

SMALL MEDIUM

The Evolving Space of the **INDIAN STARTUP**
COMMUNITY and Angel investors' Ecosystem | 11

4 ways to **IMPROVE**
YOUR LUCK IN 2021 | 13

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July 2021 | ₹200 | INDIA EDITION

THE NEW educators

WHAT THIS UNICORN
CAN TEACH YOU ABOUT THE
CHANGING LESSON
PLAN IN EDTECH

CLOCKWISE

Roman Saini, Co-Founder;
Gaurav Munjal, CEO &
Co-Founder and
Hemesh Singh, CTO &
Co-Founder, Unacademy



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How Education Changes the World and Technology is Changing Education

Education changes a society but as ironical as it sounds, technology was perhaps the last to dent the education sector. It has taken a pandemic and the New National Education Policy to deeply question the instruction, attendance, testing, funding, and the human connections that education binds together.

Understandably 2020 was a major learning curve for students, parents, and educators moving their teaching online but 2021 and the second wave has brought the efficacy of the use of technology for teaching and learning, becoming fully acceptable, even desired. We all know that technology can bring things to happen on a scale. Education delivery will now be challenged to ensure that more personalized

learning happens. The question now is no longer about how we can do digital education rather how we can effectively do digital education. So the transformation for educational institutions now is not an interim junction rather a complete journey that would need to rightly and effectively take place even after the pandemic is behind us.

The end goal is to make the student more empowered and Institutions, edtech, students, parents, teachers need to be on the same page. The innovation may not necessarily be a matter of school or screen but rather school and screen. This calls for digital collaboration and not a digital divide.

Our current issue looks into the Best Edtech Companies in India who are innovating and changing the status quo of education. The issue also examines the transformation



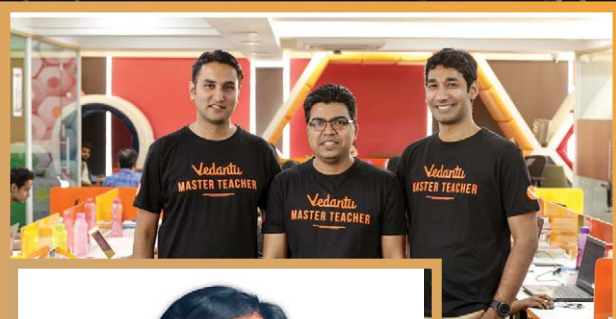
of educational institutions, who are not thinking of digital as an interim junction rather a complete journey that would effectively remain even after the pandemic is behind us. The reality is that this is going to change education forever and perhaps for the better.

Our issue also talks about new emerging markets like veg-meat, which is gaining prominence among the conscious generation.

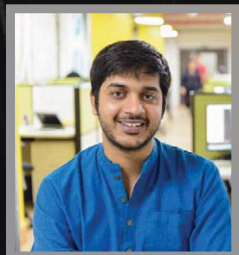
Watch out for our next issue which is Tech 25, a special on the Tech world and how it is changing human relationships with Society.

Ritu Marya.

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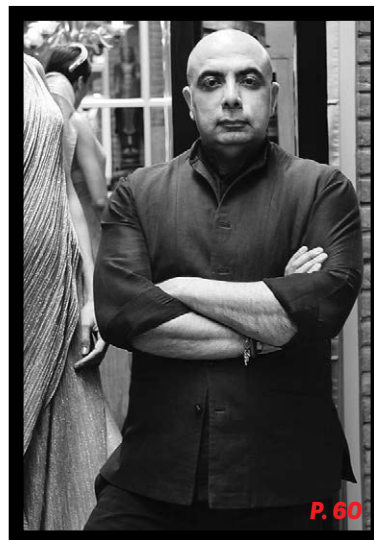
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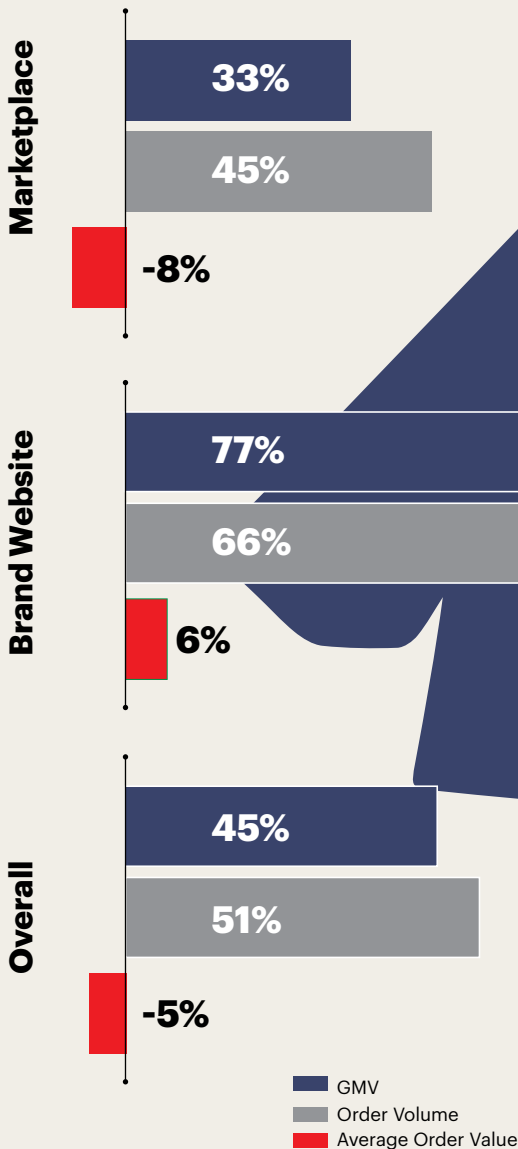
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HONEST LUCRATIVE DEALS

ONLINE FASHION INDUSTRY REPORT

Online Fashion Industry continues to demonstrate overall 51% growth in FY-21 and 66% growth on Brand Websites

FASHION SEGMENT GROWTH IN INDIA



10-15%
Overall
E-Commerce
Returns

FASHION RETURNS CONTINUE TO BE HIGH

20-25%
Fashion
E-Commerce
Returns

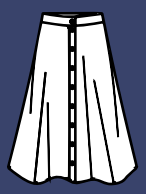
FASHION E-COMMERCE SECTOR-WISE GROWTH



Kidswear
200%+



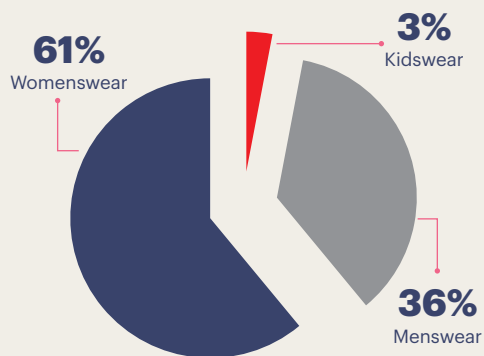
Menswear
37%



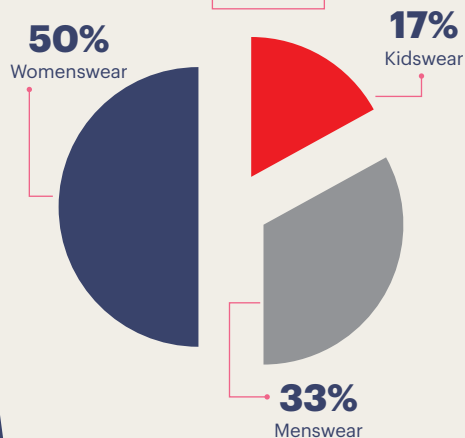
Womenswear
30%

SHARE OF ONLINE ORDERS AMONGST MEN, WOMEN & KIDS

2020



2021

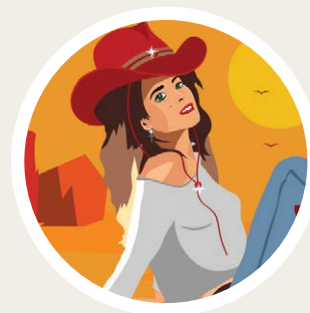


WESTERN WEAR & ETHNIC WEAR MARKET MIX

ORDER VOLUME GROWTH



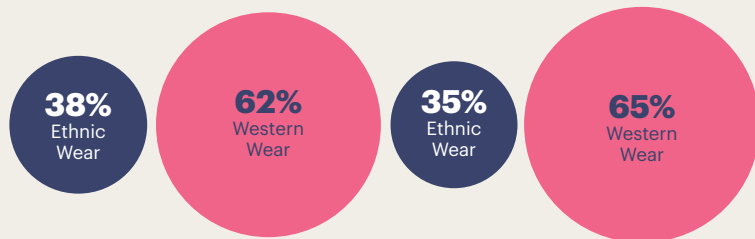
41%
Ethnic Wear
Growth



57%
Western Wear
Growth

FY 2021 VS
FY 2020

MARKET SHARE



2020

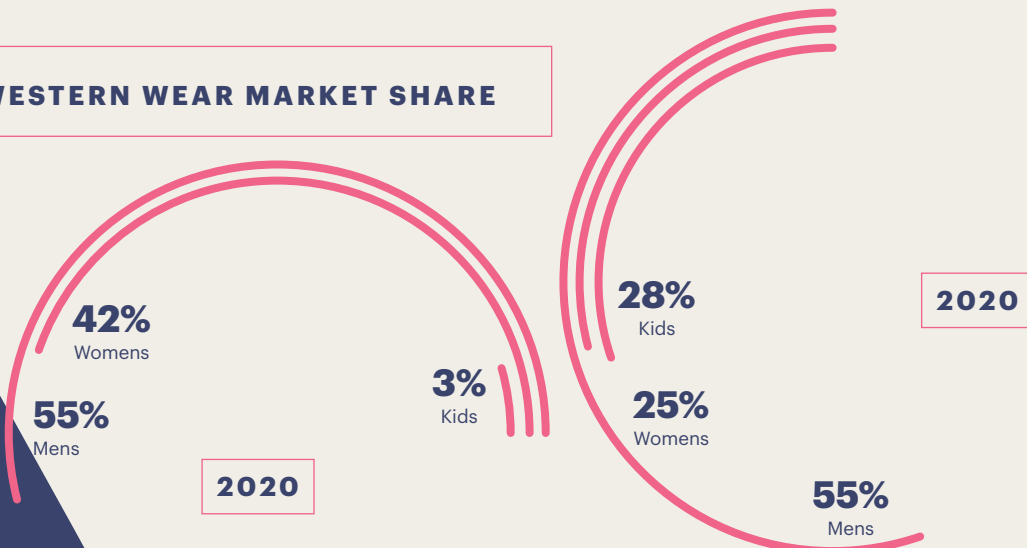
2021



WESTERN WEAR ORDER VOLUME GROWTH

300%+
Kids

WESTERN WEAR MARKET SHARE



2020

2020

5 Essentials for Restaurant Owners to cope with the Pandemic Blues

BY POOJA DHINGRA, CHEF & FOUNDER, LE15 PATISSERIE

This time is unprecedented (yes, I'm done with this word too!) for all of us. For me, for the first time in 10 years, work stopped. As a restaurant owner and entrepreneur, I was so used to always being on and always working. I went through months of uncertainty, despair and confusion before I snapped myself out of it to do what I had to for my business to survive. I had to ask myself some hard questions and act fast. I've seen many food entrepreneurs re-invent themselves and experiment with different models to survive. It's been a tough time navigating this but below are 5 essentials that helped me cope with the pandemic.

1. REAL CONVERSATIONS: We're often told as a society to not show our weaknesses and always put up a brave front. I don't believe in that at all - as a leader or entrepreneur, I decided to be as open and honest about everything that was going on with Le15 and that resonated with our customers at a different level. Early on, I realised that we wouldn't be able to survive if we stuck to our business model of cafes and pastry shops. It was the hardest decision I've ever had to make, but I knew that if we had to survive - I would have to make tough decisions fast. We closed our flagship cafe in Colaba and our petit cafe in Oberoi Mall. This helped us lower our costs, limit our liabilities and gave us some time to work on our business



model. We put together an e-cookbook with all the recipes and people bought them to support us. Even with my team - I was fully transparent and made sure they knew exactly what was going on at all times.


2. GO BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD: This time truly helped us to go back to our mission statement which is about bringing joy to people's lives and asking ourselves how we can still carry out that mission but in different formats. We'd been researching and working on our packaged good line for years and it was time to put all our energy into it. We could focus on what was important to us and work on a product range,

staying true to our principles and ideas.

3. COMMUNITY: A crisis truly shows you what's important and helps you find opportunities to serve the community too. From Chef Saransh Golia starting Covid Meals for India that brought relief to Neysa Mendes starting #BakeForIndia which helped bakers around the country raise money for covid relief - a lot of chefs and restaurateurs channeled their despair into something that would help the community.

4. RE-INVENTION: Necessity is the mother of all - in this case -

re-invention. Whether it was Riyaz Amlani tying up with Mumbai Dabbawalas for food deliveries, Chef Seefah starting an Asian Bakery or us at Le15 setting up a Shopify store to start all India deliveries. Through Shopify's platform, we were able to list all our products on our website. Also, we started tracking our Shopify backend to understand where our customers, across India, were ordering from. Taking a closer look at how things work and finding ways to adapt and change definitely helped us.

5. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUR CUSTOMERS: Building digital relationships with our consumers even when business was shut, helped us get through some difficult times. Whether it was conducting virtual classes or sharing recipes online - that sense of connection kept me going. This time helped us realise what we're good at and where we need to improve. While learning and improving is a constant process for us, we really looked at our online community and thought of ways we could build a better relationship with our customers. We started a Le15 Taste Club through our Instagram pages and now have thousands of our customers tasting and testing our products before they launch. This not only gives us critical feedback but helps us understand the market better. 

The Evolving Space of the Indian Startup Community and Angel investors' Ecosystem

BY NANDINI MANSINGHKA, CO-FOUNDER AND CEO - MUMBAI ANGELS NETWORK

Towards the latter half of 2020, progressively yet cautiously, the investor community and particularly those in the early stage ecosystem harmonized and revamped their operations and investments. Despite the diminishing hopes for a speedy recovery of the Indian economy, the current market trend is witnessing an uptick in the number of new high-risk investments. In just the initial four months of the calendar year 2021, at least 13 startups made it to the unicorn club. As India is expected to raise USD 13.7 billion, the tide will continue as more startups gear up to join this list. The angel investing ecosystem has evolved and this is what's in store for the future:

TRADITIONAL INVESTORS MOVE FROM GOLD TO STARTUPS

Several seasoned investors believe that good startup ideas with an effective jumpstart can scale up to almost 30 to 50 crores in revenue in five years, ensuring a return far better than the traditionally favored gold and real estate market.

ENTRY OF NON-METRO PLAYERS INTO THE MARKET

Gone are the days when startups were seen as a high-risk and low-reward asset class in the investment ecosystem. Today, other than successful businessmen and tech executives, several HNIs (High Net worth Individuals) based out of both metros



and non-metro cities are deploying significant capital in early stage companies. We also see an emerging trend where-in a large number of young entrepreneurs from small-towns are making it to the big league. The new-age angel investors are paving the way for promising startups even from tier-II and tier-III cities.

TECH STARTUPS ARE DRIVING THE EMERGING ANGEL INVESTORS

Tech startups have emerged as the top-most choice of most angel investors as more and more consumers are demanding convenient, hassle-free, and easy-to-use

tech-based solutions.

STARTUP FOUNDERS BECOMING ANGEL INVESTORS

The growing trend of successful startup founders converting into angel investors is empowering and encouraging young entrepreneurs to shape their ideas and transform them into successful ventures and even unicorns. Several thriving startup founders such as Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal (Flipkart), Kunal Shah (Cred), and Kunal Bahl (Snapdeal) have all turned into angel investors and are now giving back to the startup society by helping young

entrepreneurs transform their ideas into reality.

THE PHOENIX EFFECT

Just like how a phoenix emerges from the ashes unscathed, a lot of new-age startups, with their innovative approach and futuristic management, were able to beat the pandemic blues and have thrived amidst the crisis. While most traditional businesses were impacted by the sudden waves of COVID-19, several startups managed to navigate their way and survived. This success has in a way been driven by the angel investor community that has firmly backed these innovative new-age startups.

IN CONCLUSION...

Startups are a key focus segment for the Indian government, which has laid out a GDP target of USD 5 trillion by the year 2025, thereby creating ample opportunities for angel investors in this growing economy. As the Indian startup ecosystem is one of the most challenging yet profitable asset classes, it continues to be a lucrative investment option for high net worth investors. With an impressive 900+ deals in 2020, USD 403 million raised for early-stage funding and the significant increase in angel investment, the ecosystem is set to expand further. With an increasing number of domestic startups gaining global recognition, investors worldwide are showing keen interest in the Indian growth story. [®]

Unleashing India's Superpowers!

BY SHARAD DEVARAJAN, CEO, AND CO-FOUNDER, GRAPHIC INDIA

A new creative renaissance is emerging in the country across animation, comics, gaming and pop culture. Many of the Indian creators I have been fortunate enough to work with in comics and animation over the years, are now developing tremendous interest towards their work and building fan followings across the world.

In the same way the West has created superheroes or Japan and Korea have exported their anime, manga, manhwa and original styles of storytelling to the world, India has the potential to become one of the biggest creative exporters in the years ahead. The next Steven Spielberg, Stan Lee, Stephenie Meyer or Hayao Miyazaki is sitting somewhere in our country ready to shake the world with their story.

During the pandemic, there's been a huge demand for new and diverse content by consumers stuck at home, including live action, documentaries or animation. Fortunately, animation is something that can still move forward in production through remote working systems even during unpredictable lock-downs, which is why it makes a compelling option for all platforms as part of their content portfolio strategy.

Around the world, numerous animated productions that were in production when the shut downs began, still managed



to work effectively through the pandemic with remote teams, minimizing the disruptions to production and delivery. However, for animation to thrive in India we need to break the perception that it is just for kids. Instead, animation should be seen as a medium, not a genre. Similar to other creative mediums such as art, music, novels, live-action films or television, it is a tool for expression that can be used by all types of creators to target different audiences. In numerous global markets, some of the biggest films and shows for adults are done through the medium of animation.

Indian GEC audiences, who may not have been as open to non-kids related animation before the pandemic, now find themselves willing to experiment with new content during this time because live action releases have slowed down. This creates a moment to shape new experiences and hopefully create new fans that last far beyond the pandemic.

