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## CHOICE OF CAREER

Many believe that life must be allowed to run its course 'like water to flow, towards a goal'. Like DSM's case (16) By Gods grace. DSM believed all that happened to him was due to divine intervention. Others who were equally successful might attribute it to sheer luck. Yet others think that they were at the right time at right place with right backing. As Gladwell stressed that great people were great because of legacy and opportunities from outside the individual outliers.

### **Learning, earning, and yearning**

Given the philosophical discourse let us examine the reality—here and now. There is a pattern after the striving stage in the young-adult's life. Learning and earning. All education is aimed at earning. Opportunity means earning opportunity. Careers are for earning. Learning on the career is also aimed at for more earning. This pattern is part of parental programming.

Internally there is secret longing and sacred yearning to realize the potential. Sooner or later the individual comes out of shakles of parental programming and asserts internal aspirations. Then external factors, the influencing factors exert themselves in the form of chance happenings.

### **Learning yearning earning – pattern – parents choice.**

All learning is for earning a livelihood.

So goes a Telugu proverb. Aspirations rising in the society, many an illiterate mother dreams of her son becoming—District

Collector or a high official in the Government. First generation graduates are growing day by day. Their aspirations are not mere earning a livelihood. This is how environment and education, two wings of the bird are lifting the body, the endowment.

*Wings* to fly like Jonathan Livingston Seagull. Yearning for position, prestige, and power and in many cases power and influence to pay back to the poor, the society in which they grew.

Although 'realizing the full potential' 'lifting the body' (endowment), is not set as a goal, it is a 'secret mission', secret even to himself or herself. It is like a 'growing crystal'. Steadfast patience is called for. You cannot hurry the process.

### **Entry into the world of work**

At the end of striving stage-formal student life – and having appreciated the concepts of positive thinking, goal setting, etc and understanding your uniqueness some what, now open the gateway to the world of work...

Now-a-days the university education offers practicals, projects, opportunities for extracurricular activities. There are avenues or opportunities to test the waters of latent talents and develop interests that suit your inherited-endowment-gifts, legacies. These are spaces where soft skills, particularly team playing and leadership, interpersonal skills can be developed.

As I write this I came across an article titled 'Pride in Prejudice' by Vijay Nagaswami. Absence of dysfunctional pride and deep rooted prejudices can be reckoned as soft skill. He writes:

Many of our prejudices will have roots in our adolescent and young-adult years when our personal experiences started becoming more substantial.

He also stated:

Some of our prejudices may only be based on what our parents taught us from the way they lived their lives.

These absorbed prejudices can be got rid of because we spend our lives more in spaces other than parental environment.

The extracurricular activities in mini societies in NSS, Scouts, with friends, and strangers in team activities, can help us get rid of unwelcome prejudices which colour our thinking and forming of opinions in a democratic life.

The writer asks the question:

Do we hang on to them, do we let them go or do we wear them on the sleeve with pride?

He answers:

Frankly I have found that letting them go is the most mentally healthy option. Also this gives us an opportunity to experience a greater sense of inner peace... Happily, it is possible to stop doing so (deriving pride in our prejudices) in the interest of our personal growth and development.

Exposure to extra-curricular activities and developing healthy 'prejudices' or 'predilections' in the young-adult life should be part of striving stage.

Here is what an young-adult narrates:

### **My Tryst with Service**

#### **(Extra-Curricular Activity)**

I am an Engineering student studying in 3<sup>rd</sup> year. I was in 1<sup>st</sup> year when President of Rotary Club of the city and a very close acquaintance had come over to my college to discuss the setting up of a Rotaract club in our college (Rotaract is the youth wing of Rotary). Since I was the only one he knew, it was inevitable that I had to be a part of the club. Before I start off with the Rotaract chapter let me tell you a little about myself.

That I always been oriented towards service is wrong to say, but at heart whenever I saw an underprivileged, a downtrodden or just about anybody who was in trouble there would be an urge within me to help. But I didn't have an avenue to channelise those feelings, they just stayed within me. I made donations to orphanages and such other establishments from my pocket money on birthdays and other such occasions. I didn't do much apart from giving donations. Service activities at college were however, different. With Rotaract I was part of those activities, providing food at an old age home, conducting a blood donation camp in college, conducting games for the deaf and dumb were some of the activities we had undertaken through Rotaract and a lot of planning and co-ordination between members was necessary for this. I got my first feeling of how a board functions. Weekly meetings and activity once a month, giving farewell

parties or just meeting like minded people was what anybody wants.

And thus Rotaract turned out to be a new experience for me; people called me for old-age home and orphanages. They associated me with service! About a year later two graduates from my college approached me for help on similar lines. They had ideas and were looking for ways to implement them. Mr. Patnaik and Patro, one is a mechanical engineer with the distinction of being known as the topper who is presently pursuing an MS in the UK and wants to some day build cars. The other worked for Satyam for a couple of months, quit and came back to prepare for his MBA entrance exam. He works with 'TIME' simultaneously.

They and their group of about 7-6 members wanted to give back something to the city they grew up in which had taught them so much. And so came about Young Guns of India (YGOI). We are an NGO registered as Generation Jagruthi who are in the process of making Brand India. Through YGOI we visit a government school for boys every Sunday to instill an urge to study in them and discuss other worldly matters. We've started a career-employment module that aims at 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, classes and bachelors 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> years. We'd like to give them an insight into all the various careers available to them at their level.

This way new avenues and opportunities came knocking at my door. They've been enriching experiences and I did what I enjoy doing! Today it has influenced my career and I get to guide my juniors with similar interests in such activities.

**A Student**

### **Internship (Titbit)**

Four young women from the West headed for Kancheepuram town in TamilNadu for their management internship programme. They were volunteers working on the projects with NGO(HIH) Hand in Hand in Kancheepuram.

What made them opt for such a project far away from home? *Novelty* (A **NC** H ORS) It is also *Challenge*; the anchors are combined. One of them said,

'I work for a consultant in Sweden which did some development projects for UN; my interest and curiosity in micro-finance led me here.

Curiosity is the characteristic of *investigator* or *meticulous* type of personality (CREA (M) S). Out of TIP the I & P are in place. What about Talent? Internship will bring them out.

The second, a student at Stanford University had a different reason for opting for the internship travelling around the world and exploring the area of developmental work. She is *enterprising* and adventurous by nature. She worked with an industrial management firm for four years before starting a school. She strongly believes in field work which helps her in her later life.

It is again curiosity and positivity. (CRE (AM) S).

For yet another woman, it was her sheer desire to set up her own microfinance company, and the fourth woman was inspired by an ex-CEO of ABB.

For three women it was inner urge or motivation from within and it was external motivation, inspiration given by a mentor for the fourth. She was fortunate that an eminent person was in her network.

During the first week of the fourweek internship, the students underwent a training programme on micro-finance to familiarize themselves with concepts and nuances of working in India.

After the training one of them said, 'all our preconceived notions about micro-finance have been turned upside down.' Such is the value of class-room training before taking up a project.

What a beginning for field work!

Two students with American accents, the other two with Swedish accents and interpreters with Tamil accent, it was a terrible experience—a veritable Babel of tongues!. Soon things began to settle down, they shared.

The programme opened a new world for all of them. They learnt that most people out there are self-driven and have an amazing entrepreneurial zest in them.

Birds of the same feather flock together. One girl particularly, said, that ‘development happens through empowerment and not through dependence’. That’s what their brief experience taught them.

Practical experience with the knowledge of abstract concepts provide them new insights. They see things in a particular light as if they are wearing a new pair of glasses. Mere class-room instruction without project work does not give insights.

