



'We aim to train 25,000 over the next three years'



UDAI SINGH
Chief Strategy Officer, NIIT

How is the Indian start-up ecosystem doing?

In recent years, the Indian start-up ecosystem has really taken off and come into its own. Now, India has truly become a 'start-up nation'. India is the 4th country after the US and China in terms of strength, as currently it has 3,100 start-ups with an addition of 800 more every year. Since 2010, India is a home to a new breed of young start-ups and has evolved to become the third largest base of technology start-ups in the world.

What about the problems start-ups are facing?

The revolution in the start-up space has led to massive talent crunch. According to a Manpower report, 58 per cent of Indian employers are finding it difficult to fill positions and there is a significant talent shortage in the IT and accounting space. Close to 67 per cent Indian start-ups reported difficulty in filling job vacancies versus a global average of 34 per cent. The common Indian mind set says that getting a job with a big brand improves career growth more than a start-up and job security plays a vital role in decision making. Working at larger organisations is more secure and socially valuable than working with start-ups. It is not uncommon to see people working in start-ups being pressured from home to take up better jobs with larger organisations. Moreover, employee benefits

A recent survey by Aspiring Minds on employability of engineers, suggested that less than 4 per cent of engineers, who graduated in 2015 have the skills to be employed in a technology start-up.

UDAI SINGH, Chief Strategy Officer, NIIT shared with Vijay C Roy and Karan Choudhury that under the initiative StackRoute, NIIT aims to train 25,000 people over the next three years in cutting-edge programming skills to address technical manpower shortage in Start-ups. Edited Excerpts:



industry stakeholder. Under this initiative NIIT aims to train 25,000 people over the next three years in cutting-edge programming skills. Plans are afoot to launch new R&D centre for StackRoute and to introduce new age programmes.

How many people have been trained till now?

We are targeting to train 2500-3000 students by the end of this year. The first batch of StackRoute commenced in October last year for Wipro. The company aims to add eight more clients in the next three years which includes top IT companies. Technology companies including Redmart, Trellisys, Rorko, NIIT Technologies, EntLogics & Posist has also shown keen interest in StackRoute.

are also minimal in start-ups when compared to big corporations. Hence, getting the right talent becomes challenging. Some other issues faced by start-ups are Location, Marketing Strategy, Legal Constraints and Funding.

How is NIIT addressing these issues?

The kind of software engineers needed by the start-up sector, are significantly different from what large IT services firms needed in the past for their huge software factories. Engineers need to be versatile and have full stack programming skills. Hence to create full stack programmers who can work on multiple technology domains, NIIT launched StackRoute in August last year. The product has been developed in intense consultation with the industry, start-ups, product engineering companies and incubators, and is strongly endorsed by all the key

Any plans of tie-ups for this training?

We gradually plan to train individuals as well, but right now, we providing training to corporates.

What are your revenue projections?

In August, NIIT had launched StackRoute, which enables working professionals to develop the skills needed for implementation of digital technologies. We expect to get 5-10 per cent of its revenues from the newly-launched re-skilling programme StackRoute in two-three years.

Business Standard, New Delhi, March 27, 2016

US sharpening its cyberwarfare tools

The control of cyberspace is likely to assume a new aspect, with the CEO of Google heading the US Defense Innovation Fund

KAMLESH BAJAJ

Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in September, 2010, William Lynn, US Deputy Secretary of Defense outlined "The Pentagon's cyberstrategy" for US national security. He focused on leveraging the US technological resources "to create superior military capabilities in cyberspace."

Public-private initiative

While it was important for the US to train cybersecurity professionals, Lynn was quick to recognise that given the highly educated workforce in China and India, and larger numbers, the US government, "must confront the cyberdefense challenge as it confronts other military challenges: with a focus not on numbers but on superior technology and productivity." Lynn said "investments in science, technology, and education at all levels" were critical to "the US commercial information technology sector remaining the world's leader."

Lynn also observed that the government's procedures for acquiring information technology mean deployment of systems that are four generations behind the state of the art. He advocated radical changes in procurement of IT, to take them closer to those in the private sector, namely, speed, incremental development and testing, and deferring of some customisation, and creating different levels of oversight for different items.

Lynn stated that the cybersecurity challenge represents the beginning of a new technological age; even though it does not pose existential threat like the nuclear, it is capable of immobilising the society. He also emphasised the need for involving the private sector more deeply with the government's efforts in its goal of making "cyberspace safe so that its revolutionary

innovations can enhance both the United States' national security and its economic security."

Ash Carter, the Defense Secretary did precisely that when he announced the setting up of the Defense Innovation Advisory Board on March 2, 2016 in the Silicon Valley. The first Defense secretary to have visited the Silicon Valley in 20 years, he has already made three trips in a year. While the DoD is known to have taken several steps in line with Lynn's vision of reducing cycle time in defense technology development through the private sector, and its procurement procedures, this is a step in tracking innovations taking place in the private sector.

It will directly advise Carter on technology. The Pentagon release says that the Defense Innovation Advisory Board will "provide advice on the best and latest practices in innovation that the department can emulate." The idea is for DoD to understand what the commercial world is thinking, what technology innovations are being planned, what disruptive ideas are being thought of by those outside of its existing advisory boards.

The innovation board will not give any strategic advice to the secretary, nor will it discuss military strategy. Its focus is only on innovation. Carter said "we do have other boards that serve other functions. We don't have one dedicated to innovation. And since innovation is critical to department's future this is a gap that needed to be filled. Here we're looking for brightest minds focused on innovation."

Google's involvement

It is interesting that Google's former CEO, Eric Schmidt has been chosen to head the board. He clearly brings the best industry linkages, with his vision that governments, and militaries need to master the cyberspace for not only growing



Beyond binaries War by other means PROFIT, IMAGE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

their economies, but also for listening to voices of citizens including those of dissidents; handling (controlling?) movements and revolutions, social media, print media, news; managing freedom of expression; civil society and NGOs.

In short, all that constitutes soft power has to be managed to avoid creation of negative stories against the US government, in domestic and international stories. This helps in controlling the narrative of present and emerging conflicts, which in today's world is perhaps more important than the real war. No wonder, Schmidt said that the new board will look for ways of using new technologies to solve new and emerging problems; it will help bridge the gap between how the US military and industry operate.

Reuters' report of March 2, 2016 adds "Carter and Schmidt will choose up to 12 individuals to serve on the board, focusing on people

who have led large public and private organisations, and excelled at identifying and adopting new technology concepts." According to the report, Carter said that "If we don't innovate and be competitive, we're not going to be the military that the country needs and deserves."

Media warfare

The formation of this board underscores the US government's resolve to dominate the cyberspace. It firmly believes that the wars of the future, even if not cyberwars, will be cyber-enabled. The outcome of the kinetic wars will be determined by activities in cyberspace—critical infrastructure attacks, revolutions and conflicts launched through social media, crimes and terrorism mediated through cyber space to engage adversaries in low intensity conflicts similar to guerrilla wars, false news in social media to divide communities in countries leading to civil unrest or war, psychological

operations that are tech-enabled.

Remember the first Iraq war, where CNN journalists were embedded in the forward military units to report on the war; it led to the dissemination of real-time information in favour of the US government, the rise of cable TV that changed reporting of global events, especially military stories. This supplanted the direct emails sent to Iraqi soldiers that demoralised them. World opinion was controlled by the US government in partnership with CNN.

Clearly, innovations in cyberspace in the commercial world have to be understood so that their impact on society, military, and economy may be anticipated. Today's military has to control all the theatres of war—land, sea, air, outer space, and cyberspace. It has to control cyber, and all channels of information dissemination for communicating to people of countries directly.

The military must have direct links with media and psy-op channels, and any future innovative technologies that the commercial world will be exploiting. The import of this cyber push will become clear if we look at India, which has failed to set up the much needed cyber command. The technology is there, it's the bureaucratic and procedural mess that we can't sort out. We're stuck with more problems than those identified by Lynn in 2010.

Cyber-enabled war requires Indian political and bureaucratic set up to have a cyber mind set, as demonstrated by Carter, not the feudal-colonial age our governance of the military-industrial complex is stuck in.

The writer is Mentor Professor, NIIT University. He was the founder CEO, Data Security Council of India and founder Director, CERT-In. The views are personal

Hindu Business Line, New Delhi, March 14, 2016

LEADERS' CORNER

NOSHIN KAGALWALLA, Managing Director, SAS Institute (India) Pvt. Ltd.



Dynamic economic conditions, disruptive technologies and the wave of complex regulations have compelled the finance function to evolve from an operational management role into a strategic one. Empowered with the right analytical tools, CFOs can now support the business in identifying opportunities for growth, aligning metrics with strategy and operations and driving business critical decisions.

MADHUSUDHAN JAIN, Co-Founder & CEO, iVirtualCFO.com



Technology continues its march to the core of businesses and with IOT getting traction it will generate humungous amounts of data, which will require new investments in equipment and (big data) analysis. CFO's will have to help businesses make sense of the data while ensuring the highest levels of protection to their most valued asset - information and insights, and balance their investments.

RAMESH IYER, Managing Director, Concur Technologies



Smarter CFOs, in a sense, should be CIOs within themselves to give their organization an enduring competitive edge. Conventional balance sheets alone do not reflect an organization's ability to survive and grow in mid to long term. In few years from now, Millennial workforce will change the way we approach systems & processes. Embracing Digital Competence with technology, innovation & end to end integrated systems with mobility and ease of use is the way forward to future proof survival.

SUNIL KAMATH, Head - SAP Ariba, Indian Sub-Continent



The power of 'business networks' around the world is changing the very nature of business and commerce. SAP ARIBA is committed to making life easier for buyers to connect with suppliers, and to conduct transactions with as little friction as possible. SAP ARIBA is the world's largest marketplace for business-to-business transactions-connecting more than two million companies and a trillion dollars in commerce each year.

ROHIT GUPTA, CFO, NIIT Ltd



The economic environment and challenges of the current scenario will develop business value, minimise business risk and thereby strengthen financial performance. We at NIIT are developing smarter tools and methodologies to enable incisive financial analysis and management for faster and better decision making. In addition a prudent financial management will help compete effectively in a challenging environment, mitigate risks and enhance profit.

The ever-evolving role of the CFO

The Economic Times CFO Summit brought eminent experts together as it sought to understand the evolving role of the financial wizards of the corporate world

The last two decades have witnessed significant transformation in the role of the corporate CFO. The role has evolved from being that of merely a numbers guru to a big-picture thinker, involved in the functioning of practically every facet of the company. This transformation has been accelerated considerably by the financial crisis, which sent companies large and small scrambling to raise cash, cut costs and tap emerging markets, thus creating a new breed of modern CFOs who are required to have a dynamic background far beyond finance.



Besides the routine chores of collection, payment and reporting, the CFOs now needed to embrace a host of new and challenging responsibilities to guide the company through difficult times and transform daunting realities into rewarding opportunities.