Similar to the recent series I produced, "The Legend of Hanuman," we are creating a number of new animated projects inspired by our great mythologies. These stories of our culture

have inspired generations for thousands of years and are some of the defining works of all creation. Their relevancy and universal human stories continue to inspire over a billion people today. Our mythological epics must now be produced with the same visual grandeur and narrative complexity that does justice to their profound spiritual and emotional truths. Animation is one of the most powerful ways we can take audiences into that place of wonder, showing a visual world that live action budgets are sometimes constrained by.

Through animation, we were able to show the visual world of mythical beings, demons, forest creatures, spirits and anthropomorphic clans and portray the series with reverence, sophistication, drama and heart that allows us to hopefully help usher in a golden age of new similar projects that appeal to the masses using this medium.

With over 600 million people under the age of 25, the youth of India will transform not only the country's entertainment landscape but also the world's. In animation and character entertainment, we need to collectively change the perception of India from being 'an outsourcer' to being 'the source' – to create original heroes and characters that spark the imaginations of kids across India – and then the world. The rise of the Indian superhero has just begun! ©

4 ways to improve your luck in 2021

BY ANDY NAIRN, FOUNDER, LUCKY GENERALS & AUTHOR, GO LUCK YOURSELF

Luck is a 4 letter world in business circles. Only 2% of management journals mention the subject and when they do, it's usually with disdain. Peter Thiel, the founder of PayPal, sums up the conventional view – at least in the West. He says that “Luck is just an excuse for not working hard enough.”

Now, every entrepreneur knows that long hours and sleepless nights come with the job. But what if we could work more effectively, by making more of the opportunities that come our way? There's a growing body of evidence that suggests luck isn't just a shadowy force that we must submit to – it's a factor we can influence. In fact, we can all stack the odds in our companies' favour if we do 4 key things:

1 . APPRECIATE WHAT WE'VE GOT: Studies show that individuals are more likely to succeed if they take time to recognise the good things in their lives. This also applies to organizations. Many companies are blind to the advantages that they enjoy. They overlook their people, their brand heritage or their super-fans. Alternatively they don't appreciate the value of their owned media channels or the data that they hold. Often, the more familiar these assets are, the more invisible they become. So a big first step towards improving your luck is to make a list of all the gifts at your disposal: often you will find that the answer is sitting right under your nose.



2 . LOOK OUT FOR OPPORTUNITIES EVERYWHERE: What if your initial audit doesn't reveal any hidden assets though? In the unlikely event that this happens (it's more likely that you've missed something), keep your eyes open for opportunities elsewhere. Make a point of looking at other industries, sectors and cultures. Better still, see what you can learn from completely different areas like sport, music, art, psychology, film, politics or nature. Many of the biggest breakthroughs in business have happened outside of office hours. So fill your life with diverse influences, go for

a walk in the great outdoors or cultivate a new hobby. All of these will increase your chances of striking it lucky, next time you think about work.

3 . TURN MISFORTUNE INTO GOOD FORTUNE: Right now, many businesses are obviously dealing with unprecedented challenges, due to the pandemic. But the most successful businesses have always found ways to turn bad luck into good luck. Crises can create moments to rethink old assumptions. Complaints and criticism can provoke new ideas. Limited budgets and time constraints can force companies to think

more creatively. Lisa Su (the inspirational CEO of AMD) is a big believer in luck and says the best advice she was ever given was to “run towards problems.” So write down your top 5 challenges and then ask yourself how they might actually be opportunities.

4 . PRACTISE BEING LUCKY EVERY DAY: The real gains come when you build luck into your daily routines and processes. This might sound like a contradiction in terms but smart companies are increasingly realising that “happy accidents” don't have to happen by accident. For instance you can set up your office space so that different departments connect with each other more frequently (as Apple and Pixar have done). Or you can ring-fence time for employees to pursue passion projects (as 3M and Google do). Or you can just hire more diversely (as every smart company is trying to do right now). All of these maximise the chances of lucky breakthroughs, by encouraging the cross-fertilization of ideas every day. Interestingly, many of the strategies outlined above are inspired by Eastern philosophy, where concepts like luck, gratitude and karma have long been part of the culture. Which just goes to show that old ideas are sometimes the best ones. Sure, hard work is still crucial but why not bring yourself a little bit of luck too? ☺



IS INDIAN MARKET RIPE FOR ALTERNATE-

MEAT

REVOLUTION?

Several foodtech startups are gearing to take a bite of the fast-growing alternate-meat sector

By Shipra Singh

Startup OPPORTUNITY

Last month, a Twitter feud broke out between Amul India and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) after the latter urged the Indian dairy cooperative society to switch to producing vegan milk. The animal rights organization said Amul should not ‘fight the inevitable vegan global trend’. It’s indeed true that the vegan trend is on a rise worldwide. As more and more people adopt vegan diets, there’s been an equal rise in the number of businesses opening up to cater to the market need. One of the trends of the vegan sector that is fast gaining ground globally is alternative meat, or also widely known as smart protein. Mock meat is a food item that imitates meat in terms of texture, taste and nutrition but is made from plants. The key difference between a vegetarian product and alternate meat is that the latter attempts to appeal to non-vegetarian eaters in order to influence their meat buying decisions. As Indians are fast catching up on the trend of ‘conscious’ eating, a slew of homegrown startups are taking a bite out of the alternative meat market. But, the question to ask is whether the Indian market is ready for it?

MARKET IN THE MAKING

Several startups in the plant-based meat segment have been launched in the last few years. Abhishek Sinha, co-founder and CEO, Good Dot, an early entrant in the alternative meat market, said though awareness around alternative protein has increased significantly in the last one-two years, there’s still a lot of ground to cover. “It has been easy for us to promote plant based meat in our distribution partner, RCM’s channel, but in modern trade, general trade and D2C space, much more effort needs to be put in to create awareness. It’s an upcoming field with little awareness amongst the customers about plant based meats,” he said. Good Dot sells ready to eat meat substitutes for INR 85-249. In comparison to mock meat, acceptability of plant-based



GLOBAL INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE IN ALTERNATE MEAT

PLANT-BASED

\$4.4 billion
invested across
419 deals

CULTIVATED MEAT

\$505 million
across 125 deals

Source: Good Food Institute

egg has been relatively easier, as per Kartik Dixit, co-founder and CEO, EVO Food, India's first plant-based egg company. "Surprisingly, it was not that difficult because people already want a cholesterol free and antibiotics free egg," he said. The company is yet to roll out its product but claims to have LOIs (letter of intent) with more than 55 restaurants already and over 1,000 signups on its website.

Another category of meat alternative is lab-grown meat, which uses animals' cells to cultivate cultured meat. Clear Meat is doing exactly that and will soon be launching its lab-grown muscle meat in the market. Synthetic meat doesn't fall in the vegan category, but eliminates the need to rear and slaughter animals. So far, the sector has not gained notable attention from VCs either. Only a handful of startups have managed to raise small amounts from investors, majority of whom are global players. Indian VCs and angel investors have largely steered clear from this category so far.

That said, industry stakeholders are confident that the segment is set to make noise in the coming years. "You can expect deals to be made extensively in this space in the next year or two. In fact this is going to be like a new IT space very soon," said Sinha.

"Globally, investment in the space has grown significantly over the last few years--investment totalled over USD 3.1 billion in 2020, up 3x from the year prior, as per our global calculations--and it's only a matter of time before India shows similarly impressive growth," said Varun Deshpande, MD, The Good Food Institute (GFI) India.

GFI India, established in 2017, is the central convener body and ecosystem-builder in the alternate-protein sector. "We work with universities, entrepreneurs, large corporations,



"All research indicates that India will emerge as a major market for the smart protein sector over the next decade."

VARUN DESHPANDE,

MD, The Good Food Institute (GFI) India.

investors, government agencies, and a host of other stakeholders to build a fertile ecosystem for smart protein growth in the country," said Deshpande. GFI has also been a catalyst in establishing funds focused on the alternate meat space by Big Idea Ventures and Magnetic (founded by former head of JM Morgan Stanley India). The Indian government is also supporting companies and research institutes via funds and grants in their effort to create a market for sustainable food products that not only combats animal cruelty but also mitigates the impact of meat and dairy production on the climate. GFI has an agreement with the Maharashtra government to set up a research centre in the state for research on cell-based meat and production. Additionally, the institute has also

worked with the Centre for Cellular Molecular Biology (CCMB) and National Research Centre on Meat (NRCMeat) to secure INR 4.6 crore funding for cultivated meat research from the government.

OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGES

Deshpande said India has the potential to emerge as a major global market for the smart protein sector over the next decade. "India offers a 'dual market opportunity' - catering to domestic consumers as demand for meat, eggs, and dairy continues to grow over the next decades, as well as to the rapidly growing mature global market for smart protein." However, the road is marred with challenges. Foremost, proactive efforts need to be made to raise awareness around plant-based and lab-grown meat. Shah believes a national-level awareness campaign is the answer to the problem, which will require heavy investment.

Lack of capital for R&D and infrastructure building and a conducive regulatory landscape are the major impediments to the sector's growth.

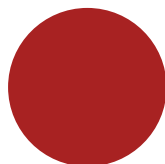
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ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF CULTIVATED MEAT PRODUCTS

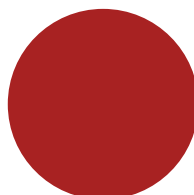
CULTIVATED CHICKEN



35-67%
less land
used

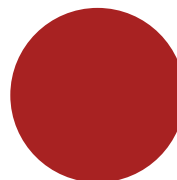


70% of
nutrient
pollution
reduction



95% less land
used

CULTIVATED BEEF



74-87% of climate
change emission
reduction



94% of nutrient
pollution
reduction

Source: Good Food Institute

Decoding EDTECH'S New Model

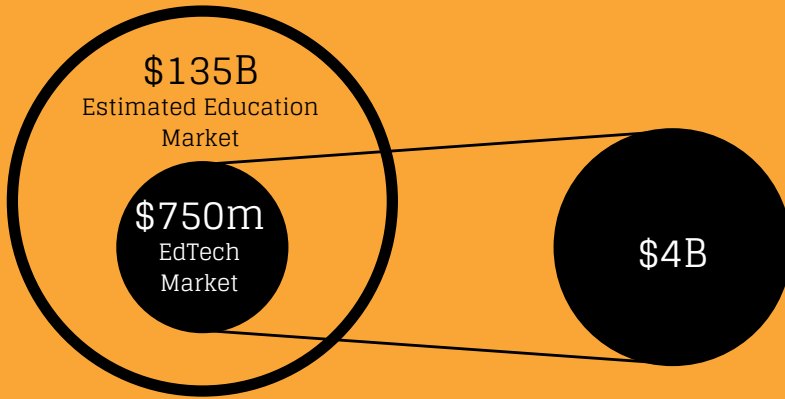
As Covid-induced lockdown continues, the demand for online learning is set to grow further. Industry leaders say the edtech boom will continue in 2021 despite the economy on a backtrack due to rising Covid cases. India's edtech sector is expected to be \$30 billion market size by 2030. It will be the testimony of time if edtech explosion in the venture investment space might be growing too fast and the real learning would be to see students gaining big ground with the new tech-based instructional methods.

By Punita Sabharwal

With Debarghya Sil, Puneet Kapani, Shipra Singh & Prabhjeet bhatla



Current Market in 2020



Obtainable Market by 2025

Key Opportunity Areas

trends

UNBUNDLING OF VALUE ADDED SERVICES

Increase in number of schools / colleges



Growing demands of an increasingly wealthy population



Gap in what students want vs. what schools / colleges can provide



Unbundling of VAS including core services like special classes / counselling, to support services like catering / security

PHASE CHANGE INTO JOBS



INTERVIEW PREP
Practice interviews / social skills training / English lessons

TEST PREP FOR EXAMS
Practice exams and tutoring for written exams for MNCs and government jobs

TEACHING CODING
Helping students learn coding and giving them live projects to build their portfolio

CONTINUOUS LEARNING

LEARNING FOR EARNING
Upskilling to increase earnings or to change jobs/ industries

LEARNING FOR YEARNING
Learning new skills for the fun of learning / interest in the subject



The Man behind India's Most Valued Startup

BYJU RAVEENDRAN, CEO AND FOUNDER, BYJU'S

Since inception, BYJU'S goal has been to make quality education accessible and to ensure students from across the country and eventually the globe have access to the best learning content and teachers. In fact, this was one of the main reasons for BYJU'S to shift from being an offline test prep class to an online learning app. "We understood early on that the only way to ensure that everyone has access to our learning programs and scale our offerings was with the help of technology. In fact, we brought technology in education when no one else was doing this," shares Byju Raveendran, CEO and Founder, BYJU'S.

At BYJU'S, there is a continuous effort to make learning accessible, personalised, and engaging for students across the country. "We understood that while one student may be learning a concept for the first time, another might just be revising a concept before an exam. Students on our platform learn through a combination of asynchronous, synchronous, self-paced and scheduled learning. Through the combination of teachers, video, and interactive games, we can deliver personalised learning, feedback, and assessments for all students," adds Byju. The adaptive learning platform uses new-age technology and data science to a detailed and dynamic learning profile for every single student. This profile forms the backbone of their highly personalised recommendation system. This recommendation system has

the intelligence to figure out what a student is struggling with, actively intervene and help fix their misconceptions.

At BYJU'S, for lower grades, they try to make concepts fun by creating games and interactive quizzes. For higher grades, they deep-dive into micro-concept levels and focus on conceptual clarity. Another aspect that boosts their asynchronous learning format is "gamification."

Byju feels the education sector is far from being saturated. There are a lot of opportunities for other players to work on. What matters most is the focus on "value creation". Once a company can create value in the lives of its end users, it is set for success. This scenario has created even more opportunities for edtech players in the country and there are many areas where they can innovate and solve the innate learning challenges of our society. When asked about newer opportunity areas for entrepreneurs in edtech space Byju advises, "Firstly, I think entrepreneurs can work on how to make tech-enabled teaching more efficient and easy for teachers. Most teachers are not digitally empowered and struggle to teach seamlessly and integrate technology. Secondly, more institutions are opening up to the idea of implementing a blended form of learning that uses the best of both offline and online learning aids. This opens up an opportunity to create something new in this space. Thirdly, reskilling and upskilling are the needs of the hour. With India having such a young and aspirational population, they need to be skilled efficiently to meet the

demand for the same around the world. Fourthly, there is an opportunity to create something in the co-circular space. Entrepreneurs can figure how to teach co-curricular skills online. As we see an increase in the number of startups in the country, we will notice that startups who provide specific and niche services or products will have many opportunities to thrive, and startups that are offering similar services or products will consolidate."

India is still the largest market and biggest focal point for BYJU'S. Going forward, they are trying to penetrate deeper into the regional market, beyond metro and tier-one cities, with learning programs in regional languages. Having said that, global expansion is also on the cards and is in line with their vision to revolutionize learning. The recent acquisitions whether it was Osmo or WhiteHatJr have also given them a headstart when it comes to the U.S. market and has given us a clear opportunity to accelerate international expansion plans. Sharing his thoughts Byju says, "The focus of all our acquisitions and collaborations has always been

to strengthen our offerings and create holistic learning experiences on a single platform. The one question we ask ourselves is if it will be useful to students and if it will be used by students. This is the most fundamental part of our evaluation process. Our core model has continued to grow at 100% year after year. We don't get attached to the belief that we can do everything on our own and hence we look at some complementary models."

Even the AESL acquisition allowed them to enter the test prep segment in a big way. Together they will create a hybrid format so that students get an option of learning from the star features online and also coming to the nearby location for the rigor and intensity which is required for test prep. Talking about the same Byju says, "If you look at our business model, it's very complementary in terms of adding new formats, because we had our expertise in a synchronous format, self-learning format. We have added a strong or synchronous format, which is scaling internationally. We recently launched BYJU'S Future School to offer live one-on-one classes, with teachers in India to students in developed English-speaking markets. There are 11,000 plus women teachers delivering these live one on one sessions, with more than 40,000 sessions delivered daily. It's creating a big impact even on that job creation side. We are tapping into this high-quality graduate pool and giving them flexibility and convenience of teaching from home, which is scaling very nicely."

FACTSHEET

Year of inception: 2015, BYJU'S The Learning App was launched

No. of paid users: 6.5 million

Registered student base: 100 million

Renewal rate: 86%

Most popular course: Math and Science (K-12)

Revenue for FY 2020-21: 2800 last FY 19-20



COVER STORY

CLOCKWISE

Roman Saini, Co-Founder;
Gaurav Munjal, CEO &
Co-Founder and
Hemesh Singh, CTO &
Co-Founder, Unacademy



Unbundling Unacademy

My Zoom Call with Gaurav Munjal, who is in Dubai at the time of this call is 15 minutes late and starts as soon as he finishes one of his investor meetings over Zoom for another fundraise. The pandemic has brought new learning methods even for investors as the edtech market brought an unprecedented change. Valued at \$2 Billion in November 2020 in their last investment round, Unacademy is upping the game, as I pen down this story another edtech leader has been declared the most valuable startup in the country making edtech the most efficacious of all. Read on to know what this unicorn can teach you about the changing lesson plan in edtech.

By Punita Sabharwal



COVER STORY

TIMELINE

2015

Unacademy founded

2016

100+ educators join Unacademy

2017

1M+ learners join the platform with 40K+ online lessons

Gaurav Munjal is a content creator whose entrepreneurial streak took him to the path of setting up Unacademy. Ever since the age of 15, Munjal was fascinated by blogging and started using online platforms like Blogger and Quora. Talking about his entrepreneurial innings as a teenager, Munjal says, “I was making money through Google AdSense throughout my college by making these blogs, etc.” While pursuing Computer Engineering from NMIMS University, Mumbai, Munjal’s college mates wanted him to come over to their place to explain a topic on Computer Graphics as they had an exam two days later. Instead of commuting there to explain, Munjal made a video, uploaded it on YouTube, and shared it with his friends. For Munjal, YouTube was just another platform like Blogger or Quora. Six months later, he realized that the video has got 1 lakh likes. Talking about his eureka moment, Munjal says, “I wasn’t expecting that because it was a very niche academic topic but people also searched for these topics when preparing for their own examination.” This was the moment Munjal realized that online learning was disruptive.