They left the place after the programme with a firm belief that micro-finance actually works.

How many MBA students undertake project work or internship for insight to internalize the abstract ideas into concrete experience? When field work is taken up with zeal, it becomes easy to write the resumes and impress interviewers? The resumes become meaningful.

Let us turn to internship with a difference- an extended internship next.

### **Parents’ Choice (Titbit)**

#### **‘Free exemption scheme fills engineering seats- BC, minority parents use the opportunity to the hilt.’**

So run the headlines.

It is a good subject for group discussion for MBA students.

‘Except senior government employees, majority of them managed to get income certificate to avail fee exemptions.’...Nearly 70 percent of open category seats are cornered by BC candidates.

How many will complete the course?

How many of these students will remain on the campus and face campus interview and obtain lucrative and attractive jobs? Is financing the main criterion for entry into engineering.

Some are bound to drop out because of hard work and rigorous discipline that engineering requires. Some may drop out for sheer lack of interest and aptitude.

**‘Politicians hold JNTU to Ransom’ (Titbit)**

- It is mandatory for every student to have 75% attendance.
- Of late, peoples representatives, MLAs and MPs, calling up officials to grant required attendance for their candidates... warned of dharnas if it is not done.. the representatives are themselves under pressure..
- ‘The officials attribute this absenteeism to non-serious students joining engineering courses given the ample availability. It is these students who seek help from their student unions and politicians of the respective parties.’
- ‘If the attendance issue is not viewed seriously it will encourage, even the good candidates to bunk’

There are black sheep in every walk of life creating hurdles to genuine students and even career makers later in life.

I asked a mechanical engineer, whose case history is included in this book about engineering study in REC with 5 years duration. He has this to say:

‘The Regional Engineering college where I did my BSc Engineering Mechanical was a five year degree course. Mechanical engineering is a very vast subject. Some subjects which are optional in some engineering colleges are taught as compulsory subject at REC, Rourkela. Subjects such as Automobile engineering, refrigeration and air conditioning were compulsory subjects in 6<sup>th</sup> /7<sup>th</sup> semester. We were the last batch of the 5-year course.

Ragging used to be dreaded but integral part of our baptism into the professional course. Ragging was very brutal, vulgar and rough. Many students ran away to their houses and had to be convinced to come back to resume studies. So much so that they climbed down the water pipe from the window of their 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of their hostels and ran through a cemetery which was behind the first year hostel, climbed a hill to take a short cut to the railway station and travelled without ticket to reach their homes.

Those who survived ragging had to survive the food, weather (extremes from 4 to 50 degrees). The college has a plaque in the building which reads “the highest temperature recorded ever was 51 degrees in the year 1971”. Generally students who come from the cosy confines of the family are generally very pampered. The induction into professional life is very harsh by way ragging particularly in the Eastern sector.

## 8 | Career Path, Entrepreneurship and Ethics

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All this prepares the student for mental toughness for the factory or field jobs. Those days the branches taught were mechanical, electrical, metallurgical, civil and chemical, only very few of the students ended up with cosy jobs like those with call centers, control rooms, etc.

### **Practical Experience**

As a part of our curriculum we had to undergo two months training, (after third and fourth year) one month each in any industry and come up with a report and give a presentation on certain aspect of the training. Also since the REC was located in a steel city the course was planned in such a way that we had frequent visits to steel plant from 3<sup>rd</sup> year onwards and also to mines, cement factory, etc which prepared us for the jobs ahead.

We had good interaction with the IIT at Kharagpur as many senior professors used to come for viva voce to our college from 4<sup>th</sup> year onwards. The professors of the college were very senior people. Our principal was a Ph.D from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. We were generally thorough in metallurgy and his class used to be very well attended. He was a very highly respected professor.

The college ragging\* helped me to withstand the rigours of field job, the indiscipline, union problems, general disorder as most our work is in remote open fields, the work goes on round the clock and the temptation to leave and run away is always there.

Do the parents who rushed to put their wards in the engineering stream know all this? Are the entrants to engineering college aware of this ?

Definitely a few, very few, might weather all the hardship and come out with flying colours and do justice to their careers and serve society. They may even take up the cause of uplifting the downtrodden by providing career counseling. Others will, whither, or while away. A set back to personality development early in life.

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\* Ragging is banned in India for good reasons. There must be other avenues than ragging to develop toughness in young adults.

**‘It’s temporary phenomenon.’ (Titbit)**

- Here is another News item from Education plus a supplement designed exclusively to the students and job seekers, an excellent search engine for career and jobs.

‘The financial crisis, however, is bound to change things in the IT industry. Greater focus will be on quality,’ say senior IT professionals.

A valuable information vital for those who make career choices.

**Bloom is over. Gloom sets in**

Uncertain times, retrenchment and recession. The campus recruitment glooming.

What does this scenario mean to a student aspiring for a career in the IT industry?....

In the long run.. it is very positive... customers of IT expect more which means, employees must perform better.

The recruitment norms will become more stringent... those who can make a difference, those who come out with innovative solutions developed at low cost..... provide the customer more value.

Does the present education system produce creative people with innovation, experience while they are on the campus?

‘When the ship is sinking, there is no place for rats.’ The companies will weed out the rodents – the inefficient. It is not enough you get a job of your choice. You have to hold onto it.

Weeding is a two pronged process. The inefficient are weeded out while the efficient, effective, productive and innovative are retained. We talked of *Trying* and *striving* stages of development. Learning on the job during the former stage and keep learning both on the job and preparing for the newly emerging technologies. Sharpening skills on a continuous basis for improving the current performance are imperative. The seminars found that there is general *apathy* or *inability* to learn and update knowledge and upgrade skills. They lament the new crop of employees are not proactive; they do not take interest in their growth. These expressions will tell what type of people employer

are looking for. A valuable information for preparation for tests and interviews. You can list the type of questions the interviewers ask for and probe to make sure that they are not wasting time and money by recruiting the wrong ones.

### **Small is beautiful**

Here is a gem of an advice.

‘Not getting a job in a big company is definitely not the end of the road. You can join a smaller firm. But make sure the company has enough revenue to sustain down turn’.

This is what our IIT–IIM did before he took up organic farming. (Refer to the case No. 10 of K.P.S....). He served a small software firm, as if he was the owner for nine long years taking up a variety of responsibilities gaining confidence to start on his own which is not a software enterprise!

Small is beautiful. ‘In a small firm you get a lot of freedom. If you do well to inspire the proprietor with confidence in you, you can bargain for higher salary which is not easy in a company with a bureaucratic outlook. If you are passionate enough to win over the superiors, customers, vendors, employees and there will be synergy in learning. To work with passion you have got to ensure that your choice of career coincides with the area of your interest. Talents, interests, personality, anchors all become one. Winning over people who matter with performance is a mixture of hard and soft skills.

### **Influencing Factors (Lamb and Robert Clive case)**

Books, particularly, biographies, can influence our thinking and goal setting in life. We have seen the life of Michael Faraday and his journey to realize his ambition. We have drawn a few lessons about modes of learning, stages of development, help from social environment and so on. He could anchor a career in the Royal Institute where he found the ‘wall’ to lean his scientific career ‘ladder’.

But in the same 18<sup>th</sup> century we have two examples, one is that of Charles Lamb and the other is Robert Clive.

‘Clive was despair of his teachers for he used to go on perilous adventures instead of attending to books.’ But he became a statesman! ‘At 18 he joined East India Company and went to Madras (now Chennai) as a clerk where he hoped to make his fortune’. The goal of all adventures is to make a fortune. That was then as it is now. Ambitious risk takers gamble with their lives as it happened in the case of Robert Clive. ‘The French attacked the British and captured Madras; Clive escaped’. ‘The resilient Clive became a soldier – a clerk transformed into a fighter. He discovered and so the British that he has a talent, may be gift, or ‘genius for organizing for fighting.’

