr. Narayana Murthy of Infosys have bemoaned the soft skills of graduates. I quote below some recent press on this topic.

- *According to a recent McKinsey report, only 25% of total engineers, 15% of the total finance and accounting professionals, and 10% of the general graduates from the colleges and universities are employable. There will be a shortfall of 3.1 million employable people by 2010 leading to a severe problem if the issue isn't tackled at the grassroots level.*
- *"We are saddled with a situation where industry is lamenting skill shortage and at the same time we have educated youth complaining of non-availability of jobs" – A report*
- *India has 350 universities, 18,000 colleges and 6,000 ITIs, which every year come out with about 500,000 technical graduates, of which, according to NASSCOM estimates, 75 per cent are not easily employable, and 2.3 million graduates, of which 90 per cent are considered unemployable*

Given all this, what do organizations really expect from new recruits? This write-up examines some soft skill parameters of relevance. An appreciation of this will then lead us to assess what traits are desirable in employees, be they new or old.

- Skill vs. Knowledge:** Most new employees come with knowledge they have gained from studying course material in college. You will find that more than 80% of that bookish knowledge cannot be directly used in day-to-day work. What the job needs will be specific skills related to your job function. Say, you are a programmer, and understand all the syntax and constructs in Java, converting a set of specifications into a robust program following all the rules, standards and processes of the company is a different cup of tea. Ability to analyse a problem, break it down into smaller problems and thinking of optimum ways to solve them are very important. These skills do not come by mere book knowledge.
- Contribution to team vs. Individual brilliance:** In organizations, success is all about achieving together as a team. In my experience, I have quite often come across brilliant individuals who do not succeed because they fail to be part of a 'team' culture. In the corporate world, no individual can succeed by herself exclusively without a team around. Behind every successful project or leader, there are a number of people that contribute in different ways. The desire of some individuals to show-off and stand apart makes them poor team players. Such individuals tend to dominate discussions, oppose every idea except their own and generally pull down the morale of everyone else in the team. It is important that you be a team player, build consensus, encourage other team members and focus on achieving a common goal and not a individual gold medal.
- Asking the question vs. Knowing the answer:** Given the speed at which knowledge is being created, it is difficult for any individual to keep up with everything. Organizations understand this and do not expect you to know the answer for everything. But they expect you to know how to ask the right

- d. question. Knowing to ask the right question is half the answer. Search for questions that throw a new light on the problem at hand, ask questions that help a deeper understanding of the problem and work will become easier.
- e. **Incident handling vs. Problem fixing**: Most of us know how to fix a problem. For example, when the customer reports a problem with a program you may have written, you probably know how to diagnose and fix it. But do you know how to handle the incidents and the consequences created by the problem? Have you communicated to customer when you are likely to fix the problem? Have you informed your manager the result of your impact analysis? Do you know what functions will get affected when you fix the problem? Are there any other people to be notified when your program is fixed? So, you can see how handling an incident is more comprehensive than fixing a problem. Organisations expect that you are well versed in handling the incident and not just in fixing the problem.
- f. **Solution Ownership vs. Task completion**: As a team member it is important for you to complete the task given to you. But that alone does not define project success. Your task may be like one piece of the jigsaw puzzle. You should understand and help in solving the whole jigsaw puzzle. That is what organizations expect – ability to look beyond your own task.
- g. **Learning vs. Know-all attitude**: As technology and business environments change, organizations need to unlearn old things and learn new things rapidly. Employees that display an I-know-it-all attitude usually tend to lose in the long term. If you have an open mind and a keenness to learn new things, you will become better equipped to succeed.
- h. **Communication skills**: Ability to communicate clearly is one of the most critical success factors. A lot has been written about it. Organizations expect the following communication skills.
 - a. Speaking and listening skills
 - b. Telephone and email skills
 - c. Ability to unambiguously report status, progress, challenges etc.
 - d. Disagreeing without being disagreeable
 - e. Ability to say NO professionally
- i. **Expectation Management**: This is another key skill you will need. In their enthusiasm to impress seniors, many new recruit over-promise and under-deliver. This leads to unreasonable expectations and when not met, leads to disappointment and frustration for all. Learn to set and manage expectations properly.

Understanding these expectations and modifying your personality traits suitably will help you become more productive and successful in your new job.

Vedavyas Mysore

From Chairman's Desk



An Update on the proposed Education Reforms

Under the head "Education Reforms On Anvil , If Politics Permits" *Deccan Herald* of Nov 24 2009, reported that three education-related bills are likely to be placed before parliament in the ongoing winter session:

1. **"The Educational Tribunals Bill** : envisages a three-tier structure to deal with disputes between students and institutions, teachers and institutions as well as disputes related to affiliation, unfair means adopted by students in examination and by the institutions.