Their task has evolved from more than just one of managing the numbers to actually becoming one of managing expectations of shareholders, banks and other senior management. Thus, beyond mere financial decision making, the CFOs now need to act as trusted advisors to the business and participate actively



> From left to right: Ravindra Sharma (VP, Asia Pacific & Japan, SAP Ariba), Rohit Gupta (CFO, NIIT), Moderator; Pankaj Chadha (Partner in an Indian member firm of EY Global), Bipin Kumar Tibrewal (Group CFO, Airbus India), S. Subramaniam (CFO Titan Industries) and Madhukar Narayan Hiregange, Chairman, Indirect Taxes Committee & Committee for Cooperatives & NPO Sectors, ICAI)

in broadening the organizations' corporate vision.

Are the CFOs of today ready to face the profound changes shaping the world today, carry the insights into what tomorrow holds and respond to changing envi-

ronments with better, more strategic decisions?

These are some of the several important aspects The Economic Times CFO Summit 2016 sought to answer through discussions, presentations and case studies

from the game changers themselves. This Conference offered the perspective of CFOs on the financial environment in which they work. These sessions threw light on the CFOs' evolving role in a changing corporate world.

Harnessing the power of Analytics

Making the most of analytics is a must since it can empower CFO's to drive business growth

The CFO's role is broader today than it has ever been. Aligning the CFO with an organization's broader strategic imperatives is the need of the hour, and thus the CFO must own analytics and put them to work to serve the organization's needs.

CFO's are in a unique position to be a

ET Edge Speak

DEEPAK LAMBA, PRESIDENT, TIMES CONFERENCES LIMITED

>>>Today's CFOs not only seeks out profitable growth for the company, but also helps shape the strategic vision as well. The Economic Times CFO Summit brought together leading practitioners from across the industry as they discussed the latest updates, innovations and cutting edge trends that will shape the way CFO's go about their business.

steward of value and an impartial guardian of truth across organizations, and in order to reduce any resistance to change, the CFO must be able to turn to analytics to produce insights that effectively debunk currently accepted corporate wisdom.

Given that many CFOs and their finance teams strategically leverage data-driven analytics, it makes compelling business sense to allow the finance chief to take complete ownership of data. By harnessing the power of analytics across operational decisions as well, CFOs can strengthen ties throughout the business and expand influence outside core finance functions.

Analytics can help provide invaluable insights and highlight opportunities for growth, innovation, and competitive advantage for an organization. Thus, CFO's must take ownership of it to make the most of it.

The role of a CFO in modern-day start-ups

Navigating a budding enterprise through uncharted waters presents the modern-day CFO with a unique challenge

India is seeing a slew of startups in today's day and age, and even as venture capitalists begin to bet big on these companies, the role of the CFO has grown ever more dynamic in these modern-day organizations. No longer a role for those solely concerned with balance sheets and cost analysis, it's now a multidisciplinary position that demands a diverse set of skills.

Start-up companies demand generalists who can juggle myriad tasks as opposed to specialists, which means the CFO must be ready to wear many hats. However, with most start-ups operating in a sphere that is supremely competitive, risk mitigation is often the focus, and this is where a CFO can come up trumps. By continually analyzing and being vigilant about whether financial norms are upheld, the CFO can play a critical role in steering the ship by adopt-

ing fiscal prudence.

Forecasting, planning and analysis are also key at the nascent stage of a company's evolution, and thus keeping an eye on Key Performance Indicator's. Thus, the wide spread of pressure points to monitor means that the CFO is challenging on multiple fronts, making this a critical role in the formative phase of an organization. The CFO fulfilling his role can mean the company will be able to make the right move at the right time or not being able to do so at the right time.

The CFO has to be able to fight their own corner, with it meaning that they sometimes also have to manage upwards by getting the best out of the CEO. Very often, a CFO will get push-back when he tries to change the set ways of a business, but sometimes it's a question of pushing much-needed changes through, all for the greater good.

NIIT

SMALL-PRICED SCRIPT

Rewriting education model

SNAPSHOT

BSE ticker code	: 500304
NSE ticker code	: NIITLTD
Major activity	: Computer Education
Chairman	: Rajendra S Pawar
Equity capital	: Rs 33.09 crore; FV Rs 2
52 week high/low	: Rs 107 / Rs 35
CMP	: Rs 73
Market Capitalisation	: Rs 1207.79 crore
Recommendation	: Buy

NIIT is engaged in the business of providing training with a whole gamut of content, delivery and educational platforms for corporate sector, individuals and schools. The stock is a safe investment with good chances of appreciation. **Just consider:**

- The company has three main business segments, corporate learning group (CLG), skills and careers group (SCG) and school learning group (SLG). A leading corporate training company, NIIT offers managed training services (MTS) to leading organisations mainly in North America and Europe. The company's SCG business delivers a diverse range of learning and talent development programmes in BFSI, soft skills, business analytics, retail sales enablement, management education, vocational skills, digital media marketing and new-age IT. The SLG segment provides technology-based learning to over 15,000 government and private schools in India, Bhutan, South Africa and the Middle East. Prospects for all these three businesses are quite promising.

- Global spending on corporate

training currently amounts to \$ 135 billion of which US spending is around \$ 85 billion. Over the past few years, the corporate training budget in USA has grown at a healthy pace spurred by an economic recovery.

- CLG, which accounts for 60 per cent of revenues for December 15 quarter, grew by 17 per cent y-o-y and operating margin remained steady at 12 per cent. The company added one new MTS (managed training service) customer, taking the total number to 27, and the revenue visibility stands at \$ 195 million with order intake of US \$ 27 million in Dec'15 quarter. While CLG has been doing well for NIIT, it was facing some challenges in its SCG and SLG businesses. In the SCG segment, the company's capacities have been underutilised while in the SLG business, it has seen its receivable days rise sharply. However, the new management at the company has undertaken an extensive restructuring for both SCG and SLG units, with reduced; seat capacity of 33 per cent and headcount by 24 per cent while the product portfolio has been pruned from 190 to 67.

For the 9-months ended Dec'15, at a consolidated level, the company reported a net sales growth of five per cent to Rs 768 crore and net profit grew 291 per cent to Rs 49.60. For FY16, we expect the company to register a consolidated EPS of Rs 4.1 and Rs 5.5 for FY17. At the current market price of Rs 73, the share trades at 13.3 times estimated FY17 earnings.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS				(Rs. in Crore)		
Year	Net Sales	Net profit	EPS (Rs)	Div (%)	BV (Rs)	RONW (%)
2013-14	951.00	17.77	1.1	80.00	25.41	-2.20
2014-15	957.38	-138.53	-ve	00.00	49.14	-5.49
2015-16 (E)	1021.84	68.11	4.1	75.00	51.74	-2.1
2016-17 (E)	1142.94	90.22	5.5	75.00	55.74	1.4

Corporate India, National, March 15, 2016

Windows 2016 PAT



The NIIT Imperia — Centre for Advanced Learning, in collaboration with Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, invites applications for its seventh batch of Advanced Programme for Marketing Professionals (APMP) and Advanced Program in Human Resource Management (APHRM). The selection to these one-year programmes will be based on the candidate's profile, statement of purpose, performance in Programme Aptitude Test (PAT).

The APMP course is designed for the Marketing and Sales professionals that provide knowledge on strategic and tactical issues in sales and marketing. Senior and middle-level managers in other functional areas, who would like to develop advance proficiency in marketing, strategy and implementation, can opt for this course. The APHRM course has been designed for professionals who would like to strengthen their career in Human Resource department and develop skills in order to manage their strategic issues.

ELIGIBILITY

Applicants should be a graduates or PGs from a recognised university with 50 per cent marks (aggregate) and at least five years of experience as on March 1, 2016.

EXAM PATTERN

There will be four sections in the exam — verbal ability and communication skills, numerical ability, logical reasoning and creative problem solving and supporting personality traits.

IMPORTANT DATES

The last date to apply is before March 31, 2016. The classes will commence from May. Application forms can be obtained from www.niitimperia.com or at NIIT Imperia centres.

Pioneer, New Delhi, March 23, 2016

Can technology reshape the future of education?

The cloud is emerging as a new delivery model and a platform of choice for a number of educational institutions



UDA SINGH

This is the age of technology disruption, where digital is the way to go. The world, as we have known, has transformed in just under a decade, growing and evolving on the wings of revolutionary digital innovations that are now visible everywhere.

The extreme connectedness, ease-of-technology access and availability of all we need and want at the press of a few keys have made new technology—including mobility, cloud, analytics and social—a 'must have' in virtually every area of life. From healthcare to governance to manufacturing to education, there is no domain that is not being powered by technology. Education is one area where new technology will have the greatest transformational impact.

For a country such as India that is facing gargantuan problems in the educational sphere, technology can certainly serve as a panacea.

India's schools and higher education system are under great pressure. Lack of infrastructure, poor quality of teaching, teacher absenteeism, high dropout rates of students and a host of other challenges have prevented the country from achieving its goal of 100% literacy.

Technology can reverse this situation and play an important role in making education a key pillar of national development. Education can serve as the tool that will help India convert its currently uneducated youth into employable, job-ready resources that can help the country leverage its much talked about demographic dividend.

India, which will have 47 million people in the working age group by 2025, will only be able to put this high potential manpower to use if the country can educate and train it in the right manner.

Here's where technology can step in. Our education system, especially private sector institutions, has already embraced state-of-the-art methodologies to deliver premier education that conforms to highest global standards. In such schools, whiteboards have replaced blackboards, and tablet computers, projectors, digital cameras and online games have made an appearance.

This trend, of course, has to become widespread. In 2016, therefore, we can expect to see a significant churn in the



education vertical—a change that is led by technology innovation.

We are sure to see technology, especially e-learning, making a real difference to the school education system sooner rather than later. This will allow high quality education material to reach remote locations, thereby enabling teachers to expand their reach. As a result, the overall efficiency of the education system is expected to improve. With the introduction of technology in the classroom, students are likely to take more interest in the curriculum and unleash their creativity. Technology will also bring the fun back into learning. The new academic year will certainly be a showcase of many out-of-the-box ideas that deliver 'student delight'.

We also expect to see greater deployment of the cloud to deliver learning flexibly and conveniently to users. As it has become more secure, the cloud has emerged as a new delivery model and a platform of choice for institutions including colleges, schools and universities. These citadels of learning are expanding their footprint across India (some even across the world), and reaching the unreached without making heavy financial investments. They are leveraging the infrastructure provided by service providers to host their programmes and make available online courses 'off-the-cloud'.

Others, meanwhile, are setting up their own campuses in the cloud, as a

Research has shown that social media platforms, when integrated with student programmes, can boost student participation and reduce dropout rates. Also, collaborative learning will soon go mainstream. It will be fuelled by portals such as Moodle, which enables students to share notes and course content, upload assignments, and chat with peers and teachers

pathway to higher growth. Over the course of the year, we are likely to see more cloud campuses appearing on the landscape and high-quality education being accessed by a large number of learners, on a 'pay-per-use' basis.

Another trend that is expected to gain momentum is the delivery of video over the cloud—a model that several countries in Africa are successfully deploying to train teachers and make faculty world-class cost-effectively.