‘Eventually he became a statesman who founded the British Empire in India’. Poor fellow ‘had to defend himself in Parliament, against the charges of corruption’. He ‘pleaded that he was being treated more like sheep-stealer than a founder of an empire’.

His life ended in tragedy–‘he took his own life.’

Clive’s ignoble end is a pointer to the greedy. We witness this now in the globalized world.

Charles Lamb worked as an accountant for his living in the East India Company in the city of London, whereas, at 18 Robert Clive went to India as clerk became founder of British Empire.

‘When he was 21 a terrible tragedy struck Charles Lamb but for which he would not have worked in the East India Company.’

He had to take care of his sister, Mary, all her life, as she was a mental patient. He had to earn enough to look after his sister by ‘writing books for children, the best being *Tales from Shakespeare*.’

‘He wrote busily in spare time and became known for his poems and essays. He had many friends, many of them famous literary men. He was a *good talker* and also *very good at getting other people to talk*’.

These qualities epitomise the communicative competence-conversations. ‘Any one who reads his delightful essays to-day comes away with the feeling of actually coming face to face with the author!’

## SEARCHING FOR A JOB

### Goal Setting–Getting Started

You are ready with your portfolio of talents, interests and personality perceptions to enter the arena, vast...

Regardless of whether or not you have a specific or general idea of career interest-CREAMS, ANCHORS, TIPS, CRISP, etc-you need to begin to set some goals and make a plan to carry them out. The path or the map is before you. Career success means you must be serious about securing a series of job successes and eliminating an ‘I need some job and can think of career later’ attitude.

Venkat in the case No. 3, ‘passion impels...’ wanted a career in the cinema industry as a photographer. But he accepted laboratory assistant’s post for an opening. Sai after engineering, joined a tool room. The three months internship was memorable experience which he remembers for a long time.

Even if you want to eliminate the attitude of getting into any job, it becomes imperative because of the pressures for earning in middle-class families. Another, joined a multi-national company as salesman which was not to his liking just because of the attraction of salary and commission. But the period cannot be considered a waste of time. He did learn some transferable skills which he could transfer on to other jobs in banking career: Customer orientation and interpersonal skills and personal qualities like punctuality and hard work and regular timely visits to the customers. Much later in the banking career some of the abilities came to be used in the banking career, though late joining in the bank had made rising in the hierarchy difficult.

There are many ex-service men who join corporate world after retirement with special reservation. Their experience in military is thus not wasted. A captain who joins the bank at lower level may go up faster upwards by sheer performance and excellence. However, he may not have the same scope as the one who joins early as a probationary officer.

Goal setting, thus, is not a one-time affair. At each change in career you have to reset the goals, short or medium. The captain comes with transferable skills kit, and add some new set of skills which a Bank Manager needs. Quick learning helps in quick adjustment and excellence in the job.

His goals include developing new skills. The best way is to set small, manageable goals that can be achieved. Learning is cumulative and the speed of learning increases in rapid strides. Venkat learned laboratory skills and grasped in no time what went wrong on the shooting sets of the cinematic world. By watching the 'rushes' and sitting with sound recording, editing, and other functions, he developed a holistic picture of cinematography. His dreams became clear.

## **SCAN THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **Job Search and Research**

Scan the environment for career choice and industry choice. Don't limit your search to companies that put an ad in the paper, or referred by your college placement office, or in the recruiter's data base, or of those who are interested in you. You are making the choice for which you need more information before you short list as the companies do in the case of applicants to jobs.

You need to collect information about the company from the published data or through networking. Always keep your eyes and ears open to data from primary (people) sources.

Now that you have a fair idea about yourself and what you want to do in life, apart from earning a livelihood. After all 'what one wants is not wealth, but just enough to work unhampered and to be free, frank and independent'. You must lead 'a good life and also a life that is good' I have given an acronym SUCCESSFUL for defining success. Set forth, Unique, Career choice, Controlled, Enterprising enjoyable and ethical. Steer, Swerve, Fringe working, Utility, Leave a legacy. Selfishness is part of our nature, but it is not the best of our nature. It can be subordinated to a nobler ideal. The nobler ideal is realization of our true potential. Careers are the means to that end. Keep serving the society and leave a legacy.

### **Seminars, Fairs, Expos etc.**

Now go out and look out. Newspaper, the print media, has supplements and special features. They report events that go on a regular basis. Here is a heading that must interest young people who want to take up medicine for a professional career.

Live workshop at MNJ hospital. (A live workshop show-casing techniques to take up complicated cancer surgeries related to stomach, thyroid, oesophagus, breast and rectum was organized by MNJ Cancer hospital on Sunday)

Such workshops, if attended by you, stimulates your interest or enhance already existing interest in Medicine. You start dreaming to become a great surgeon and you can decide it for a career. There are many who have such dreams but fail to make it for want of preparation at entrance exam level or subsequent stages. You may have interest, dream, or passion without the diligence and hard work. There are several steps to attain your wish. You must convert your dream into a mission, vision, long term goals, broken into smaller goals each collapsing into the next.

Scan your newspaper regularly for vital information. You must appreciate the power of information. It is said information is that which changes us. You must scan with a particular mind set viz. for career decisions. From seminars, job fairs, and career expos information gathered becomes your resource. You must allocate time and money for such occasions. You may have umpteen excuses for not attending to them, but remember you are the loser. All planning involves setting goals and allocating resources *including time*, making sure your path is working for you. Some times we get starry-eyed about what we believe will be our perfect career without *exploring* whether the day-to-day work involved in that career will be interesting to us...We may choose a banking career and join a bank as a clerk or godown keeper or counter clerk or cashier. Each job involves different day-to-day activities. It may be that our strengths do not match the job you are asked to do. Some people study further and join as a probationary officer whose job requirements match with their interests and talents. You may have to investigate through reading or networking or job descriptions in the ads.

*Don't sell yourself short.* The job descriptions given in the ads specify matching skills, knowledge and attitudes called for. You demonstrate that you have them first in the resume and later in the interview. So read ads carefully and between the lines.

I have come across news article in a vernacular paper on 'Temping' organizations. They give press notes, ads, and conduct job fairs to promote their services. They are called Temping

groups because of the work they do. They provide workers to the needy companies from out of their pool purely on *temporary basis*. It is a new service providing picking up in India. Students, home-makers, retired persons, etc can register themselves with temping companies. If those registered need any training the Temping company will arrange to upgrade their skills, training in Computers, English language, etc in whatever areas the job seekers want improvement.

Although they are sent as temporary workers the companies hiring them may absorb them on a permanent basis.

The virtue of practical or hands-on experience is such that the candidate is putting to the test his latent talents. This is a discovery channel for a beginner. One can find what work interests and what does not interest one. It serves as apprenticeship or internship. You may do well, but it may not interest you; or you may find something more interesting a little later.

‘At present banking, insurance, finance, agriculture, retail and manufacturing companies are availing themselves of the facility from temping companies mostly for lower level jobs. FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods) , IT, Health care, Pharmaceuticals, Automobile and Aviation companies are among them.’

A few hirers ask for team leaders, project managers, marketing officers etc- the next higher level employees.

Companies which cannot afford fullfledged HR departments or who do not want such departments as a matter of policy prefer using temping companies. The temping companies in turn seek help of trainers to train their registered candidates. There is outsourcing for each of the HR functions. As mentioned before,

‘Material enters the factory and comes out up graded; but men go into it and come out down graded and corrupted’.

