

Entrepreneurs are Problem-Seekers



NIIT pioneered IT education in India. Set up in 1981 by **Rajendra S Pawar**, Vijay K Thadani and P Rajendran, with investment from HCL Technologies' founder Shiv Nadar, NIIT has since trained legions of graduates, creating a pipeline of skilled workforce for the IT industry and has a presence in over 40 countries. In 2004, it was split into two companies, one focusing on IT education and training and the other on IT solutions. In conversation with **Radhika P Nair**, Pawar, NIIT's co-founder and chairman, shares his entrepreneurial philosophy.

SPOT THE PROBLEM

I was working as Head of corporate planning at HCL in the early eighties and was tying up processes together. While doing that I realised that lack of trained manpower had the potential of holding back the then nascent IT industry. Bringing people and computers together was the challenge. This was the genesis of NIIT. Entrepreneurs have to be problem seekers, spotting the problem before anyone else.

ORGANISATION BUILDING

We never had any doubts or nightmares about our idea. We were very excited about it. But it is one thing to be excited and quite another to build up the company. We devoted time and effort to build the organisation, as scaling up is linked to the strength of the organisation. The most crucial part of building up a company is getting the right people. It is not enough to get the person with the right qualifications; he should also have the right frame of mind that fits in with what is required for the company.

PEOPLE POWER

We try to nurture talent. We have had an annual day at NIIT every year for the past 22 years. We pick a central theme each year for the coming year. Last year it was 'Employee First' and we went back to study the young NIIT-ian and this year we have instituted the Young Achiever award. I have started meeting the younger generation of NIIT employees more regularly to understand their views better. I am quite proud that at NIIT we have created an environment where people are willing to try out new ideas to solve issues.

PET PROJECTS

Now, I have the luxury of being involved in many projects. At the moment I am focusing on Bhutan's IT literacy programme with which NIIT is associated. It was interesting to see King Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck and senior government officials going back to the classroom to understand the role of technology in improving people's lives. The other project is NIIT University, which is in Neemrana on the outskirts of Delhi. It should be fully functional by 2020 and I hope it becomes a sustainable, research-driven centre for higher education. As entrepreneurs, we need to keep finding new problems to solve.