SUBJECT MATTERS

Parlez-vous MBA?

How many languages does an MBA student need to speak?

SPEAKING three languages wasn't enough for Lenka Menden. When it came to choosing where to study for an MBA, she wanted a chance to absorb a new culture and learn yet another tongue. "My first language is Czech, I studied for a degree in business administration in Germany and I went on to take an MSc in Prague," she explains. "I then worked for three-and-a-half years as an analyst at Morgan Stanley in Canary Wharf."

Ms Menden turned down the chance of studying at London Business School, instead choosing IESE in Barcelona, because she thought it would open new doors. "Staying in London I would have been in the same environment and there wouldn't be that many challenges. So I learned a new language alongside my MBA because Spanish is a very important language of business. I have extended my personal network to include people from Mexico, Spain and the Philippines. I can now work anywhere in Europe or in an emerging economy," she says.

High-profile business schools still teach primarily in English. But many, especially in Europe, are beginning to realise that language tuition is a big selling point. The attraction of learning a language is two-fold. With so many alumni on the market, bi-lingualism distinguishes the exceptional MBA from the run of the mill. And in a global business, the ability to speak languages and understand cultures is vital.

INSEAD, which has campuses in France and Singapore, has a three-language requirement. Students joining its MBA programme must be fluent in English and proficient in at least one other. A third language of a student's own choice is taught alongside the MBA. Facility in that language is a condition of being awarded an MBA. "It's about developing a cultural sensitivity and is a way of becoming a global citizen," says Leila Murat, the school's assistant director of MBA admissions.

Chinese whispers

Mandarin is popular on both campuses. A quarter of students are of Asian origin and many Westerners come to the business school specifically to gain insight into doing business in China. Other emerging markets are shaping interest too: Portuguese and Russian are also becoming more popular, says Ms Murat.

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Despite Anglophones' reputation for lazyness in this area, such stringent language requirements don't seem to be putting off English-speaking students. INSEAD has seen applications from America more than double in the past five years. Nevertheless, there are drawbacks. For one, teaching languages is expensive. The most effective method is face-to-face. That means recruiting native speakers.

But how easy is it to find a native Chinese speaker in a provincial city? At Grenoble Graduate School of Business in France, they can call on the university's renowned languages department. But responding to students' demands is not always easy. Japanese teachers are particularly hard to source, says Carol Gally, the school's language co-ordinator. She says she often has to rely on the partners of people employed on the campus coming forward to teach.

Grenoble's students are given 72 hours of language tuition over two semesters, with classes running into the early evening after the MBA teaching finishes. Compulsory French classes expose students to everyday situations, official documents and radio and television. Beginners start with the basics, such as how to shop, eat and drink. Other languages are then taught in the medium of French.

At IESE, learning Spanish is a big attraction for international students such as Ms Menden. Although the MBA is taught in English, some second-year modules are in Spanish. The school's aim is to graduate students fluent in both languages. Ninety per cent of students pass the Spanish element and qualify for what is known as a bi-lingual MBA.

Students are advised to come to Barcelona to attend a summer language school before joining the programme. This makes them more employable, according to Javier Munoz, IESE's admissions officer. The internships arranged through the business school demand fluency in Spanish; without considerable language skills the offers from Spanish banks, engineering firms and car manufacturers would not be forthcoming. Given the current economic situation in the country, they need all the advantages they can get.

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INTERVIEW

'A solution is more than technology alone'

Integration of technology plays a major role in skill development and bringing technology right in the classrooms is critical for preparing students for global working environments. Additionally, with the use of technology, cognition skills are enhanced and students are better able to adapt and apply concepts in various situations, thereby improving their problem solving and analytical skills. For more than 20 years now a company has been working on improving the way the world learns. The company's called SMART Technologies and its managing director for India and South Asia, **Sanjiv Pande**, *met with* FE's **Vikram Chaudhary** *to share more about its solutions. Excerpts*:

A lot of content solution provider companies in the field of education are present in India, how is SMART Technologies different?