Temping companies solve this problem by upgrading human resources before they are sent to companies by reorienting the new entrants into corporate world. Elsewhere I discussed trying stage-the painful adjustment period after joining the workforce. The arrangements mitigates the age old problem/paradox.

Temporary staff is nothing new. Banks and others large scale organizations were taking employees as temporary workers. The

temporary workers are exploited by the managers as well as the existing permanent employees. They were made to work long hours and take up left over work.

Many good things are happening. You must be aware of them. Be informed and vigilant.

There is another news item that is relevant to you. It's called 'employability' fair by TMI. It is similar to temping in its work except that it is not for temporary posts. The similarity is for the kind of service they are doing for bridging the gap between employers and employees or job seekers. The venue was Institute of Public Enterprises which runs a PG Diploma in Business Management, signifying that the institutes and colleges show interest in such fairs to attract students and to serve them beyond syllabi.

In these job fairs some candidates are selected for employment and others rejected because they are not 'employable'. The novelty of this fair was that the organizers enroll the rejected candidates into a course where a job is guaranteed after completion of the course or give information about *employability coaching programmes*. Moreover the rejected candidates are put through *seminars* which will train them in:

- Preparing effective resume
- Preparing them for interviews

Seminars, job fairs, career expos, etc. are sources of information more than opportunities to make an entry into the job world or career choice. Before you make a decision to choose a career and a job, you need to do research. That's what everyone who is in the field of career counseling tells you. You attend any seminar, conference, fairs, or expose, they are all meant to help you in your research.

'The new age recruitment in the private sector is a different affair', different from public sector and government where the recruitment takes painfully long drawn process. Half a century ago, majority of job seekers were looking for stable and permanent employment and the government happened to be the biggest employer. Even the large organizations in the private sector many of which eventually became public sector thanks to nationalization of vital industries, the story is same.

The difference in to-day's private sector is that there are more jobs created in the I.T and I.Tes and related sectors. The private sector employer is on the look out for good workers. They are hunting for job-hunters. The hirers go out to meet prospective employees. Instead of the candidates, it is the companies which are rushing to job fairs where the 'buyers' and 'sellers' of jobs meet and exchange information. To-day's candidate for jobs can be choosy.

Imagine your application for a job results in a interview on a particular date. The anxiety, anticipation, and preparation is enormous. Your success or failure to get selected has enormous effect on your confidence. But you go to fair with no such anxiety. Any failure is not devastating. If it is not in one booth you go to another booth. If you don't succeed, you have more *information* about jobs, skills, opportunities etc, for your research purpose. Going to a job fair is fun where lot of information sharing goes on between candidates, candidates and company executives. You become sensitized to the environment not only as of now but you get a peep into the future.

### **Fairs are fair enough**

The Director, Institute for Electronic Governance who conducted a fair on 17<sup>th</sup> Nov, 2008 at the PG College, Secunderabad where in top MNCs in I.Tes, Media, Retail, Sales and Marketing, Logistics, Services, and Education participated. The report said that fresh graduates from science and arts streams would be recruited. Some of the top participants were Satyam BPO, Wipro BPO, Southerland, Sitel, 24/7 customer, Tata Business support, TMI Networks and scores of others. All these data was available through daily news papers, a vital primary source, so to say, the supplement of views, and opinions. They contain what the candidate should do before the fair, during, and after the fair. Fairs are fair enough training grounds.

You can search and research for more companies all at one place. You can find what kind of companies and what type of jobs, interest you. It depends on your soft skills how the job fair will turn out to be. You can put questions to company representative to know more about of what type of talents, soft skills included, interests and personality traits they are looking, for what positions you are interested in? etc.

Apart from information gathering, the fresh candidates can go through the 'preparation exercise' for resume writing and facing interview. We have dealt with the topic of resume preparation elsewhere. You need to make several trials in building up an ideal resumes—different resumes for different jobs. The preparation exercise includes dressing and address etc to make the best impressions. There is lot of fun; you go with your friends and enjoy asking questions to companies, putting them at the receiving end. You have time to bother about immediate appointment.

With the experience of job fair you lose some of the stage fear you encounter in the formal interviews conducted where you are most of the time at the receiving end with lot of anxiety. In a fair you can face the interview with confidence. You do all the homework that you are required to do to attend a formal interview as if it is one such interview. To complete the exercise you can do some followup work and experience contacting the company on your chances. Experts agree that *followup* is an important part of attending job fair. If you have picked up a business card of the company representative, send a 'thank you' letter by which you are not just being polite but showing your earnestness and seriousness about the job. You say you are the right person for the company and hence hopeful of selection. Your communication skills in verbal and written, the most vital soft skills, you display once again.

### **College placement cells.**

Needless to say that every student must make best use of this support system. They also arrange seminars, guest lectures, fairs etc to give opportunities to expose the students to information, campus interviews, summer placements. These are well known activities and opportunities.

### **Ads and Ad columns in news papers**

Companies advertise for jobs with job description. These are mandatory and sometimes obligatory or a formality. The jobs are already filled! Let the candidate accept them as genuine. Before we come to job description part and what the candidate should look for, ad columns are useful for a different reason. The job

descriptions throw light into jobs and their description you have not thought of.

Maybe you have relevant skills and responsibilities which you can handle; a creative way of self-assessment and seeking job opportunities. Know this that your career explorations are limited only by your imagination and time. There are advertisement features in newspapers and business magazines which give you more information than meets the eye. Infact the avowed purpose of advertisement is to inform the consumers of products/services and the totality of all the features. It is upto the consumer of the information, to use the information, that which changes us, enables us to take decisions on career and job choices. Check for in-house publications of corporations who may have monthly newsletters.

For reviewing the publicity material the underlying assumption is that you are good at reading—rapid, reflective, and receptive reading. Reading habit is not merely a hobby as most people make out to be, but it is necessary condition for survival in the world where knowledge is escalating continuously. Knowledge is information assimilated.

What do you make out of this news? How does it impact you?

### **Recruitment drive for BPO**

The Institute of Electronic Governance has conducted a recruitment drive for Wipro BPO from 9 a.m on October 30 at the Rishi UBR Degree College in Kukatpally. An orientation on career opportunities with Wipro BPO was also to be held at the same venue. Graduate, under-graduates and post-graduates were eligible. Candidates working with domestic BPOs can also attend. Interested candidates had to carry a copy of their resume, one passport size photograph, photocopies of identity proof, address proof and their academic and professional certificates.

### **Net and Networking**

Be your own job/career hunter online

- Log on to know the latest
- Feel free to write to us. Also feel free to share with your networking friends.

“When was the last time you knew of a great opportunity—only too late?” asks Nitin Rao, founder of the portal, *Let Me Know* ([www.LetMeKnow.in](http://www.LetMeKnow.in)).

A number of students in Indian universities miss out on opportunities simply because they never hear of them. Organizers of events or even recruiters, in turn, miss the opportunity to reach a broader talent pool. *Let Me Know* seeks to share information with the Indian youth and overcome gaps in information.

