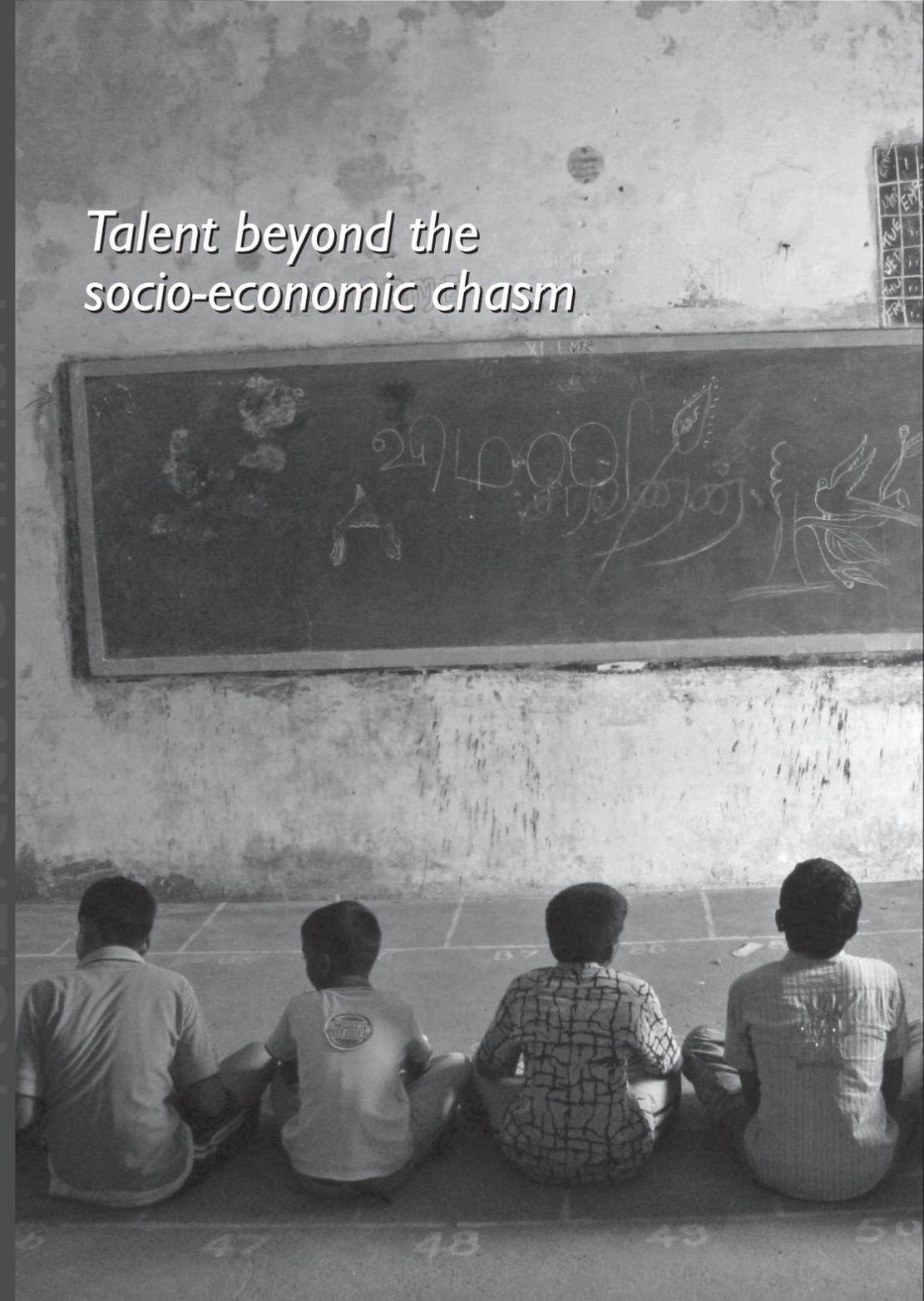


Talent beyond the socio-economic chasm



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Editor's Note

Dear Friends

As a firm that has been tracking employment and labour market trends in the country over the past ten years, one subject that has been concerning us immensely is the huge talent that is lying unrealised because of the socio-economic chasm. We have always wondered what it would take for the youth from rural India to achieve their true potential.

While the findings of people like Max Weber and David McClelland several decades ago concluded that N-Ach (need for achievement) among Indians was low because of our socio-cultural orientations, it is now fairly evident that thanks to the structural interventions in our economy over the past two decades, the same socio-cultural factors have now begun to play a favourable role in shaping and enhancing the need for achievement among young Indians, even the ones in rural India. That is great news. However we recognize that N-Ach alone is not enough. They need to overcome several socio-economic roadblocks to achieve their true potential.

Our deep interest in this subject motivated us to undertake an extensive research project to understand what it would take for talent from rural India to cross the socio-economic chasm. That is the theme of this edition of UTB.

The ultimate validation of our hypothesis and our choice of the theme and our reading of the situation was the fact that the theme of the 2009 Human Development Report (HDR) is **Migration**. The report takes a refreshingly divergent view and breaks the popular myth that all migration is bad. The report also clarifies that over 75% of all migration is domestic and only 25% is international. Our findings also support the view of the 2009 HDR that migration has several great benefits.

We could not have asked for any greater affirmation of our efforts and its global relevance!

Our research of course, has a very specific focus. We have looked at the migration challenges among educated youth from villages and small towns as they come to cities, especially in search of white collar jobs. A large part of our sample is Tamil Nadu centric. We however have reason to believe that the findings have national validity.

While the HDR recognises the barriers and recommends global solutions, we have chosen to focus on what each individual can do by and for himself and herself. Our recommendations are not directed at the Government, the educational institutions or others. Our recommendations are directly addressed to the youth themselves. It is meant to empower them and help them achieve their true potential. While the findings of our research effort are by no means earth shattering, they certainly hold the potential to become life altering. That in itself made our efforts purposeful. We would be most pleased if this small effort and simple message can find its way into the homes of as many youth as possible.

It gives all of us at totus immense pleasure to bring to you this very special socially relevant edition of UTB as we celebrate our 10th anniversary.

We welcome your ideas and suggestions on how we can reach this message to the people who can benefit from this effort.

Warm Regards



Ganesh Chella

"Under the Bonnet" is a quarterly journal from totus consulting and is distributed to our clients and community of Business Leaders, CEOs and HR Professionals.



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We would also like to acknowledge the insights we gained from our interactions with Mr. Samik Ghosh of Foundation for Life, an NGO that is working on transforming rural India by rendering intensive job oriented training to employable illiterates and persons with little education.

We are also very grateful to the very many experienced professionals who helped us validate our findings.