With mobility proliferating in India, another platform for providing learning, going forward, will be the smart-

phone/tablet. Educational institutions will be looking to link their teachers and learners over the mobile platform and use it to offer content, tools, data and services.

Finally, social media will be the other big game-changer in the emerging educational landscape. Increasingly, educational institutions are using their social media sites to communicate with their learners, connect them to faculty, create discussion and feedback platforms, share content, and scale their learning experience. Recent research has shown that social media platforms, when integrated with student programmes, can boost student participation and reduce dropout rates (source: BBC Active).

Further, we can expect collaborative learning to go mainstream. This trend, fuelled by portals such as Moodle—which enables students to share notes and course content, upload assignments, and chat with peers and teachers—will become more visible.

We can also expect to see more and more educational institutions integrate with and leverage social media apps such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to offer content to learners.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that technology will be the tool that will draw India's educational system into the 21st century, making it a powerful driver of the country's economy.

The author is chief strategy officer, NIIT Ltd

Financial Express, New Delhi, March 28, 2016



KAMLESH BAJAJ

APPLE VS NATIONAL SECURITY

There is an opportunity for a global treaty to balance security concerns and privacy

FOLLOWING THE FBI demand that Apple build backdoors to enable it to open iPhones and access encrypted data of users, CEO Tim Cook's message to Apple's customers around the world, on February 16, 2016, argues that such backdoors can fall in the hands of the very criminals that the government is trying to protect people from, even as it is prone to being misused by the government itself.

This is not new. Similar comments have been made since the Edward Snowden incident—which brought to light that the US National Security Agency (NSA) had worked with vendors to weaken encryption, and that it could break encryption.

Then came the iPhone with stronger encryption. Even Apple can't access the "keys" to unlock an encrypted phone—only the user controls them. The San Bernardino case, in which 14 innocent people were killed by an Islamic terrorist couple, has validated the Apple claim because the encrypted data on their iPhones could not be accessed by the FBI. Apple could not help either. Hence, the demand for building an operating system that allows backdoors to circumvent security, under an archaic law, is a dangerous precedent according to Cook. "Rather than asking for legislative action through Congress, the FBI is proposing an unprecedented use of the All Writs Act of 1789 to justify an expansion of its authority."

This has reignited the debate on data privacy versus national security, which had moved away from the mainstream media after occupying centre stage for over a year imm-

Governments in the West have enacted laws regulating surveillance—delicately balancing the concerns of security and privacy. For example, the USA Patriot Act. In these democratic countries, civil society and media can force some transparency. But what about a country like China that recently passed an anti-terrorism law in December 2015? The law requires technology companies to assist the authorities with encryption keys, but without any judicial review.

Immediately after Snowden's revelations surfaced in May 2013, trust in American companies, the innovators of almost all the technology—hardware devices, applications; platforms for commerce, social media, search, among others—fell to an all-time low, because of spying by the NSA through suspected backdoors in hardware and software platforms.

With the major technology companies' revenues heading south in most geographies, after the Snowden incident, industry leaders gave strong signals against the surveillance programme to the US government. All major technology companies announced plans for the development of strong encryption. There was a strong business imperative for this approach to regain the trust of global customers. But then the terrorist attacks on Paris and San Bernardino happened, and national security regained centre stage.

In a paper, titled "Keys under doormats", in July 2015, some of the foremost cryptographers of the world warned the governments that cyberspace will become insecure for banking, e-commerce, and other transactions, if vendors agreed to build backdoors.

Governments in the Western world have enacted laws regulating surveillance—delicately balancing the concerns of security and privacy. For example, the USA Patriot Act and the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act in the UK. In these democratic countries, civil society and media can force some transparency in governance. But what about a country like China that recently passed an

anti-terrorism law in December 2015? The law requires technology companies to assist the authorities with encryption keys, but without any judicial review. When criticised, China accuses the US of double standards on counter-terrorism.

Interestingly, Bill Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft, has said that the FBI is justified in asking Apple to unlock the phone, and that technology companies should be forced to cooperate with LEAs in terrorism investigations.

Social media companies, such as Google, Facebook, and Twitter, which monetise personal data in return for providing free services, have a different take on this, since users don't want to share their data with LEAs.

But the world needs cooperation of all service providers—irrespective of their business models—to share the desired data with LEAs for national security. Does it have to be backdoors, or an agreement under which any government can ask for data from any technology vendor? Such an agreement can be discussed at the United Nations. Nations can enact laws on the pattern of a model law that may be created by the UN. This can lead to a treaty that limits surveillance, but enables LEAs to access data, without compromising encryption, without violating the privacy of global citizens.

The writer, founder CEO, Data Security Council of India, is mentor professor, NIIT University

Indian Express, New Delhi, March 07, 2016

Grand gesture only for the Grandmaster

Aamir Khan decides to break a self-imposed rule for chess wizard Vishwanathan Anand

STORY OF THE DAY

SHAHEEN PARKAR
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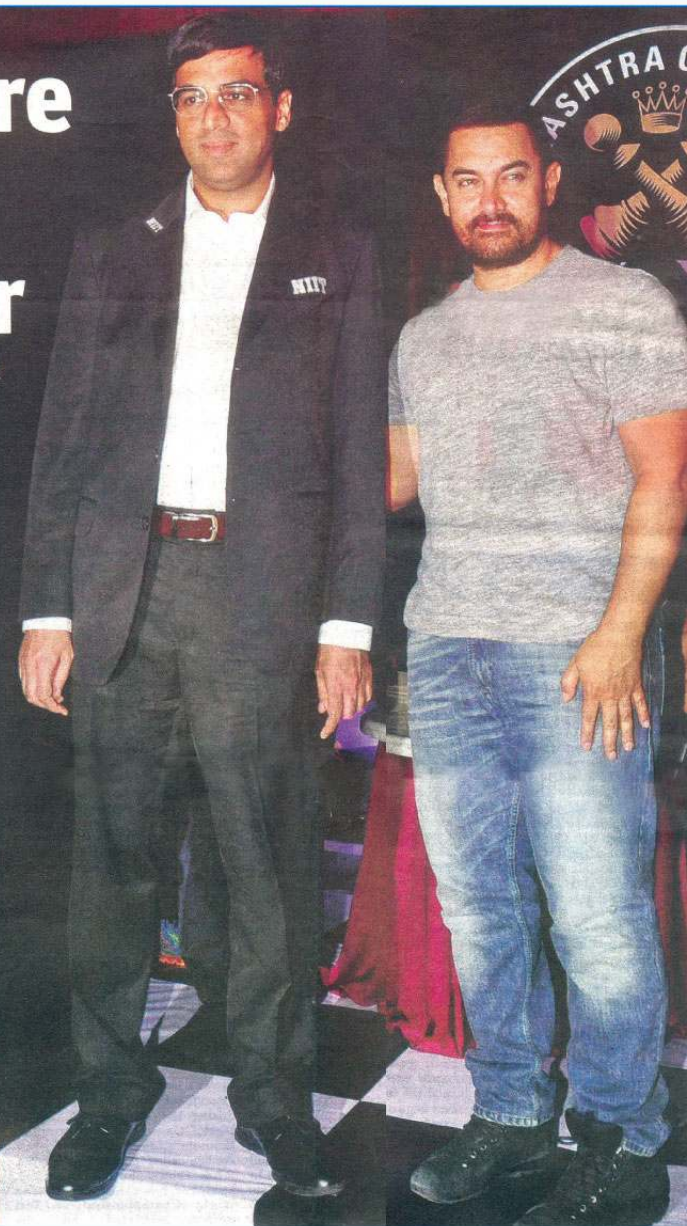
AAMIR Khan's aversion towards award ceremonies is well known, although he had made an exception for the prestigious Oscars in 2001 when his film Lagaan was contending for the Best Foreign Film honour. We have also seen the star at award galas for charitable purposes. And who can forget an annual journalist awards ceremony in New Delhi last year where Aamir stirred up a hornet's nest with his remarks on intolerance?

Now we hear the star has decided to put his reservations aside for someone he greatly admires. The star has agreed to be present at an upcoming event in Mumbai where chess grandmaster Vishwanathan Anand will be honoured.

Says a source, "Aamir was approached by the organisers keeping in mind his interest in the game. There was also another big reason. Vishy Anand is someone he has great regards for and whose achievements he finds mindboggling."

The star, who is currently in the US, is scheduled to return to the city this weekend. Aamir's spokesperson confirms that he has given his nod to the organisers.

The star considers himself not only a lover of the sport, but feels he can make his mark on the chessboard as well. Last year in May, Mr. Perfectionist had played a game with the chess champ. When he realised that a terrible loss was upon him, he quickly surrendered. The match barely lasted for 30 minutes. During the event, Anand had stated that Aamir understood the game of 64 squares well and had come prepared for his moves.



Aamir Khan (right) with Vishwanathan Anand

Mid Day, Mumbai, March 10, 2016

No FB yet, but campus startups thrive in India

OUT OF THE BOOK Students at engineering colleges are setting up companies, taking time off from academics, and hiring their seniors. But this does not yet give them an edge over the other students



Sruthi Lal
sruthi.lal@indiatimes.com

Siddhant Jain and Vaibhav Sinha passed out of IIT Delhi last year not just as graduates in chemical engineering but also as the CEO and CTO of an information technology company. They had set up the company, VdoCipher Media Solutions, a year earlier, during their final year, to tackle piracy on video websites.

"We started it as a hobby," says Sinha. "It was interesting to work on, so we didn't feel any pressure on academics."

Their company is part of a rising trend of firms being set up on campuses by students. Many engineering and management students have been turning entrepreneur on passing out, or soon after.

This takes India's startup eco-system a step closer to that of the US, where companies like Facebook were born in a Harvard dorm. Though that degree of startling success has not visited India's colleges yet, campus startups have begun to find angel funding and paying customers.

ANGELS AND CUSTOMERS
VdoCipher wouldn't disclose the amount it raised from angels, but proudly declares that it has 40 clients. However, all those may be overshadowed by the one customer of Detect Technologies, a company formed at the IIT Madras campus that has developed a system to detect fault in oil pipes. Its co-founder Daniel Raj David, a fourth year engineering student, says he does not care much how he does in his exams. He actually doesn't; he thinks

DANIEL (R) & HARI KRISHNAN
IIT Madras
Company: Detect Technologies
Business: Fault detection systems for power plants, oil pipelines

he is building the next General Electric. What gives wings to David's dreams is that his company has just found the first big customer for its system: Reliance Industries. The Goliath of corporate India has completed two trials on it and wants to buy it. Detect is also conducting field tests for a drone and a robot which could find faults in thermal power plants.

The core team of Detect includes Hari Krishnan, a fourth year dual degree student, Karthik R, a final year student, and Krishnan Balasubramanian, a member



RAHUL KR (C) AND TEAM
IIT Madras
Company: Clozerr
Business: An app that rewards customer loyalty by detecting their activity using sensors

of the faculty. The CEO is Tarun Kumar Mishra, who has graduated. On the same IIT Madras campus, KR Rahul, now in the fourth year, noticed that he did not get any loyalty rewards for visiting his favourite restaurants in Chennai. So he started Clozerr, a company that uses sensors — usually installed in restaurants

to interact with smartphones of customers. The sensors, called beacons, connect with smartphones of customers who have the Clozerr app installed, detects

their presence when they enter the shop, and gives them loyalty offers. Rahul took a semester off to work on Clozerr and now runs it as the CEO. The company has a 20-member team.