Rao’s tips for getting the best out of the site are simple. “Keep a close track of updates on opportunities of your interest through our personalized alerts. Use our advanced search to drill down to what you are looking for. And if there’s something specific you are still looking for, *feel free to write to our team.*”

### **Strategies for Success in Job Hunting**

- Do a good job in the pre-interview activities to insure a successful interview.
- Interview with a variety of organizations. Don’t focus all your attention on the top companies. Remember, the largest growth in the job market will be with small to medium size companies.
- Prepare for any and all contingencies. This means that you should consider all possibilities. Don’t reject an employer or a position because you think you know something about the industry/job. Talk to the employer. Explore the opportunity. Remember, you are under no obligation to accept an offer if one comes your way.
- Look throughout the region, and to the extent possible, look at opportunities across the country. Flexibility will be key to any successful job search.
- Interview with any and all organizations, using all resources available to you. Take on-campus interviews, develop your own leads, follow up newspaper ads and develop your own network.
- Most importantly, keep at it!

### Job Hunting Online

- The first step to a good hunt, as you might be aware, is to make a nice, easy to read, but compact resume of yours.
- Then log in (create an user-id & Password) on Job sites like [www.naukri.com](http://www.naukri.com), [www.monsterindia.com](http://www.monsterindia.com), [www.firstnaukri.com](http://www.firstnaukri.com), etc.
- Make sure that you make your profile, on these websites. It is quite easy to do, as the website itself will guide you in this process. Do not go for the default options like selecting the text in the help menu, or in choosing a font. Especially important is the heading that appears after your name in the jobseekers' list.
- Do not forget to attach your resume', as a part of your profile.
- Apart from your mobile No. give one landline no. as an alternative. This will help the company wanting to talk to you get a message across, in case you are out of calling area, or your mobile is switched off for some reason or other. And inform the person/s, who normally takes the call on the landline, about the possibility of the call from companies.
- While selecting the job categories, tick all those, which you feel that you would like to be a part of.
- There is an option for salary range; it is better to select the lowest ones. Better still, if there is an option of being flexible on the salary front, select the same. You can discuss this, once you go for the Interview.
- As far as the geographical locations of your job posting is concerned, select a reasonable one like for example, South India, or cities like Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, Pune, Vishakhapatnam, etc. Don't restrict yourself to the city of your stay or of your origin.
- It is important to visit these sites, at least on alternate days, and do a minor modification to your profile, so that the Search engine will always throw your Name and Summary on page 1, if anybody's search criteria matches your profile.
- ❖ Once, this is done; as you are a fresher looking for a first job; you need to visit these sites on a daily basis.

- ❖ Do an intelligent job search; from the postings put in by the companies. Even if the company mentions at least one year experience, you can still apply for the same. Maybe, you can highlight the project work you have done, as an experience.
- ❖ Collect the e-mail id of the company, and after clicking on the SUBMIT button; make sure you send a personal e-mail from your e-mail id. In this, make sure that you mention “Your job posting on ----- site for ----- position” in the subject line of your message. Also, never send a blank message, with just your resume’ attached. It will be treated as junk mail. So, take a few minutes to type out a few lines stating the purpose of the message and that you are eagerly looking forward to meeting them, at the earliest.
- ❖ At least 5 or 6 such e-mails everyday will increase the probability of your success in getting that elusive interview call.
- Apart from these job websites, many major recruitment consultancies have their own websites, where you can fill in your profile. Follow the same suggestions as above.
- Also, make a list of target companies that you would like to work for. Then visit their company websites and click on a link “Careers” or “Jobs”, and then send your profile to them. Take a chance. You never know, do you?

‘Online search is cheaper/inexpensive for the array of information. It can be done 24/7. Your college library offers free access to the internet. “Many companies, professional bodies, colleges, and government agencies have pages where you can find news about job opportunities, upcoming events, useful documents to obtain and so on.’ The more you learn about the internet, the more useful it is to you.

You need computer skills for collection of information cheaply and easily. Every search, investigation is based on curiosity, patience, creativity, and computer, reading skills. You are skillful when you enjoy doing a thing

A word of caution, you may get addicted to it and strain yourself. It has become cause of many ailments. Time management principles apply-when to start when to stop.

Here is a news item that must interest freshers.

Exclusive job site for freshers' [www.access2campus.com](http://www.access2campus.com) launched by International school of information technology. Hirers seeking freshers find it difficult to get fresher through job sites. To help them this website is launched. It is exclusive website dedicated to freshers and students. However, students preferring to upload their resumes have to pay for the service. 'This gives favourable deal for freshers', the school chairman says. The HR teams cannot directly use the resumes free of cost.

The companies can ask the website for candidates that suit their job requirements. The school does the job for companies. The resumes have to be certified by the principals of their colleges.

The data is removed after one year. The web site has a quite a few salient features such as video resume, applying for the jobs on behalf of candidates, informing events, and arranging interviews with the companies among others.

The job seekers get so much of news/information and services from print and electronic media. You reap the benefits if you can cultivate the habit of browsing and searching. Keep it in mind always information means that there is a change in you, your understanding that will enable you to take right decisions.

SCAN demands a variety of soft skills. Recall what Michael Faraday did when he attended the four shilling lectures of Sir Humphry. 'He took copious notes from the lectures'.

Listening and taking notes shows commitment to learning; *taking notes* and *listening* is one process.

### **Changing Horizon of the World of Work**

Most people prefer now to opt for permanent jobs even though sizeable number of people in some industries like IT, are changing jobs.

A few generations before people looked aged at 55 and were glad to retire. They had pension to fall back and their children look after them. With the average life span increasing, we notice that many people are living up 90 and beyond, thanks to the medical progress. Aged parents have become a reason for many generation career conscious people for not opting for transfer

from the place of posting. Some defied this difficulty and left the parents to take care of themselves. Recently Indian Government passed a bill making it obligatory for children to take care of their aged parents. There is also a trend for most people to seek re-employment after retirement, competing for jobs with younger people.

In cities spending more time on transport with less time with their parents and children – with more spouses getting employment for extra income and some of them making a career of them, normal family life gets disturbed. There is more stress on all family members. Yet another change is the life styles are changing for better. Luxuries become necessities. Borrowing for buying house, articles, clothes etc. More and more people are turning aesthetic. Naturally they have to change jobs for better salary. Children's education and their demands takes away big share of salaries. Credit cards, ATMs, Consumer Loans, Hire-purchase make money management a formidable tasks. This comes in the way of making decisions of quitting job for a change difficult.

When wife and husband live in different places, extra time & money is spent in travel at the week end to be together. Two establishments is not only financial problem but effects family support system when the one has to spend in isolation of each other. This has all kinds of economic and psychological problems. When a man returns to residence late after hard work away from parents and wife and children, it will effect the performance at work place.

All these factors affect the career decisions. For example the banks promote officers with transfer. If they don't want transfer they have to forego promotion. Many people lost their careers and remained stagnant. The children of these people believe that their parents' generation paid too high a price for career success in terms of health and family relationship.

Today's generation learn from the previous generation and make strong decisions regarding their careers. I know a case of a person who became Chairman of a leading bank put his daughter in boarding school to enable himself free to move from place to place in the younger days. There was a time when he suggested to his daughter to put her child in a boarding school so that she could pursue her career. Pat came the reply: I suffered and missed living with my parents; but I don't want my child to live

away from me. The gentleman was hurt and broke down, saying, 'I never knew that you did not like the arrangement for you. Had you opposed I would have done something different', said shocked man who shared this in a group.

There is thus world of change. Everyone wants to make their own career choice weighing all the pros and cons vis-à-vis family.

Balancing work-life and family life is choice of man. There are people who resigned after a long service in an organization because of transfer to another place. They could do it because they are financially independent and confident they could earn through other means-*freelance, consultancy* etc. The company which knew their value even cancelled the transfer.