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The Inspiration



TARGET
TEAMWORK
DETERMINATION
WILLPOWER
OPTIMISM
ASPIRATION
INSPIRATION
DISCIPLINE
CONFIDENCE
RESILIENCE
PERFORMANCE
ACHIEVEMENT
GROWTH
LEADERSHIP
INTEGRITY
COURAGE
PERSISTENCE
AMBITION
DREAMS
VISION
PASSION
Dedication
Hard work
Perseverance
Resilience
Growth
Ambition
Determination
Inspiration
Achievement
Success
Growth
Ambition
Determination
Inspiration
Achievement
Success



The stories of the outliers that must be told ■■■■■■■■■■

*(All names and related identities have been changed or concealed
for reasons of privacy)*

Ramu completed his schooling from a small town called Tadepalligudem in the west Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. His medium of instruction until class XII was Telugu. His strong analytical skills helped him obtain admission in a local Engineering college. He did not find a job on campus. However, he was lucky to find a job with an IT consulting company through its off-campus recruitment drive. After a two year stint with the Organisation, he appeared for the 'Common Admission Test' to the Indian Institutes of Management and succeeded in obtaining admission with one of the IIMs. Today he is employed with an oil major. According to him, the clarity about his goals, his ability to communicate and his perseverance helped him transcend the so called limitations and get ahead in life.

Aparajita hails from Mandanpalle, a small town in Chittoor District. After her schooling in Madanapalle where the medium of instruction until class XII was Telugu, she managed to obtain admission into BITS,

Pilani. She completed her course successfully and landed a campus job with a multinational computer technology corporation. Her desire to dream, the willingness to work towards those dreams, the courage, the curiosity to know the world, to discover new things and a belief that, some day she was going to do something 'big', drove her right from her childhood, she says.

Though she lacked the exposure that a top rated school in a city would have provided, she was able to make up for this through the initiative she took to learn more and gain a little more knowledge about the ways of world. Most importantly, Aparajita sees it as just the beginning.....

Krithika, daughter of a public sector employee from Nagarcoil, dreamt of becoming a doctor. She was heart broken when she lost out on a medical seat by .20 marks. However, instead of drowning in self-pity and with the encouragement of her family and friends she managed to get admission into a reputed engineering college in Coimbatore. She soon realised that this opportunity was a blessing in disguise as it enabled her to unearth her hidden potential.

She excelled in college, participating in many activities and was chosen the 'Best Outgoing Student'. She was also chosen as the Campus Ambassador for a multinational giant, to promote and propagate the technologies and software of the Organisation to the college staff and students. She also managed to convert her final year internship project with the largest technology company in the world into a job and is currently working with them in Bangalore. Her next big dream is to do her masters in the US. The principle she follows

700 million of the 1.2 billion of India's population lives in about 600,000 villages with a per capita income of less than \$1 (Rs.50) per day. A number of factors as we know are responsible for poverty in rural India. The low returns from agriculture which provides livelihood to 60 percent of the rural population is one of the main reasons. While improved farming techniques, genetically improved seeds and other improvements have made the nation sufficient in grain production, it has not insulated the country from the impact of drought and declining water resources.

Add to this the problem of literacy. With a literacy rate of 65%, we have 296 million illiterates, aged seven years and above, as per the 2001 census. The literacy rate in rural India was estimated at 59%. But do these figures mean anything? Most of those who are "literate" have hardly benefited from the schools they might have attended where poorly trained teachers irregularly hold overcrowded classes that often combine several grades or standards for want of enough teachers. Similarly, primary health care is delivered to the rural population through a network of primary health centres and sub-centres that are ineffective. Life for the rural poor is characterised by malnutrition, long-term health problems, inadequate shelter, unhygienic conditions and high infant mortality.

Rural infrastructure too is found wanting with interior villages having no access to electricity, regular water supply and muddy roads that get washed away with a heavy shower of rain.

Add to this the problems of social injustice and caste based discrimination.

The lives of rural India viewed against this backdrop, seems hopeless. It is therefore no surprise that the young son or daughter of a marginal farmer or wage earner sees no ray of hope in his hometown and the only option that seems viable to elevate themselves and their families from this quagmire of misfortune, is to migrate to cities, carrying dreams of a better and brighter future.

Compare this with the life of an upwardly mobile youth in urban India and the chasm is palpable. Generation Web 2.0 survey, a youth survey conducted across 14,000 high-school children between the ages of 12-18 in 12 cities across India during 2008-09 reveals some interesting facts:

- 62 per cent have a personal computer at home
- 1 in 4 students own laptops in metros; 2 of 3 own music players
- 63 per cent of urban students spend over an hour online daily
- 93 per cent are aware of social networking. Orkut and Facebook are most popular online destinations.
- 46 per cent use online sources to access news and TV.
- USA, UK top the list of international destinations for higher studies.

At a relatively young age, India's urban students are thinking about travel, learning new skills, gaining valuable work experience and earning great salaries when they consider future careers. Many have global ambitions. While some have a definite career plan and have chartered out how to get from one point to another, others pursue courses that simply give them a global exposure or some others take up a job and use this learning process to discover what is in store for them. Money is not a constraint for many and hence they enjoy the good things in life along the way. Guidance on the best and most promising career options, training on mastering entrance tests and social

networking to gather information from other like-minded youths are facilities that are easily available to them.

So you see, there is a clear difference in lifestyle, opportunities and needs of these two groups of youth - rural and urban. The common thread between both groups is their inherent talent and the desire to make it big in life and carve a niche for themselves. How they go about doing this, the opportunities that they have access to, the facilities that they have, the quality of their education, their upbringing, their finances, their family needs and so on is what sets them hugely apart.

Clearly, where you come from seems to matter!

What the 2009 Human Development Report on Migration has to say

The 2009 report on migration starts by conceding that our world is a very unequal place.

The huge differences in human development across and within countries have been a recurring theme of the Human Development Report (HDR) since it was first published in 1990. For the first time, this year's report explores the topic of migration.

The report rightly points out that for many people in developing countries, moving away from their home town or village can be the best - sometimes the only option open to improve their life chances. Human mobility can be hugely effective in raising a person's income, health and education prospects. But its

value is more than that: being able to decide where to live is a key element of human freedom says the report.

Migration - the journey of aspiration, hope of opportunity and uncertainty

The report quite sensitively and empathetically describes how, when people move they embark on a journey of hope and uncertainty whether within or across borders. Most people move in search of better opportunities, hoping to combine their own talents with resources in the destination country so as to benefit themselves and their immediate family, who often accompany or follow them. If they succeed, their initiative and efforts can also benefit those left behind and the society in which they make their new home. But not all do succeed it argues. It points out that migrants who leave friends and family may face loneliness, may feel unwelcome among people who fear or resent newcomers, may face the physical dangers of working in dangerous occupations and in some cases, such as those of illegal border crossings, face a risk of death.