Although various companies are present in this field, it was SMART Technologies that spearheaded the "technology in classrooms" revolution, and brings in more than two decades of collaboration R&D to a broad range of integrated solutions that free people from their desks and computer screens, transforming the way the world works and learns. It was the year 1991 when SMART Technologies created the world's first interactive whiteboards and has since then brought numerous products to the market. As a matter of fact, recently SMART installed its two millionth interactive whiteboard at a school in Calgary, Canada, which is also the company's home. Additionally, SMART is the global market segment leader with over 50% of the total installed base of interactive whiteboards. We also have a comprehensive range of integrated hardware, software and services (content, resources and support) that help educators achieve improved student outcomes. Do you know our products are now used by over 30 million students in over 175 countries worldwide?

How has been your India journey?

The education sector in India has grown tremendously over the past few years. There is a paradigm shift in how education is imparted and received. Educators in India are seeking to empower students with 21st-century skills and SMART education solutions create the extraordinary learning environments to achieve this. In India, SMART holds the position of being the leading supplier of the interactive whiteboards with 25.6% category share. We have customised product offerings for the Indian market: SMART introduced a range of interactive technology solutions for Indian classrooms including interactive whiteboards, collaborative tables, etc. Then there is the adoption of ICT products—SMART interactive products and solutions are effectively being used by premium educational institutes in India such as IIT Delhi, IIT Kharagpur, IIM Ahmedabad, ISB, Delhi Public School, National Public School, International School of Bangalore and Alpine School, etc.

Tell us about your interactive whiteboard and its functioning?

Twenty-two years ago, SMART's executive chairman & co-founder, David Martin, conceptualised the SMART Board interactive whiteboard—the first and most widely installed interactive whiteboard in the world. In 1991, the first generation of the SMART Board interactive whiteboard was introduced. Since then the whiteboard line has expanded to include models integrated with projectors and other tools. SMART's focus has expanded to include a variety of supporting hardware, software and content to create complete classroom and meeting-room solutions. The SMART Board connects to a computer with a USB cable and draws the power it needs from the computer. The SMART Board driver automatically starts when the computer is turned on, and the interactive whiteboard becomes active once the driver is running. When one connects a digital projector to one's computer, the computer image can be projected onto the whiteboard. The SMART Board driver converts contact with the interactive whiteboard into mouse clicks or digital ink. This feature enables one to use his/her finger as a mouse. Therefore, simply by touching the large display, users can access or control any computer or multimedia application, and write notes in digital ink. Another smart thing about SMART Board is that the SMART Pen Tray automatically detects when a user picks up a pen or an eraser.

And what beyond the whiteboard ...

We believe in solutions. So we have education solutions, higher education solutions, business solutions. government solutions, custom solutions, etc. In, say, education solutions, we have interactive whiteboards and displays, then we have complementary hardware products and finally the software accompanying these. And these differ for different needs, especially the software. Essentially, we believe that a solution is more than technology alone.

How cost-effective are these?

In the long run, we are fairly competitive, if you consider the total solutions that we provide.

NEWS REVIEW

CAMPUS ROUNDUP

XLRI placement report—Summer Internship Placements (SIP) 2012
XLRI School of Business & Human Resources has successfully concluded its Summer Internship Placements 2012 in a record time of 4 days by executing a preference based slotted process, with 100% of its students being offered internships across geographies and sectors. As many as 77 recruiters participated with an unprecedented 365 offers made to a batch of 240 students. The average stipend for the internship period this year was ₹1,23,000, an increase of 10% over last year. The median stipend for the internship period was ₹1,00,000. Microsoft, ITC, Standard Chartered, Aditya Birla Group and Tata Motors were the largest recruiters.

Sharda University organises a workshop on medical education technology
Sharda University recently organised a workshop on medical education technology at its campus. The focus of the workshop was on improving teaching tools with the help of which teachers impart knowledge to the students. Speaking on the occasion, PK Gupta, Chancellor, Sharda University, said, "There is an urgent need of bringing about a change in the current education as well as assessment system. As far as the medical education is concerned, it requires a drastic change for the better understanding of the students."