That is the advantage of personality development-development of knowledge and multiple skills when you can dictate terms to the employers and keep your values intact. There are many fringe workers today who care for their independence and freedom opt for free-lance work, part-time jobs while pursuing something that interests them most. There are interim managers who work for a month or two on a project enjoying autonomy with competence as their forte. You find such jobs mainly technical in the film field and TV and radio media. They are engaged, paid for their expertise and competence. They don't look for permanent jobs. But they manage their finances well. Sometimes they may work 18 hours day or for days together they are out of work. Their success depends on their technical competence and self-reliance and self management.

### **What Hirers Say**

"I recruit people for niche skill and approach the institutes that train the graduates in these skills. The skill, which I am talking about, pertain to Software testing. Recently, we took the decision to hire science graduates, as trainees.

There were three levels for them to cross. One was the test, the next was the group discussion and finally the Technical interview. The test is straight forward - one has to pass the cut-off stage to go to the next round. The tests can be multiple choice or long answers, and depends upon how the company chooses to formulate it.

Group discussion was evaluated by the HR. Topics addressed are popular issues and topics. We saw to it that the topics chosen

gave everyone a fair chance to speak. For instance we did not consider a topic such as “Nuclear Deal - Is it good or bad for India”. Certainly, this would require a lot of knowledge on Current Affairs. So we chose a more popular topic such as “Is 20-20 tournament good for cricket”. Also the duration was neither too long nor too short-just enough. Normally, the HR takes a call on this.

There will always be someone to start the discussion. That has its plus points. There will be someone who will take control and summarise and arbitrate. All these were being closely watched. There will be some who will have something to say and will say it very succinctly. Those who fail to participate have no chance of making it to the next round. Also, the content of discussion was mostly observed to see if they are talking sense. We select anyone whose contribution made sense. It was HR's sole discretion as to who would make it to the next round.

Technical interviewers bore in mind that the candidates would be trained over a period of time and all the candidates would need to understand the concepts and basics well. Knowing this and expressing this clearly using the right technical terms (and correctly so) would take the candidate a long way. This would express his grasp of basics well.

Interviewing experienced candidates is entirely a different ball game. One of the things I notice is that, they know what they have mentioned in the resume. It is very important that the resume honestly reflects the skills. This is because the employee's selection for other projects much after the selection will be based on the resume. A well written resume also becomes a good starting point for selection. It impresses the HR and enables you to get shortlisted for the next level of interview. Also, be very careful in declaring your skills in the resume. Declare all the qualifications and certifications. Declare all your international travel, if your new job demands it. Declare if you have any valid visas. These things add value to your resume. Also, if you are leading a team, state the size of your team.

Good Communication skills for any level of experience matter. As you climb higher in the hierarchical ladder it becomes a necessity to communicate well with your subordinates, peers, and particularly, the clients. Sometimes in body-shopping firms, and in key roles, the client would like to interview the candidate before bringing him onboard to the project. In such a case strong

relevant technical and communication skills become important. Some clients do a video conferencing and presentation skills become important.

In some companies HR will have a say in the recruitment and can decide on high salary for deserving candidates. They can even override decision of the technical team!

While searching for a job in Hyderabad, I met a friend in a leading company. He forwarded my resume to HR. A technical interview was conducted for senior position in the company. The interview result turned out to be negative. However, the HR interview went in favor of me and HR was convinced I was a good candidate for the job. My friend also had a discussion on my selection with HR. HR had a discussion with the Technical Interviewer. Finally, the organization decided to take me in, provided I would accept a position much lower than what I was interviewed for. *Since I needed a break in a good company, I relented. Since then, there was no turning back.* I quote this example to say that HR can be powerful enough in some organizations to influence decisions of selection. They can gauge the person and decide on their salaries a candidate deserves. They also have the power to provide "joining bonus". Sometimes they can pay for the notice period to the relieving company and get the candidate immediately."

*A Software Professional in Mid Career*

### **Comment**

A good candidate with soft skills can get a chance to sharpen his or her hard skills. The sentence in italics is significant.

### **Preparation**

Preparation for interview is similar to preparation for the examinations in the schools and colleges you were engaged in. There are students and students. Some who make last minute preparations. Some study systematically throughout the year participating in the classroom, weekly, monthly, or half-yearly examinations. Each school has its own regimen.

Rishi valley school of Madanapally wanted to dispense with examinations completely because the founder, the late Sri Krishnamurthy, did not believe in the system of examination. But

the school had to fall in line with the Government rules and regulations. But they kept it to a minimum.

In those days there were no tutorial institutes or guides. But students were going through previous years questions papers for the type of questions or standard questions. Some questions are repeated. Problems are repeated. Some questions appear in a different form. There are guides which provide standard answers, alternatives.

These practices are extended to job selections too. Internet provides information and guidance. All this is preparation for the content, language, context and process of interviewing to both the parties. There are other aspects—the soft skills testing.

Even in the written examination system, the presentation of answers varies from student to student. There are those who reproduce standard answers verbatim learned by rote. A clever examiner knows it at a glance. There are others who give BOLD answers—Brief, Own, Lucid, and Direct to the point. They impress the awarder of marks who see the difference readily. The pity is that in these days of mass valuations and the money involved and the labour, the unpleasant nature of the work, are making awarding of marks not uniform or equitable.

These and many other factors make selection through interview least effective although a routine affair, not a right instrument to select candidates for employment and engagement for a long tenure or career.

However you have to go through the ritual; go through it well enough not be rejected.

Your preparation for the interview is part of your preparation for the job and career. It is continuous process of self assessment and presentation of self. Self expression. The key is management. You have to manage the internal milieu (self) and manage the external environment (employers) and the relationship between the two.

The ideas about interviews are changing for better. The panel members who visit campuses are trained. They do lot of preparation work. Look at their problem. When selected candidates are given to the departments or projects, one hears that the project managers who are not involved in the process of selection complain and reject the candidate after a few days and blame the recruiters. The recruiters on the other hand, blame the

project managers for lack of leadership skills or ability to manage talent. On your side it is not enough if you impress people the 'wicket gate' keepers, to gain entry; but you keep impressing the people who matter in the organization. If you adopt the impression management continuously, you will spend life with anxiety and with no focus on the purpose of the job and career, managing impressions. What is important is quality of your personality, your values, knowledge, skills, soft skills in particular over and above the required hard skills. The most important thing is learning skill. Interviewers have learnt to ask questions like, what are your strengths, and what are your weaknesses? The guides pitch on these questions and give you best answers and next best answers.

Second important thing is to find out what the employer is looking for. Behind every question there is this need of the employer hidden or expressed. Most interviewers don't put all their cards on the table. For both the hirer and the hunter of jobs it is a process, a journey, inquiry, information, reduction of uncertainty, simply knowing each as well as possible in the short time of say, 30 minutes.

What both need is *authentic encounters*. Honest transactions without any hidden agenda to trap the other.

I came across a guide titled 'How to answer 64 tough questions'. Browsing the list I found more 'clever questions' to trap the candidates. The authors suggests the means to avoid the trap. Instead authentic transactions benefit both the parties.

*Preparation* is the key soft skill. The idea of Planning, Preparation, and Practice must be firmly established in our minds. You need 10000 hours of practice to make you perfect in any art. It is said that Sir C.P.Ramaswamy Iyer took up his first case after 10 years of internship and study and graduation. His first case was a sensational adoption case of Jiddu Krishnamurthy's father Vs Anne Besant which Sir C.P. won. You must add to 3ps a fourth P—patience. There is no exception to this rule even in the case of geniuses and prodigies. Thomas Alwa Edison, the great inventor himself has said, that genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration. Perspiration is yet another P—that need to be added.