Nevertheless, millions of people are willing to incur these costs or risks in order to improve their living standards and those of their families. The report points out that opportunity and aspiration are frequently recurring themes among people who migrate - themes so strong that they are willing to make huge sacrifices and face grave uncertainties.

Freedom and Movement - How mobility can foster human development

The HDR report devoted a full chapter to urbanization and human development, reviewing the failed experiences of policies designed to reduce internal migration and concluding: "As long as differences exist between rural and urban areas, people will move to try to take advantage of better schools and social services, higher income opportunities, cultural amenities, new modes of living, technological innovations and links to the world."

People in motion: Who moves, Where, When and Why? ■■■■■

The report breaks the popular myth that most movement in the world takes place between developing and developed countries. It argues that the overwhelming majority of people who move do so inside their own country. Using a conservative definition, it estimates that approximately 740 million people are internal migrants-almost four times as many as those who have moved internationally. Among people who have moved across national borders, just over a third moved from a developing to a developed country-fewer than 70 million people, says the report.

Movement both within and between nations is predominantly driven by the search for better opportunities, and in many cases, particularly those involving skilled labour, opportunities will be greater in places where there are other people with complementary skills. This is one of the reasons why people gravitate to urban centres and why high-skilled professionals often move to cities and places where their profession is already well established.

The report reveals that poorer people may decide to take the risk of migrating as they hear news of others' success and become more confident that they will receive the support they need in order to succeed themselves. It quotes research into the educational profiles of internal migrants from across 34 developing countries to show that migrants were more likely than non-migrants to complete secondary school, reflecting both selectivity and better outcomes among migrant children

It also points to the interesting fact that emigration (international migration) may foster subsequent internal migration in the home country. In Albania, migration flows to Greece in the early 1990s generated remittances, which helped to finance internal migration to urban centres; in India, international movers from the state of Kerala have freed up positions in their areas of origin and their

remittances spurred a construction boom that has attracted low-skilled migrants from surrounding areas it argues.

How Movers Fare ■■■■■

People are motivated to move by the prospects of improved access to work, education, civil and political rights, security and health care. The majority of movers end up better off-sometimes much better off-than before they moved. The gains are potentially highest for people who move from poor to the wealthiest countries, but this type of movement is only a small share of total flows.

Available evidence suggests that people who move to emerging and developing countries, as well as within countries, also tend to gain.

For both internal and international mobility, different aspects of the process-including the proximate causes of moving and the resources and capabilities that people start out with-profoundly affect outcomes. Those who are forced to flee and leave behind their homes and belongings, often get into the process with limited freedom and very few resources. Likewise, those who are moving in the face of local economic crisis, drought or other causes of desperate poverty, may not know what capabilities they will have; they only know that they cannot remain. Even migrants who end up well off after a move, often start out with very restricted capabilities and high uncertainty.

Internal migrants also tend to access better income-earning opportunities and are able to diversify their sources of livelihood. Commissioned research found that internal migrants in Bolivia experienced significant real income gains, with more than fourfold increases occurring to workers with low education levels moving from the

countryside to the cities. They also found that in 13 out of 16 countries, internal migrants had higher incomes than non-migrants. In Brazil and Panama, a series of studies on education found income gains for indigenous groups who move. Studies across a range of countries suggest that internal migration has enabled many households to lift themselves out of poverty.

Given these realities, the report recommends that two principles be adopted:

Government policies should seek to facilitate, not hinder, the process of internal migration. The policies and programmes in place should not adversely affect those who move.

By the same token, they should not require people to move, in order to access basic services and livelihood opportunities.

The mirage of demographic advantage ■■■■■■■■■■

The India of today is certainly a land of opportunity. India has been rated as the fourth most attractive investment destination in the world, according to a global survey conducted by Ernst and Young in June 2008, before the US and Russia. India is seen as the destination for skill-intensive and high value-added service industries, particularly Financial Services and Information Technology, as well as a preferred location for companies looking to offshore their IT and back-office functions.

India is relying on its demographic advantage - a versatile and skilled human

capital to propel its growth. Of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries, India is projected to stay the youngest with its working-age population estimated to rise to 70% of the total demographic by 2030 - the largest in the world. India will also see 70 million new entrants in its workforce over the next 5 years.

The number of Indians who know English is more than the population of the US. India's diverse cultural heritage puts its citizens at ease with people from other cultures and vice versa. With over 380 universities, 11,200 colleges and 1,500 research institutions, India has the second largest pool of scientists and engineers in the world. Remember, over 2.5 million graduates are added to the workforce every year, including 300,000 engineers and 150,000 IT professionals.

With statistics like this, why are our business leaders, thought leaders and others worried about a manpower crunch?

While we have created centres of educational excellence such as the Indian Institutes of Management, Indian Institutes of Technology, other universities of repute, institutions for research and development in agriculture, scientific laboratories, atomic energy, space and other institutions, it is woefully inadequate for the numbers we are talking about.

More importantly, all of this has not addressed the longstanding neglect of primary education especially among the poor. Also, the quality of education reaching the poorest of poor, who statistically constitute the so called demographic advantage, is pathetic.

So, while the demographic advantage is statistically true, it does not always translate into talent on the ground because of the rural disadvantage. To realise these opportunities these youth need to do three big things:

- Acquire education at any cost and perhaps even migrate for this purpose.
- Migrate to a city to seek employment, armed with this education.

- Most importantly, learn a whole host of new skills and abilities in order to finally succeed in their efforts.

Our research tells us that education, migration and finding the first job was not adequate. Transcending the chasm was the key. Many had learnt how to do it. If we could discover what they did and share it with others, we would have made a huge difference, we thought.

If this did not happen, our demographic advantage would be a mirage.

The nature of our research efforts

We partnered with Thiagarajar School of Management, Madurai and created a Research team of 8 students. We worked with this team for over a two month period to conceptualise, design and execute the research effort.

We decided to choose Tamil Nadu as the base for our research. The sample included the following groups from small cities, towns and villages of Tamil Nadu:

- Young students in the final year of graduation or post graduation from all disciplines.
- Young professionals who had made the transition to metros to pursue a career in the past three years.
- Parents of these students and young professionals
- Principals, Deans, teachers, professors and other faculty members involved in imparting education in rural areas.

Our research team used a combination of Group Discussions, Personal Interviews, Telephonic conversations and e-mails to communicate with the target group. Our respondents represented practically all cities, towns, districts and villages of Tamil Nadu.