But this moment wasn’t just a one-off; he had a series of incidents that made him believe in the potential of online learning. In the first year of his college, he found about Stanford Engineering Everywhere, it was Stanford’s initiative for online courses and there was one Professor Mehran Sahami whose videos were uploaded on Stanford Engineering Everywhere for Computer Science. “Amazing courses and amazing quality content, this is what they teach in Stanford and when I discovered this, it was significantly better than what my college was teaching and I went for those courses and I learned most of Computer Science online and I realized in online learning a great teacher can create a 1000x difference,” mentions Munjal.

Entrepreneurial Innings

Once College was over, Munjal worked as a Software Developer with Directi for a year. While Unacademy remained a YouTube channel, Munjal along with Hemesh Singh pursued FlatChat a real estate platform for college students and bachelors across

India, which in 2014 got acquired by CommonFloor. On how he found his true calling with Unacademy, Munjal shares, “After CommonFloor had acquired us, I was helping in marketing. I was there for one and a half years. Then I wanted to do my own thing and the Unacademy YouTube channel was taking off and I somehow knew that the time had arrived so the final trigger was that we pitched to a few investors and then they said yes without even the product or revenue in place.” Hemesh Singh has been doing programming since he was 12. From the start, he has been really passionate about technology in general. Currently, the CTO & Co-founder at Unacademy, Hemesh Singh, says, “I joined Gaurav right out of college and when we started working together, we realized that we both really love building products, both of us have a deep passion for technology and we just wanted to build good things and when FlatChat got acquired, we moved to Bangalore. I think we enjoyed building things together and that translated into the inception of Unacademy.”

Soon, he convinced his friend from school days, Roman Saini to teach on YouTube, who went to AIIMS and became a Doctor and further cracked UPSC and became an IAS officer. When he did a video, he got 50,000 views and people were obsessed about cracking UPSC. “That is when we realized that this is massive and we are already seeing the traction on Youtube and we must pursue this,” adds Munjal. Talking about what made his videos click with the masses, Munjal says, “I think we have got very content-creator like DNA and then because I was also a coder so it was a very interesting combination of product and content.” The investors said yes based on the founders’ background and the Youtube distribution they had. When asked about what made him launch Unacademy as a full-fledged business, Munjal replies, “When I made

videos it was just a hobby, but when we saw more views with more videos, we soon became the largest education channel on YouTube in the country, we realized we have something here, we already have traction, why not build a product out of it.”

At that time in 2014, there were hardly any content creators, especially those who were successful. Remembering the same Saini, the co-founder at Unacademy says, “Being an IAS Officer, I wouldn’t be able to create any content. When I first created a video, it was watched by 50,000 people in a day. Whenever I used to upload a video 50000-1,00,000 people used to watch it and that was the eureka moment. One of the videos crossed a million views over the span of 2-3 weeks and at that time, I realized it was a massive market and it was extremely important for us to crack it properly and that was the Eureka moment for me.” On creating newer

educators through the platform Saini says, “We realized we need to incentivize a lot of smart people to teach. Right now only the traditional teachers were teaching but at Unacademy a lot of first-time teachers were also teaching and the Eureka moment was that we should enable hundreds and thousands of content creators to become educators.” More importantly, for them, it was also about building a brand for them as well. If they started teaching offline, they would require at least 5-10 years to get recognized as a top educator in a certain field, but Unacademy provided them with a platform and distribution.

Talking about the struggles in building the tech platform, Singh says, “On the tech side, the biggest problem was to make sure that the product works really well because it was one of its kind apps and in 2015, not a lot of creation was happening on mobile and that is what we were trying to enable. We had an app with which one could create high-quality educational videos,

UNACADEMY ACQUISITIONS

PrepLadder
Mastree
CodeChef
Coursavy
Kreatryx
Graphy
NeoStencil
TapChief

2018

200K+ daily active users and 5000+ educators on the platform

2019

1000+ live classes daily

2020

700K+ daily active users, 2L+ subscribers & 18K+ educators on the platform

2021

Acquired TapChief

which was turning out to be one of the biggest technology challenges. The second one was building a good team because you want to be very sure of the people you are hiring early on because they end up hiring more people and so on. The kind of talent we wanted to bring early on and with the limited resources we had, it was one of the challenges early on.”

Time to Pivot

Launched in 2015, for the first four years, Unacademy didn't make any money. Talking about the pivot at that moment, Munjal says, “I think the real shift came in 2019 when we launched a subscription product, till then we were a free platform.” Delving further, Munjal shares, “Our top teachers were leaving the platform because we had become a sort of talent acquisition platform for top teachers for top institutes and we had to figure out monetization. We got fairly excited about monetization and now it is a \$200 Million product.” When asked about handling growth in the time of the pandemic, Singh says, “For the initial 3 years, we were focusing on getting the educators, creating content and serving it to our learners. We had a

lot of learnings from that already. The core technology platform was there so when the growth happened during the pandemic everything was already there. Since then we've improved certain things. Our systems are better but nothing broke because we had the time to learn and fail and create the systems from that and when we started in 2019, we were doing live classes before that in a different model, we had enough time to prepare and have strong systems in place.”

Since Unacademy was a technology-first company from day one, it was very easy for them to scale. The test prep platform serving 40+ categories went on to enter the K12 market. Today the Unacademy Group consists of Unacademy, PrepLadder, Mastree, CodeChef, and Graphy. Today, students from Tier 2, 3, 4 cities form 70% of the user base at Unacademy. With the first acquisition of Wifistudy in 2018, in the pandemic period, they upped their buying game in 2020 with the most recent one in 2021 being TapChief. Talking about his ambition behind these acquisitions, Munjal says, “I have rarely done an acquisition for revenue. Mostly, I have done acquisition for team and capability so if there is a good team, we would like to acquire them.

If someone has done something that we don't know how to do, we acquire them. Rarely, it is for revenue.” Next on his radar is the jobtech market which according to Munjal is in need of a major upheaval. And the recent fund closure will be announced very soon as per Munjal and they will be able to crack the market.

Today, Unacademy is India's largest learning platform with a valuation of \$2 billion and a growing network of 50,000+ registered Educators and over 49 million Learners. The vision of Unacademy remains the same to reduce the knowledge gap by providing access to the best of teachers. Sharing his vision Munjal says, “We believe we can build great consumer internet products and we would like to do that in edtech.” The platform imparts education to students across 10,000 cities in India, in 14 Indian languages. When asked about competition in edtech, and the sector giving the most valuable startup to the country, Munjal reiterates, “We are not chasing the valuation game, valuation is secondary. Our game is a better product, better brand, and better marketing. We are the number 1 education brand in India if you go by the Google Trends and YouTube trends data.”



KARAN SHROFF

joined Unacademy in mid-2019 as the Vice President for Marketing and was elevated to the role of Chief Marketing Officer in September 2020. In June 2021, he was elevated to the position of Co-Founder and Partner at Unacademy.



SUMIT JAIN

co-founded Graphy, a mobile-first live learning platform, in April 2020. Unacademy launched Graphy, a platform that helps creators grow their audience, monetize their skills, and host live cohort-based courses, with a separate founding team in June 2020.



VIVEK SINHA

is the Senior Vice President of Business at Unacademy. An MBA from the Indian School of business, the young and zealous Mr. Vivek Sinha joined Unacademy with 13 years of experience.



UMESH BUDE

joined Unacademy in July 2020 as the Vice President and Head of Engineering. With an experience in building secure, microservices oriented platforms, Umesh is actively involved in the designing, development, and testing stages of the innovative technological solutions that Unacademy offers to its users.



TINA BALACHANDRAN

serves as the Vice President, HR at Unacademy. Tina is skilled in Human Capital Management, Organisation Design and Development, Change Management, and Thought Leadership.

Startup OPPORTUNITY

Last month, a Twitter feud broke out between Amul India and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) after the latter urged the Indian dairy cooperative society to switch to producing vegan milk. The animal rights organization said Amul should not ‘fight the inevitable vegan global trend’. It’s indeed true that the vegan trend is on a rise worldwide. As more and more people adopt vegan diets, there’s been an equal rise in the number of businesses opening up to cater to the market need. One of the trends of the vegan sector that is fast gaining ground globally is alternative meat, or also widely known as smart protein. Mock meat is a food item that imitates meat in terms of texture, taste and nutrition but is made from plants. The key difference between a vegetarian product and alternate meat is that the latter attempts to appeal to non-vegetarian eaters in order to influence their meat buying decisions. As Indians are fast catching up on the trend of ‘conscious’ eating, a slew of homegrown startups are taking a bite out of the alternative meat market. But, the question to ask is whether the Indian market is ready for it?

MARKET IN THE MAKING

Several startups in the plant-based meat segment have been launched in the last few years. Abhishek Sinha, co-founder and CEO, Good Dot, an early entrant in the alternative meat market, said though awareness around alternative protein has increased significantly in the last one-two years, there’s still a lot of ground to cover. “It has been easy for us to promote plant based meat in our distribution partner, RCM’s channel, but in modern trade, general trade and D2C space, much more effort needs to be put in to create awareness. It’s an upcoming field with little awareness amongst the customers about plant based meats,” he said. Good Dot sells ready to eat meat substitutes for INR 85-249. In comparison to mock meat, acceptability of plant-based



GLOBAL INVESTMENT LANDSCAPE IN ALTERNATE MEAT

PLANT-BASED

\$4.4 billion
invested across
419 deals

CULTIVATED MEAT

\$505 million
across 125 deals

Source: Good Food Institute

egg has been relatively easier, as per Kartik Dixit, co-founder and CEO, EVO Food, India's first plant-based egg company. "Surprisingly, it was not that difficult because people already want a cholesterol free and antibiotics free egg," he said. The company is yet to roll out its product but claims to have LOIs (letter of intent) with more than 55 restaurants already and over 1,000 signups on its website.

Another category of meat alternative is lab-grown meat, which uses animals' cells to cultivate cultured meat. Clear Meat is doing exactly that and will soon be launching its lab-grown muscle meat in the market. Synthetic meat doesn't fall in the vegan category, but eliminates the need to rear and slaughter animals. So far, the sector has not gained notable attention from VCs either. Only a handful of startups have managed to raise small amounts from investors, majority of whom are global players. Indian VCs and angel investors have largely steered clear from this category so far.

That said, industry stakeholders are confident that the segment is set to make noise in the coming years. "You can expect deals to be made extensively in this space in the next year or two. In fact this is going to be like a new IT space very soon," said Sinha.

"Globally, investment in the space has grown significantly over the last few years--investment totalled over USD 3.1 billion in 2020, up 3x from the year prior, as per our global calculations--and it's only a matter of time before India shows similarly impressive growth," said Varun Deshpande, MD, The Good Food Institute (GFI) India.

GFI India, established in 2017, is the central convener body and ecosystem-builder in the alternate-protein sector. "We work with universities, entrepreneurs, large corporations,



"All research indicates that India will emerge as a major market for the smart protein sector over the next decade."

VARUN DESHPANDE,

MD, The Good Food Institute (GFI) India.

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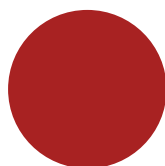
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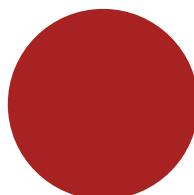
CULTIVATED CHICKEN



35-67%
less land
used

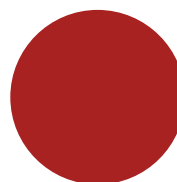


70% of
nutrient
pollution
reduction

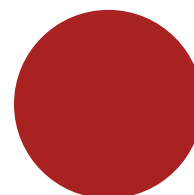


95% less land
used

CULTIVATED BEEF



74-87% of climate
change emission
reduction



94% of nutrient
pollution
reduction

Source: Good Food Institute

This Startup Is Offering Personalized Learning

ZISHAAN HAYATH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND FOUNDER, TOPPR

PERSONALIZED LEARNING

Hayath has been a serial entrepreneur for quite some time. After working for ITC and Opera solutions, Hayath decided to plunge into the entrepreneurial world. His first startup was Chaupati Bazaar, a phone-commerce startup that enabled mobile users to buy home appliances, children's products, books and magazines over the phone. The startup was later acquired by Kishore Biyani-led Future Group. He is also an active angel investor and one of the first to have given a cheque to now a Unicorn cab aggregator startup - OLA. Zishan started Toppr in 2014 to use technology to make learning personalized.

"We took a 360° view of a K-12 student's learning needs in order to define our roadmap. Toppr's product ecosystem solved exactly this - learning app for after-school learning, School OS, homework and exam help and extra-curricular coding classes," he added. Toppr's flagship learning app provides free resources in the form of video lectures, revision tips and AI-enabled instant answers to doubts. As part of the premium offering (Toppr Plus), students can enroll in courses and follow a timetable, practice questions & tests, get one-on-one mentoring. Students can even chat with a tutor 24x7 to resolve their doubts. At



present, Toppr has 35 million monthly active users and 2 million daily active users.

BOTTLE-NECK COMPETITION

When there is a demand, more players will emerge and more aggressive will be the market acquisition. If we talk about the year 2020, which is now considered as the watershed moment for the ed-tech space, due to rising demand witnessed a capital infusion of \$2.22 billion compared to \$553 million in the previous year. As per a report by Indian Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (IVCA) and PGA Labs data at least 92 players attracted funding in

FACTSHEET

Year of inception: 2014

Subscription base users: 20mn registered students

- No. of downloads: 13 mn downloads

- Most popular course: Learning App for Grade 5-12

- Funding received: \$110 Mn

2020, out of which 61 players received seed funding. The report further estimated that education is a \$117 billion market in India with around 360 million learners in 2019-20. We also saw the entry of Unacademy becoming Unicorn along with a plethora

of acquisitions to get a strong foothold.

"Firstly, competition is a good thing for the ecosystem as it will maximize innovation and value to the user. We believe the market is large enough for multiple large players to thrive, just as in other domains such as media, consumer goods, telecom. As for growth, our focus has been on creating a comprehensive learning experience which is loved by our students, which will continue to drive adoption for our products over the coming years," Hayath added.

The startup, unlike others at present, is sharing content for the Indian market.

Focusing On Developing Extra-Curricular Activities Among Children

ASHISH GUPTA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND CO-FOUNDER, BAMBINOS

THE BEGINNING

Ashish Gupta holds a degree of MBA from IIM-C and engineering from PEC Chandigarh. Before diving into the entrepreneurial world he had worked for 12 odd years in various management roles. Before establishing Bambinos, Ashish has worked at multiple leadership positions in various companies like Amazon, Curefit, etc. In his last role, he operated as Chief Operating Officer for a series-A start-up funded by Lightspeed.

As per Gupta, the need of the hour is not just memorizing concepts from the syllabus, but the ability to think out of the box, quick problem solving, logical reasoning and more. He said that children are now able to explore their interests in co-curricular activities without hampering their academics.

“Quality is critical hence access to quality extracurricular courses becomes the key element in improving the skills of kids. Bambinos.live is solving this problem, bringing accessibility of quality extracurricular courses to help children improve their skills and explore their interests,” Gupta said.

WHAT BAMBINOS OFFER?

Established in 2020, Bambinos is a Bangalore-based ed-tech startup that aims to build an ecosystem of extracurricular learning to make kids smart. The startup claims to identify and further develop unique

intelligence that is present in a child. Bambinos provide a variety of activities and subjects for children aged 4 to 15 years and have a highly fragmented framework of courses. At present, the company has over 40 courses across multiple genres like dance, fitness, personality development, e-sports, communication, among others. The company has a presence in more than 15 countries including Korea, Japan, Canada, among others and generates 20 per cent of revenue from foreign markets.

Gupta wants Bambinos to be a one-stop platform for extracurricular courses for kids. “We believe the market is huge and lots to yet to be tapped, so our focus is on growing the business and building a platform which is liked by both parents and students,” he added.

STIFF COMPETITION & PRIVACY

If we are talking about ed-tech then we have to discuss the

FACTSHEET

Year of inception: 2020
No. of paid users: 15K
Most popular course: Multiple courses in language development
Funding received so far: \$500K

recent booming of the space, particularly in the backdrop of the pandemic. Several ed-tech startups have emerged and want to enjoy a share from the education market which is worth a \$117 billion market. In this cut-throat age of competition, acquiring customers requires out-of-the-box ideas and world-standard products.

Gupta believes that customers would prefer quality content and tutoring. “Our focus is to understand the customer and student needs and develop and concentrate on a few core programs where we would have the best content and most skilled tutors. We believe that this will increase the time

that the customers spend with us and will also increase the adoption of more programs,” he added.

He further mentioned that focusing on quality and convenience offered will ensure parents remain loyal to them.

“We also have a higher product penetration, which means customers adopt more than one program from us, thereby bringing down the cost of acquisition,” he concluded.

Bambinos claims to believe in customer privacy and all data is used strictly for internal purposes to help customers attain a satisfactory experience.



How This Ed-Fintech Is Refinancing COVID-Induced Modest-Ambition Trap

NEERAJ SAXENA, CEO & MD,
AUXILO FINSERVE PRIVATE LIMITED

Founded in 2017, Auxilo Finserve Private Limited is an NBFC registered with the Reserve Bank of India. Auxilo Finserve Private Limited chief executive officer and managing director Neeraj Saxena told Entrepreneur India, “We believe that it is the right of every student to avail quality education. We are taking steps towards ensuring that students acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that they need to achieve their individual goals; and to maximize their contribution to society and the country on the whole. Our focus is on providing easily accessible education loans to deserving students for higher

studies in India and abroad. We do not just make higher education accessible to all but have made it more convenient than ever.”

The platform offers a broad country coverage: whether it be the UK, USA, Canada, Germany, or Ireland, Auxilo expands the boundaries for aspirations. They claim to understand the dynamism involved in overseas education, thereby bringing a suite of features that make them the perfect partner to help conquer all the challenges. They offer loan structuring that helps mitigate unexpected costs of living abroad and are prepared for the experience, financially.

Saxena believes that

fintech and edtech will remain mainstream in 2021 for enhancing pan segment and pan geography product which can be driven through partnerships (educational institutes and financial partnerships) and delivered using technology.

As of now, they have created a portfolio of over INR 500 crore with a steady pursuit of aspirants going to them. Students and education institutions looking for financing from Auxilo are entrusting their future aspirations with them. As a responsible lender, they empathize with that thought and offer credit on the fairest possible terms with the clearest and transparent processing giving the customer unparalleled clarity for their financing which has been received very well from their customers.

From a growth percentage, the platform has a CAGR of 41 per cent considering FY18-19 as the base year of operations.

The NBFC has funded over 2200 students for their higher education in India and abroad across 25 countries and 148 education institutions. The most popular course stream funded by the company has been Science and Engineering.