Campus startups are not confined to the IITs. Czar Securities, which offers security services for websites, was founded by students of the NIT University near Jaipur. Its clients include Microsoft, Yahoo, and Blackberry. "We had the luxury of making mistakes as we were still in college," says Shikhi Sharma, the CEO and co-founder.

SIDDHANT JAIN & VAIBHAV SINHA
IIT Delhi
Company: VdoCipher
Business: Offers encryption services for online video-streaming websites



NO EDGE IN ACADEMICS
Rajendra K Pandey, president at the NIT University says there are 11 startups active on the campus. "In the last semester the students have to work in the industry. We now let students work in their own companies."

Tamaswati Ghosh, CEO of the IIT Madras incubation cell, says she definitely sees an "increasing healthy trend" of students starting their own ventures. But, the Confederation of Indian Industry is not enthused. "R&D commercialisation is very poor in our higher education institutions. That is because the majority of them do not have the right kind of experts to guide them," says Shalini Sharma, head, higher education, CII.

CAMPUS STARTUPS IN THE UNITED STATES

Mark Zuckerberg started Facebook in 2004 in Harvard University, where he studied psychology

Larry Page and Sergey Brin, PhD students at Stanford University, founded Google in 1998

Jerry Yang and David Filo founded Yahoo in 1994 while studying for a doctoral degree at Stanford

Jack Dorsey conceived the idea of Twitter in 1999 while he was a student at the New York University

Steve Huffman and Alexis Ohanian founded Reddit in 2005 at University of Virginia. They were roommates

Michael Dell founded Dell during his undergraduate years in 1984 at the University of Texas

INDIA'S STARTUP SCENARIO

72%
of startup founders in India are less than 35, making it the youngest startup nation

91%
of Indian startup founders are male

4,200
is the number of active startups in India, the third highest in the world

47,000
is the number of active startups in the US. The UK comes second with 5,000

40%
growth rate per year in the no. of startups in India — fastest in the world

125%
is the growth in private equity, venture capital, and angel investments in 2015 against 2014

SOURCE: NASSCOM

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Hindustan Times, Mumbai, February 01, 2016



OUTSTANDING UNIVERSITIES
DOCTORAL STUDIES

IT'S A QUESTION OF QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

From lack of funding and a conducive atmosphere to industry indifference, India's research output is lack lustre. Academicians and scholars discuss the scenario...

by Shiphony Pavithran Suri

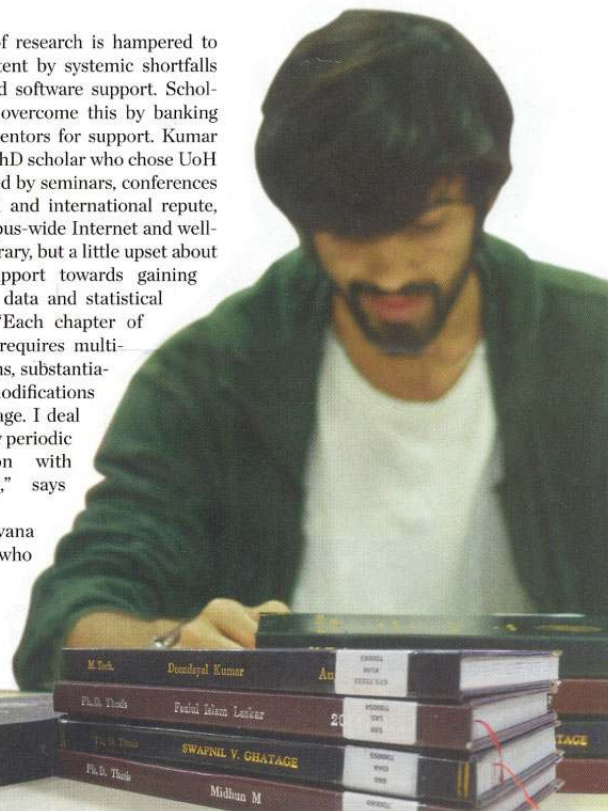
PhD has become a non-negotiable minimum requirement for teaching in colleges and universities, the Delhi High Court ruled in its judgement on a notification by the UGC. This has literally opened the floodgates for PhD admissions. Some universities were recently exposed when they began to offer 1000s of PhDs within a year. So what ails India's research system?

Quality factor

The rise in the number of PhDs is indeed a good sign, but what about the quality of work? Prof. M Periasamy, In-charge VC, University of Hyderabad (UoH) argues, "Many students join PhD not with any primary intention of pursuing a research career but because of not getting a suitable employment opportunity after their Master's. At present there is a rise in quality research, but not on expected lines to compete at the global level."

Quality of research is hampered to a large extent by systemic shortfalls in data and software support. Scholars try to overcome this by banking on their mentors for support. Kumar Ashish, a PhD scholar who chose UoH is impressed by seminars, conferences of national and international repute, 24X7 campus-wide Internet and well-stocked library, but a little upset about limited support towards gaining some rare data and statistical software. "Each chapter of my thesis requires multiple revisions, substantiation and modifications at every stage. I deal with this by periodic consultation with my guide," says Ashish.

Dr Rizvana Nulwala, who



COLUMN



DR SHRIHARI HONWAD,
Vice Chancellor, University of
Petroleum and Energy Studies

WHY PhD IN A FEW POCKETS?

I feel the culture in India is more towards obtaining the PhD than for solving a problem or pushing the boundaries of knowledge. If problem solving or movement towards a better solution do happen they are likely to be incidental than out of creative or innovative contributions. Luckily for us there are great many exceptions and while comparisons with the rest of the world are pathetic, I am really appreciative of the hard work put in by our researchers under the extreme circumstances. We are obviously not progressing in a healthy direction.

Research needs a larger heart and nationally we have been very miserly and discriminatory when it comes to research spending. The society has to spend on research either through the tax payment route, or the premium fees route or as it happens in most cases through purchase of exorbitantly costly technology route. Whenever there has been a political will for research spending indigenous talent has come through tops. Let us spend more for research without discrimination on the basis of either, the institution or researchers' pedigree. Let the criteria be the idea, the most important ingredient for research. Financials can be handled by competent team. Let researcher enjoy their quest. Utopian idea perhaps but need to think out of the box.



PROF. M PERIASAMY
In-charge Vice-Chancellor
University of Hyderabad

Many students join PhD not with any primary intention of pursuing a research career but because of not getting a suitable employment opportunity after their masters. At present there is a rise in quality research but not on expected lines to compete at the global level

was recently awarded PhD in the area of clinical social work at TISS, Mumbai shares similar views. "My mentor enhanced the freedom to develop the research gaze, fostering intellectual growth. I developed the ability to critically analyze issues," she said.

What is a PhD?

Doing a PhD is about creating new knowledge. It involves generally three to four years of work of which first one or two is devoted to extensive course work followed by a comprehensive exam or viva. The next two years are devoted to research, where a candidate applies a theory to a set of data to test or verify or enhance the same or creates new frameworks or theories. Some universities have an MPhil as a pre-requisite for PhD and some others permit students with a Master's degree. Many universities offer a fellowship to the scholars and some even allocate teaching duties to

them. But still research is not a very popular proposition.

PhD - Not that popular a choice

In India lack of awareness of research and poor compensation structures have dissuaded brilliant students from choosing it as career options. Dr Rajendra Pandey, President, NIIT University says, "The cumulative effect over the past several decades has led to serious shortage of qualified faculty pool. By the time a fresh postgraduate completes his doctoral degree the average age is about 28-29 years. We must provide an assured career path along with an appropriate compensation."

Dr Nulwala is anguished that even family members and friends don't seem much convinced of not seeking a job after doing a Master's. "Financial needs come in the way," says Ashish. "We need to be self-dependent financially and need to support family. The scholarship we get is much lower compared to foreign counterparts. There is also regular delay in disbursement of scholarship amount," he says, stressing the fact that a good research requires considerable funding without having to worry about return on investment.

It is the recent UGC notification that made PhD a mandatory qualification for teaching, resulting in a mad rush for PhD registrations. Academicians say this could erode quality. "The insistence on a doctoral degree for a teaching position without a quality control mechanism has also been responsible for the deterioration in the quality of our doctoral degrees," says Dr Pandey, adding, "absence of a research culture has made the problem more complex."

Research is not a priority

Many of the state and Central Universities do not have long-term plans for promoting research. Passionate individuals, rather than institutional policy drive most of the research activities. Today most of the public and private institutions in higher education lack infrastructural facilities. The governmental as well as industry support for R&D has been meagre, leading to



OUTSTANDING UNIVERSITIES

DOCTORAL STUDIES

resource crunch. "These factors have prevented us from producing translational research output leading to products and patents," Dr Pandey said.

Research in just a few pockets

The emphasis on research has grown at UoH so much that, in 1977-78 there were just 16 students enrolled for PhD, which rose to 473 in 1990-91 and is at 1939 as on date. In the last two years alone the university had research projects worth 50 crore rupees. Dr Periasamy reveals, "All our faculty are involved in research in their respective areas. At present the University has more than 235 research projects, which is worth Rs.251 crores. More than 42 patents have been filed in India and abroad out of which at least 17 have been granted."

Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology, Nagpur has more than 400 publications in top quality international journals and conferences in 2015. Dr Narendra S. Chaudhari, Director, VNIT says, "Minimum two research papers/publications in Science Citation Index (SCI) journals or Institution of Scientific Information (ISI) recognized journal is compulsory for VNIT's PhD students for submission of their thesis." NIIT, in the last 5 years of its existence has published more than 100 research papers in SCI journals.

"At Kalasalingam University all papers, which are communicated to journals for possible publication, are checked using iThenticate Software and scholars/faculty members are permitted to communicate the paper only if the similarity index as shown by the software is less than 20%. Similarly PhD thesis is received for evaluation only if the similarity index is less than 20%. Further all scholars have to publish minimum three papers with at least one of them in SCI journal with impact factor for thesis submission," says Vice Chancellor Dr S. Saravana Sankar.

Need for solid research culture

Research is the fodder for the nourishment of higher education, but it requires the right type of environment.



DR RAJENDRA PANDEY,
President, NIIT University

The insistence on a doctoral degree as the minimum qualification for a teaching position without a quality control mechanism has also been responsible for the deterioration in the quality of our doctoral degrees. We have not been able to distinguish a pure teaching institution from research and teaching institutions



"Doctoral scholars require an engaging, stimulating and thought-provoking environment which encourages critical thinking and equips them to deal with the emerging challenges in continually changing fields. To prepare the next generation of researchers institutions we will need to provide an environment in which scholars can do much more than research their own specialties - they will need to learn to be effective communicators, work in teams, manage other people, see the bigger picture and develop a multi-disciplinary/trans-disciplinary approach to their work," says Dr Surinder Jaswal, Deputy Director, TISS, Mumbai.