To validate and complement the research through Thiagarajar School of Management, we also undertook

our own primary research covering young working professionals from rural areas who had migrated to Chennai. While most of them were from interior Tamil Nadu, we also spoke to youth from rural areas in other states such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Bihar. These young professionals were drawn from seven different Organisations in the Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES) sectors. The organisations that supported us in this research effort included Tata Consultancy Services, HCL Technologies, Wipro Technologies, Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd., Pondicherry, Indus Teqsite Private Ltd. (Datapatterns), Aspire Systems and Firstsource.

In terms of qualifications, most of our respondents were engineers from different streams and working in IT firms. Bachelors in Computer Application, Masters in Computer Application and Diploma in Computer Technology were some of the other qualifications. There were youth who had completed a degree in various disciplines and working in non-technical jobs as well. The average age of this sample population was approximately 24 years with an average of 1.5 years of work experience.

In all, we spoke to about 500 students, 235 young professionals, 35 parents of these young aspirants and approximately 50 faculty members of educational institutions.

We also spoke to an NGO based in Karnataka that supports and empowers rural youth with basic or no education to earn a living by training them for the rural BPO industry. Their insights validated our findings and helped us in shaping our views on the subject. 

References: [Census of India (Year 2001), TCS Generation Web 2.0 Survey (Year 2008-09), Investment Commission of India (On Human Capital)]



N-Ach (Achievement motivation) fuels education and migration

For a long time, Indians were misconstrued as being fatalistic in their approach to life and therefore unmotivated. In fact, Max Weber felt that India's spiritualism, philosophy of renunciation and asceticism were obstacles to its material progress. Even David McClelland who coined the term Achievement motivation and a measurement for it symbolised as N-Ach was of the opinion that 'achievement motivation', (the desire to achieve purely for the sake of achievement) was lacking among Indians, a conclusion he based on his experience with handloom weavers in Orissa and artisans in Kakinada in South India in 1969.

However, subsequent researchers have questioned this belief. They have held that while socio-cultural factors definitely influenced the motivation levels, appropriate structural interventions could make all these socio-cultural attributes play a favourable role in enhancing the level of enterprise in the Indian society.

It would be fair to conclude that the opening up of the economy and the emergence of a whole host of new

businesses and employment opportunities has helped a large number of the previously "unmotivated" people to desire and do something to actually work towards a better life.

It was heartening to realise that a critical mass among the new generation of rural youth - the students pursuing their education, the young professionals who are currently working and their parents believe that an education and the job they hope the education will fetch them are the only things that can change the course of their lives and enable them to live a life of respect and dignity. To that extent, it is fair to conclude that a fair level of achievement motivation has been triggered by the changes in the socio-economic environment in India over the years.

They are also aware that this education will go unutilised or underutilised unless they move to the metros or large cities as this is where businesses and opportunities are concentrated.

Several compelling reasons were cited for their decision to migrate:

1. The first employment opportunity or break.
2. The ability to go beyond the first job and switch jobs and therefore, enhance their career prospects.
3. The ability to leverage opportunities to learn through part time certification courses that enhance their knowledge and their career prospects. Some also perceived their migration to metros and large cities as the first step to migrate abroad.
4. The possibility of much higher remuneration.
5. The quality of infrastructure and facilities that were available and the good life that it assured.

6. The exposure to experience the latest and best in both their professional and personal lives.
7. The possibility of making their parents proud and changing their life styles in an unimaginable manner.

For those from the villages, their migration was a two step process. Given the lack of higher education facilities, most youth from villages had to leave their homes after class XII to pursue their graduation. This was normally in a nearby town or city. He/she then had to migrate further to a metro or large city through campus placement or in search of a job.

Interestingly, many recruiters felt that those who made the two step migration ended up being much better socialised to the job requirements and felt a lot less homesick as they had learnt to be on their own for 3-4 years before taking up their first job.

For the youth from rural India, their families are a great source of motivation too. The desire to give their parents a good life for all the toil and hardships they faced in bringing them up and educating them was the key source of motivation to excel in life. For this one reason, they are willing to stretch themselves and face every challenge to succeed in their profession.

They are slowly beginning to recognise that they do have strengths that are in demand - being technically sound, being committed and responsible for the job at hand, the loyalty they demonstrate and the determination to succeed.

Recruiters perspective about Rural Talent

Visiting colleges, universities and institutes in semi-urban and rural parts of the country has now become an important element of the staffing strategy for many large organisations and all the ones we spoke to confirmed this. The increasing number of fresh recruits that Organisations required year after year to meet their business needs has necessitated tapping the rural talent pool. We spoke to the recruitment teams who are responsible for bringing these youngsters on board and their project managers who are thereafter responsible for their performance and deal with them on a one to one basis every day to get their perspectives.

Both the recruiters and the project managers found these youngsters to be technically as sound as their urban counterparts. While the nature of technical training imparted by these Organisations is identical for both groups, the differences seem to emerge in the manner in which it is applied on the job. While both groups seem to grasp the fundamentals and seem to have similar abilities in analysis, the ones with better exposure seem to be able to synthesise better by using multiple sources of information, see the connections and the big picture, it was pointed out.

Many also pointed out that the big difference was in the industry exposure that these youth have had when compared to a person educated in a metro or a large city. The latter would have had industry exposure, done an internship or two in an organisation, various short term projects and had many prominent executives visit them for guest lectures in their college. While internships and projects may form a part of the educational curriculum for a youngster studying in rural parts of the country, the importance that is given to it or the ability to do it in an organisation of repute is questionable.

Another well understood difference that was pointed out was their inability to communicate effectively, speak English fluently and confidently, carrying themselves well, being confident in handling situations and working smartly.

However, there are many areas where people from a rural background score over city people. Managers feel they are easier to mould and display much greater commitment to seeing a task through to completion. As they are humble and don't have the 'I know it all attitude', they pay attention to detail, seek clarifications and try to execute a task in the right manner. As respecting elders is a very integral part of their culture, the reverence, loyalty and gratitude they show to their seniors and managers is a quality unique to them.

Many organisations feel that since their aspirations and awareness of opportunities is relatively lower when compared with the urban youth, their retention is also higher.

Clearly, tapping the rural talent pool seems to hold a lot of promise!

N-Ach is not enough ■■■■■

Our research efforts convinced us that "N-Ach" was high among a sizable number of youth in the villages, thanks to their visibility into job opportunities and their realisation that education plus migration can give them a good chance of making it.

We however realised that they are not dreamers. They are extremely realistic. They have a very good sense of the kind of bottlenecks that they were likely to face on their long and arduous journey to prosperity.

Both the ones studying now and the ones that had made the leap were acutely aware of all that they had to contend with.

They were able to lucidly explain to us 6 critical humps they had to cross through several examples and real life stories:

1. They had several financial constraints which often prevented them from pursuing their dreams
2. They were often victims of an inadequate educational System
3. They felt the absence of a mentor and a professional role model. This resulted in ignorance, lack of direction and the several misconceptions that they carried.
4. They had trouble coping with the pressures of living and working in the city leading to stress.
5. They lacked some of the social skills and the niceties resulting in low self-esteem and the inability to make an impact.
6. They experienced serious cultural differences.