Next trigger of growth the company is pan segment and geography expansion of education finance lifetime products with a multi-distribution point for smooth access and as for the elevator pitch for the next level, Saxena aims to enable the freedom of financial access across the country by building inclusive financial algorithms and models that shall look at potential financing rather than the usual route of pure-play credit financing.

FACTSHEET

Year of inception: 2020
No. of downloads: 500K+
Most popular course: Singing and music composition
Funding received so far: \$3.2mn





Leading with innovative and comprehensive education

ISHAAN PREET SINGH,
CO-FOUNDER OF FRONTROW

Ishaan Preet Singh, Co-Founder of FrontRow, a new-age EdTech Start-up, talks about the changing horizon and what their venture is doing to meet EdTech's growing requirements. EdTech has gained a newfound significance, especially in the past few months, owing to the pandemic situation where many have been forced to continue their education digitally. The confidence and reliability of EdTech have also been explored better for the lack of an alternative in the past year or so. Stemmed from these growing requirements, FrontRow is an online learning platform that emerged in 2020; and now has acquired 500K+ downloads of the official app along with \$3.2 million in revenues over the 2020-2021 year of operation. It has an innovative take on digital education wherein it provides skill-based courses at a nominal fee. These are not typical education schemes and are taught by the biggest name in respective fields in the industry.

Ishaan emphasizes, "FrontRow is building a university for non-academic skills. There are 100M+ learners in India following their passions, and FrontRow is the daily learning destination for them, with celebrity-led flagship courses, a community platform to practice and network, and cohort-based live courses for them to go deeper."

FrontRow aims at helping learners across the country to pursue what they are passionate

about. They not only learn from the best but also grow through interactive activities, events, and workshops. Some popular courses on the platform include that of comedian BiswaKalyanRath and Indian cricketers Yuzvendra Chahal and Suresh Raina. Other courses from experts such as pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar (fast bowling course) and Neha Kakkar (singing course), and several others are in the pipeline.

The Indian EdTech Market is a competitive one with new ventures spawning every now and then. "We aren't competing against the hundreds of EdTech companies in test prep and K12 but are building for an underserved audience.", Ishaan clarifies. As for a leap into the overseas or global market, FrontRow is not actively approaching such a leap but has already acquired a large number of learners from across countries organically.

Ishaan explains the unique proposition of FrontRow, with some leading celebrities being the banner-people of their innovative courses. Thus, the issue of customer acquisition cost isn't a major one from them currently. He strongly believes that "It's a great time to build for learners. Everyone now understands there's a massive spending base - both existing and latent that can be tapped into and scaled rapidly. There will be billions of dollars of value creation in this market."

These Harvard and INSEAD Alumni Are Making Ivy League Education Accessible to Masses

ASHWIN DAMERA, CO-FOUNDER AND CEO AND CHAITANYA KALIPATNAPU, CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Having attended top-tier business colleges, Ashwin Damera and Chaitanya Kalipatnapu well understand the importance of high quality education. “Education has had a profound impact on my life, both personally and professionally,” said Damera, a Harvard Business School alumnus, in an interaction with Entrepreneur India. But, these prestigious institutions remain elusive to most given their hiring models.

“The ‘Ivy Leagues’ in the

USA accept about 5 per cent of the total applicants. In India, the acceptance rate of the IITs and IIMs is even less at 1 per cent,” he said. Even if one gets through the selection process, the high cost of education--a two-year MBA course in India costs nearly INR 25 lakh--and commitment of one to two years can be prohibitive to many. Eruditus came about in 2010 with Damera and Kalipatnapu, an INSEAD alumnus, wanting to make high quality education more accessible and affordable

to a broader community of professionals.

“The idea was to use curriculum innovation, technology and pricing to open up access to Ivy league education. At the time, my co-founder, Chaitanya Kalipatnapu, worked at INSEAD in executive education. When he was able to convince INSEAD to be our first partner, Eruditus was born,” said the co-founder and CEO Damera. The Mumbai-headquartered company offers professional education courses in collaboration with top-ranked universities. “Upskilling is going to be the differentiator in the knowledge economy. That’s the education challenge we are solving, and we solve it in a unique way, by partnering with top ranked universities.”

In the one decade of its operations, the company claims to have partnered with over 30 reputable academic

institutions, including the likes of MIT, Columbia, Harvard, Cambridge, Wharton, UC Berkeley, INCAE, IIT and IIM, to offer close to 200 courses to over 100,000 professionals across over 80 countries.

OPPORTUNITY IN EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

But, why executive education? Damera said there is huge opportunity in the segment given the changing nature of the skills needed to succeed in today’s fast changing job market. “Today, a professional will typically hold seven jobs throughout their career. New skills like data science, design thinking and digital transformation are in demand. There is a huge need for professionals and companies to upgrade themselves to remain relevant. We saw this as a high growth opportunity and kept it as the initial focus of Eruditus.”



FACTSHEET

Year of inception:
2017

Subscription base:
3 mn users

Renewal rate:
over 95%

Most popular course:
Spoken English and
Doodling

Funding received
so far: INR 5 cr



This Former Youtube India Head Wants to Solve the English Language Problem

AMIT AGRAWAL, FOUNDER,
OCKYPOCKY

"About 95 per cent graduates in India struggle to find their first jobs and subsequently promotions," said Amitt Agrawal in an interaction with Entrepreneur India. Ask him the reason and he's quick to point out that it's the candidate's communication skills. In particular, lack of written and oral fluency in English

language, which is key to finding good job opportunities and further career growth. Indian schools are falling terribly short on imparting good quality English-medium education. In fact, most government-run schools do not offer English-medium curriculum and the ones which do are merely for showcase purposes.

"English is the holy grail where even our teachers struggle with basic grammar and fluency," Agrawal said.

Sensing an opportunity where schools are falling short, the former YouTube India head and IIM-Bangalore alumni founded OckyPocky in 2017 to help kids develop proficiency in English language. He is achieving his mission by catching them young. "The best time to learn a second language is early childhood," said the founder Agrawal.

OckyPocky is an interactive English learning app for pre-school kids.

OckyPocky is an octopus that assists children in learning English using artificial intelligence (AI), Natural Language Processing (NLP) and speech recognition to create a personalised experience behind the screens.

"OckyPocky brand persona is of an elder sibling or a best friend. It's playful, talks in your mother tongue, interactive, helpful and yet protective of the kid," said Agrawal.

With a focus on catering to non-english speaking families, the app is available in Hindi, English, Tamil and Telugu. The company also ties-up with several kindergartens to help them use the app as an after school or lab tester tool to reinforce classroom concepts in an interactive and fun manner. The company claims to have a user base of 3 million kids with a renewal rate of about 95 per cent for their paid services.

“Shift to Online After-School Tutoring Was Already Underway, Covid-19 Just Accelerated It”

(L-R) PULKIT JAIN, CO-FOUNDER & HEAD - PRODUCT, ANAND PRAKASH, CO-FOUNDER & HEAD- ACADEMICS, VAMSI KRISHNA, CEO & CO-FOUNDER, VEDANTU

“When we started Vedantu in 2014, the design choice of live-tutoring that we took was a bold one,” said Vamsi Krishna, co-founder and CEO, Vedantu, in an interaction over a video call with Entrepreneur India. Albeit bold, it was also a conscious choice. Before Vedantu, the founders trio—Krishna, Pulkit Jain and Anand Prakash—ran

a successful offline coaching institute for competitive exams in Punjab. So, when they decided to move online to overcome the inherent limitations of a brick and mortar business, the idea was to emulate the same success in the digital model. “We didn’t want to just give out content that people could consume. There has to be a structure, pattern and motivation

to learning. So, we decided to replicate the same format of a teacher teaching a student in the online version as well,” he said. But, the task was laden with challenges.

Back then 4G didn’t exist and explaining to a parent about live online classes was a tedious task, Krishna pointed. Reflecting back on the long way the edtech company has come, he said the sector has gone through a sea change.

“As an entrepreneur, it has been the sweetest seven years to see a category which you create become mainstream with everyone talking about it and adopting it.”

Today, Vedantu boasts of 30 mn unique students accessing its mobile application every month and 68 mn monthly unique

views on its Youtube channel. The company has grown from 50,000 paid subscribers in 2019 to 200,000 in 2020.

On being asked what is the core strategy that the founders have followed since the company’s inception to achieve this feat, Krishna said their strategy has been two-fold. “We follow a two-pronged strategy of delivery and distribution. What it means is think about what all you can do to

reach as many students as possible. This covers the distribution part. As for the delivery part, invest in teachers, content and product so that the experience of your education service is ten times better than offline,” Krishna explained.

Besides strategy, Krishna also attributes the company’s success to the core value of student-centred learning that the founders have stuck to since the beginning and see themselves following in the future as well. “As teachers ourselves, we (the three founders) fundamentally believe in keeping the student’s interest at the centre and not worry about competition or other things. Deliver what is best for him or her and the rest will follow.”

FACTSHEET

No. of overall paid users is close to 300k

No. of app downloads: 35 million

Most popular course :

1. Vedantu CBSE 10 Pro Lite
2. Vedantu CBSE Grade 5 Pro Lite
3. Vedantu CBSE Grade 1 Pro Lite

Funding : \$190 Million plus



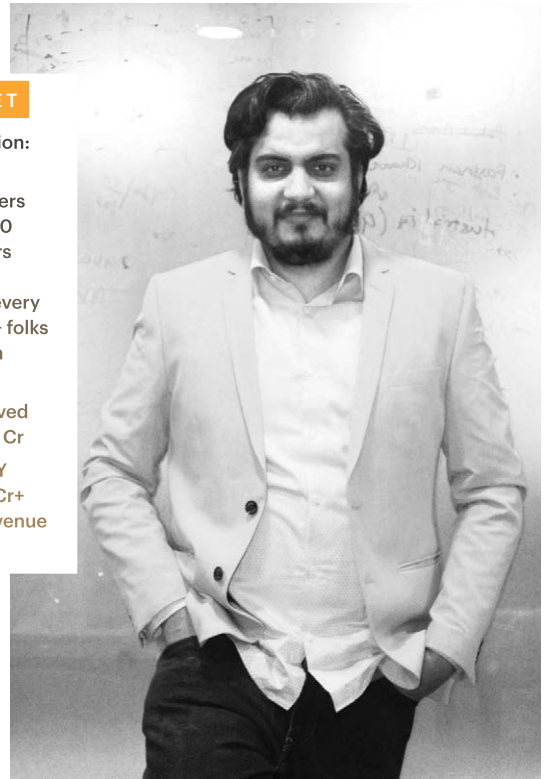
Mr Future Wise

AKSHAY CHATURVEDI, FOUNDER & CEO, LEVERAGE EDU

As a leading tech-driven University admissions platform, Leverage Edu offer seamless solutions for students in their entire study abroad process starting from multiple workshops to identify the right course and country, tracking their applications, engaging in personalised sessions, helping find the right-fit university, enabling maximum scholarships and also making available value added services like education loan, accommodation, forex and so on. Sharing more on the startup, Akshay Chaturvedi, Founder & CEO, Leverage Edu says, “India has been plagued with young adults following the herd and not doing what they are good at - and Leverage Edu’s foremost mission is just that - helping people choose what is right for them. Once they do that, it’s important that they do it in a geography that’s right for them, gives them the right economic opportunities - and that is where our focus on solving that via Study Abroad, in a borderless and frictionless world comes from.” Students sign up on the Leverage Edu Platform, using the AI Course Finder to have the systems answer what University or Program is suited to their background and interest. Thereafter, students fill in their details on their OneView Portal, which includes access to Coaches and Mentors who would guide them. This includes academic and professional details with essential application related documents at a later stage. Today, they have over 3MN+ students engaging across different properties every month.

FACTSHEET

Year of inception: 2017
No. of customers till date: 15,000 paid customers ++ 50,000 counsellings every month, 25Mn+ folks using platform every year
Funding received so far: over 75 Cr
Revenue for FY 2020-21: 150 Cr+ annualized revenue run rate



The Coaching Institute Transformer

MUKUL RUSTAGI,
CO-FOUNDER, CLASSPLUS

In 2018 when all Edtech startups in India were developing solutions for students, Calssplus went the opposite way and launched a mobile SaaS platform for teachers to digitize their offline tuition classes and bring their coaching business online. Sharing the same, Mukul Rustagi, Co-Founder, Classplus, says, “In the internet age, educators found themselves devoid of any technology to give their students a digital learning experience and were not able to compete with the big online players of today. Teachers

were afraid of adding online to offline as they did not know how to code and build an online platform. Classplus is India’s first mobile platform that enables educators to take their offline institutes online.”

Since the launch they expanded nationally and served tutors across 1500+ cities. Talking about handling the massive data on its app, Rustagi says, “We adopt appropriate encryption and security measures to prevent any misuse of the information of the educators and their students and ensure that the user is not asked to disclose any sensitive personal data. Additionally, we do not claim any ownership of either teachers’ or students’ data.” Classplus



FACTSHEET

Year of inception - 2018
No. of paid users - 100,000+ educators
Subscription base - 15M+ students
Renewal rate - 70-75%
No. of downloads - 15M+ downloads
Funding received so far - USD 53M

helps educators run all their communication, online tests, digital payments, video lectures and online learning programmes on a full-stack mobile solution enabling them to reach out to students across the country. It also provides a content distribution channel allowing educators to generate additional opportunities of monetising their online assessments and digital content. Teachers are saved from the trouble of using multiple platforms for different needs and spend time on learning technology, so that they can focus on teaching their students in an easy manner. Delving more on the business model Rustagi mentions, Since we do not bring the students by advertising, our cost structures stay low. So, we essentially grow with the teachers on our platform.”

COVER STORY

FACTSHEET

Year of inception: 2015

No. of paid users: 55,000+

Subscription base: 1 million individuals across 50+ countries

No. of downloads: 2 Mn+ including Android & iOS

Most popular course:

Advanced Certificate in Digital Marketing and Communication

Executive PG Programme in Data Science

Global MBAs with Deakin University (Australia) & Liverpool Business School (UK)

Funding received so far: Raised USD 120 million from a global investment company Temasek

Revenue for FY 2020-21: 100 crore monthly revenue and an Annual Revenue Run Rate (ARR) of 1,200 crore.



Changing how learning has always been perceived

MAYANK KUMAR, CO-FOUNDER AND MD, UPGRAD

UpGrad is a rising venture that focuses on solving three education problems by leveraging technology. Mayank Kumar talks about the first as the problem of “access”. Post graduation many people don’t have that kind of access to learning as they once did. Having a job and other engagements obstructs freely going back to an unhindered learning environment, which is something technology can solve to a great extent. The second major issue at sight is - the cost of learning. Technology can be leveraged to bring this cost down to be able to offer programs that are effective minus the traditional setup. The third and most critical solution that upGrad brings to the table is that of extending a personalization impact at scale. “We want to create engagement and a personalized learning journey for a learner. If you are doing our programs, meanwhile transitioning to a new job, you may have a slightly different learning journey then let’s say if you’re joining the program and want to get promoted.” Mayank explains how learning journeys can be starkly distinct.

“During the program we capture close to about 100,000 - 200,000+ data points for every learner during the course of the journey, so how you do the assessment, how many marks you get - We try to capture your skills to figure out how you are as an individual.” Mayank explains the second segment. The third segment of data collection is when the program is completed regarding what kind of job you’re seeking or what should be recommended to a particular user. All three sets become essential in the whole experience for the user.

“We want to play in the lifelong learning play,” Mayank shares. Our focus on all options for graduates, degree program seekers, those looking to study abroad or even learn alongside a job - is what sets us apart. Outside of India upGrad has set up three geographies- US, Southeast Asia and India European MENA region. “Right now, we are in the phase one and phase two of the journey which is, we have established our teams. More than 50% of our revenue comes from referral repeat and organic.” Mayank concluded about where upGrad is headed in the days to come.

Preparing future Coders

PRATEEK SHUKLA, CEO & CO-FOUNDER, MASAI SCHOOL

There are about 8.5 million graduates coming from different colleges across the country, while the employability ratio is only around 20 percent. Masai School has taken an entirely different route to solve the problem of employability of young graduates in the country. The Masai School Admission Test is all about what the student has learnt from middle school to high school. Computer Literacy, Typing Speed, Logical Reasoning and some School-level Arithmetic is what the test entails. The idea is to make Masai School available for anyone and everyone who has a high motivation to learn and earn. They do not ask for a formal degree to get into Masai School, but just that he/she should have passed 12th standard. Through Masai School, learners keen on pursuing a career as a software engineer, are made to undergo an intensive coding program. Video-conferencing software Zoom is used for all kinds of teaching, Slack is used for all layers of communication, doubt-clearing, feedback etc. GitHub is used for source code management and developing software applications. At Masai School, they have also built their own learning management system (LMS) and online judge (OJ), to track the learning activities of the students, down to the most basic level. Masai School believes that the real competition for the institute is the existing universities and the system in itself, rather than other market players like Coding Bootcamps. The Glide Program is introduced for really smart and dedicated learners who want to learn and make a living, but are lacking some access to the right digital infrastructure. As part of it, they will be given a monthly allowance of Rs 15,000 to help with living expenses, which would later be adjusted for, in their ISA.

On foreseeing the future of edtech space, Prateek Shukla, CEO & Co-founder, Masai School says, “The Education Industry in India is never a winner-takes-all market, and is never going to be. If you just look at the colleges that we have, there are over 10,000, and they make average revenues to a tune of Rs 50 crore annually. The pandemic has just brought to the fore the urgent need for skilling. And many believe that job tech focussed platforms like us will be an alternative to universities.



FACTSHEET

Year of inception: 2019
Most popular course: Full Stack Web Development
Funding received so far: \$8 Million
Revenue for FY 2020-21: on track to hit the milestone of clocking \$1 Million in MRR, over the next 6 months.

COVER STORY



The Math Magician

MANAN KHURMA, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND FOUNDER, CUEMATH

Changes swept the world, be it COVID-19, or digitalization of almost all sectors. The most impacted sector is education Industry. E-learning was conceptualized with the purpose to provide ease of learning. In advent, Cuemath, key to learn Mathematics and coding with easy learning methods and practices has evolved, and it has revolutionized the terms of remote learning and making Mathematics easy to all the students.

Khurma, told Entrepreneur India, about the germination of the whole concept for his platform and said, “While earning my engineering degree at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in New Delhi, I taught math as a side project to kids preparing for the IIT entrance exams.