Better infrastructure facilities, research-orientation in Master's level and attractive funding are the need of the hour. India needs to increase qualitative and quantitative research

to match global standards. Research institutions should motivate students to undertake research in areas like technology, sciences to compete with global institutions.

Some of the crucial reasons for non-completion of doctoral degrees or shallow theses are non-availability of resources; incompetent research guides; lack of depth; and low commitment levels.

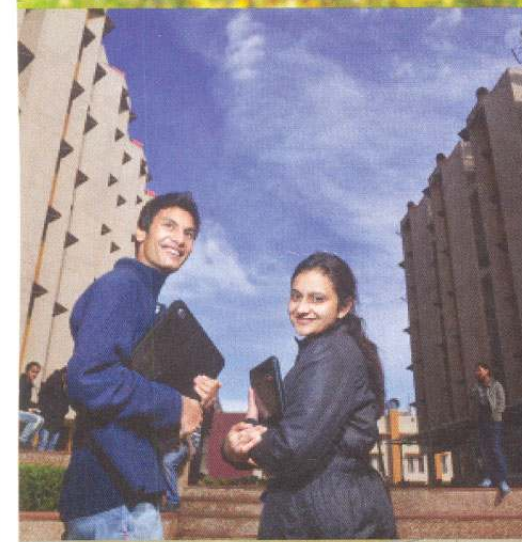
"More funding to establish research facilities is definitely needed, so are opportunities for researchers to present their work to their international peers. The role of a publication does not end with its appearance in a journal, it also has to be presented, publicized, discussed and debated for greater impact," says Prof. Amol Dighe Dean, Graduate Studies, TIFR, Mumbai.

Academicians say that what is needed now is a nationwide research grid that promotes, facilitates and advances research and development.

Facilities available at National Laboratories and institutions of repute should be networked and co-ordinated to increase research publications. Dr N. Sundararajan, Vice Chancellor, Jain University says, "The work load of faculty members who are actively engaged in research must considerably be decreased from classroom teaching."

South Asian University's President Dr Kavita A Sharma emphasizes treating both teaching and research as parts of the same coin. "Some countries predominantly look at research, others teaching and some combine both." She is critical about non-committed PhD scholars. "PhD should not be taken as just another degree. It should create intellectual leadership. In developed countries, many begin their PhD research after work experience. This gives them insight and equips them to tackle real problems of the real world that impact people's lives," she says.

What is essential is that students get into research it with full knowledge of the challenges and opportunities. A piece of work done well will always stand in good stead throughout a scholar's career. ■



The research-driven NU B.Tech programme exposes students to Problem Solving, Design of Experiments, Research Methodology and Scientific Method. NU B. Tech students are involved in various research projects on future technologies such as Handwritten Digit Recognition, Experimental WiFi Campus Network, and Measurement of EAT Parameters using a Sensor Network. The students from the university engage in internships at prestigious organizations. B.Tech students also get the opportunity for a 6-month work experience before they graduate. NU has also entered into an academic collaboration with University of Missouri, Kansas City, USA, which enables students to complete their B.Tech from NU and MS in Computer Science Engineering from UMKC, both in just 5 years.

NIIT University offers the perfect blend of academics and sports by providing all the facilities of outdoor as well as indoor sports. Students are encouraged to enjoy sports, as well as to participate in various sports competitions. Pandit Nehru said "Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit." NU follows the same notions to refine this facet of the students' personality, and a variety of cultural events are organized at NU. Students are provided with numerous opportunities to showcase and enhance their talents through co-curricular activities like photography & movie making, music, dance, debating & elocution, theatre, techno-art and PC Gaming.

NIIT University, acknowledged as the greenest and the most environment-friendly campus in India, continuously endeavours to create a sustainable campus. NU is notified by the Government of Rajasthan u/a 5 of 2010 and covered u/s 2(f) of UGC Act. NU recently was awarded with the title of e-GOV campus during ET E-TECH Summit 2015.

**MISSION
ADMISSION**
toimissionadmission.com

It's that time of the year again, when students have to make choices that will define their careers. To have many choices is wonderful but when all appear compelling, making an informed decision is a challenge. TOI's 'Mission Admission' guides students through the season. Today's focus: **Digital Marketing and Social Media**

LEARN TO SELL, WITH A SMILEY

Digital Marketing – Selling Of Products, Services Using Digital Technologies – Is A Hot Trend

Ranjani.Ayyar@timesgroup.com

People are prisoners of their phones," says a meme. "That's why they are called cell phones." Much has been written about our addiction to mobile phones, and most of that is read on mobile phones. In fact, the aforesaid meme would not have become popular had it not been circulated through cell phones.

Such is the reach of digital media that an increasing number of people shop, bank, do business and entertain themselves on digital platforms. As this compels companies to revisit their marketing strategies, a career in digital marketing and social media could be rewarding.

"Companies are going through a digital transformation. Digital first companies like Ola, Paytm and Flipkart are pushing the envelope, connecting industries to consumers. Watch the next decade," says Arjun Shankar, chief delivery & operations officer, skills and career group, NIIT Limited.

For the uninitiated, digital marketing is the marketing of products or services using digital technologies with the objective of promoting brands, engaging with customers and increasing sales. A career in digital marketing would encompass several sub areas including search engine optimisation (SEO), search engine marketing (SEM), social media, email, mobile and web analytics. SEO entails maximising number of visitors to a website by ensuring that the site appears high on the list of results returned by a search engine. SEM is about building visibility through advertising.

While digital marketing is included as a sub topic in mass media and management courses of-

fered by colleges, a host of institutes offer online certificate and diploma courses too. From a basic course in digital marketing, they offer certificate courses in specific areas such as social media marketing, pay per click (PPC) and mobile app marketing.

Deepak Kanakaraju, digital marketing manager at RazonPay says, "A digital marketing course teaches you setting up websites to building online presence and creating web content. It entails using SEO and SEM to reach out to prospective visitors and harnessing the power of social media tools and tapping into online advertising, email and mobile marketing."

Kanakaraju suggests starting one's own blog. "Keep a minimal budget and carry out SEO and SEM for your blog. It will test your marketing capabilities," he says. While basics of advertising and

marketing are a must, one has to choose his sub area according to his penchant, says Vedanarayan Vedantham, senior director- marketing, Simplilearn. For those with a flair for writing, there is content writing; web analytics could suit those who love numbers.

Adapting to the latest technologies is vital. "With consumers using such forums to discuss everything from personal issues to product complaints and reviews, companies need to keep a watch and respond in an agile manner," says Saurav Gupta, digital marketing executive with an ad agency.

One can choose to work with a digital marketing agency or in the industry within the marketing team. Kanakaraju suggests working with startups for maximum exposure. "Startups are not reliant on traditional methods and are tech savvy. So there is plenty of scope to experiment," he says.

IT'S A 'NET'WORK

Increasing number of people shop, bank, do business and entertain themselves on digital platforms



ADMISSION PROCEDURE

Eligibility | Class 12 pass (aggregate 50% required in most courses, may vary across institutes)

Fees
₹15,000 – 60,000



WHAT STUDENTS LEARN

Creating website, content
Planning online marketing strategy, determining the target audience, measuring results

Building online presence for the company, tapping into social media tools
Using web, email and mobile as primary tools for marketing



SCOPE AFTER COURSE

► Digital marketing manager
► SEO (Search Engine Optimization) executive/manager
► SEM (Search Engine Marketing) executive/manager
► Social media manager

Companies that are active in digital marketing
Flipkart
Amazon
L'oreal
Accenture

Starting pay scale
₹2,50,000- ₹3.5 lakh

For tips on courses and career guidance, students can email queries to
missionadmission.toichennai@gmail.com

COURSES OFFERED
Course duration varies from one-day courses to 6 months; includes online courses

INSTITUTES	COURSES
Simplilearn	Digital Marketing Certified Associate Training
Digital Vidya (Government certification)	Certification in Digital Marketing
NIIT (in partnership with digital management institute, Ireland)	Professional Diploma in Digital Marketing
Manipal Prolearn	Digital Marketing Professional Program
All India Management Association	Professional Certificate in Digital Marketing And Analytics
Digital Marketing Academy	Digital Marketing Training Program



“Digital first companies like Ola, Paytm & Flipkart are pushing the envelope, connecting industries to consumers. Watch the next decade

Arjun Shankar | CHIEF DELIVERY & OPERATIONS OFFICER, SKILLS AND CAREER GROUP, NIIT LIMITED

DID YOU KNOW?

► On an average, **60% of a marketer's time is devoted to digital marketing activities**, fuelling demand for digital marketing skills



► **First ever tweet was from the founder of Twitter himself – Jack Dorsey in March 2006**

► **First registered domain was Symbolics.com in 1985**

► **71% of companies have planned to increase their digital marketing budgets in 2016**

► **78% of firms say they have dedicated social media teams in 2015, up from 67% in 2012**

► **As per a study by digital marketing company Adestra, 80% of consumers unsubscribe from emails they no longer want to get**

► **15% of Google searches have never been searched for before, i.e., they are unique searches**

Source: Smart insights and Ecommerce Expo, Webiquity, IScoop

The Times of India, Chennai, April 11, 2016

‘Training Has to Become Definite for True Impact’

As startups blossom and technology changes the way businesses are run, NIIT's MD **Vijay Thadani** says his talent development firm is transforming itself and its clients by creating multi-skilled programmers

BY DEEPTI CHAUDHARY



NIIT Ltd, a global leader in skills and talent development, is sharpening its focus on the digital services space to offer better solutions and benefits to its clients and to ensure sustainable

margin expansion for itself. At present, digital services contribute about 15 percent of the company's revenues. For the fiscal year 2015, NIIT posted consolidated revenues of Rs 9574 crore.

In an interview to *Forbes India*,

Vijay Thadani, vice chairman and managing director of NIIT, says the plan is to exit less attractive businesses and focus on asset-light, growth-oriented ones.

The company recently unveiled a first-of-its-kind programme

called StackRoute to address the versatile talent requirements of the rapidly growing startup sector. It is also changing the way its centres look and operate to cater to the millennial learners. Edited excerpts:

Q Why is there so much emphasis on digital services?

Social media is changing the way we lead our lives. Mobile technology is transforming our lives. This is generating new types of data and much of this information is in text, video and pictures; there are tools which are becoming valid to analyse. Big data, analytics and cloud computing are putting all this together in a decipherable language. I call it SMACS (social, mobility, analytics, cloud and cyber security). SMACS, when put together in a way that affects an organisation, is a whole new domain of digital services. When we say NIIT is transforming, we are actually helping organisations transform. When this type of disruption takes place in digital services, two things happen—your current set of people need to be re-skilled, and while that is happening, organisations are realising that a nimble firm can do this much faster. Therefore, there is a boom in startups. A startup will create one little product which will go and fit into the digital services play of somebody. NIIT is always anticipating the needs of the industry and society.

Q How are you addressing this new need? How is NIIT transforming?