As we began to listen to these stories we realised that understanding these constraints and doing something about it seemed to hold the key to their success and the success of future generations of youth from villages.

1. The Financial Constraints ■■■■■

Most people living in the rural and interior parts of the country are poor and live a hand to mouth existence. The majority of them cannot afford to educate their children and even when education is available free of cost, they may not have the luxury of waiting till this education yields results. And as poor children who are enrolled grow older, the opportunity cost (their lost labour and the forgone income it may entail) becomes greater, thus

increasing the likelihood of abandoning school. After the age of fourteen, most children are stopped from going to schools and are made to earn through doing manual labour, helping their fathers with farming/the family trade and the like. The few who realise that education is the only solution to a better future for their children, go through extreme hardships to send them to school or college. Quality higher education comes at a cost which most can't afford and hence they either give up the idea of further education or take loans to finance it. Thus, they become a part of the vicious circle of debt and face the additional burden of repaying educational loans along with their other financial woes.

Most of the youth who cross all these hurdles spend the first few years of their employed life repaying the loans they have taken to finance their education as well as shouldering their family's other financial obligations.

Take the instance of **Sridhar** from Nellore, who has migrated to Hyderabad for an IT career. Sridhar's life came to a standstill when his bus conductor father died in an accident. Within months of that, his sister committed suicide. His mother took to working as a domestic help, supported by her husband's meagre pension, while he hoped for scholarships to keep his education going. Sridhar says he saw his mother smile after years when he received through mail his offer letter. He now needs to clear debts worth Rs. 2 lakhs very quickly.

Sridhar is one of the lucky few who have been employed and has the hope of being able to meet his financial obligations. There are many out there whose fate is governed by variables which are out of their control such as the current economic downturn

which saw many companies freeze recruitment and in some cases, not honour the campus and other offers that were made.

Take for instance **Subha**, an engineering graduate from Tirunelveli. Her father is a PSU employee and her mother a school teacher. Subha's ambition was to work in a reputed IT company where one of her brothers is currently employed. She secured high marks in her course and was ecstatic when she secured a campus placement in her dream company. But her joy was short-lived. She received a mail from the organisation deferring the offer. This pushed her to work as a lecturer in an engineering college in Tuticorin. Through hard work and a genuine desire to see her students do well, she was promoted from handling first semester students to students of the final semester. Today, Subha is a content person and happy with being responsible for grooming the youth of tomorrow.

2. The Inadequate Educational System ■■■■■■■■

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "everyone has the right to an education." Unfortunately, education that can make a difference and change lives is still a distant dream for many in India. A third of India's billion-strong population is illiterate and 70 million children are denied schooling of any kind. In the rural belts, the dropout rate is as high as 50 percent, with millions of first grade entrants never completing even primary school.

The biggest challenge is to push parents into the habit of sending their children to schools and to provide incentives for them to continue learning. Parents send their children for manual labour in order to feed large families back home, defying labour laws, often in extremely inhospitable conditions and for long hours in small factories making beedis, tending to brick kilns, working in 'dhabas' or the like. Others work as rag pickers, domestic help or just beg in richer urban places.

Those that have been able to pursue an education face a different challenge. Educational institutions

situated in rural areas tend to be sub-standard in the education they impart and the facilities they provide. Inevitably, even students completing six years of primary schooling in village government schools lack rudimentary reading and writing skills. Coming to higher education in rural areas of the country that nurture employees of tomorrow, the situation is no better. In almost half the districts in the country, higher education enrollments are abysmally low. This is reflected in the fact that almost two-third of our universities and 90 per cent of our colleges are rated as below average on quality parameters.

The Indian educational system in general is criticised for encouraging cramming. This evil is even greater in rural areas where students are encouraged to gain bookish knowledge with often no clue on how to apply the learnings to real life situations. The measure of success is high marks and students are encouraged to focus on this alone. Do they understand what they learn? Will this knowledge help them in their future jobs? Can this knowledge be applied to real life situations to solve problems or interpret information? The answer to these questions is probably 'NO'. But the system continues to be followed.

Professors in these colleges are ill equipped to serve as faculty. They are primarily ex-students of the same institution who have come back as lecturers and are not fully equipped for the teaching profession. They are oblivious of current realities, latest advancements, forging relationships and associations with organisations and forums that will add value to students. This inability to guide the students along the right path and help them make the right decisions at the right time has life long implications.

These pitfalls in the education system in rural and remote India denies these youth the best opportunities and places them at a disadvantage when compared to their urban counterparts.

3. Ignorance and

Lack of Direction

Many of the students and young professionals that we interviewed saw their family members as their role models and hoped to imbibe their traits and apply them in their chosen field of work. While this level of respect is good and their value orientation useful, their inputs in shaping careers was certainly limited, given that the parents themselves having little or no education, are easily influenced by what others say or what other youth (of friends or family) are doing. They often did not have the benefit of a well informed guide to advise them on education, career, goals, ambition, managing transition to a workplace, dealing and coping with the ups and downs of life as well as on personal matters. The "been there and done it" perspective was missing.

When asked about role models, these youth usually come up with names such as A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Narayanan Murthy and Azim Premji. While these men and others are extraordinary personalities who have played an important role in shaping the India that we see today, aspiring to be like them may be a little too farfetched. They did not have role models that they could relate to, have a conversation with and "go to" for help.

While the social capital of the city kids helped them plug into several useful networks for information and insight, this is not the case with the kids from the villages. There is also the misconception or simplistic assumption that moving to a metro and working there will solve their family's problems of poverty, indebtedness and will turn around their fortunes. Many realise quite painfully that they need a clear plan and the ability to think a few years out.

Only those who have figured out what their career objective or goal is, have a plan to achieve it, look beyond their first job and are aware of the skills they have to acquire along the way, are the ones who succeed. Unfortunately, most young migrants do not have a career plan and meander along the way. Years later, they realise that they have not progressed much from where they started, leading to frustration and anxiety about the future. Some even opt to return to their native land and find themselves back at square one. The main reason for this situation is that young students have no guidance in the choices they make.

On the other hand, their urban counterparts are way ahead. In addition to their curriculum at schools or college, parents enroll them in classes to learn other skills which range from abacus classes to improve arithmetic skills at the elementary school level to computer programming, animation and so on at higher levels. Extra - curricular activities - learning an instrument, dance, learning a sport or a martial art are all given importance as it leads to better all round development. No such resources are available to rural students. They miss out on this grooming and preparing for the future that city children are blessed with.