2. The National Authority for Regulation of Accreditation in Higher Educational Institutions (NARAHEI) Bill: would have the prestigious institutions like the IITs and the IIMs also under its ambit.
3. Bill for Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Education: For the first time the government would be able to initiate criminal proceedings against officials at private institutions who cheat students or make false promises to them.

The draft document on setting up a National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER), which would subsume existing regulators like the University Grants Commission, the Medical Council and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), has been under circulation” and is under discussion.

Under the head “Sibal’s Reforms Hit Roadblocks, *Times Of India* of Dec 5, 2009 reported that the HRD Ministry has decided to refer the Bills on : Setting up of Educational Tribunals, and Malpractices to the Group of Ministers (GoM) ; this will also have an impact on the Bill relating to Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions. This will delay the introduction of these Bills in the current session of Parliament.

The fourth Bill on Foreign Education Providers is held up after PMO objected to certain changes; and the proposal to set up the National Commission for Higher Education and Research has also been delayed.

In this context, it may be remembered that the last time Educational Reforms were introduced in 1986, a Draft Document was prepared and discussed in a series of country-wide National Workshops, and was subsequently reviewed and finalized a few years later. It is important to get consensus among the various stakeholders, in as much as implementation and execution of the plans depends on them.

On behalf of BITES, I wish All Our Members , Stakeholders and Well-Wishers A Very Happy New Year and All The Best in the Coming Year!

Prof. R. Natarajan

District Wise Workshops - 2

Funding Opportunities for Sponsored Research and Collaboration with IT industry

Date: 11th December 2009

Venue: KVGCE, Sullia

Sponsor: BITES



BITES would like to help build a strong research culture in our engineering institutions and also create a symbiotic relationship between academia and IT Industry for mutual benefit. BITES has started a series of District wise workshops to reach out to engineering colleges located in non-metro areas. This is second in the series covering the districts of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada. This was an awareness workshop which provided information about programs and schemes available for sponsored research from various funding agencies. The second part of the workshop gave details of various opportunities available for collaboration with twelve major IT industries.

Forty faculty members from ten engineering colleges participated in the workshop. The participants received a virtual class room DVD comprising of Audio-Video presentations made by the directors of various funding agencies and also a compendium of schemes, formats, how to make proposals, evaluation criteria and best practices to be followed for getting funds for sponsored research.

TCS is BITES New Corporate Member

BITES extends a hearty welcome to TCS on the occasion of their becoming BITES corporate member and wishes TCS best of luck in all their future endeavours. We look forward keenly to network with TCS in our future activities.

Upcoming events

Date	Event	Host	Sponsor
February 13	Symposium on “ <i>Excellence in IT Education</i> ”	MSRIT	BITES
March 18-20	Workshop on DSP & MSP 430	Reva Institute of Technology	TI (India)

What is new in Information Technology?

Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS)

Information technology (IT) has transformed many industries, from education to health care to government, and is now in the early stages of transforming transportation systems. IT enables elements within the transportation system—vehicles, roads, traffic lights, message signs, etc.—to become intelligent by embedding them with microchips and sensors and empowering them to communicate with each other through wireless technologies. In the leading nations in the world, ITS bring significant improvement in transportation system performance, including reduced congestion and increased safety and traveller convenience. Japan, Singapore, and South Korea are global leaders in ITS deployment with US a distant 4th.

Intelligent transportation systems include a wide and growing suite of technologies and applications. ITS applications can be grouped within five summary categories: 1) **Advanced Traveller Information Systems** provide drivers with real-time information, such as transit routes and schedules; navigation directions; and information about delays due to congestion and accidents Etc. 2) **Advanced Transportation Management Systems** include traffic control devices, such as traffic signals, ramp meters, variable message signs, and traffic operations centers. 3) **ITS-Enabled Transportation Pricing Systems** include systems such as electronic toll collection (ETC), congestion pricing and fee-based express (HOT) lanes 4) **Advanced Public Transportation Systems**, for example, allow trains and buses to report their position so passengers can be informed of their real-time status (arrival and departure information). 5) **Fully integrated intelligent transportation systems**, such as vehicle-to-infrastructure (VII) and vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) integration, enable communication among assets in the transportation system, for example, from vehicles to roadside sensors, traffic lights, and other vehicles.

SOURCE: The Information Technology and Innovation Foundation Report: January 2010