We created this new curriculum which we call StackRoute. It is an expression of a new NIIT. StackRoute aims to create multi-skilled and multi-disciplinary programmers who can become key members of high-performance teams in top-notch product engineering companies and startups. It is just one component, an expression of how boldly the

organisation is trying to transform itself to meet this new need. It's not just a new programme, it's a new NIIT because of the way our new centres have been created. These look very different. A StackRoute centre is a new concept; in some ways, it looks a little more disorganised than our traditional old centres... it looks more like a coffee shop rather than a centre. Remember that digital as a need is a new need. But the learner is also new. We now have a millennial learner, whose attention span is small, who wants instant results... hence learning styles are different. They have already read the lessons you are going to teach them in class the previous night on Facebook. It's also a new business model because as a part of

“OUR STACKROUTE CENTRE IS A NEW CONCEPT; IT LOOKS MORE LIKE A COFFEE SHOP THAN A CENTRE.”

this programme, not only is a person getting a certificate but he's also building a new intellectual property. At the end of the programme, you will also have a product.

Q Is it true that you are turning away from domestic government projects?

That statement is for a particular type of service. It's a scheme of the government called ICT@Schools. Under this scheme, there is a government school and in this school, you come and invest in technology and provide teachers. The government pays you for the technology, teachers as well as content in monthly fees because at that time, the government

does not have the funds to invest in technology. This is the business model that we are moving away from. That was an asset-intensive business model.

Q How is your order book looking at the moment?

It is growing very well. In fact, our managed training services, which is our solution for corporate entities, has done exceedingly well and has a 60 percent growth rate. Organisations are saying training is strategic for their survival. Training has to become definite for its true impact; it has to be more measurable to become more efficient. These are the areas where we have built our expertise over the last 34 years. In the quarter ended March 31, 2015, fresh orders of \$89 million (Rs 600 crore) were secured leading to \$295 million worth of orders executable over the next 12 months.

Q How will margins in your business improve?

We are taking many steps to improve our margins. The assumption that there is a cap on margins in education is not correct. In the conventional model of education, there is a fixed operating cost and a variable cost. In case of fixed operating cost, when you are below the breakeven point, margins are low. But when you cross that, margins have a hockey-stick growth... the growth can be exceptional. In the case of NIIT, let's say 40 percent cost is fixed. So, if I operate with less than 40 percent utilisation, there is hardly any margin, but if I go above 40 percent utilisation, every rupee I earn is my margin. Our margins were challenged due to global headwinds. Going forward, our new developments are very asset light, so we should be able to improve margins faster. Brick and mortar is asset heavy. Technology is more cost effective and needs less space while delivering the same results. That will be our new focus. ☺

NIIT University partners with PwC India to develop talent for Cyber Security industry

PwC India and NIIT University (NU) have entered into a strategic partnership towards creating a trained talent pool of Cyber Security professionals in India. To this end, academic experts from NU and senior professionals from PwC India have co-created a two-year work-integrated specialised Master's Programme in Cyber Security.

The Master's Programme in Cyber Security is amongst the first programmes that blend academic and professional education, with the industry player PwC India being an equal partner in developing and delivering the programme. The key driver in this programme is industry-led research in the Cyber Security space.

Rajendra S Pawar, chairman, NIIT Group and Founder NU, said, "In today's digitized environment securing our cyberspace has become a priority for businesses and citizens across the world. This calls for a team of trained professionals who are equipped to combat the challenges that are posed by hackers every day. Our partnership with PwC India is a step in that direction."

Deepak Kapoor, chairman, PwC India said, "Cyber Security is a major focus area and the growth driver for PwC India. We currently have around 300 people in this practice and will need to increase it tenfold to about 3,000 people over the next 4-5 years."

Cyber Security market currently stands at \$1 billion and is expected to grow to \$35 billion by 2025.



Voice & Data, National
February 2016



Regulate online education

Online education is a fast growing global growth arena, both in formal education and vocational training. We hope that the Government will introduce measures to ensure a level playing field for the highly regulated Indian online education and training companies against the much larger funded global players who are entering the Indian market aggressively, in an unregulated manner as far as Indian taxation regime is concerned. Further, specific measures should be drafted to help make education and skilling more affordable to the masses.

Skill India and Digital India are two key and highly ambitious initiatives of Government and in the Budget 2016, we expect specific Indirect tax rebates for the companies and its partners who are working towards making these initiatives a success.

The Government should spell out the incentives and policy framework to boost the start-up sector by announcing a tax rebate and allocating more funds for the development of the sector

Government has set an ambitious target of skilling 500 million people by 2022. In a country where less than four per cent of the population is formally skilled, the Finance Minister needs to substantially increase fund allocation to the sector to draw youth to the skilling programmes. They should also spell out incentives and policy framework to boost the start-up sector by announcing a tax rebate and allocating more funds for the development of the sector.

The Goods and Services Tax is another much awaited Indirect tax reform, which will boost the economy. We are expecting a firm roadmap from the Government for its implementation. We also hope there would be changes in the Income Tax policy frame that will allow us to get quick refund for the excess taxes paid.

(The writer is Rahul K Patwardhan, CEO, NIIT Limited)

Pioneer, New Delhi, February 24, 2016

INVEST • ISSUE FOCUS | VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

A skilled business opportunity

Over the years, the education industry has undergone a sea change with the focus shifted from public to private sector. Catering to the skill deficit and guaranteeing jobs for the youngest customer base vocational education business proves to be ready money spinner.

BY JOYSHREE SAHA

THE recent budget 2016-2017 reveals a shortage of trainers to implement skill-development programmes across the country. Speaking on same note, Shivan Bhargava, Group President - Skills & Careers Group, NIIT Limited comments, "One way to overcome this is to introduce the blended learning model for imparting quality education. At NIIT, we used technology enabled delivery models such as Synchronous Learning Technology and Cloud Campus in India. The company also launched digital learning platform NIIT.iv".

How franchise boosts the growth

Currently, there are 18,000 vocational training centres with an annual intake of 1.8 million students. The industry requires 40 million additional seats to cater to the market demands.

"Aptech through its retail brands is present across 60 Indian towns and cities through over 850 franchise locations. Aptech believes in an asset light model and has spread across geographies through the franchise model. And even next expansion aims at the franchisee model only", shared Shruti Paliwal, Vice President, Aptech.

Criteria to choose franchise partner

Selecting right franchisee is the most important aspect. "The candidate should be a graduate in any discipline; should

possess the ability to mobilize resources through internal and external means, should have the capability to personally invest around 50-60 per cent of the total project cost. In terms of business experience, candidate should possess 1-3 years of experience in any functional area, preferably at the middle management level. Also, share the vision and values of NIIT in the field of talent development, devote full-time attention to the venture or source professional help to run it and should have complete knowledge of the regional and local market", pointed Bhargava.

Elements, which Aptech look for brand franchisees are commitment and passion, local market knowledge, scalability and sustainability and financial ability.

Investment

Bhargava: "The minimum initial investment for the project varies from 25-35 lakhs. The investment is based on various factors such as the centre location, student capacity, duration and the types of courses to be offered by the centre".

FRANCHISE FACTS	NIIT	APTECH	TIMTS
Investment	25-30 lakh	20-50 lakh	812 Lakh based on town category
Existing outlets (Company-owned + franchise)	Over 300, across 40 countries	All locations are franchised	1 & 41
Area (sq.ft)	1500-2000	800-2000	Min 1500
RoI	Varies	Varies	180% plus
Breakeven	Varies	18-24 months	6 months
Target cities	30 + Cities	Tier II and Tier III	Tier I and II
Location	Tier I and Tier II Cities	Student catchment areas	Any district HQ town
Year of franchise Operations	1986	1986	2013

Franchising Support

"We give all the technical help to run the business, which include staff training. We have senior people deputed to look after the centre in the initial stage, which is later followed up

Developed countries, skilled workforce is 60-80%, India records a low 5% of workforce (20-24 years) with formal vocational skills
India needs to grow by 7-8% in order to generate enough jobs for 12.8 million
12 million expected to join the workforce every year
India's education and vocational training system churns out 3-4 million workers
By 2020, India will have 116 million workers in the age bracket of 20-24 years as compared to China's 94 million
India is expected to be home to a skilled workforce of 500 million by 2022
In 20 years, the labour force in the industrialised world will decline by 4%, while in India it will increase by 32%

with regular monitoring," said Raj Sharma, Director, Times Institute Of Management and Technical Studies.

Paliwal: "There is a hand holding process initiated at the start of the relationship. The relationship manager is a mature, seasoned and experienced professional who looks and guides the franchise business partner to understand the nuances of the field".

Expansion through franchise route

Franchising has been largely beneficial to investors in the vocational training industry. "We started franchising in 1986. At a time when IT training was at its peak and premium, the only way to scale operations was the franchising route. At present, Aptech has over 1350 franchise centres across 43 countries," added Paliwal.

Vocational training institute has totally changed the scenario by fetching benefits in terms of employment and raising the standards of Indians. Today, with the emergence of organised players in vocational institutes, the sector is also offering business opportunities to many aspiring entrepreneurs. ♦♦

www.franchiseindia.com

THE TIMES OF INDIA | Career

Startups and skills — a winning combination

Posted by TimesJobs.com on Mar 30, 2016



In order to survive and thrive, startups need talent that stays with them and contributes to the success of their businesses

Rakhi Sharma

There is no doubt that India is in the midst of an entrepreneurial revolution today. There is a new breed of young and not-so-young Indians who are coming up with innovative ideas, productising them and taking the plunge into uncertain waters with passion. This startup generation is brave and willing to take risks. It is also keen to leverage the digital wave which is sweeping the world to deliver its novel products and services most cost-effectively and while reaching out to the largest number of people.

Entrepreneurship has taken a quantum leap owing to many factors such as availability of funding, a stronger VC presence, a conducive regulatory climate, a robust and supportive ecosystem and existence of hundreds of success stories that are proving to be inspirational for others.

The startup movement has received a further boost with the government unveiling the 'Start-up India, Stand-up India' action plan which would promote bank financing for startups and offer incentives and job creation, and this was followed by announcement of Rs 2,000 crore fund for startups. This ecosystem is expected to be the next big driver of the Indian economy.

In fact, according to India's leading chamber of commerce, NASSCOM, around 50,000 Indian technology SMEs and startups are expected to add two percent to India's GDP and three million jobs by the year 2020.

Entrepreneurship a double-edged sword

Despite all these positives, the task of being an entrepreneur is not exactly all fun and games. Entrepreneurship is a double-edged sword that comes with its own pluses and minuses and pleasures and heartaches. It is a truly transformational journey where facing challenges and difficulties are the norm and finding solutions to problems the key.

Among the most critical issue for entrepreneurs, particularly if they are active within the technology space, is manpower. The revolution in the startup space has led to massive talent crunch.

According to a Manpower report, 58 per cent of Indian employers are finding it difficult to fill positions and there is a significant talent shortage in the IT and accounting space. Also, close to 67 per cent Indian startups reported difficulty in filling job vacancies versus a global average of 34 per cent.

Short supply of talent

Being a knowledge-intensive industry, the IT sector requires people who possess certain specific skills. The industry needs high level programming talent, database and cloud experts, web experts, content creators and managers, and people well versed with the digital and social spaces. It is no secret that more often than not, these professionals are in short supply.