Whether all city bred children have a career plan, are focused, know what they want out of life is a question that cannot be answered. But do they have the resources to make these decisions? The answer is a big yes. The access to multiple television networks and channels, computers at home, internet on their mobile phones, etc. all ensure that they are 'wired in' to the latest in education, technology and the world around them. They are also aware of the importance of networking to facilitate success and make a

conscious effort to build and maintain contacts. This world of virtual communication and real connections is alien to a youngster from a small town or village and hence, leveraging its benefits is only a distant possibility.

4. *Stress, Work Pressure and Coping with City Life* ■■■■■

Our research clearly pointed out that city life definitely takes a toll on the youth from rural India who are used to a slow paced, calm and relatively quiet existence.

Ask the young boys or girls who have opted to work in a metro or a large city, what their bugbears are and they will tell you that they miss their family, the food that their mother cooks, a life that allows them to relax and the peace of the countryside. These youth come to the city carrying dreams of earning a good salary, supporting themselves and their family, paying an education loan, meeting other financial obligations and eventually leading a good and respectable life. While all this may happen in due course of time, the initial path is fraught with difficulty and struggle. Those who survive these hardships are the ones that succeed. Not all do and it is not difficult to understand why.

Their sources of stress are many - high cost of living, unsuitable accommodation, pollution, crowds, noise, the traffic, congestion, stiff targets, stringent deadlines, working late, dealing with a new working environment and a lot more. Many also have to deal with the additional pressure of an unsympathetic boss and competitive peers.

Migration to urban areas is an important contributor to high blood pressure and hypertension, as has been found among people in the Indian capital in a new study conducted by AIIMS. The research studied 500 people in two batches - settled migrants and recent migrants. The people selected in both groups did not have any previous history of blood pressure or hypertension before migration.

The study found that among the recent migrants, 17 percent of men and 15 percent of women suffered from

Many suffer from an inferiority complex and feel out of place in their new found environment. This fear of not being able to match up to the others, leads them to withdraw into a shell and restrict themselves to job oriented activities. However, success in the business world and moving up the ladder comes with its own set of requirements. Beyond technical competence, it requires being open minded, projecting the right image, contributing at meetings and discussions, coming across as smart and capable, contributing beyond the job and adapting a savvy way of working.

6. Cultural Differences

The cultural differences in the way people live lives in the villages and the ways of those in cities which are a lot closer to globalised lifestyles, is yet another source of maladjustment for the youth from villages.

In rural India, the family is the most important institution and there exists interdependence not only among members of a family but also members of a village. The village satisfies all the needs of its people. They generally use and share the common village facilities like the village pond, the temples and shrines, grazing grounds, schools and sitting places. This interdependence of the rural life in India perhaps provides a matchless unity amongst the people which supports them in surviving amidst thousands of odds.

The joint family system which is more prevalent in the villages serves as a strong institution that supports all decisions and is pivotal to the individual. All decisions are discussed and elders in the villages have a say in the matter. The affairs of a household are known in the community and people

are more than willing to lend a helping hand in times of difficulty or celebrate the successes and achievements of others in times of happiness. What comes across is the wholeness of the community as one large entity, rather than a number of parts or a number of families. The feeling of oneness and belonging is important to them. There is also an inherent curiosity in them to know what is happening in their village/town and in the lives of others. This is the social background from which our rural migrants hail - they are used to openness, sharing, caring, helpfulness and making time for others.

This is in sharp contrast to the city life that they experience. They find it a claustrophobic experience to be crowded into concrete jungles, surrounded by traffic and pollution and the congestion of millions of strangers. They feel alienated and isolated with no one to turn to for moral support and comfort after a hectic day at work. Many youth we spoke to cite unfriendly neighbours and the so called selfish and self-centered attitude of urban people as a distinct disadvantage of living in the metropolis. They miss and crave for the co-operation and generosity of their family and friends back home.

Clearly, while N-Ach was important, there was need for a lot more, in order to overcome these strong socio-economic barriers.

References: (Articles in Rediff.com, The Hindu and Asia Sentinel, Wikipedia on Education in India)

1. Discover your Passion/Strength

How would we define this?

Discovering your life purpose through soul searching and examining the past, present and future to unearth talents, strengths and the direction you want your life to take.

What does this mean?

- Discover your interests
- Discover what you are good at doing
- Do not choose a career based on current trends
- Have the courage to make a detour if you realise that you are a misfit in the job/vocation of choice

Why is this important?

The right choice of a career is important to realise your true potential. You can give your best, only when you are interested and passionate about what you are doing.

How to discover your passion?

- Your passion is your interest. Choose a field of study that you are interested in. This choice must be yours and yours alone, as nobody else knows what your passion and inherent strengths are. Take the help of your mentor in discovering this.
- When pursuing an education look into what your employment opportunities will be on completion of the chosen field. Explore the possibility of building up on an inherent family trade, if interested (e.g. handicrafts). You could pursue a course connected with this.
- Avoid being influenced by current trends (e.g. The IT boom) and monetary gains alone when choosing your education or career. Joining the bandwagon, depending on current trends or monetary gains will at some point in time run out of steam leading to complete dejection in life.

- Pursue your dream even if unconventional or different from the rest. It is also important to have the courage and confidence in oneself to bounce back if your decision fails and start over again. A more prudent approach would be to keep options open and have an alternative plan if the chosen path does not work out.

2. Finding a Mentor

How would we define this?

Mentorship is the relationship between a guide or trusted adviser and his protégé or eager learner, formed with the goal of sharing knowledge and expertise. Mentoring is guidance in the form of support provided by someone whom you trust and who has 'been there and done it before'. It is a long term relationship.

What does this mean?

- You have access to valuable advice in educational and career matters from a qualified person.
- You have a healthy relationship with this person symbolised by openness, honesty, trustworthiness and friendliness.
- You have a sounding board to hear you out - fears, apprehensions, dilemmas, pressures, etc.
- You have an impartial person to advise you. He /she must also allow you to think through issues and make your own decisions.
- You have a guide who uses his / her own networks and contacts to help you.
- A relationship where you as the mentee, takes joint responsibility for your development by following the advice and guidance provided by the mentor.

Why is this important?

- You will have far better ambitions and aspirations as well as better goals that motivate you in a healthy way.
- You will be able to accomplish tasks, goals and projects much more quickly.
- You will make fewer mistakes in your personal and work life.
- You will be able to develop yourself more effectively.
- You will be able to move up faster to the next level of your personal and professional life through the insights you gain.

How to find a mentor?

- At the early stages of one's life, say during the secondary education phase, the mentor can be someone in the educational line, a family member who has studied in a reputed institution or anyone with a sound education. At this level, the guidance required is to help choose your core subjects for higher education and explain the implications of the choice made in terms of the courses that you can pursue at a college level and the careers available after completing your education in a particular field.
- At a later stage, ideally the college level, the mentor must be a person who has 5-7 years of industry exposure and someone who can help you assess your strengths and weaknesses and help you choose your first job by giving you inputs on the various industries and the options available to you based on your functional specialisation.