Recall what we discussed under *Vibhuti yoga... Splendour of the splendid*. Keep practicing like Jonathan Livingston Seagul,

invoking the divine residing in your heart, *you will grow and glow!* Remember Mozart was a prodigy, who composed music at 6. He mastered it only at 21!

US Defence Secretary Colin Powel made a critical presentation to the United Nations in Feb 2003 – not only did he rehearse, write, and research his speech painstakingly, he delivered it several times in advance to colleagues. At one stage he had a room set up to replicate exactly the room where he would be speaking. There is no such thing as too much preparation.

No amount of preparation is too much. Abraham Lincoln once told a club President that he needed 5 days' preparation to give a speech of 5 minutes; if it is one hour speech, he would need a day for preparation. If there is no time limit, then he said he was ready. Similarly shorter the interview longer is the preparation.

### **RESUME<sup>1</sup>. An Exposition**

Resume is a Realistic Exposition of Self Underscoring Major Exploits –

**Realistic:** It is real not imaginary. What you are, what you can do, and what you will do if an opportunity is given. It is down-to-earth and practical.

**Exposition:** A setting forth *in writing* a proposition, something difficult to explain to the reader who can make sense at a glance for first impression so that it is one among the short listed resumes. It demands exactitude, the written communication is all about. You need to develop proficiency in written (English) language. That itself is an indication of your soft skills... It should be – BOLD; brief, own, lucid, and direct – *brief* unlike most expositions. Hence it becomes doubly difficult to set forth on paper. It has to be own, not a copy which is what the lazy do. lucid (or clarity, logical, stimulating) and direct to the point. A good resume will emerge only after several attempts. It is iterative, re-writing, correcting, and rewriting and so on till something worthwhile emerges.

**Self:** It is all about self. Self expression in writing, a rewarding and reinforcing exercise. It rejuvenates, energises, a motivating force. Temper it, to make it realistic. The process leads to self

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<sup>1</sup> RESUME: Reaslistic; Exposition; Self; Underscoring; Major; Exploits

discovery – a little deeper with each draft revised. An excellent way to probe into self. Remember 3Es of personality development discussed before. What are your endowments, the contribution from the environment, and the gains from education and experience. A good resume is an outcome of self discovery as nearly true as possible to the self and others.

**Underscoring:** It does not contain everything. Only salient features of true self that have utility value. Therefore you need to be selective, keeping the norm, realistic appraisal about self. Dictionary meaning of *underscore*:

To draw a line under, to make *evident*, *emphasise*, *stress*; to provide (action on film) with accompanying music;

For us emphasis and stress are suitable meanings; make evident can be more significant. The resume, in writing, makes your ‘self’ evident to the judge who picks it up out of a large pile. It must stand out. That is the objective of underscoring used as a metaphor, the last cited meaning of the dictionary—to *provide music to the action* in a film.

When you underscore you are providing ‘music’, melody, rhythm, tone, tune, texture; fine tune the exposition without ignoring the realistic aspect. The underscoring or the background music, as it is called here, should be appropriate to the mood and sentiment. The audience are enthralled when audio is mixed with visuals. Musical scoring or under scoring is done on paper from which the reader can play. The reader of your resume must respond to the underscoring with the same excitement to call you for the next stage of selection.

**Major:** Brevity makes it imperative for you to focus only on the major accomplishments, evidences; what is major or minor depends on the situation. It involves sifting and sieving. A difficult exercise. A rummy player who finds it difficult to discard ends up with unwanted cards, leaving others to take the booty.

It depends on the job, career, industry you are applying for. The employer may not nearly think of the job you have applied for. He thinks of your utility in the long run. They have their succession plans. He may not simply rely on your present resume but your future resumes—your true potential. To day’s employers are looking for soft skills set more than the hard or job-specific skills. It depends on the research you made on the company and tasks involved and their expectations.

*Let me give an illustration:*

When I began my career in a bank as branch level employee, there were no resumes, only references. The banks wanted honest, loyal, pen-pushers to man their counters and back office operations. Because they were lending for short-term or working capital to traders, they wanted some shroffs from the business community to assess the borrower's solvency and business acumen.

Soon banks diversified into industrial finance, both working capital and later for long-term capital formation. They further diversified, in keeping with government policies, into small scale industries, financing of entrepreneurs and self-employed; this made banks recruit specialists, as directly recruited officers, like chartered accountants, cost accountants, engineers, and even MBAs.

After nationalization of 14 major banks, they began recruiting agricultural scientists first at the apex level and later at the grass-roots level. All this put banks into manpower planning, succession planning, compensation packaging, requiring the appointment of yet another specialized category HR managers.

All these changes are significant for discussion on resumes. First bank's reliance on resumes for calling candidates making them go through the process of selection and recruitment. Those who joined the bank in the earlier period have also been aspiring and competing with the specialists who eventually became generalists. If they had the opportunity to present their resumes—realistic exposition of self underscoring, major exploits—achievements and there would have been realistic appraisal of these resumes. They would have had better chance to come up. There was no such a concept of resume preparation. It epitomizes ones' progression in career, in the unfolding of personalities. Each failure will become a cause for re-examination and re-education and renewal.

**Exploits:** One's feats, heroic deeds, outstanding achievements. They stem from exploitation of talents, hidden or actual, interests, personality traits—tendencies, reactions aptitudes, innerurges, temperament, specialization.

### **Exploit them to your fullest**

The employers' interest in your past exploits is limited to their future utility. It is TRAITS that must be evident in the exploits—tendency gives rise to reactions; the in-born aptitudes give rise to inner urges, your temperament is seen in your speciality-uniqueness

A unique combination of *transferable* skills with *flexibility*.... They are apart from job specific technical skills which may be classified under hard skills. Therefore hard skills are more than skills in operating machinery....There are certain skills beyond these hard skills, universally sought by employers—call them soft skills.

Most job seekers do possess a few of them to some extent. But all employees whatever may be the extent or lack of it, can be *trained*. These are trainable skills. That is the good news. Through training, professional development, coaching, mentoring they can be acquired, refined, improved, developed, enhanced; if there is will there is the way.

There is process, a systematic way; I call it ADEPT programme—Appreciation, Demonstration, Experimentation, Practice, and Transfer to real situations. The list of skills is too long. But if you know in advance what a particular employer seeks, then you can match or tailor your job search.

You can show case what you possess through resume, covering letter, and face-to-face interview. For all this you need to be clear about your own strengths and weaknesses; be sensitive to what you have gained through various projects and work experience, etc. It is quite possible that you do not know your own strengths leave alone your weaknesses.

There is a more appropriate name given—*employability skills*. To know the verbiage—the words that are understood by every employer is useful so that you can use them in your written communication and oral presentations.

## Jargon

Numerous studies which identified them and developed jargon on employability elements, which a job seeker must know.

Jargon, a somewhat derogatory term, is specialized vocabulary and idiom of those in the same work, way of life, etc. Each profession has its own jargon, if used in the correct sense it makes for efficient way of communication between the professionals. Soft skills is a phrase that creap into the jargon of social science, management, and HR professions. It is now used widely and everybody uses it without meaning anything to the job seeker or hirer, the two who should know what they actually represent in terms of the observable behaviour and the result these behaviours produce. But jargon is necessary for precise communication between the sender and receiver – effective communication with no communication gap, another jargon.

What are they, the jargon? Most often mentioned skill by the employers is communication skills, oral and written, both verbal. This is where most troubles in business arise. So they insist on these skills. The reader may refer to my earlier book titled ‘Communicative Competence’ published in 2006.

## Use of Radar<sup>2</sup>

*Radar* is a device that emits radio waves and processes their reflections for detecting and locating objects or surface features...