However, I realized that most of these students struggled with certain concepts despite my best efforts to teach them.

I figured that their struggles stemmed from a weak math foundation. After teaching over 10,000 students, I realized that children don’t struggle with Calculus because it is complex. They struggle because their fundamentals dating back to eighth grade and earlier were lacking. That inspired me to develop a Math learning system based on deep mastery rather than memorization. No other learning system in India was addressing the core issue of math mastery

this way. That’s how Cuemath was born.”

The Cuemath founder notes that his one-line elevator pitch is to make the world’s children great at Math and coding, and create invincible problem-solvers who will go on to solve humanity’s biggest problems.

The thirty-six-year-old founder, champions the role that technology plays in his business and states that they have a customized learning

program that adapts to each student’s learning ability in order to help them master concepts better. Cuemath’s learning method and state-of-the-art technology platform has the potential to reach and improve the lives of millions of children worldwide

He further remarks, “The concepts are well explained with videos, simulations followed by adequate practice like spaced repetitions of concepts and exercises to enable students to refresh and retain them. The additional features such as story-based concept videos, interactive simulations, and interesting whiteboard activities keep the students engaged and interested, and hence they would be intrinsically motivated to continue with the program. Gamification is one hook that has been elaborately built into the system. Plus, there is an elaborate reward system that factors in the accuracy level of each completed sheet, the number of chapters

FACTSHEET

No. of paid users – 200,000+

Renewal rate – 80 per cent

No. of downloads – 1 million+

Most popular course- Math and Coding

Funding – \$67 million

Revenue- Cuemath’s revenue from operations has surged 2.04X to INR 24.43 crore during the fiscal ended in March 2020 from nearly INR 12 crore during FY19.

completed, and so on. We do have additional hooks like exciting puzzles, games played on a whiteboard to keep students engaged and motivated.”

Cuemath is STEM certified and has been awarded as the best math program by ETR. The establishment claims to have taught more than 200,000 students and taught for more than 25 million hours, across 20 countries. Coincidentally, the pandemic resulted in phenomenal growth for them and remarkable growth coming from foreign markets like the USA. International students now constitute more than a quarter of their total learners on the platform.

Since they are Math-focused, Khurma aims to win the global Math market.



BREAKER, THINKER,
CHANGER, EXPLORER,
STORYTELLER,
THINKER, MAKER
BELIEVER, CREATOR,
TRENDSETTER,
STRATEGIST, DOER,
FOUNDER, REBEL,
INVENTIVE,
ADVENTURER,
RULE BREAKER,
STORYTELLER,
MAKER, INNOVATOR,
BELIEVER, MAKER, DOER,
RULE BREAKER,
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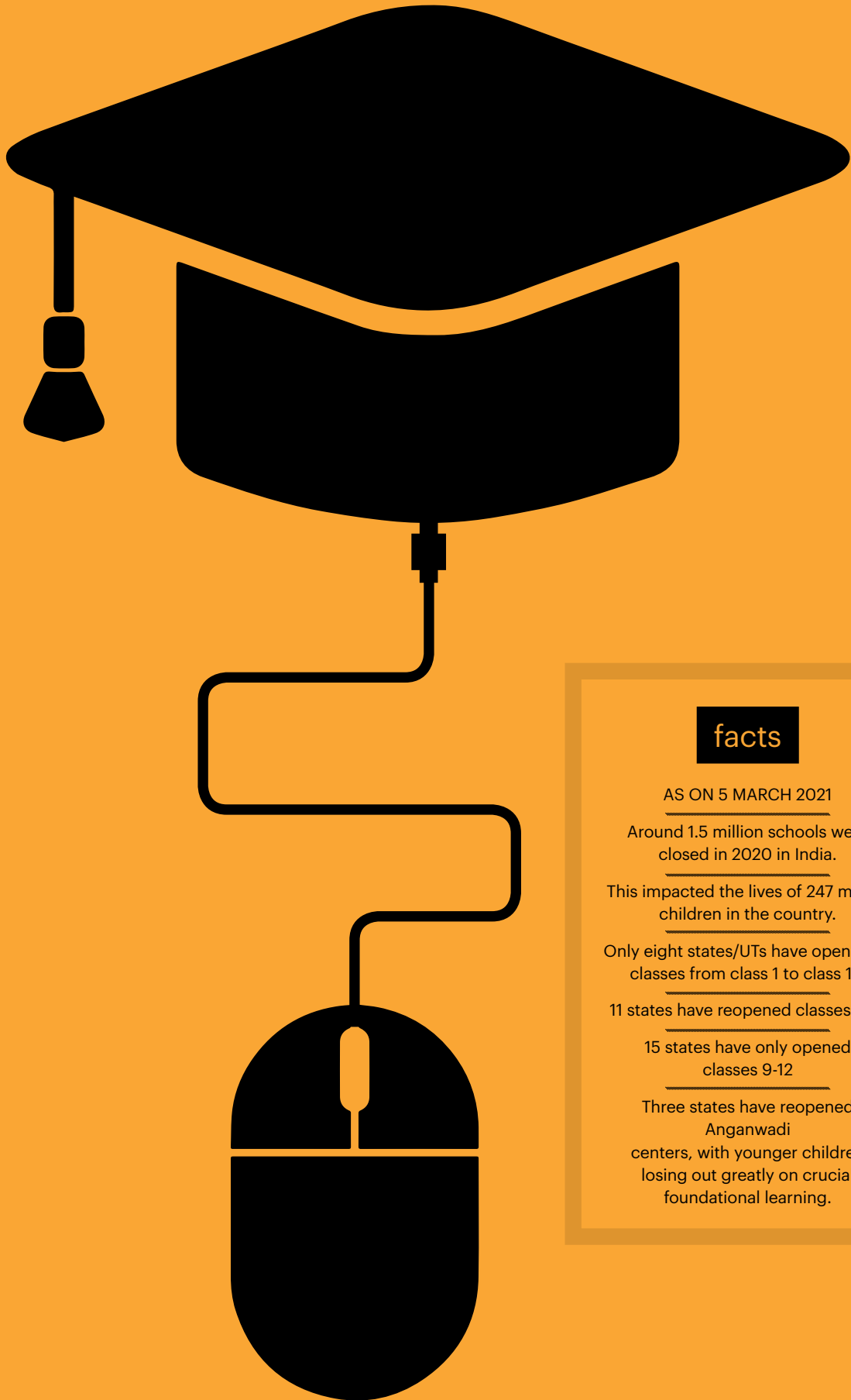
EDUCATION'S

DIGITAL

TRANSFORMATION

Some HEIs and Elite Schools Being Early-Adopters of Tech, Smoothly Transition To Online Education CBSE flags issues before hybrid model becomes a nation-wide reality; HEIs implement incremental tech capabilities

By Deepa Vaidya



facts

AS ON 5 MARCH 2021

Around 1.5 million schools were closed in 2020 in India.

This impacted the lives of 247 million children in the country.

Only eight states/UTs have opened all classes from class 1 to class 12.

11 states have reopened classes 6-12

15 states have only opened classes 9-12

Three states have reopened Anganwadi centers, with younger children losing out greatly on crucial foundational learning.

At a time when some schools are closing down as owners look to exit the business of education, some managed to go online, some are into hybrid teaching and online teaching is almost the norm, Prof. Biswajit Saha, Director, (Trainings & Skills Education), Central Board for Secondary Education, expresses concerns over the hybrid model. For the hybrid model to exist forever and promote the asynchronous model, says Saha, “This is not the time to shift curriculum transactions to online method. In the future, think of health issues and unless students come to school physically, other pillars of education will not be completed.” “Then there are issues related to data security, where content is stored in cloud; there is open source vs closed source. In open source, data quotes are freely available, schools’ management should create indigenous LMS based on freely-available open source s/w. Ultimately, cloud ownership could be in India to define future data safety and security. Also, the SOP for operating LMS of the teaching-learning process should be region-wise. How the existing platform is addressing these issues, how teachers are functioning need to be discussed.”

“There would be technological intervention. Hybrid will co-exist and we can craft all traditional methodology, technology intervention, project-based learning by the name of hybrid, so that we can carry out the real meaning of assessments and curriculum transactions seamlessly. For this we need a good quality e-content developer/SME, comfortable to deliver lectures online.” Nevertheless, a positive outcome of the disruption is the change on assessments. Says Surabhi Goel, CEO, Aditya Birla World Academy, “Schools are compelled to bring in continuous assessments, marry the formative-summative assessment, be able to do online and offline, which has been a big learning for teachers and educators.”

Adds Saha, “I am seeing unprecedented decisions on assessment. Assessment dynamics altogether will entail a lot of changes. It could be shifted to competency-based assessment, continuous assessment where we see changes towards competency and learning outcomes. We are empowering schools towards internal assessment, project-based learning and different methodologies of assessment.” Corroborating Saha on the hybrid model and assessments, says Raghav Podar, Chairman, Podar Schools, “It is good that CBSE is talking and pushing for assessments. In order to be ready for the exam called life, focus should shift from content mastery to competence mastery.” Higher education institutes (HEIs) on the other hand, have a different story to tell. Dishan Kamdar, Vice Chancellor (VC), FLAME University and Professor Ramabhadran S. Thirumalai, also the Senior Associate Dean, ISB, provide inputs on the last 1.5 years of transitioning to online learning. Apparently, the institutes had begun going digital long before the pandemic. It has only accelerated the pace and reinforced the need to add/upgrade existing/additional infrastructure.

Says Thirumalai, “The PG program and management for working professionals at ISB was launched in 2018 as a hybrid model. Of the 18 hours of lectures, four hours of lectures were offered online and 14 hours of lectures would be covered on the weekend. The faculty of those programs, was used to doing at least four hours of online lectures, and had already designed

and planned their courses accordingly. So, at least a bunch of our faculty has the experience of teaching online and we were able to adapt.” Says Kamdar, “At FLAME University, we were rather well-equipped to handle the crisis, as FLAME University has been an early and keen adopter of digital technology in all its academic and administrative processes. We were already using digital technology to leverage it to provide the best student experience in teaching-learning. FLAME was able to transition to the digital platform within 48 hours of the disruption.”

Given the UGC guidelines of the past 15-16 months that direct classes be conducted online, irrespective of the stream of education, it is interesting to know how these HEIs have transitioned. Commenting on the efforts that they, as leaders of academic institutes had to undertake and also the laudable efforts by their faculties to enhance the learning experience, says Kamdar, “The transition to online learning was fairly smooth and fast because of the timely formation of a Tech Task Force, the mock drills and constant communication with various stakeholders to ensure that learning does not suffer. The team conducted workshops to help the faculty familiarise with the various digital tools and resources. The workshops included topics such as creative assignments, games and virtual simulations, and creating lecture tutorials. This supported the faculty to redesign their courses so as to make them most suitable for online settings. We are making extensive use of audio-visual material created by our own faculty members, innovating our pedagogy and constantly evolving by learning from best practices in India and abroad.” “Rethink, is what teaching institutes have had to do. We need to keep innovating,” says Thirumalai. One of the things we did, was to extensively set up these writable boards, digital boards. The annotations get recorded saved and students can see it on their screen. We had to set up a fair number of studios, where faculty could reach out with video cameras. And in addition, some faculty preferred teaching in their own office. So we set up the same kind of infrastructure in their own offices.” says the Senior Associate Dean.

As for training the students, says Thirumalai, “The biggest upgrade in terms of infrastructure has been upgrading our classrooms. We had to make sure that we set our classrooms up for hybrid delivery. We have multiple monitors so that the faculty is able to see the students in the class as well as those who were online. Right now, five different monitors manage the entire classroom seamlessly. This has ensured that we are able to support hybrid delivery without any drop in the quality of the program delivery.” Says Thirumalai, “Even more challenging was the amount of training we needed to do for students, including our new batch, to make sure they understand how the online proctoring system works. The proctoring system takes control of your camera and microphone, the system can see what you are seeing on your screen. If you have somebody standing behind you, then it's going to be flagged online and will pick up for other sounds during the exam. Also, we had to train our faculty that this is the online exam system; some of them have had to modify the way the exams are structured.” Talking about the pros and cons of digital disruption in the the academic sector, says Kamdar, “Now, many academicians have realised the potential of technology and its impact in terms of scale, quality, cost, ease of access and multi-modal teaching-learning by incorporating concepts



“How will the underprivileged students with no internet access receive education? Can everyone afford an online teaching? Will the educators be equipped to handle the new blended learning methodology etc?”

Dr. Dishan Kamdar



“The right measure of digital is a strategic decision that institutions need to take”

*Professor
Ramabhadran S
Thirumalai*



“The new normal is going to be hybrid, it’s going to be blended or what is called ‘phygital’. But the fundamental question is, are we serving the purpose of education?”

Raghav Podar

like gamification in education.” Adds the VC, “Digitalisation is a great tool for streamlining the organisational systems and process. Even before the pandemic forced it, we had realised the use of digitalisation in clarity, ease and efficiency of operations and accordingly, have taken all the processes on the digital platforms.”

“Digitalisation provides huge access to content, many opportunities to experiment, create and transform. With the new technology, the content is not limited to passive printed content, but can be developed and customised to individual learning styles and preferences. Technology also supports all-time-access to the content.” Thirumalai, commenting on the efforts at ISB that has been actively devising innovative ways to engage students more effectively, says, “Our faculty was trying a lot of new things. We had a few sessions where the faculty exchanged ideas, discussed experiences, the different things they tried with and without technology. Some of us had also done courses for Coursera and other online learning platforms.” On using tech in organisational processes, says Thirumalai, “We have been using Learning Management System (LMS) for a very long time and not necessarily because of the pandemic. And in the last decade or so we have taken an open source LMS, and customised it to the extent of managing all our processes. We did try a few new things, such as integrating Zoom with the LMS. The student has to just log into the learning management system, and they will see a link to the Zoom for a particular course.”

NOT ALL HAVE HAD IT SO EASY AS IS EVIDENT FROM REPORTS.

“On the flipside, for some schools and colleges digital learning has come as a jolt, leaving many institutions in a quandary wondering how to deal with a completely unexpected and unanticipated situation”, says Kamdar. “When teaching online,

you need to be able to engage with students differently. You cannot expect students to sit in hour-long lectures and engage in discussions the same way as in a physical class. Also, online teaching alone can be very tiresome. Recent studies showed that online teaching-learning, if used as just a replica of the classroom interaction may be quite ineffective. Students are already feeling fatigued with online learning and are raring to get back on campus.” Adds Thirumalai, “In a classroom setting, it’s easier for me to know, what students are doing, whether they get a sense of it or not. In an online world, because we don’t have real time feedback, it becomes a little more difficult for me to judge whether the class is with me or no. We basically have to make sure that we think of new ways, using technology, to ensure that our message is delivered.”

So, will hybrid models work for the higher education sector?

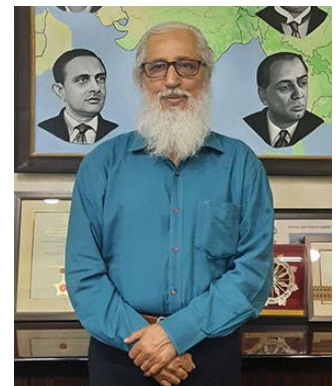
Says Thirumalai, “It’s already working right? The question is, is it going to be sustained post- pandemic? It depends, if institutions leverage it and make it a permanent feature. Commenting on the future of education given the disruption, Kamdar raises concerns, “How will the underprivileged students with no internet access receive education? Can everyone afford an online teaching? Will the educators be equipped to handle the new blended learning methodology etc.? “To resolve high dropout rates and lack of engagement by students because of classes being online now, a personalised way of learning, which is more engaging and interesting will have to be devised.”

Thirumalai opines, “You will see far more number of online programs, which open up the education sector, making access to good quality education easier. We need the government’s support though, in allowing online classes of +1,000 students. The distance learning or correspondence course models can basically get disrupted far more.” It has been a fairly smooth transition for some HEIs and eliteschools. However, how to make online education available across all categories of schools is the question. ①

Talk

BEYOND
CHALK
AND

The EDTech x 11th Indian Education Awards & Edtech Summit, became the most fertile space where the delegates enlightened with insightful sessions in a specially crafted Peer2Peer forum, where the torch bearers of the Indian and Global Education fraternity spoke their minds in an exclusive face-off to find uni-directional approaches that will usher crucial uprising trend among the community. In one inspiring day, ie. 22nd June 2021 Edtech 2021 brought together an incredible group of Global Educators and Innovators to share their perspectives on the global leadership lessons learned and what Education & EdTech trends will emerge in a post-COVID-19 world. Sessions and Panel discussions focused on mapping and meeting future demand for technology in education, the growth of EdTech in India (and beyond) & the challenges faced by education entrepreneurs. How leading institutions have rapidly transitioned online? The virtual classrooms, the multi-device any-time, anywhere learning / teaching scenarios and how to leverage them, new ways that are emerging and facilitating the assimilation of border less education imparting opportunities across education segments. The transformation has been quite rapid and the industry indicators are showing steady growth. More and more individuals and enterprises are playing prolific roles in adding value to the education system as a whole. IEA 2021 identified, showcased & recognized the most promising Education & EdTech Brands of the Year 2021, for their outstanding contributions in transforming education through technology to enrich the lives of learners everywhere.



Anil Sahasrabudhe,
Chairman, AICTE



The value of the Teacher

The panel talked about teachers and students both getting used to the covid restrictions and embracing the new normal and how the key to the success of digital education lies in continuous, collaborative and personalized professional learning

and supporting teachers. Manoj Harsh Kumar on the Hybrid Education Model mentioned, “We are coming up with new ideas and how to blend it finely is obviously in new curriculum framework. All these things will be fine-tuned.” Dr. Indrajit Bhattacharya added, “We have brought in blended learning accreditation called LSP (learning service providers) to ensure that the delivery moves out of ‘Chalk and Talk’ experience to ‘Tech-

driven’ experience.” Abhimanyu Basu on the importance of schools said, “This whole scenario only puts our faith back that schools are not only places for learning but it is something more. The learning is still happening at home but people are still craving to back to school. There is something called social interactions which gives more to learning and adds a dimension which I feel is missing.”