- At the working stage, you would require a mentor who helps you in charting a career path and giving you guidance on how to develop yourself to move up the career ladder. The mentor must also be a person whom you can relate to and will be able to discuss professional and personal matters with as well as seek advice from or in some instances just serves as a sounding board for you.

What is important to realise is that at different stages of your professional growth, you require different mentors and one person cannot fulfill this role throughout. Also, at each stage you can have more than one mentor to get varied opinions and different perspectives. Ultimately, the choices have to be made by you and your mentor or mentors can only guide and assist you in making the right choices.

3. Have a Career Plan

How would we define this?

The next step is to plan your career based on what you are good at or enjoy doing. It is a desire to achieve in a selected field or occupation with a well thought out plan to get there. It helps us focus, make decisions and directs us to accomplish what we want. It also helps anticipate problems, barriers and weaknesses that we may encounter and find ways to overcome and avoid them. It is a continuous process and not an end in itself.

What does this mean?

- Know what you want from a career
- Make things happen for yourself
- Look beyond the first job
- Have clarity on what is to be achieved and set realistic and challenging targets
- Make contingency plans in case of failure

Why is this important?

- Time spent on reflection and charting out a career path is never wasted as each person has a unique mix of skills, strengths and limitations, which are likely to change over time.
- Career planning provides clarity. So when opportunities emerge, you are able to make informed choices.
- A realistic and achievable plan can be used to gauge progress.

How do you make a career plan?

A career plan is knowing what you want to achieve in your professional life and charting out a road map on how to get there. You must be open to the fact that this plan may change along the way and hence you would need to be flexible to embrace these changes.

- The long term goal will comprise of a number of short term time-bound targets that must be achieved with the big picture in mind. Checkpoints, milestones and controls must be built in for it to be effective.
- You must work in a systematic manner and keep options open. The advice of professionals and your mentor is necessary to devise a realistic career plan.

4. Enhance Communication Skills

How do we define this?

The ability to communicate information accurately and effectively in a logical and concise manner that will command attention and achieve the understanding of others.

What does this mean?

- Fluency in English, the most commonly used language in business.

- Effectiveness in both written and spoken communication.
- Understanding of correct grammar and its usage.
- Being able to converse coherently, fluently and confidently to make a point or answer a query.
- Being able to handle meetings, discussions and conference calls.
- Being able to draft regular reports / documents/letters/e-mails that are essential to the job.
- The ability to read and write sufficiently to be able to understand work instructions, fill forms, vouchers, letters and memos.

Why is this important?

- Knowledge of English, commonly referred to as the 'world language' is essential in today's globalised world. Further, most communication at the workplace is also in English, making fluency with the language essential.
- The ability to speak fluently also increases your confidence and commands the attention of the listener.
- Learning and practicing grammatically correct English is of importance for both written and oral communication especially in work related matters.
- Effectively speaking over the phone, making good presentations and good correspondence skills helps improve your image and the reputation of the organisation you work for.

How to develop communication skills?

- In metros and cities, there are a number of institutes that teach spoken English that helps hone your communication in the language and teach correct usage of words and grammar. Enroll in one of these classes after doing your homework and arriving at the one that suits your requirements the best. There are also various online courses that are available and these can be utilised if work timings do not permit attending classes
- Make reading a habit. Read an English newspaper everyday. Mark words that you do not understand and use a dictionary to find the meaning of these words and their correct usage. Maintain a notebook where you enter these words and try to use them appropriately in communicating with others. Reading a business newspaper will also acquaint you with business terminology and its usage.
- Ask your mentor to suggest books that you can read. Try to cover all categories of books such as biographies, autobiographies, fiction, management, self-help, etc. over a period of time. Also cover books and journals that pertain to your field of work. Practicing writing a synopsis of what you have read will help in improving written communication.
- Make a conscious effort to talk in English at your workplace or educational institute and with your friends and colleagues. Practicing this at home may not be feasible but try to do so with your siblings and family members of the same age who will be working or studying and may be facing the same challenge of lack of fluency in English.

- Organising mock interviews and group discussions with friends will help in preparing yourself to face them with confidence. Seek the help of seniors and young professionals who have been through the process to help facilitate sessions for you.

5. *Adapting to a Savvy Work Style* ■■■■■

How do we define this?

Managing and organising one's work in the most modern and cost-effective manner and being flexible in trying new and better ways to deal with work related matters leading to an overall improvement in execution of work.

What does this mean?

- Flexibility to try new, different and better ways of working
- Ability to get things done
- Being able to make a point or get your voice or point of view heard
- Ability to be persuasive but not overbearing
- Leveraging the power of information technology and being able to learn, understand and acquire knowledge about new technologies.
- Being adaptable to new ways of working such as sending SMS, basic handling of a computer and laptop, familiarity with basic work related computer applications, using a projector, the use of chatting and messaging through Skype, Google talk, Orkut, etc. to communicate, handling conference calls, video conferencing, etc.
- Picking up on the need to change personal, interpersonal, and managerial behaviour quickly and work towards this.

- Being able to create and support flexibility and adopt procedures and work methods which ensure quick turnaround.
- Ability to adapt to different cultural experiences.

Why is this important?

- Knowledge of the newer, easier and smarter ways of working enables you to save time, energy and cost.
- Gives you the edge over peers who are otherwise equal, in terms of functional knowledge and performing one's day to day duties.
- Savvy working includes having the presence of mind to act quickly according to the situation. This helps in building other's confidence in your abilities.
- Assimilating ideas, opinions and insights from various sources and leveraging on diversity that exists in organisations can help you maximize your effectiveness.
- Challenging conventional thinking and existing processes and procedures by identifying new and better solutions or ways of doing things, is an effort that is valued and appreciated by organizations.

How to adapt a savvy work style?

Adopting a savvy work style is a smarter way of working. It can enable you to stay ahead of competition. It requires a deep desire to know and learn easier and quicker ways of working and thus acquire working knowledge of latest technology required in your field of work.

While this has to do with technical know-how, the other side of savvy working has to do with seeing a job/task to effective completion.

This behaviour can be acquired through:

- Observing and learning from people in leadership positions who are likely to demonstrate effective and efficient working styles.

- Practicing assertiveness (maintain an appropriate balance between passivity and aggression).
- Learning and using technology that simplifies one's tasks/job.
- The knack of 'Looking like a Winner' in all situations through efficient and speedy working.

6. Develop a Network

How do we define this?