Fifteen MBA final year students selected in campus placement drive at E-max
A campus placement drive for final year MBA students was organised by Mas Financial Services Private Ltd at the E-max Group of Institutions. The process started with a pre-placement talk by Manjeet Singh, HR Head, and his team of Mas Financial Services. This was followed by GD. Students selected in GD appeared for the final HR interview.

Finally, 15 students were selected. The director of E-max Business School, Sunil Arya, congratulated the selected students. The chairman of E-max Group, Om Prakash Aggarwal, expressed his gratitude to the company officials and wished a bright future to the students.

JIMS organises Oasis 2011, an intra-college techno management cultural fest
Jagan Institute of Management Studies (JIMS) recently organised Oasis 2011 at its campus in New Delhi. Speaking on the occasion, Dr JK Goyal, Director, JIMS, said, "We believe in the overall development of our students and keep organising events like games, extra curricular activities and fests. These events help our students to bring forth their inner talent. Events like this give a platform to the students to discover their talent and quality.

Classteacher Learning Systems organises training workshop for teachers
Classteacher Learning Systems, a pioneer in digital educational interactive solutions, recently organised a unique initiative to train teachers at a DAV School in New Delhi. Attended by PGT teachers from various schools across the capital, the workshop focused on training teachers in Autograph—a 3D powered software that helps in visualising core mathematical concepts and provides an understanding of its applications.

AT A GLANCE

Inhaler treatment for lung cancer being developed at Strathclyde
Lung cancer patients could receive safer and more efficient treatment through a system being developed by researchers at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. The scientists have devised a method for giving drugs by inhalation to patients through a nebuliser, rather than the current approach of intravenous delivery. The system could administer the treatment far more quickly than existing methods and without the harmful side effects associated with current systems, which can cause kidney damage. It could also enable health authorities to deliver the drugs in smaller doses without diminution of benefit to patients. Dr Chris Carter, a senior lecturer the Strathclyde Institute of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences, led the research, partnered by Prof Alex Mullen and Dr Valerie Ferro.

Scientists gain new insight into genetic structure of flesh-eating parasite
Scientists from the University of Glasgow have took a major step towards understanding the genetic make-up of a parasite that causes the flesh-eating disease leishmaniasis. The disease is spread by sand flies and threatens about 350 million people in 88 countries, including Brazil, Iran, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Afghanistan and China. There are 21 species of the parasite that cause a variety of forms of leishmaniasis in humans, ranging from disfiguring sores on the skin to potentially fatal infections of the liver and spleen. The parasite, which infects white blood cells, is usually treated with chemotherapy. Researchers have now been able to analyse the genome of different species that will help them understand how the disease develops and how it can be better treated.

SachINDIAN MARKETendulkar

Why should young managers focus on understanding how people relate personally to optimal organisational brand association strategy?

Subrato Banerjee

THE focus of this article is on the importance of marketing in the functioning of markets. A traditional economist will describe a market as a mechanism that determines the prices and quantities of traded commodities by equating demand and supply. Clearly, the basic inputs needed for us to figure how a market should function are information on demand and supply. For example, if the supply side has only one seller, we should expect prices and quantities (of, say, processed food) to be determined monopolistically—a tautology. Suppose now that some reliable (and reputed) scientific study reveals that the food manufactured by our monopolist doesn't meet quality standards and exposes its consumers to some ugly form of food poisoning. The monopolist will end up with an inventory of unsold food, the costs on which have already been incurred. The result: losses. Clearly, demand is the more important input to ensure the existence of any market, let alone its functioning. The current literature in economics, however, identifies that most of the time, it is not known if demand exists at the first place, let alone how much of it. This is largely because it is humanly impossible to collect data on consumer valuation for each transaction, let alone those that did not occur. A more fundamental point, according to me, is that consumers may themselves not know anything about the nature of their own valuations. If this isn't convincing, ask yourself if you would really know what item you will value more than the other in a menu of dishes offered in a particular restaurant that you've only visited for the first time.