How Technology is changing the Future of Higher Education

This panel talked about new ideas that will shape the future of college education using everything from blockchain networks to computer simulations to A.I. and learning aligned to skills in demand. Nitish Jain on experiential learning said, "It is actually possible to offer 'experiential' learning online and

there were so many new activities that we could do, in fact activities that we could not do physically on campus we could now start doing it online." Ashok Mittal on the positive impact of the pandemic mentioned, "The positive impact of the pandemic was that we were able to prepone the usage of virtual online technologies. I think it has been preponed to about a decade." Vineet Gupta on flexibility of the years required to complete the course said, "The state and the central government will have to be flexible on the assessments and maybe take an assumption that the learning in these 15 months might be half as effective as it would have been." Vijay Thadani on the state of learning online mentioned,

"The overall learning experience was in fact a shade better on a few issues because of the extra attention that was given to these issues. On the pandemic, education came up with the largest opportunity because technology has been knocking on the door of education" Tim Oates on assessment said, "I think the major recommendation that emerges from the surge prior to and during the pandemic is we actually need a lot more assessment and we need an assessment of different kind." Neelesh Kumar Jain on Online Placement concluded, "We did very well the online placement interview and we achieved a placement for those who registered of about 95%."



The Future of Hybrid Education

The panel talked about the reshaping of the K-12 perception and the how the technological advancements had played a role in this and the journey that students and teachers will go through towards a collaborative, data-driven and student-centric education model. Surabhi Goel on teachers coping, understanding and embracing the virtual environment of a classroom said, "All we need to do is hand hold the educators and the teachers and they will be able to embrace the new normal." While Dr. Biswajit Saha on the Hybrid Education Model mentioned "True asynchronous learning beyond the schools, I think hybrid model is going to promote." Raghav Podar on the transition of physical education to phygital education said, "Our posterity will look back at this moment as one of the defining moments that comes once in centuries and they will either thank us for the direction in which we took the evolution of education or they will curse us for not rising up to the occasion when we had the opportunity." Chandrahas Panigrahi on evaluation via educhemy said, "Evaluation can be multiple things, how much effort vs. what results I am getting, how much is my success gap, who is the best student topper, etc."

The Billion-Dollar Question To The New Of Education

A VC Perspective on Education Technology came out at this session moderated by Ritu Marya. Pranav Pai said, “Companies that have earned the trust, built credibility, has stood by their customers, stood by their experiences, responded rapidly to changing concerns,

changing demands from parents, from students, from teachers, from schools, from even policy, I think those companies will grow even faster now that time is a constraint.” While Imran Jafar mentioned, “When the nursery of Edtech Investments grow up, you will find the growth stage investments to

be at much higher value. You will see increasing MMA, you will see IPOs, you will see supersized VC investments of the type of Byju, Unacademy and so on.” To this Amit Patel quipped, “We are seeing significant interest from companies outside of India starting to think about the India Market. This is a market that they are not able to ignore anymore or they eventually want to get to. It is something that they are prioritizing as the main area of focus.” Ashish

Sharma added, “I think there is a lot of scope may not be as huge a market on other skills beyond the hard skills. In India, there is way too much focus on Math and Test Prep and things of that nature but I think folks who are trying to build life skills or things of that nature, I think that is another opportunity and that can make a huge impact vs. just improving marks and getting into some great universities.”



Connecting the Dots

This panel talked about the role of edtech in launching promising as well as sustainable careers and promoting upskilling as well as lifelong learning. Mayank Kumar spoke on how Edtech is making a difference, adding, “A macro-trend that we are observing in the ecosystem is that there is action coming from people in traditional industries trying to pick up digital skills so that they become more relevant.” On changes in the edtech platform in the coming years Krishna Kumar said, “Indians are known for their technology talent. The entire world needs to be re-trained on some of the emerging technologies and this isn’t a one-time phenomenon, it is an ongoing phenomenon. Every two year technology completely changes so as we get into the future, the need for constant reskilling is only going to accelerate.” Irwin Anand on the concept of education, added, “The concept of education



itself has changed and the big change that we are seeing is that people and enterprises themselves are realizing that the onus is on themselves to invest in yourself, in your employees to continue to stay relevant and that is leading to the growth we are seeing on Udemy and I am assuming the same in the entire ecosystem.”



Chandrahas Panigrahi,
Co-Founder & CEO,
Edukemy



Divya Ial, Founder and
Managing Director,
Fliplearn Education
Pvt. Ltd



Subhasish Gupta-
Managing Director (Sales),
Brightcove

CATEGORIES	WINNERS
Best Employability Award	WileyNXT
Best e-books (School & Higher Education)	Oxford University Press india
Best college prep Platform	Collegify
Best Tutoring Solution	TEACHMINT
EdTech Deployment of the Year K12	BYJU'S
Best EdTech Company of the Year	Unacademy
Best robotics (for learning, education) solution	WIZKLAB LEARNING PRIVATE LIMITED
Best online learning management platform	Practically School Solution
Best career planning Platform	upGrad
Best Learning Mobile App	Vedantu
Emerging technology solution	GLOBUS INFOCOM LIMITED
Best Test Prep Solution of the Year	Edukemy
EdTech Deployment of the Year (HigherEd)	simplilearn
EdTech Startup of the Year	Eruditius
Best Classroom Tech Solution of the Year	ALTURA by Macmillan Publishers India Private Limited
Best Online Children's Learning (by a Pre School)	Klay School
Standalone Pre-school of the year Regional)	Saksham School
Excellence and Innovation in Online Teaching	Glendale School
Best Emerging School of the Year (National)	vidyashilp School
Best Faculty Development for Online Teaching	Pathways
Standalone School of the Year (Regional)	Bal Bhavan Public School
Most Emerging Higher Education Institute of the Year	D Y Patil International University
Best College of the Year (BBA/Bcom/ BA/Bsc)	S P Jain school of global Management
Best Skill Learning Institute	NIIT
Edupreneur of the Year	Dr. Aseem Chauhan
K12 School Chain of the Year (National)	Seth Anandram Jaipuria Group of Schools
Institute with best placement	SUNSTONE EDUVERSITY
Coaching Institute of the year	CATKing

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Winning New Business

Consumers are more discerning with their dollars than ever before. We asked six entrepreneurs: How do you attract and win new customers during uncertain times?

1/ Borrow trust.

"In the current climate, customers are largely spending their money with brands they know and trust. That is a challenge for a new brand like ours, which launched weeks before the pandemic and hasn't had the same amount of time to build that trust. Therefore, we have leveraged influencer marketing to leverage the trust *they* have with their followers, who look to them as guides for product recommendations and reviews."

—TIFFANY PAUL, founder and CEO, Slept

2/ Turn down the noise.

"Last fall, our competitors were flooding the market with deeply discounted products—while simultaneously investing heavily in Google ads. We were losing on our own branded keywords. Instead of competing dollar to dollar or discount to discount, we pushed our brand awareness marketing and moved spend onto YouTube, where we could tell our unique brand story in a video format that other brands could not compete with. This translated into not only more sales conversion but also a brand awareness spike."

—MATT SCANLAN, cofounder and CEO, Naadam

3/ Let them decide.

"We find that customers are more interested than ever in house clothes, but the most important factor—softness!—is hard to judge online. Even the lowest-quality loungewear proclaims it's the softest on Earth. So we started broadcasting our 77-day, no-questions-asked guarantee up front. Customers feel a lot better knowing it's risk-free to try them on, and we get more opportunities to show them that our clothes live up to expectations."

—ANDREW GOBLE, cofounder, Jambys

4/ Keep it simple.

"Understand a pain or frustration that people may feel. (And there are plenty of them!) Then deliver a unique solution. It starts with a compelling product. Then attract attention with a focused visual. Drive action with succinct, conversational copy. Apologies if that sounds boring and isn't a hack, but it is more sustainable."

—CRAIG ELBERT, cofounder and CEO, Care/of

5/ Ditch discounts.

"The most important thing in converting a new customer is to *not* offer them discounts to have that first interaction with your brand. The largest mistake brands make is having the first transaction be driven off discount, starting the relationship off on the wrong foot. Especially during COVID, people have a lot on their plates, and the last thing they need is discounted product shoved in their face. It feels disingenuous."

—JASON GRIFFIN REIDEL, cofounder and CEO, Gorjana

6/ Listen up.

"For B2B businesses, show your buyers the value that your products and services will deliver to them on day one. It starts with your first sales conversation: Focus on understanding their pain points. Although it seems off-balance, a good salesperson spends 20 percent of their time talking and the other 80 percent listening. This helps you build rapport and allows you to map your solution to their unique needs. Once you've got them hooked, outline the implementation game plan, giving them confidence that your team is going to be with them every step of the way."

—KRAIG SWENSRUD, cofounder and CEO, Qualified

The Unexpected Upside of a Crisis

The pandemic seemed to be tanking the biggest deal of **John Berkowitz's** career. Then he learned how to harness the chaos. **by JASON FEIFER**

John Berkowitz grabbed a surfboard, paddled out into open water, and let loose nearly a year's worth of anxiety. "I just screamed," he says. "At the top of my lungs. It was the most incredible PTSD scream I've ever done."

Berkowitz had begun 2020 trying to acquire a larger company, which was already stressful. Then the pandemic set in, causing chaos. Investors were scared. Travel was impossible. But he pulled it off—raising \$68.1 million, outlasting competitors, navigating cultural barriers, and transforming his business as a result.

Now, he realizes, the pandemic pushed him into a great lesson about business. He discovered that with the right attitude, downsides can become upsides. "You can lean into the uncertainty," he says. "I gave ruthless transparency into our business."

The saga began in September 2019. Berkowitz is the founder of the Austin, Texas-based OJO Labs, an online platform to help people buy and sell homes, and he had a great chat with the CEO of Movoto, a large online real estate brokerage. Berkowitz saw an opportunity. If he could buy Movoto, he'd gain millions of customers and take a massive leap forward.

It wouldn't be easy, though. "When I pitched it to my CFO, it sounded so crazy," Berkowitz says. OJO Labs would have to

raise tens of millions of dollars and keep it all a secret (because competitors, and even some of OJO's investors, might want to outbid them for the deal). Movoto was owned by a Japanese company, so Berkowitz would need to spend time traveling overseas, navigating the country's complex, relationship-driven business world.

Still, by late 2019, he felt confident enough to try. He set out to raise money—but 150 investor meetings went nowhere. "Literally every one of those 150 pitches was different because after every pitch, I received new feedback on the one prior," he says. When the pandemic arrived, investors stopped taking meetings so they could focus on their existing portfolio.

Meanwhile, Berkowitz had begun negotiations with Movoto's owner, but it wasn't going well. "This company was very thoughtfully saying, 'You don't have the money to buy us,'" Berkowitz says. Movoto then started courting other buyers—just what Berkowitz had wanted to avoid.

This was when his swagger started falling apart. But it's also when things started looking up. Berkowitz confided in an early investor, explaining how badly things were going—but that he refused to give up. That investor connected him with a fund manager who is also based in Austin, and as much as Berkowitz wanted to welcome him to the OJO offices and impress him with their



swanky digs, they decided to meet, safely, via Zoom. "It wasn't much of a pitch," Berkowitz says. "I was like, 'It's a crazy situation. It's an incredible value. I don't have any premium investors. I don't have great options.' Which meant he smelled value."

The two started working out a deal; once that was done, other investors followed. Meanwhile, more good news: Although Movoto had begun acquisition talks with other companies, they were all scared off by the pandemic—causing Movoto's price to fall. Even though Berkowitz had yet to secure financing, his talks with Movoto now picked up.

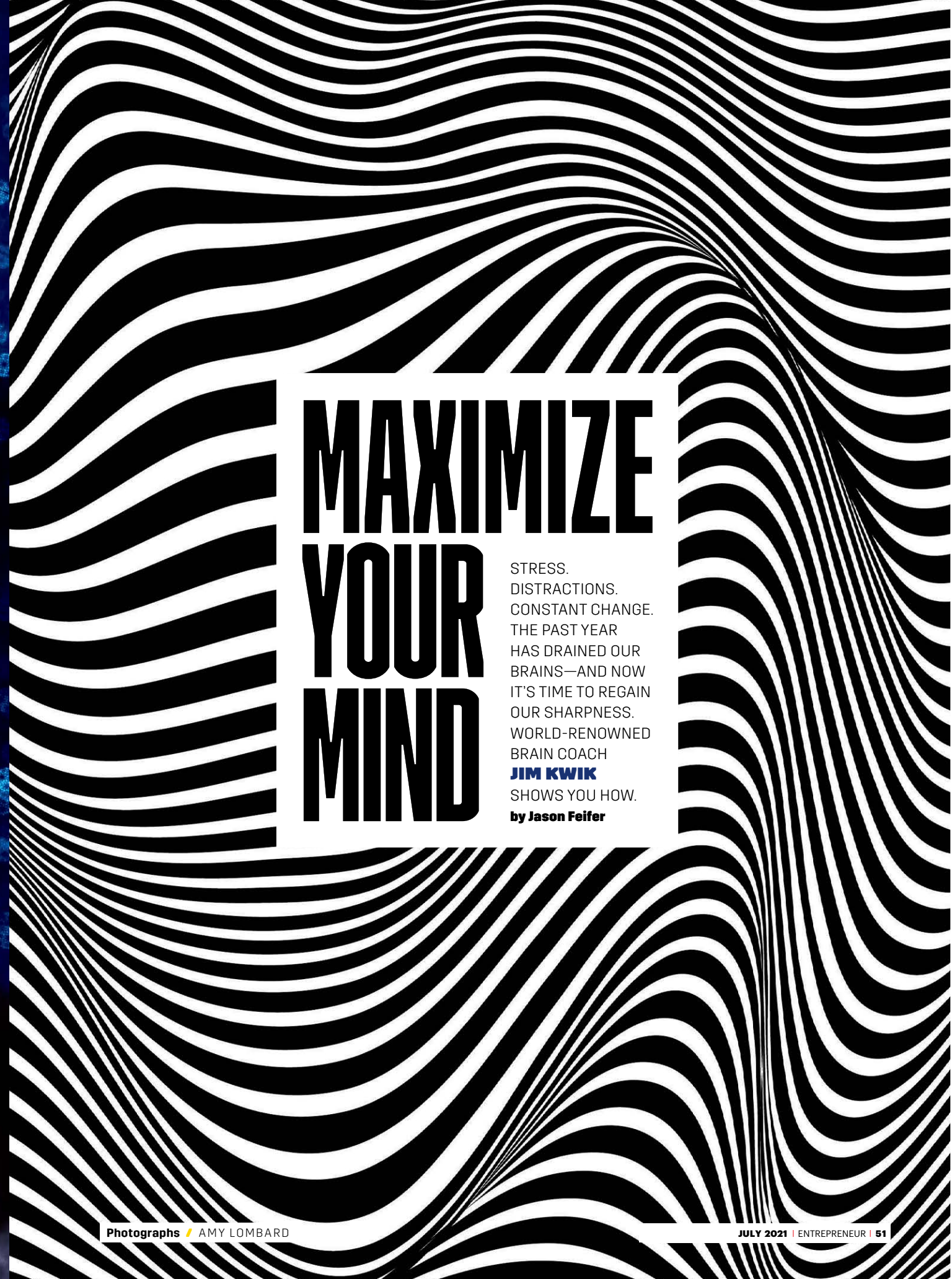
This would usually require multiple trips to Japan, with formal meetings and high-stakes dinners, but the pandemic forced everything onto

Zoom. And that ended up working in Berkowitz's favor. "It's hard to build a relationship in a boardroom," he says, "but when you are in your house, and your kid busts in and the internet goes out, we all get to know each other a little bit more intimately."

In June 2020, it all came together, and he went on vacation to Florida. "I gave the entire company the next week off," Berkowitz says. That's when he paddled out into the ocean, screamed, and came back to shore. He's not afraid to tell that story, either. After this deal, he knows that raw honesty has its upside.

Hear Berkowitz on our podcast Problem Solvers, available on Spotify or wherever you find podcasts.

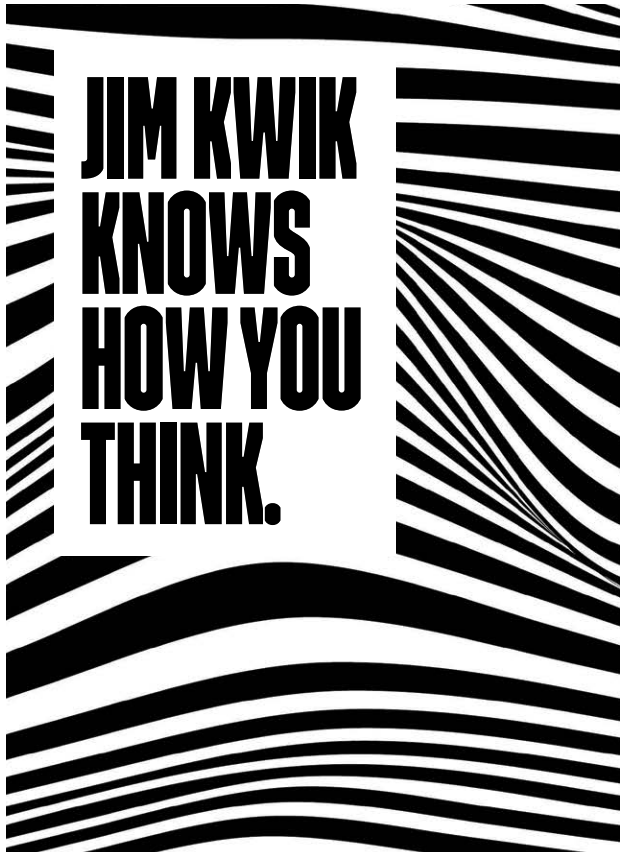




MAXIMIZE YOUR MIND

STRESS.
DISTRACTIONS.
CONSTANT CHANGE.
THE PAST YEAR
HAS DRAINED OUR
BRAINS—AND NOW
IT'S TIME TO REGAIN
OUR SHARPNESS.
WORLD-RENOWNED
BRAIN COACH
JIM KWIK
SHOWS YOU HOW.

by Jason Feifer



JIM KWIK KNOWS HOW YOU THINK.

He knows that, as an entrepreneur, you're trying to shove as much information into your brain as you can, and to do it as fast as possible. He knows that is frustrating, especially in our current moment of great change, because you can never move as fast as the things that come at you: Emails pile up, reports go unread, people are waiting for you, your industry is evolving, your world is shifting, and all the while you're bombarded with noise and distractions and Slack pings and it's why you're waking up early and grabbing your phone and responding to everyone right away, as if that'll actually stem the tide, which it will not.