Developing and using contacts for purposes of furthering your knowledge and keeping abreast of latest and new developments in your area of interest. Networking refers to building effective relationships with people who may be helpful in creating opportunities for you down the line.

What does this mean?

- Recognising the importance of networking to facilitate success.
- Initiating contact, building rapport and maintaining relationships for future needs.
- Building and maintaining a network of contacts (friends, family, seniors, business associates, etc.)
- Building goodwill and trust, sharing information and being helpful to members of your network.

Why is this important?

- Networking helps in getting to know job opportunities that are available in the market. You may even get to know of opportunities that have not been advertised and hence this reduces the competition significantly and increases your chances of getting employed. Organisations in some cases prefer candidates that are from known sources and hence run 'Employee Referral Schemes'. Networking is a proactive job search method.
- Networking provides you with the opportunity of learning from the success and failures of others and hence if utilised right can take you miles ahead, much earlier in your career.
- Networking aids the process of decision making.
- Networking through the mediums such as the internet provides you with the latest information from all around the world at the click of a button.

How to develop a network?

- Keep track of career counseling organised by universities and actively participate in these sessions. This helps you decide on the most appropriate and suitable education and hence make the right career choice.
- Keep track of job opportunities posted on job sites such as naukri.com, monster.com, etc. Post your resume on these sites.
- Leverage the use of technology like the internet to join or form groups, receive SMS and mails on educational courses and employment opportunities.

- Join general or business social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, MySpace, etc. to build an online friends/business network.
- Make use of chatting facilities that Facebook, Yahoo, Orkut, etc. offer to build that more personal relationship with people.
- It would be a good idea to read up about the misuse of networking sites by some miscreants and try not to fall into these traps.
- Visits job fairs to build contacts and learn about the business of various organisations.
- Keep in touch with training institutes and recruitment agencies in your hometowns or 2/3 tier cities which are tapped by organizations for sourcing manpower.
- Attend social gatherings that will help build or strengthen contacts.
- Your mentor, seniors, friends working in organisation especially in large cities can help you to establish contacts in industry circles.

7. Develop Presence

How do we define this?

Learning to carry yourself in a way that commands respect from all.

What does this mean?

- Improve your personal appearance - dressing & grooming (neat hair & fingernails, limited jewelry, polished shoes, appropriate dressing, etc.).
- Developing a positive body language & facial expressions.
- Understanding and acquiring the niceties about interaction with others - handshakes, answering telephone calls, greeting others, polite conversation, etc.

What does this mean?

- Do not confine yourself to academic books or syllabus while acquiring knowledge but look beyond to understand concepts better and discover practical uses of the same.
- Leverage the power of the internet to keep abreast with the latest developments in your chosen field of study or line of interest.
- Keep yourself up-to-date with the recent trends. Do not be stuck in your comfort zone.
- Do not shy away from opportunities because of the fear of making mistakes, instead learn from mistakes.
- Constantly ask and seek clarifications that enable you to make well informed decisions.
- Be a relentless learner and be open to change.

Why is this important?

- The initiative of continuously improving yourself helps to overcome shortcomings of an outdated educational curriculum, poor teaching standards, lack of exposure and the like.
- Continuously improving yourself through acquiring knowledge and increasing awareness, helps in making better informed decisions and career choices.

- Displaying a keen interest in keeping yourself updated increases your employability and your career prospects.

How to constantly develop yourself?

- Keep yourself aware of current events in the political, economic and business environments by reading papers and magazines, watching the news and using the internet.
- Emphasis on practical application of theoretical concepts during your journey of learning. Your academic syllabus and teaching staff will not be able to fully meet this requirement and hence it is in your hands to use other resources to bridge the gap between knowledge and application of the same.
- Make the most of internship/projects that are part of the academic curriculum. A conscious effort has to be made on our part to do projects in organisations of repute and on current and relevant topics. You must ensure that in your role as an intern or project trainees, value is delivered to the organisation through your project work.
- Seek opportunities to work in the city (during vacations, etc.) to understand and evaluate whether you are ready to take up the challenges of building a career there.
- Accept and utilise any opportunity to participate in inter-collegial/state level or national level events such as - paper presentations, debates, elocutions, cultural events.
- Develop interest in an extra-curricular activity - a sport, a musical instrument, a form of dance, music or a martial art for better all round development.

10. Celebrate Your Values

How do we define this?

An internal, underlying, enduring & constant judgment of what you consider good, positive, useful or important. Values exert major influence on your behavior and serves as broad guidelines in all situations.

What are the values that Organisations give importance to?

-  *Respect*
-  *Loyalty*
-  *Gratitude*
-  *Commitment/dedication*
-  *Resilience*
-  *Hard working*
-  *Sincerity*
-  *Drive/Energy*
-  *Honesty*
-  *Integrity*

What does this mean?

- Be completely forthright in all dealings and uncompromising on matters of business ethics.
- Give importance to organisational values and adhere to them while taking decisions.
- Understand and adhere to the Organisation's code of conduct.
- Do not misuse office property, intellectual property or any other confidential information for personal gain.
- Behave in a consistent manner.
- Show respect and courtesy to all.
- Treat all with dignity and fairness.

- Carry your share of work load, keep to commitments without having to be supervised and produce results.
- Display the highest standards of personal discipline & dedication in managing your time and work priorities.
- Be determined to see things through to completion.
- Demonstrate flexibility in personal needs & preferences to meet Organisation's priorities.
- Set an example for others to follow in business and professional behaviour.
- Do not blame others for your own mistakes or misrepresent yourself for personal gain.

Why is this important?

- Organisations give importance to values as these influence one's business ethics and forms the foundation for professional behaviour.
- Reference checks, testimonials, reference letters, and so on are used to judge values and form an integral part of an organisation's recruitment process.
- Most organisations articulate their values and have a code of conduct to be followed by employees. They choose people who have traits that demonstrate these values.
- Adherence to values helps forge a long lasting successful relationship with the organisation and the people that one works with.

Your greatest strength is your value system. In many ways, Organisations hire people like you on the strength of your values.

So, wear them on your sleeve. Respect and celebrate them. Be proud that you are displaying these values. Never ever compromise on them. 



Epilogue

This research project derives its greatness from the cause it is attempting to address and the value it is attempting to create. It does not derive its greatness from the insights because what we have discovered, many might be aware of.

The Research project helped us become acutely aware of the enormity of this human resource development challenge - the possibilities on one side and the enormous gaps on the other side.

We are convinced that if the dream of a developed India by 2030 has to materialise, millions of indians who statistically represent India's demographic advantage, must master these ten golden steps and liberate themselves and we think they will.

Our only wish and prayer is that the power of this simple idea helps carry itself into the right homes very soon.

If this edition of UTB inspires you, please help us spread the message! With every effort, we would have helped at least one youth cross the chasm! 
