

Bridging the Divide – Academic to Industry



"Computers are incredibly fast, accurate and stupid; humans are incredibly slow, inaccurate and brilliant; together they are powerful beyond imagination."

- Albert Einstein

Industry and academia: a collaborative effort

Battling multi-cultural barriers, struggling to control the attrition rate, catering to the growing needs for cross-functional skill sets amongst others, are the many challenges faced by the IT/ ITES industry. Despite this, Indian IT companies today, continue to play a key role in the Global IT scenario.

In recent years, our IT firms have seen increasing success in bagging coveted multi million dollar contracts becoming a leading player in the global economy. The flip side of this boom is that in spite of nearly 300,000 IT graduates coming out of various Universities in India every year, just about 10 to 15% are found employable by Tier-1 companies and about 25% in all. According to a NASSCOM-Mckinsey study, India is expected to face a shortage of 500,000 knowledge workers by 2010. A crucial issue being faced, by a rapidly growing IT giant.

Studies like this show an alarming indication of a mismatch between the industry's expectations and our academic performance.

Why quality of education suffers?

A large number of technology and engineering institutes, which are established with inadequate infrastructure and a faculty that leaves much to be desired, contribute largely to this problem of unemployable graduates. Lack of focus on behavioral aspects and soft skills, less than adequate practical training, little or no correlation with industry requirements and teaching methods still comparatively conservative, all attribute to the drawbacks of our educational system. One which severely needs to evolve, be more pragmatic and keep pace with changing times.

The talent crunch we now face, is caused by several factors:

(Source: TeamLease Services)

- An ageing population
- Inadequate educational programs
- Insufficient vocational training facilities
- Lack of individuals with the skills and competence required for available jobs
- Immobility or off-location opportunities
- No detailed understanding of skill requirements in the market
- Lack of industry participation

Working Together

The industry is realizing that it needs to be selective in choosing academic institutions to partner with, for its recruiting programs. IT companies need to partner with educational institutes with an objective to strengthen the relationship with academia. Universities and educational institutions in India and abroad would only help fortify the vital R&D base.

The good news is that new courses like; *Train the Trainers program (TTT)*, *Faculty Industry Internship Program (FIIP)* and *Faculty Development Programs*, designed to enable academicians to participate in campus-industry relationship initiatives are available.

The degree, diploma, ITI, and Vocational professional (semi professional) programs conducted under this collaborative arrangement offer employees an opportunity to:

- Augment academic skills and aptitude
- Synergize Theory and Practical
- Provide awareness and exposure to the new theories and technologies
- Participate in organizational initiatives, improve their perspective, and provide meaningful insights.

The partnership parameters

A severe mismatch between industry needs/expectations and the available skills, is probably one of the most threatening issues which call for a stronger partnership.

Companies spend a lot of time, effort and resources to mould candidates for specific job profiles. The selected candidates are trained to understand a company's culture, philosophy and values. In addition, company specific technical training is also a requirement. These initiatives become a key in retention efforts and yet, attrition seems to constantly loom over.

The GOA AGENDA 2008

This year's "Goa Agenda 2008" aims to address this issue of "**Bridging the Divide – Academic to Industry**". We need to seek answers to the following questions:

- (i) What are the issues faced by a booming IT sector? Why does it cry for the urban talent?
- (ii) What are Indian engineers found wanting, when they interact with customers from other cultures?
- (iii) How can we gear up to fight competition from emerging rivals?
- (iv) What can Academia do to meet the Industry's expectations?
- (v) How do we reduce the gap between the two?

Goa Agenda 2008 will be divided in three sessions.

Session I will deliberate on Industry's perspectives.

Session II is intended to understand Academia's plans to meet the industry's requirements and

Session III will brain -storm on The Road Ahead.

The Chamber is hopeful that this program will help identify solutions to meet these challenges. It aims to define the next steps, in terms of encouraging center of excellence programs, within and outside the industry to develop quality manpower in the country.