This fundamentally brings in the question of possible creation of demand. Unlike, what was traditionally believed of the role of advertisements—that it was merely a channel of educating consumers, today it is well-known advertisements play a wider role that covers even creating and maintaining consumer demand. While demand creation itself involves consumer education, a lot has to do with brand association. First channel: reveal to your potential customers that the research that went in the development of what you want to sell had been sponsored by a reputed organisation. Second channel: provide sponsorships at well known events (IPL being a case in point, each individual team has multiple sponsorships). Third channel: get your brand endorsed by a well known celebrity who is at least venerated (if not worshipped) and more importantly known by the masses. These

channels of brand association have witnessed countless examples by now. Which example do I stick with throughout this article? Well, the choice of a good example according to me, must satisfy two criteria—perspective encompassment and the ability to relate with. Let me talk about perspective encompassment in brand association in terms of demand creation. If you recall, Action shoes with light systems—which were practically not the *in thing* when the concept had just been introduced—actually gained popularity with the ad that featured Sachin Tendulkar saying "*Action ka hai yeh light system*" back in the 1990s. I was a kid back then and was quite excited to get my first pair of such fancy shoes. To briefly speak on the ability to relate with, I was only six (in 1991) when I started taking interest in cricket—Sachin was a part of the Indian cricket team then. Today I'm 26—and Sachin still plays for India. Personally, every time I watch Sachin bat, I'm practically driven back to my childhood ... the only difference being that I no longer take exams and receive the kind of grades I did back then ... and blame Sachin's captivating performances for the same (a confession, I blamed my own performance in sixth grade exams on Sachin's performance in the 1996 World Cup ... talk about exploiting coincidence, but it is worth pointing out that the difference between mine and Sachin's performances was he had two hundreds ... I had none).

Let me now come to the more important issue of demand maintenance. It is noteworthy that fancy shoes that lit in the dark are out of fashion today ... demand did not persist because of genuine durability-related issues. As in the example in the first paragraph of this article, any negative publicity, backed by a reputed name can immediately kill demand. Demand, therefore, needs to be maintained. While it is impossible to completely eliminate the impact of any negative publicity, it is possible to mitigate the same. Here, advertisement practically acts like insurance. Brand association offers another perspective here in terms of demand maintenance. The idea is to be able to make your consumers question the reliability of the reputed source of negative publicity, stemming from association with a well known brand. The consumers' thought process is ... "*if this product is really that bad, why would a great person endorse it? ... we should wait and see if there are any further negative reviews*" or "*if a company can hire this celebrity, it obviously has the resources to set things right ... lets wait.*" You're in two minds but have not yet completely given up on the product. This is what an influential brand is capable of—creation of doubt. To provide yet another example of doubt, I've never been much of a sports person, but have tried my hands at cricket. I used to be a medium pacer. Now, suppose I bowled an over to Sachin and got smashed for 36 runs straight, I wouldn't know whether I'd really be upset. On one hand, there will be a momentary upsetting feeling that I've just been hammered, but on the other hand there is a pleasant feeling that being a Sachin fan, I've had the chance to get the best view possible of a great batsman in action, and by now I'm simply used to being happy when I see Sachin hit sixes—a habit that has lasted for two decades now. I'd let you decide if the momentary upsetting feeling or the one developed over two decades will dominate. I'll maintain, I do not know.

My only explanation to the demise of shoes with lights is that Sachin was a still a prodigy then. Today he is the master of the game, and that clearly makes him a better brand worth being associated with. I'd finally like to conclude by saying that the best way to associate yourself with a brand is to be one. Sachin clearly is and I wish him luck for his 100th hundred. I want the child within me to remain alive—I don't want to see Sachin retire any time soon.

The author is a research scholar at the Indian Statistical Institute