He's seen this play out infinitely. As the world's top brain-performance coach, and the author of the best-selling book *Limitless*, he's worked with teams at Google, Nike, SpaceX, Virgin, Facebook, and Zappos. He's seen what over-

load looks like at the highest levels. He knows that you've felt on the verge of burning out, particularly during the past year, when everything you knew had to be thrown in the garbage, and he knows it's a complicated feeling. "A lot of times," he says, "entrepreneurs are burnt out not because they're doing too much but because they're doing too little of the things they really value."

He knows you're hungry for methods—because who doesn't love methods? Concrete steps, as straightforward as a cake recipe, to do *better*. It's why he makes online videos full of brain-boosting tactics, and why they've drawn more than 100 million views. But he also knows that methods by themselves are pointless—like giving someone that cake recipe but locking them out of the kitchen—because before you can use methods, you need tools that enable you to make

use of methods.

And if you think that sounds confusing, Kwik knows that, too.

"Entrepreneurs have to constantly study," he says. "They want to be an expert in their field, but if they feel overwhelmed, sometimes it's because they're trying to connect something they don't know to something they don't know." Our brains don't work like that. Why did you just read that interesting article about black holes in another galaxy, and then not retain a single damn piece of it afterward? Because you never studied the foundational information about astronomy, which means you have no knowledge base to connect this new information to. "All of learning is connecting something you don't know to something you *do* know," he says. We have to start somewhere.

Which is why, when Kwik meets with entrepreneurs, he likes starting with metaphors and stories. Here's a quick metaphor he often tells his clients. Then a quick story.

The metaphor: A little boy watches a caterpillar build its cocoon. He waits and waits for it to emerge transformed, but eventually he gets impatient and cuts the cocoon open himself to see the butterfly. Instead, he's horrified to find a swollen, mangled bug. He runs to his mother, who explains, "What happens in the cocoon isn't pretty, but it is also necessary, and it cannot be interrupted."

Now the story: Back in 2015, Kwik's friend Sylvester Stallone called him to ask, "Want to join me and Arnold Schwarzenegger to watch Floyd Mayweather, Jr., fight Manny Pacquiao?" Of course Kwik wanted to do this. He went. When the (overhyped!) match was over, Kwik asked these two legends, "What does it take to be a champion?"

Schwarzenegger replied, "The difference between an amateur and a champion is that a champion is willing to push past the pain."

What do we learn from these tales?

The past year in particular has been a strain unlike any other, and now that the pandemic is coming to a close, it's replacing one kind of uncertainty with another. What will the world be like now? What will people need, and what do they no longer want, and how can entrepreneurs stay atop it all? There is a massive amount of information to ingest and decide on, and it can be overwhelming. Entrepreneurs want strategies to help with this—but strategies alone will not help, as we now know, because our brains first need something more fundamental.

What is the fundamental thing, then? What's the foundation to build upon—the thing to know first, which more knowledge can be built upon, and that we need now more than ever as we emerge from a pandemic and into... whatever comes next?

"The number one skill set," Kwik says, "is to learn how to learn."

He had to teach this to himself. Because at first, Kwik didn't know how to learn. He was just, as one of his grade-school teachers called him, "the boy with the broken brain."

Jim Kwik suffered his first head injury at the age of 5. He had two more by the age of 12. As a result, basic cognitive functions became difficult. He struggled to focus, to read, to remember. His school grades were terrible. His self-esteem was shattered. He pushed himself and was accepted into a local state university, but the work was so difficult, and Kwik felt so overwhelmed, that he considered dropping out his fresh-





man year. That's when a friend intervened. "Before you tell your parents you're going to quit school," the friend said, "I'm going to see my family. Why don't you come with me and just get some space?"

Kwik said yes. The trip would change his life.

Before dinner one night, the friend's father invited Kwik for a walk around their property. "How's school?" the father asked, and Kwik broke down crying. Then the father asked, "Jim, why are you in school? What do you want to be?"

Kwik didn't know how to answer; nobody had asked him that before. The father grabbed a journal, tore out a few sheets of paper, and asked Kwik to write down his goals and dreams. Kwik did, and then started to fold up the paper and put it in his pocket—but the father grabbed the paper and started reading. "I'm freaking out," Kwik recalls, "because I've never shared this with anyone." The list contained the normal dreams of an 18-year-old: finding success, making his parents proud. Then the father held up two index fingers, about a foot apart, and said, "You're this close to achieving everything on that list."

"I'm like, *No way—give me 10 lifetimes and I'm not going to crack that list,*" Kwik says. "And then he takes his index fingers and puts them on the sides of my head." *Your brain*, the father was saying, *has the power to make these goals possible.* Then he took Kwik into his library, with a wall full of books, and instructed Kwik to read one book a week. Kwik said it was impossible; he was a slow reader, and anyway, he had midterms coming up. The father said it didn't matter. Figure out a way. Then, to hammer home the point, he pulled out Kwik's list of goals and started reading them aloud.

"I don't know what it was," Kwik says, "but something about hearing your deepest desires in somebody else's voice, incanted into the universe, just messed with my mind and my spirit." Kwik agreed: He'd read a book a week.

But he didn't know how. Back at school, he pushed himself to do it—barely sleeping, barely eating. He withered down to 117 pounds, and one morning, at 2 A.M., he fell

down a flight of stairs at the school library and smashed his head. He woke up in a hospital, malnourished and dehydrated, thinking he'd died. Then a nurse entered with a mug that had Albert Einstein's face on it. Kwik took it as a sign—he'd once done a book report on Einstein in high school, but he was so insecure that he threw it out rather than hand it to his teacher. Now Einstein stared at him,

along with a quote printed on the mug: "We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them."

Something clicked for Kwik. He understood his problem.

"It's not how smart you are—it's *How are you smart?*" he says now. Kwik loves speaking like this, shifting words around to invert a phrase's meaning. "I thought that I was failing school, but in a way, school was failing me, because

WHAT'S YOUR DOMINANT QUESTION?

A dominant question is the thing we keep asking ourselves, over and over throughout our day. It's what drives our decisions in the moment and focuses our obsessions when we're alone. It feels permanent—but Jim Kwik says it is not.

Kwik was recently going through this exercise with a friend of his, and they realized her dominant question was: "How do I get people to like me?" This explained a lot about her. "You can imagine her personality," Kwik says. "She's self-deprecating, her personality changes depending on who she's with, and people take advantage of her."

This is a habit we're programmed to have. "We all have a part of our brain called the reticular activating system, and that helps determine what you focus on," Kwik says. "People don't realize this, but our brain primarily is a deletion device. We're trying to keep information out. If you paid attention to the billion stimuli around you, you would go stark raving mad. The only things that come through that filter are the things that are important to us, that are charged by the questions we ask. Because ask and you shall receive."

The goal, then, is to shift our brains toward asking a positive and constructive dominant question. For example, when Kwik started working with the actor Will Smith, they realized that his dominant question is "How do I make this moment magical?" That drives Smith toward action. One night, Kwik was with Smith and his family on a movie set, and it was 2 A.M. and everyone was freezing. "He starts making hot chocolate for everybody, even though there's a crew there that does that for them," Kwik says. "He starts bringing us blankets. He starts cracking jokes. He starts telling stories. And I realized, *He's living his dominant question.*"

But no matter the question, Kwik says it can always be improved and refined.

How do you identify your dominant question? You listen to yourself. "Usually a dominant question emerges when people are under stress," he says. "Noticing yourself talk is very important." He also suggests journaling, perhaps first thing in the morning.

Next, how do you install a better dominant question (or just upgrade your existing one)? "One way is through repetition," Kwik says, "and the other way is having external triggers." Some people will put a question on their phone's lock screen and set a sporadic timer to remind them to look at it. Others will write it on Post-it notes and stick it on their walls.

People can also tie the question to specific actions or events, so they think of the question whenever something happens. For example, Kwik recommends a few useful dominant questions worth adopting: First, *How can I use this?* And second, *Why must I use this?* Think of these questions whenever you read something, or have a useful conversation with someone. Through repetition, these become your filters.

When Kwik worked with Smith, they realized that his dominant question—"How can I make this moment magical?"—had a flaw. It meant that not all moments are magical! But what if every moment has some magic in it? To empower him, they worked together to change the question. It became, "How can I make this moment even more magical?"

That's the magic of a good dominant question.

sometimes the way a teacher prefers to teach is different than a student's way of learning." People learn in different ways, he realized—and just because he learned differently than his peers didn't mean he was *unable to learn*. He simply needed to figure out what worked for him.

That's what he set about doing. Once he'd figured it out, he began tutoring other students to do the same. Then he began tutoring those students' parents, who passed him along to their friends and colleagues, and soon Kwik was training the greatest minds in the world.

Now he is in demand by major companies, entrepreneurs, athletes, and entertain-

ers, and he travels the globe speaking to crowds of thousands. Kwik says he is torn about this success. "I didn't want to be famous. I don't want to be known for this work," he says. "I'm very introverted and very shy." He doesn't hide this, either. In conversation, he speaks in a serious, subdued tone, looking off to the side every so often as if needing to recharge. But he feels compelled to keep teaching, reaching the maximum number of people he can, because he knows how transformative it is to learn how to learn.

"Shame on me," he says, "if somebody is struggling and suffering the way I did for so long, and I don't help that person.

"IT'S NOT HOW SMART YOU ARE—IT'S HOW ARE YOU SMART?"

So how do you learn how to learn? This is big and complicated, and when Kwik explains it, his words form a kind of abstract Russian nesting doll—one category of thought, which opens up to reveal another category, which opens to reveal another, and so on.

But in short, we can start

with what *not* to do, because it's the first thing people tell Kwik.

"People come to me all the time and they're like, 'Jim, I can't do this; I'm not good at this.' And I say, 'Stop. If you fight for your limitations, you get to keep them,'" he says. "People in our society are constantly talking about all the things they *can't* do."

Does he hear this from billionaire CEOs at top-tier companies, too? "Oh, goodness!" Kwik replies. "I can't tell you how many high-profile individuals struggle with self-esteem issues." The way he sees it, all behavior is driven by beliefs—and if someone believes they cannot do something, then they won't be able to, no matter their level of accomplishment. "Your brain is a supercomputer, and an entrepreneur's self-talk is the program that will run," he says.

To create a winning mindset, then, people can't just focus on what they want to do. They have to identify their limiting beliefs and then, he says, systematically "un-limit" them.

Kwik believes our mindsets have been destroyed by many lies (or rather, L.I.E.s—limited ideas entertained; he also loves acronyms). Among the biggest lies: Intelligence is fixed, mistakes are failures, genius is born, learning new things is hard, and knowledge is power. That last one may sound like a mistake—how can knowledge not be power? But Kwik points out that knowledge *alone* isn't power.

HOW TO FOCUS

Focus begins in the morning, Kwik says. And most entrepreneurs destroy it by reaching for their phones.

"When you wake up, you're in this relaxed state of awareness—it's the most relaxed you'll feel the entire day," he says. "When you pick up your device, you're rewiring your brain for two things—for distraction, and then something even worse, *reaction*."

Kwik says that we understand the word *focus* all wrong. It is not something one person is naturally better at than another, or that waxes and wanes throughout the day. "Focus is not something you have," Kwik says. "Focus is something you do."

He suggests thinking about concepts like *focus* and *distraction* as if they're separate muscles. If you work out either of them, they become strong. "Most people are flexing their distraction muscles," he says—by trying to do 10 things at once, say, or constantly checking their email. "Then they wonder why they're distracted later in the day."

So how do you build focus? First, eliminate the word *multitasking* from your vocabulary.

"The enemy of focus is multitasking," Kwik says. "That's why people suffer from a lot of Zoom fatigue and everything else. Entrepreneurs say that they're multitasking, but in actuality they're not. The research shows that the human brain cannot do multiple parallel cognitive processes at once. What they're really doing is more accurately described as task-switching—going from Zoom to Slack, to social, to email, to everything. And it can take anywhere from five to 10 minutes just to regain your focus." When an entrepreneur tries to multitask, he says, it costs them time and energy, and it leads to mistakes.

Instead, he says, "start doing focused activities." That means staying on one task, and one task only, until it's time to do something new. If you're working on something that requires a lot of attention, do it for about 25 minutes and then take a break. (That's called the pomodoro technique; it's based on research showing that our brains tend to drift after about 25 minutes of focused work.) For shorter tasks, Kwik says, add a small change that keeps you focused. For example, if you normally brush your teeth with your right hand, switch to your left hand. "Your brain grows through novelty and nutrition," he says. "You always want to challenge it."

As you do, your focus "muscle" will become stronger—and so will your ability to stay on task.

“Entrepreneurs feel like just buying a book is good enough, or just listening to a podcast or going on Clubhouse is enough for them to have some power,” he says. But when entrepreneurs learn something, he says, they must filter it through three questions: *How can I use this? Why must I use this? And when will I use this?* Without those answers, knowledge is wasted.

That’s mindset, in brief: Un-limit your beliefs, and actively turn knowledge into power. Remember earlier, when Kwik said that you need the right mindset before you can truly make use of good methods? Well, are we there yet? No. Because if you combine a great mindset with powerful methods, you don’t actually have learning. Instead, what you have is ideation.

“A lot of entrepreneurs suffer from ideation,” he says. “They believe everything is possible and they have all these great ideas, but they’re not doing anything because they’re not motivated.”

That’s the final piece of the puzzle. If you want to learn how to learn, you must combine mindset, methods, and finally, motivation. (Kwik also loves alliteration.)

“The evidence that somebody is motivated—an entrepreneur or their team or customers—is that they consistently take action,” Kwik says. “I think 90 percent of entrepreneurs would say, ‘Yes, I have an issue staying motivated to consistently do the things I don’t want to do.’”

Kwik has come up with a formula to fix this, which he says goes like this: P x E x S3.

P is purpose: “A passion, for entrepreneurs, is what lights you up—and I think purpose is how you use that passion to light other people up,” he says. E is energy: It’s about managing your energy like you manage your time, so that

you have enough of it when you need it. And S3 is small, simple steps—breaking things down into manageable tasks. “What keeps people from acting is either they’re intimidated or they’re confused,” Kwik says. “So ask, *What is the tiniest action I can take right now that will give me progress toward this goal?*”

Combine all this together and you’ve built true, action-oriented motivation. Now you’re ready to really

learn—to absorb the methods you find in books and podcasts (and in this magazine!), and to expand your potential. Because above all, as Kwik transformed himself from a stunted learner into a world-renowned brain coach, he is convinced of this: We contain more potential than we know.

“This is not about being perfect,” he says. “This is about advancing and progressing beyond what we believe is possible. We live in a world where

we’re outsourcing jobs to Asia, to automation, to artificial intelligence. What’s not going to be easily sent to a machine? What are the things that are truly limitless? There’s no limit to our creativity. There’s no limit to our imagination. There’s no limit to our ability to solve problems.”

The most limitless thing in the world, in other words, is us. **E**

Jason Feifer is the editor in chief of Entrepreneur.



Turning Up The Heat On Toxic Culture

Three things you can do right now to improve organisational culture.

One of the irritating things about good culture is that it's difficult to achieve.

Uniting everyone around a common mission is no mean feat. There's lots to stand in its way – much of it related to human nature. As a founder and leader of ad industry businesses, a sector with a reputation for toxic culture, I have a long-term interest in working out ways to dissipate the heat. Here's my top three.

1

VALUES OUTING

Much has been said about the first step to shape good culture; take a values-first approach to your recruitment; a signpost to all that there's a defined, identifiable culture. Equally, you'll find swathes of expert opinion telling you that all decisions taken daily in your business should be guided by your values and mission. Assuming that your leadership team actually live and breathe both, I'm thinking here of the recent Brewdog debacle, then what about your people? How can you be sure those you bring in are down with your vision? After all, it's difficult to really know if the person who turns up to do the job is the same person who turned up for the interviews.

One way to aid your judgement is values outing. Ask your candidates to metaphorically rip up their CV and get them to think about their career achievements in a different way; to show you how they have lived your

organisation's values by reworking and categorising the structure of their CV using each of your values as a heading.

The foreword to a fascinating survey of the value of values in business by the consultancy firm Maitland* asked how many CEOs could honestly say the values they so lovingly crafted were fully lived within their organisation. A values-outing exercise will crystallise your culture in the minds of your people on day one of their journey.

2

DO AN EQUALITY AUDIT

Workplace inequality – there's a lot of it about. Any self-respecting entrepreneur needs to be aware to their own unconscious biases that can cause the flawed decision making leading to inequality and a toxic culture.

You should also be vigilant to inequality and therefore toxic culture, creeping in



through the back door as your enterprise grows. Regularly auditing and measuring team engagement is a way to guard against this. The accepted HR way to measure engagement is asking people if they're proud

to be part of your business and further, would they recommend it as a great place to work. A yes to both are indicators they're 'engaged'. Consider this in context of those communities most

frequently discriminated against at work. If women recommend your business as a great place to work to other women outside the organisation, that would be an indicator you're getting some things right. You might then extend measurement to other groups; the UK's 2010 Inequalities Act protects 9 characteristics; would your LGBTQ+ community be highly engaged for instance.

I'm not suggesting that the existence of equality in any organisation can be ascertained through this exercise alone, but as an indication for how your culture is perceived internally, and which areas need to improve, then asking people inside any organisation for their view is a good place to start – perception is everything.



SORT YOUR MEETING MIX

A perfect environment

Why we can't stop fighting – and how to get great stuff done despite our differences

I Don't Agree

MICHAEL BROWN

"Well researched, empathic and urgent. If the title makes you nervous, you probably need to read the book. Michael Brown wants to help us learn to listen so we can figure out how to move forward."

—**SETH GODIN**
Author, *This is Marketing*



women. Google it.

I spoke to Jules Chappell OBE about her experience. Jules worked at the Foreign Office. She was posted to Baghdad as part of the governance team after the fall of Saddam Hussein, to work with Iraqi women's groups, helping female leaders join the political process after the conflict. She later became the UK's youngest ambassador, taking her post in Guatemala in 2009 aged 31. Jules inevitably attended lots of meetings.

"My biggest take away if you want a meeting to work is getting the right people in the room. Countless times I've sat through talks in rooms full of men, where clever language was agreed and signed, but ultimately nothing changed on the ground. It makes a big difference if those at the table are more diverse, representative of the communities involved or actually impacted by the issue."

Consider the volume of meetings happening daily globally. It is estimated that 55 million meetings happen every day in America alone*. Whatever the real number, we should assume this isn't a minor source of tension. It's a major culture warping issue that's endemic and destabilising for 50% of the working population.