*Echolocation* is what a bat, the creature does... physiological process for locating distant or invisible objects by sound waves reflected back to the emitter.

RADAR is a device used for echolocation. That is what an interviewer for job selection does. His questions are echolocations. The reflections are of RADAR questions are used to detect your employability.

- Reason (why)
- Aspirations (what level) (your expectation)

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<sup>2</sup> **RADAR:** Reason; Aspirations; Duration; Asset value; Reliability.

- Duration (how long)
- Asset value (how useful are you in the long term)
- Reliability (can you work without supervision)
  - Why are you leaving your current employer?
  - Why have you chosen our company?
  - How long did you serve the present employer?
  - We can only offer you a temporary job
  - Asset value – long term value. How quickly can you become one of us?
  - Reliability – can you set your own goals.

## **Ravi Varanasi shares his experience in Resume writing and Interviewing**

### **My Experience**

During my final year at Engineering, I had received an offer from Siemens Engineering (Circuit Boards) for a pre-sales engineer. Unfortunately, Siemens had a pretty bad quarter and froze all the existing offers. The first important lesson that I learned was not to take things for granted. After a brief stint as an intern at Square-D software of India, I decided to pursue higher studies in Binghamton, NY. In my final semester, I started interviewing with several companies. Thanks to the good economy, I had received offers from Goldman Sachs, American Management Systems, Thought works and Trilogy. Thought Works is a global IT consultancy company. The interview process involved an aptitude test along with a coding exercise. As a fresh graduate, I wanted to pick a company that would provide me the best chance to learn and Thought works provided that, (even though it wasn't the best paying). The work involved traveling to customer sites and implementing projects for them. The world of consulting provides a different environment and problem set at different clients. The flip side to the consulting world is the travel that is involved and the need to establish your work at every client place. The move to Dallas forced me to change companies. The consulting rigours made me feel at ease in the subsequent interviews. The subsequent change of jobs originated from contacts from my previous jobs.

*The best way to prepare for an interview is to get information about the position from an ex-colleague or a friend who is already working in the company. It helps one to understand the situation from an insider and also know what kind of skills the position entails.*

*The more interviews I had attended the more it became a fun and challenging exercise. A failed interview provided me good feedback on self-evaluation. The important takeaway from it might be reading a new book to enhance my skills in a certain area.*

My current position's interview process was one of the different interviews. The company had a set of interviews and also made me go through a coding exercise that would mimic a normal

working day. The interview made me evaluate the company in a normal working day mode.

### **As an interviewer**

When I interview a candidate, these are the following things I look for -

1. Technical competence for the position.
2. Role as a good team player.
3. Ability to answer questions in a direct and succinct manner.
4. Ability to communicate one's experience in a succinct way.
5. Is he compatible with the company's culture.?
6. Does he have passion and enthusiasm?
7. Do books/blogs and other things interest him outside his work?
8. Has he done anything related to work in his spare time?

### **As an interviewee**

Here are a few of things I look for in a company and seek answers to the following questions—

1. Does company subscribes to the same set of beliefs/culture shared by me?
2. Does company provide an environment that fosters independent thinking?
3. Does it treat developers as another entity?
4. Does it expect me to strike a good balance between life and work?
5. Does the interviewers create in me a feeling they enjoy working for the company?
6. Does the company invest in me to improve my skills.

### **Advice for fresh graduates**

1. Have interest in the position you are applying for. Once you take the job, you will spend a good amount of time working in that area. So if you don't have interest in that area, you are better off finding what interests you.

2. Use the internet to read blogs/articles to keep up with the latest in the field.
3. Show enthusiasm to learn. Learning is the best investment.
4. Do not worry too much about compensation.
5. Read lots of books and tap into your intellectual curiosity.
6. Be professional – talk in ENGLISH at work place. Professional behaviour is more important than just dressing in a professional manner. That is not be all, end all. It is always dress plus. That plus is behaviour which stems from professionalism. (Ravi appears to be a regular reader as (2) suggests).
7. Avoid grammatical errors in resume
8. Provide your intent in your objective/summary in a clear and simple manner.
9. Attach a covering letter for the positions of special interest to you. Explain to them why you are suited to the position.
10. Have patience and keep a smiling face.
11. Expand your contacts using online forums, user group meetings or intern positions.
12. Have confidence in your position.

**Aspirations of an NRI**

For the past 10 years I have been working in the Information Technology domain. Starting out as a programmer, I have grown to become a Business Intelligence Technical Architect. I am currently an Asst Vice-President in their Enterprise Technology Group at Marsh, World leader in Risk and Insurance Services Industry. At Marsh, I lead major work streams of various Business Intelligence projects. This responsibility as work stream lead provides me an opportunity to take up project management tasks and also managing a 5 to 6-member development team along with the primary responsibility of providing solutions in the Technology domain. Part of the Application development is outsourced to India and managing and solving the challenges that arise as part of outsourcing have been a major component of the work streams that I lead. During the last few years, I got substantial exposure to managerial context at Marsh.

I plan to enhance these on-job learnt management skills by augmenting them with formal education in management. Together these will provide me right skills to reach my short-term goal of succeeding at a higher level managerial role in the Technology domain. The managerial role I aspire for will deal with all aspects of management, including project planning, budgeting and resource management, and will involve larger teams.

Later, the experience gained in a managerial role along with my technical expertise and experience of handling outsourced projects should help me reach my long-term goal of setting up an India-based Software Development company initially focusing on the Business Intelligence domain. Changes in macro-economic policies over the last 15 years in India had resulted in its Software Industry achieving tremendous growth rates. NASSCOM-Mckinsey Report 2005 on Indian Software Industry estimates that Software Industry in India is likely to achieve 25 per cent growth rate year-on-year for the next few years. I plan to utilize this business opportunity through my company to achieve good growth rates.

I have looked at Part-time MBA program offered by NYU very closely and am sure that it will provide me with the right tools to help me accomplish my short-term goal of succeeding in a higher level managerial role as well as prepare me better for pursuing my long-term goal of establishing my own business through its 'Entrepreneurship & Innovation' curriculum.

## 9 Reasons for Rejecting of Candidates

1. *Vague statements* 2. *Abstract words* 3. *Incomplete data* 4. *Not showing enthusiasm in writing* 5. *Giving no concrete examples* 6. *Long, and showy language* 7. *Over reaching (trying to hoodwink)* 8. *Rushed through applications* 9. *Yawning gaps in information*

- Vague statements in the resume, covering letter, or in the interview.
- Abstract words instead of action verbs.
- Incomplete data in the applications
- Not showing enthusiasm in written and oral communication and body language.  
Add to them vain attempts to impress the hirer's among others characteristics.
- Giving no concrete examples—this is very important. This is particularly true of the project work, internship, any work experience prior to seeking employment. You can not leave things to the hirers imagination, inference, interpretation, or assumptions.
- Language not being BOLD—brief, own, lucid and direct. Showy language shows shallowness of the speaker or writer.
- Overreaching (trying to hoodwink)
- Rushed through applications—you will fill so many applications you hardly spend time it deserves. No doubt filling in details in a printed form is a boring task. Yet it should not show you are slipshod.
- Yawning gaps in the information supplied. There must be some orderly presentation—chronological or logical.

Studies over a time have revealed some of the reasons for rejection of candidate at different stages of the selection process. The above sums up: VAINGLORY<sup>3</sup>—Vain though in vain.

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<sup>3</sup>VAINGLORY: Vague statements; Abstract words; Incomplete data; Not showing enthusiasm in writing; Giving no concrete examples; Long, and showy language; Over reaching; Rushed through applications; Yawning gaps in information.