Hiring therefore is tough. Most startups struggle with finding people who are job ready on day one. And not just employees, entrepreneurs themselves need to be rightly skilled in order to run and manage their businesses.

They need leadership and communications skills that enable them to build and steer crack teams and drive the growth of their companies. They require in-depth knowledge of the markets they are playing in, and the customer landscape. A good familiarity with technology, which lies at the core of every new age startup, is also a must. As they begin, most entrepreneurs need a helping hand of a mentor more skilled than they are.

The skill gap

The skills conundrum becomes even larger when the startup begins to do well in the market, acquires customers and feels the need to scale. At that time, getting manpower for expanding work profiles and roles, on-boarding more senior and mid-level managers and adding on more specialists who know specific domains becomes a long haul.

Other issues that crowd the agenda of startups are related to creating career growth paths for their employees, ensuring that they are able to realise their potential and dreams. Doing this is critical to retaining good manpower, which can be easily lured by better prospects outside of these companies.

In order to survive and thrive, startups need talent that stays with them and contributes to the success of their businesses. There are of course training programmes available in the market that teach startup founders the nitty-gritty of business and skills management.

It is clear then that startups without relevant skills are headed for a quick extinction. The ones that overcome the skills challenge will be the companies that will go on to make a mark.

The author is vice president-HR at NIIT Ltd

http://content.timesjobs.com/startups-and-skills-a-winning-combination/?fromsite=toi&utm_source=TOInewHP_TILwidget&utm_medium=ABtest&utm_campaign=TOInewHP



India's Largest National Industry Targeted Aptitude Test (NITAT) by NIIT Receives Phenomenal Response

New Delhi, Feb. 26 -- NITAT opens avenues for aspiring careers in IT, Banking and Finance

More than 1 Million students benefitted over the past 11 years.

NIIT Limited, a global leader in skills and talent development has received an overwhelming response for its 12th National Industry Targeted Aptitude Test (NITAT) conducted on 13th February, 2016. NITAT 2016 witnessed 93,068 applicants, 47,311 test takers, among which 35,178 students qualified. The examination was conducted in over 150 cities nationwide. Over past 11 years more than 1 million aspirants have been benefitted by the test.

NITAT helps the students and graduates to access their potential and aptitude for careers across multiple sectors. The test has been designed as an objective test of reasoning, comprehension, data interpretation skills and behavioural traits. Every student is entitled to receive a personalised score card that will give his/her Aptitude Ranking (concentric graphical form) on National and Zonal basis.

Speaking on the success so far, Shivan Bhargava, Group President, Skills and Careers Group, NIIT Ltd. said, "The response that NITAT has received from the students across India is unprecedented. We commenced NITAT 11 years ago with an aim to recognize skilled workforce to meet the demands of the IT industry. Today NITAT has evolved from being just an I.T. aptitude test to the one that assesses student's career readiness quotient across multiple domains like IT, Banking and Finance. We are confident that NITAT will continue to help students access their skills for multiple career domains."

Students who appear for NITAT receive assessment score card & personalized career counselling from NIIT. They are also entitled for complementary job fair passes. NIIT's program proposition is highlighted during counselling and scholarships are awarded to merit holders, along with a congratulatory letter from NIIT MindChampion and five-time world chess champion Viswanathan Anand.

NIIT's pioneering initiative NITAT was introduced in 2004 to enable graduates and students pursuing their studies in engineering, arts, commerce and science streams to gauge their aptitude for a career in the IT sector, identify skills further required, if any, and thus systematically charter their career into the IT industry. Today the test has evolved as a powerful tool that assesses student's aptitude across multiple domains, including IT, Banking and Finance. The test is designed scientifically to assess students and provide a relative ranking system, which helps them to identify their position amongst all test takers.

<http://htsyndication.com/htsportal/article/India-s-Largest-National-Industry-Targeted-Aptitude-Test--NITAT--by-NIIT-Receives-Phenomenal-Response/11671393>

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
India's Premier News Agency

NIIT Awarded as 'India's Most Trusted Training Brand' for the 4th Consecutive Year

New Delhi, Delhi, India - Business Wire India

-- Wins the coveted accolade based on Trust Research Advisory's - Brand Trust Report, India Study 2016

-- Recognized for providing globally benchmarked full-service end-to-end training solutions

NIIT Limited, a global leader in skills and talent development, has been recognized as 'India's Most Trusted Training Brand' 2016 by Trust Research Advisory (TRA), India's foremost data insights company dedicated to understanding, simplifying and researching aspects that makes the intangibles of brands more measureable. NIIT has won the coveted award for the fourth year in a row.

The Brand Trust Report 2016 was conducted across 16 cities, generating nearly 6 million data points among 20,000 unique brands, thus making it the most intensive study on Brand Trust across the globe. The report measured consumers' trust and brand insights by measuring variables that influence consumer behavior.

Speaking on the occasion, **Mr. Rahul Patwardhan, CEO, NIIT Ltd.** said, *"We are pleased to receive the Most Trusted Training Brand award for the 4th year in a row. NIIT today, works on a blended delivery with 200 engineers working on education-technology – making us the largest EdTech Company in the country. Further NIIT has been a key player in corporate training outsourcing, providing globally benchmarked full service end-to-end managed training solutions to Fortune 1000 corporates worldwide. Our programs are delivered through a hybrid combination of the 'Cloud Campus' online platform, satellite-based 'Synchronous Learning Technology' and a physical network of hundreds of learning centers globally. This award is a reaffirmation that our initiatives in the training sector have been appreciated by the consumers and the industry."*

Over the last 34 years, NIIT has contributed extensively to the IT sector by training 35 million people in IT and other disciplines. In the last decade, NIIT diversified beyond IT training by entering into partnerships with domain experts in growing industry verticals. NIIT is actively involved in offering technologically advanced learning products and services to its customers. The company introduced pioneering Cloud Campus in India way back in 2011. A recent path breaking initiative NIIT.tv has received phenomenal response nationwide. An array of programs from NIIT are already available online through NIIT.tv. and cloud campus. With the recent launch of StackRoute, NIIT has also reinforced its leadership position as a pioneer in meeting the future skill needs of the IT sector.

Additionally, NIIT's Corporate Learning Group (CLG) offers Managed Training Services (MTS) to market-leading companies in North America, Europe, Asia, and Oceania. With a proven global track record and strategic partnerships with many Fortune 500 clients in US & EU; with over 600 Global Specialist Training Partners across a wide range of subject domains; with a pool of over 1000 trainers deployable globally; and with the world's largest content development facility, NIIT brings the best of breed training services to meet the needs of discerning corporate customers in India, across all domains and entire range of training services, with a focus on large local and MNC firms.

Elaborating on the recognition, **Mr. Sachin Bhosle, Research Head, Brand Trust Report** said, *"Brands are extraordinarily important as they are the interface between the consumer and organization. Mapping educational training brands based on our brand trust matrix has become essential part of our survey and NIIT has emerged as the undoubted winner backed by the cutting edge training solutions that they offer to individuals as well as corporates. This award is a recognition of NIIT's thrust in providing the best training services through innovative use of technology."*

Prakash Menon, President, Global Skills & Careers Business, NIIT Ltd said, *"This award will encourage us to further focus on EdTech as we continue to offer innovative training solutions across multiple sectors. Going forward we look at brining innovations to NIIT portfolio, and further enhance NIIT's curriculum offerings to serve the urgent skilling needs for a Digital Workforce."*

NIIT has alliances with various reputed companies across multiple sectors. The company has alliance with ICICI for developing trained manpower for Banking & Financial Services sector through its IFBI initiative; and with Genpact for BPM training. Similarly, it has joined hands with leading B- Schools like IIMs for its NIIT Imperia venture, aimed at working professionals. In the corporate front, NIIT offers best-in-class Managed Training Services that enable clients to reduce cost, embrace change and drive real quantifiable business impact. In the school's space, NIIT's technology based learning solutions aim to make the vital process of teaching and learning simpler, thus bringing joy back into learning.

Trust Research Advisory, a part of the Comniscient Group, is a Brand Intelligence and Data Insights Company dedicated to understand and analyze stakeholder behavior through two globally acclaimed, proprietary matrices of Brand Trust and Brand Attractiveness.

http://www.ptinews.com/pressrelease/17961_press-subNIIT-Awarded-as--India-s-Most-Trusted-Training-Brand--for-the-4th-Consecutive-Year

moneycontrol
India's No.1 Financial Portal

Feb 18, 2016, 10:55 AM | Source: IBNLive.com

Budget 2016: NIIT seeks steps to make education and skilling more affordable

Budget 2016 is crucial for the Education & Training sector, according to a statement issued by NIIT CEO Rahul K Patwardhan.



NIIT, a company offering learning management and training delivery solutions to corporations, is expecting some of the measures such as equal distribution of the resources and specific incentives to boost the start-up sector to be taken in the upcoming Union Budget for better growth of the education sector.

Budget 2016 is crucial for the Education & Training sector, according to a statement issued by NIIT CEO Rahul K Patwardhan.

"Online education is a fast growing global growth arena, both in formal education and vocational training. We hope that the government will introduce measures to ensure a level playing field for the highly regulated Indian online education and training companies against the much larger funded global players who are entering the Indian market aggressively, in an unregulated manner as far as Indian taxation regime is concerned," Patwardhan said.

He also said he hopes that the Finance Minister will announce specific measures in the Union Budget to help make education and skilling more affordable to the masses.

Skill India and Digital India are two key and highly ambitious initiatives of the government, and in the forthcoming budget he expects specific Indirect tax rebates for the companies and its partners who are working towards making these initiatives a success.

"Government has set an ambitious target of skilling 500 million people by 2022. In a country where less than 4% of the population are formally skilled, FM needs to substantially increase fund allocation to the sector to draw youth to the skilling programmes," he said.

Patwardhan is also expecting specific incentives and policy framework to boost the start-up sector by announcing tax rebate and allocating more funds for the development of the sector.

Talking about the contentious GST Bill, he said, "GST is another much awaited Indirect tax reform, which will boost the economy. We are expecting a firm roadmap from the Government for its implementation. We also hope there would be changes in the Income Tax policy frame that will allow us to get quick refund for the excess taxes paid."

<http://epaperbeta.timesofindia.com/Article.aspx?eid=31818&articlexml=PUSH-FOR-GREATER-FINANCIAL-AUTONOMY-IIT-Fee-Hike-03022016019009>

EQUITY  BULLS

Pre-Budget expectations for the Education & Training sector

Posted On: 2016-02-15 19:26:59

Mr. Rahul K Patwardhan, CEO - NIIT Ltd.

Online education is a fast growing global growth arena, both in formal education and vocational training. We hope that the government will introduce measures to ensure a level playing field for the highly regulated Indian online education and training companies against the much larger funded global players who are entering the Indian market aggressively, in an unregulated manner as far as Indian taxation regime is concerned.

Further, we hope that the Finance Minister will announce specific measures in the Union Budget to help make education and skilling more affordable to the masses. Skill India and Digital India are two key and highly ambitious initiatives of Government of India, and in the forthcoming budget we expect specific Indirect tax rebates for the companies and its partners who are working towards making these initiatives a success. Government has set an ambitious target of skilling 500 million people by 2022. In a country where less than 4% of the population are formally skilled, FM needs to substantially increase fund allocation to the sector to draw youth to the skilling programmes. FM should also spell out specific incentives and policy framework to boost the start-up sector by announcing tax rebate and allocating more funds for the development of the sector.

GST is another much awaited Indirect tax reform, which will boost the economy. We are expecting a firm roadmap from the Government for its implementation. We also hope there would be changes in the Income Tax policy frame that will allow us to get quick refund for the excess taxes paid.

Shares of NIIT LTD. was last trading in BSE at Rs.75.9 as compared to the previous close of Rs. 71.3. The total number of shares traded during the day was 174277 in over 1766 trades.

The stock hit an intraday high of Rs. 76.35 and intraday low of 73. The net turnover during the day was Rs. 13109048.

http://www.equitybulls.com/admin/news2006/news_det.asp?id=179046

Business Standard

NIIT, SASTRA University ink pact to enhance employability

Press Trust of India | Chennai | March 14, 2016

Aimed at improving employability of engineering graduates, NIIT has inked a partnership pact with the Sastra University.

"NIIT.Tv has entered into a significant tie-up with SASTRA University in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. Sessions delivered by expert faculty members will be broadcast on the portal," NIIT Ltd said in a statement.

NIIT.Tv is the internet television portal and digital learning initiative of NIIT, which provides multi-disciplinary learning, management and training solutions to corporations, institutions and individuals.

Initially, programmes on biomedical nanotechnology, biosensors and control systems would be available through the portal and later expanded to other streams in engineering, management and law, it said.

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/niit-sastra-university-ink-pact-to-enhance-employability-116031400957_1.html



India's Largest National Industry Targeted Aptitude Test (NITAT) by NIIT Receives Phenomenal Response

Business Wire

Business Wire India

- NITAT opens avenues for aspiring careers in IT, Banking and Finance

- More than 1 Million students benefitted over the past 11 years

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http://www.indiaonline.com/article/news-business-wire-advertising/india-s-largest-national-industry-targeted-aptitude-test-nitat-by-niit-receives-phenomenal-response-116022600263_1.html

BusinessLine

NIIT awarded as Indias Most Trusted Training Brand for the 4th consecutive year

March 31, 2016:

NIIT Ltd has informed BSE regarding a Press Release dated March 31, 2016 titled "NIIT awarded as Indias Most Trusted Training Brand for the 4th consecutive year".

(Retrieve from PDF link)

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/announcements/others/niit-awarded-as-indias-most-trusted-training-brand-for-the-4th-consecutive-year/article8418144.ece>

BusinessLine

NIIT: On a learning curve

Updated: April 3, 2016 22:43 IST | Meera Siva

When the market hits turbulent patches, investors typically turn to companies in defensive sectors. One such choice, for those with a long-term perspective, is NIIT, an education service provider. The company offers computer education and training to corporates, schools and individual clients.

While revenue stagnated in the past three years, the recent shift in focus — from the government school segment to corporate training — should help drive revenue and profit growth in the next few years. The company's strong balance sheet — with debt at 0.2 times equity — also provides comfort. The stock currently trades at 13 times FY17 Bloomberg consensus earnings. Investors can buy the NIIT stock, given the company's improving revenue and earnings outlook.

Shift in focus

NIIT has consciously shifted away from government schools to focus on corporate learning and skills development. In the December 2015 quarter, revenue from the school segment fell 33 per cent and contributed only 8 per cent to the overall income.

There were a few reasons to shift focus away from this segment. One, the receivables cycle is very long; ₹140 crore of receivables are due from the government currently. Two, the business is capex heavy and returns are depressing.

The number of government school clients has been on a steady decline, from the peak of over 15,000 in 2009-10 to about 3,700 currently.

The company plans to exit the government and other capex-heavy school services business segment as these contracts end (by 2018-19). It will focus on asset-light, cloud-based solutions for the 2,500 private school clients.

The school business has also been carved out into a separate subsidiary and the company plans to leverage the NIIT brand name.

The revenue shift is already boosting the company's overall margin and profit. In the nine months of 2015-16, operating profit jumped 58 per cent Y-o-Y to ₹58 crore, even as revenue increased 4.7 per cent to ₹768 crore. The management expects non-capex intensive services to grow at 10-15 per cent over the next two years.

Robust corporate revenue

NIIT's corporate learning segment, which contributes 60 per cent of the overall revenue, grew 17 per cent in the December 2015 quarter. International service, especially in Europe, contributed about half of this segment's revenue.

Orders in the nine months of 2015-16 rose 28 per cent Y-o-Y to \$78 million. The company has 27 global customers and revenue visibility of \$195 million from these customers over a three- to five-year period.

In the corporate learning segment, the management is confident of sustaining a margin of 12 per cent and growing revenue at 15 per cent annually in the next two years.

Skill segment recovery

NIIT's Skills and Career Group, which contributes about a third of total revenue, has been witnessing a turnaround.

Revenue from this segment, which has been on a decline over the last few years, has been on an uptrend over the last three quarters. In the December 2015 quarter, revenue increased 3 per cent compared with the same quarter a year ago. The company has been consolidating its operations by reducing seat capacity, headcount and exiting unprofitable international locations.

The company is adding new specialisations in IT, such as big data and business analytics; its Beyond-IT courses such as retail sales enablement and finance are also seeing good traction. In October 2015, NIIT.tv, an internet TV portal to offer skill-based live and on-demand courses digitally, was launched.

These operational changes and new initiatives should aid revenue and profit growth in this segment. NIIT holds 23.74 per cent stake in software company NIIT Technologies.

In the nine months of 2015-16, higher earnings from its associates and joint ventures as well as lower depreciation expenses boosted the net profit of NIIT by four times Y-o-Y to ₹50 crore. Net margin improved to 6.5 per cent, from 1.8 per cent in the same period.

Margins are likely to sustain at these levels or improve over the next few years as the company moves to an asset-light model and focuses on the high-margin corporate learning segment.



<http://m.thehindubusinessline.com/portfolio/firm-calls/niit-on-a-learning-curve/article8429498.ece>

THE HINDU

SASTRA to offer online courses with NIIT

Updated: March 16, 2016 05:46 IST

SASTRA University has tied up with NIIT to offer online courses to B.Tech and M.Tech students through internet-based learning portal NIIT.tv.

While NIIT will provide the infrastructure, SASTRA will supply the course material. NIIT has around 1.7 lakh registered users in 142 countries.

The courses would be on the lines of Massive Online Open Courses and sessions would be conducted by the university's faculty.

Digital India initiative

According to S. Vaidhyasubramanian, Dean (Planning), SASTRA, the courses are on the lines of the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning, an initiative of the Indian Institutes of Technology. "We have partnered with the IIT and given 13 courses under NPTEL. It is basically about Digital India initiative and will be a resource warehouse," he said.

Initially three courses — biomedical nanotechnology, biosensors and control systems would be offered. Candidates can log in to the portal and take the courses and be assessed.

If, however, at the end of the course they want certificates, they would be charged a nominal fee.

The proposal is to expand the programme to other engineering, management and laws disciplines and coaching for competitive exams like GATE.

According to Udai Singh, NIIT's chief strategy officer, NIIT.tv aims to offer cutting-edge skill based training to aspiring engineers.

NIIT will provide the infrastructure, SASTRA will supply the course material.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/sastra-to-offer-online-courses-with-niit/article8358734.ece>

The Telegraph

Post Budget Reactions for the Education and Skill Sector By :- Vijay K Thadani, Vice Chairman & Managing Director, NIIT Ltd.

NEW DELHI, DELHI, INDIA 29-02-2016 6:45PM



Business Wire India

We welcome the focus on education, skills, job creation and entrepreneurship in this budget. Emphasis on promoting excellence in higher education on a level playing field by identifying 10 public and 10 private institutions, is a good move.

Digital repository for validation of qualification will provide a great boost to high employment industries, such as the IT sector. Also, upgradation of National Career Services will produce more effective connection of jobs with skills.

The maturity of digital technology and its role in the society is visible from the fact that MOOCs will be used for mentoring new entrepreneurs.

<http://www.telegraphindia.com/external/display.jsp?mode=details&id=47614#.VtUg7px97IV>

<https://twitter.com/NIITLtd>

NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Mar 16
ASSOCHAM Skilling India presents the award for Best Institute-Innovation to NIIT Yuva Jyoti Ltd

↳ ASSOCHAM, Udaipur Pratap Rudy and Skill India



Udaipur Singh
Chief Executive Officer NIIT Ltd
receives the
"Best Institute-Innovation"
award for NIIT Yuva Jyoti
from
Rajiv Pratap Rudy
Hon'ble Minister of Skill Development
& Entrepreneurship Government
of India.

NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Mar 14
NIIT.tv partners with SASTRA University to offer industry-aligned support programs in BTech & MTech

↳ EdTech K-12 Magazine, EdTech Higher Ed, Digital India and SASTRA University



NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Mar 22
You have to become a constant learner to cope with these challenges. @rpatward #DigIndiaSummit

↳ NASSCOM, Prateek Chatterjee, Nitin Sethi and Shrikant Sinha



NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Mar 18
#BigData helps decide the best edu platform (online course, classroom setting or blended approach) in #corporatetraining

↳ PCQuest, Dataquest magazine and TriplePundit.com



You Retweeted
CII @FollowCII · Mar 18
From being an #industrial economy, we've moved to being a #knowledge #economy ~ @vkhadani, @NIITLtd #BuildingNorth



You Retweeted
Ajay Mohan Goel @ajaymgoel · Mar 7
Attending #HappeningHaryana Summit. P Rajendran of @NIITLtd among the panelists for Edn, Skill dev & sports.



<https://twitter.com/NIITLtd>

NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Mar 4
"We are developing smarter tools for incisive financial analysis & mgmt" - Rohit Gupta, CFO, NIIT Ltd @ #ETCFOSummit

↳ ET Edge, PwC India, EY India and 2 others



NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Mar 4
Panelists discuss "The next level of financial mgmt: Creating opportunities out of challenges" #ETCFOSummit

↳ SAP Ariba, Airbus Group, ICAI and 4 others



NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Mar 1
Here's how the growth rate of the IT-BPM Industry is projected to be in FY 2016. #IT

↳ NASSCOM, Deloitte, Digital India and Zinnov



CII @FollowCII · Mar 1
@vkhadani welcomes Govt's high priority on #Education, #Skills, #Employment, #Entrepreneurship. #Budget2016 @NIITLtd



Times Network presents Digital India Summit 2016
Developing Digital Workforce
digitalindiasummit.co.in/digital-india-summit-2016/



NIIT **NIIT Limited** @NIITLtd · Feb 28
Its NIIT MindChampion's #MannKiBaar for students ahead of board exams. youtu.be/zGNh9-k_FLU

↳ Doordarshan News, All India Radio News, Vishwanathan Anand and PMO India