If the aim of your meeting is to achieve balanced, representative decisions (key ingredients of good culture) then you'll fail if you let the diverters hog all the airtime.

References

*The Values most Valued by UK plc (Maitland)

*55 Million: A fresh look at the number, effectiveness and cost of meetings in the U.S. (Lucid Blog)

"MY BIGGEST TAKE AWAY IF YOU WANT A MEETING TO WORK IS GETTING THE RIGHT PEOPLE IN THE ROOM. COUNTLESS TIMES I'VE SAT THROUGH TALKS IN ROOMS FULL OF MEN, WHERE CLEVER LANGUAGE WAS AGREED AND SIGNED, BUT ULTIMATELY NOTHING CHANGED ON THE GROUND. IT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE IF THOSE AT THE TABLE ARE MORE DIVERSE, REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNITIES INVOLVED OR ACTUALLY IMPACTED BY THE ISSUE."

to shape good culture is in that staple activity of business – the meeting.

It has been documented by many women in many places, men seem to speak more in meetings. Often speaking over women, and diverting the course of that person's creative flow, refocusing the room to the interrupter's ideas – and as has also been commented on to infinity; repackaging ideas expressed earlier by women as their own. It's my view, and direct experience, that many brilliant trains of thought are ruined in this way.

Not just mine; reams of research and commentary exist around the negative experience of meetings when viewed through the eyes of

Designer Tarun Tahiliani on the business of fashion in the times of COVID-19

Ace designer Tarun Tahiliani, a name that represents modern India in the most glamorous form through his avant garde designs with a focus on rich Indian heritage art and craft. After launching the multi-designer boutique in 1987, he started his eponymous label in 1990 and went on to hone his understanding of design techniques at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York. Now, more than three decades later, the management professional-turned-designer, who is undoubtedly one of the luminaries of Indian fashion, feels that as the modern Indian woman is changing, so are her needs especially when it comes to her wedding ensemble. Tahiliani, whose designs are worn by celebrities like Alia Bhatt, Priyanka Chopra Jonas, Sonam Kapoor, Kareena Kapoor Khan among others, are heavily sought-after. In our exclusive conversation, he discusses the changes in the post pandemic ethnic scene of fashion, his partnership with Aditya Birla Group, being a part of the Vogue Wedding Show, the country's most exclusive luxury wedding exhibition showcasing India's top wedding couture with this year's edition in a special digital avatar and much more. Read the edited excerpts:

By Puneet Kapani

From where do you draw inspiration for your bridal wear?

There is never really a definitive process because fashion in my view is the synthesis of culture & values, and it somewhere is also a reflection of the period it's being designed in. I love it when our designs reflect how the choices and society are evolving at that given point.

Generally, designers start with an inspiration/theme and then work on the story of their collection. We as a brand do not follow a theme per day. To build our story we look around into our strong design concepts which we believe

in – for instance embroidery techniques, colour palettes, lightness of clothes and also what works for our clientele. Then we start working on our collection months in advance by putting together that colour palette and try to infuse diverse embroidery techniques with design innovation/technology to take it to the next level. And somewhere through this, all a collection is born that comes straight from our hearts and intent of offering couture that listens to its customers

How do you define a modern Indian bride?

To me the modern Indian bride is somebody who has a



“We as a brand do not follow a theme per day. To build our story we look around into our strong design concepts which we believe in – for instance embroidery techniques, colour palettes, lightness of clothes and also what works for our

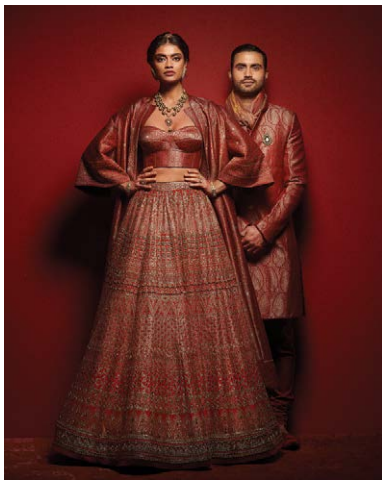
clientele.” Tarun Tahiliani

point of view, who wants to look like herself because she is educated and emancipated enough to own herself rather than being some stereotype precast version of a bride, exhibiting great demeanor, I suppose a modern bride is someone who can carry herself as she does normally and not put on an act to look like she is from some other time no matter how traditionally she is dressed. So naturally it follows the embellishment and particularly make-up which goes too far and the jewellery is kept toned and elegant and in keeping with personality.

With regard to couture collections timed for the

festive season, do you expect buyers will continue to spend lavishly?

I think consumption at large will be different post this pandemic. Due to a new consciousness that has set in amidst this global crisis, we are not only prepared for a decline in consumption; we are also prepared that some might not want to consume at all. But I also do believe that now, more than ever, people will realise true luxury also meant high quality – something that will last you for ages because of the finesse and detail gone into to putting it together



ranging from fear and panic, to a realisation of and trying to learn from the situation and finally, to acceptance and acknowledgement – during a crisis scenario of this nature, I personally have always been someone who likes to follow a strictish routine, and I have tried to establish that very early on in the lockdown. This has helped give me some sort of structure to my day



go to men's premium ethnic line was really a pet project of the Aditya Birla Group and the vision of its chairman and the top executives, we just happen to fit together on the conversation that we developed over time and really sort to see if we're to be a perfect fit in complimentary working skills, we are extremely excited about the opportunity because India doesn't have one major national player and we feel the time has come where Indians will wear more and more of our own styled clothing and we need better offerings. We want economies of scale, we want to take on things that smaller players don't have access to and represent some of the most incredible textiles of our country, with an understanding that it cannot be so elitist of price. It has to be priced in reach of most upper middle class Indians as well as NRIs who come and shop from India for their special occasion. This is the idea that has now been successfully moved in western wear that we feel have a great value addition with our combined expertise in this segment and I am excited to explore more.

the same ensemble with a strong focus on quality.

One change that I would love to see when all this is over is for people to be less vacuous about fast fashion and more mindful of the planet and the way in which their actions impact it. I would love to see change in consumer behaviour which shuns quantity in favour of quality and people cherish the things they have in order to develop their own style, which is far more sustainable and creates longevity.

What is your advice to up-and-coming designers who are seeking to make an impact in the fashion arenas?

My most serious advice to the upcoming designers who are seeking to make an impact in the industry is that firstly, they need to understand that it takes extremely hardwork and not the glamour that they might associate with, someone on the red carpet or beyond the fashion show. It is something that you do and will survive only with your passion and almost you are obsessed by it. Secondly, it is very important to develop a point of view, to go with one's instincts and develop a style because people want to see that they wear something which is representative and it can tune into different sensibilities. Everything doesn't work for everybody and the designers themselves can't be everything to everybody. Communication and storytelling is important and it must be based on something authentic. And lastly, my most important advice is that designs is not just sitting and thinking of pretty ideas, to build a business one needs the other eight spokes of the wheel as it were to be complete and which is why most designers work with partners who provide them the skill sets that they don't have and work in concert. All aspects of the business are equally important for any business to be built. ©



and has been a great source of anchoring for me. I have had plenty of time to ponder during this period of quietness and forced clampdown and the most important thing that has occurred to me is to really reflect upon what matters to Tarun Tahiliani. It has made me look at my life's work and ask myself what parts of it would I do over, and perhaps most importantly, what will I do going forward, that has a deeper meaning and resonance to the person I am and whether I want to be on the same 'treadmill' for

How are you spending time in isolation and how do you think COVID will change our psyche?

I have never spent so many days at home with this kind of time on my hands. While I'm sure that everyone goes through different emotions –

the next 30 years or else, do I want to move to something different

What made you feel like this was the right time to go into the men's premium ethnic-wear?

To be honest, the decision to

Do you feel like premium ethnic wear has evolved or changed post-pandemic? If so, how will that reflect in your pieces?

Post a global crisis, which is still to date is galloping, everybody has suddenly had more time to sit with themselves, more than they ever thought about, or would. I genuinely feel this has affected a change because everyone is going to be much more low key, much more conscious, much more cognizant of re-usability and the overall importance of a planet which has to be sustained by us because we are the ones who need it.

Similarly, we as a brand have always believed in creating thoughtfully and encouraged different uses of

What's your favourite corner in your home?

By Puneet Kapani



DEEPAK
ABBOT

Co-founder, indiagold

"I have created an office nook in a room close to the balcony. It is because the space receives abundant natural light and inspires my productivity. Another advantage is I can take a quick walk and that helps me to unwind my thoughts. My favorite place to work remains my work desk. I have a basic study table and a chair, nothing fancy. During the day, I am majorly attending meetings or on calls. And so, I need a peaceful space to concentrate. My workstation is a great combination of peace and view."



SANDEEP
AGGARWAL

Founder & CEO, Droom

"I have two favorite WFH spots - my terrace, which has over 200 plants, and the leather recliner in my master bedroom. I especially prefer to spend mornings gazing at the clear skies, connecting with the plants to relax, and bird watching. These simple things go a long way in helping me stay creative. The pandemic has contributed to an increase in stress levels but living on the 17th floor certainly has its perks. While I use my bedroom which has a lounge section with a Buddha statue and a colorful wall for Zoom calls, the rest of my workday is often spent between my favorite spots."



ANUBHAV
JAIN

Co-founder & CEO, Rupifi

"My wife has helped me set up a small office nook in one of the rooms in our house. With my desk by the window, the ample of sunlight brings in positivity and motivation during the day. Considering I spend longer working hours on my computer, I have opted for ergonomic set-up that helps me reduce the risk of physical stress. Additionally, my table has all the IT essentials including a screen and iPad that enhance my working experience and productivity. One can also find earphones and a Bluetooth Speaker in a corner that I use to re-energize myself with some Music during my breaks"



RAJAT
GARG

Co-Founder
myUpchar.com

"With increasing work from home culture, I have made my living room as my office space."

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5 INDIAN COMPANIES ENABLING SMES TO MOVE TO DIGITAL BOOKKEEPING AND ACCOUNTING

1. OKCREDIT

Bangalore-based OkCredit – founded by three IITans in 2017 -- offers a mobile-based platform for SMBs and their customer base to keep a record of their credit and payment transactions digitally, and aims to solve other major pain points in the regular functioning of small to medium business owners -- be it in terms of tracking their accounts, managing staff or the basic need to go online! With its innovative mobile application, OkCredit has been able to give a 100% digital makeover to the traditional register books of millions of retailers/shop owners/small businessmen, i.e. the 'Bahi/Udhar Khata', making their daily bookkeeping task simpler and more effective; the app is available in English, Hindi, Hinglish, as well as local languages like Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Punjabi, etc.

2. KHATA BOOK

Khata Book is an app to replace the traditional bahi khata with a new avatar of a digital ledger cash book; it is like the 'Tally for mobile' for shop owners and small business owners to automatically take care of their entire daily accounting needs, minus the need for investing in expensive accounting software. The app also helps small businesses by recording credit (jama) and debit (udhaar) transactions for customers and can accept digital payments via QR code, UPI-supported apps like Google Pay,

PhonePe, Paytm, BHIM, SBI Yono, etc., or by sharing online payment links with customers. Additionally, with the app's 'auto payment reminders' feature, automated SMS can be sent to a customer every time a transaction is done.

3. GIMBOOKS

Raipur-based dedicated fintech platform for SMEs, GimBooks, was launched initially as an 'invoice-maker' app and has over the years evolved into comprehensive bookkeeping and accounting platform. Through its mobile app and integrated website platforms, GimBooks allows its users to digitally create invoices, e-waybills, purchase orders, quotations, challans and much more; the app also has many unique features for small businesses to help them to manage inventory, expenses, track purchase reports, notify payment reminders to the customers, and so on. GimBooks has also recently introduced multiple advanced features like GST e-Invoicing and 'Embedded Finance' on the app. The app – available in 9 vernacular Indian languages -- has already crossed 1.5 million+ downloads on Playstore, and had, in 2020, won the 'Aatmanirbhar App Innovation Challenge' launched by the Government of India.

4. VYAPAR

Vyapar is a great GST billing app and software for Indian small businesses, which can be used

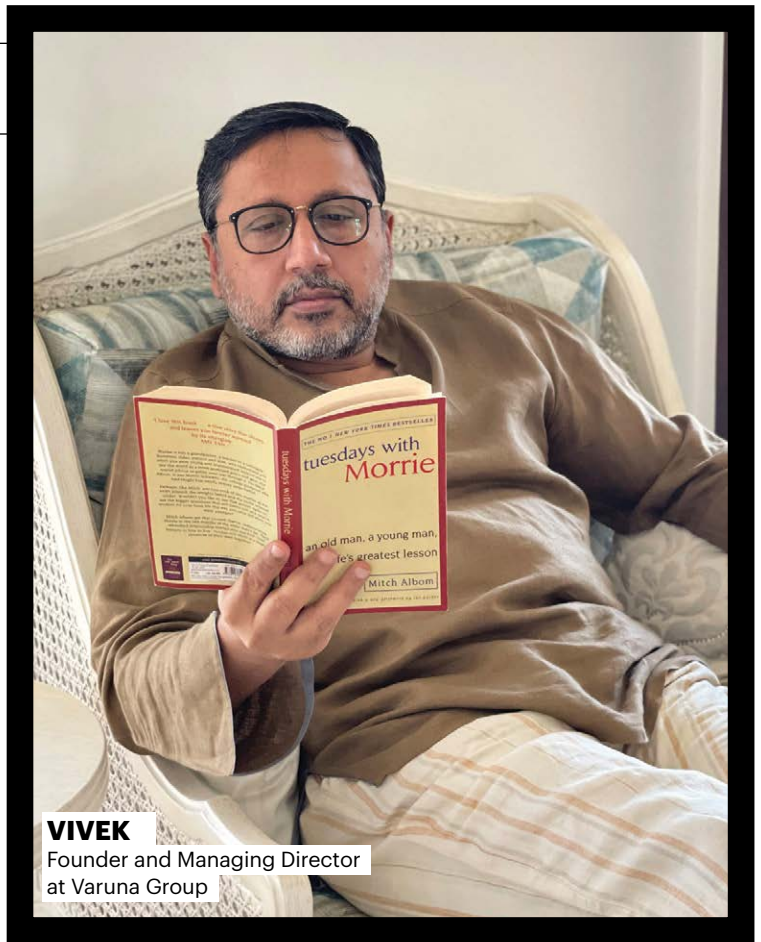
to generate GST invoices and for the generation of reports for your business' GST filing. Besides GST billing-related technological solution, Vyapar the app also makes inventory management easier and digitalized through its full stack inventory management solution that helps you track and check the stocks by the expiry date, batch number, etc., and enable low-stock alerts, if necessary. Furthermore, entrepreneurs can also use Vyapar to generate accurate profit & loss reports, check balance sheets, control expenses and reduce errors with expense reports and to keep live track of receivables and payables.

5. CAXPERT

Delhi-NCR based CAXpert is a one-of-its-kind online platform that is serving as a bridge between chartered accountants (CAs) and enterprise owners by providing a range of SME-focused services -- starting from maintaining accounts to prepping GST and TDS calculations, undertaking compliance and taxation requirements for the businesses. CAXpert has been built to help in transitioning the varied bookkeeping and tax filing needs of today's individual business owners and small businesses and firms from offline to the online/digital space. Notably, the company offers several monthly pricing plans based on the size of each client and their respective custom needs.

My Summer Reading

Founder and Managing Director at Varuna Group, India's leading homegrown logistics warehousing, and integrated services company, Vivek has built a 25-year legacy from scratch. A nature lover and fitness enthusiast, Vivek enjoys spending quality time with his family, going on nature walks, hitting the gym, reading books and swimming when he's not in his boardroom avatar strategizing Varuna Group's operations and future.

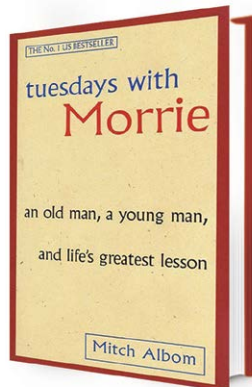


VIVEK
Founder and Managing Director
at Varuna Group

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE

by Mitch Albom

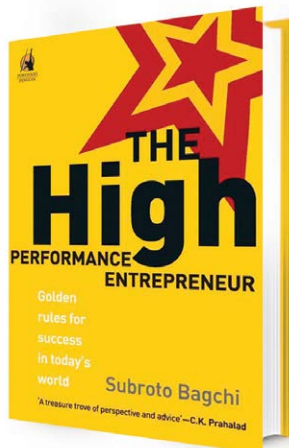
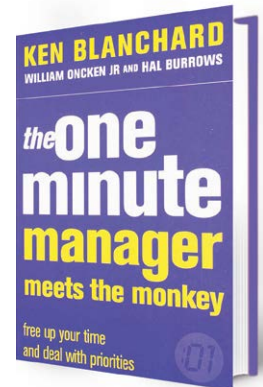
How to lead a balanced and fulfilling life both as an individual and for the society around you has been a key learning from this book. It also discusses how to eradicate the fear of death and how to eradicate the fear of ageing. These fears are inherent in everyone, this book helps you understand how to navigate these fears fiercely and live a fulfilling life. My favourite quote from the book is "Once you learn how to die, you'll learn how to live"



THE ONE-MINUTE MANAGER MEETS THE MONKEY

by Ken Blanchard, William Oncken, Jr. and Hal Burrows

The book talks about micro-managing and doing other people's work which affects your ability to perform completely. The importance of delegating and optimising the worth of your team members has been a key learning. It also showed the way on assigning responsibilities and monitoring them properly.



THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE ENTREPRENEUR

by Subroto Bagchi

The book is ideal for someone thinking of or taking an entrepreneurial journey. It is like a guide which helps one to understand whether they are ready to take the plunge into the entrepreneurial space. Most entrepreneurs keep a fallback option in their life when they start a venture but the book suggests not having one. When you don't have a parachute is when you can give your 100%. It helps you help yourself find answers to difficult and daunting questions. The learnings in this book helped me give more transparency to teams below me. My favorite quote from the book is "Investor money is meant to bring in customers, build and deliver products and services and generate cash before you start leading a life of such luxury."



**NAVEEN
MUNJAL**
MD, Hero
Electric

DIVING INTO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Naveen Munjal, MD, Hero Electric introduced the first Electric Bicycle way back in 2001 and an Electric Scooter in 2007. Today, Hero Electric is India's largest Electric Two-wheeler company. Photography, scuba diving, and making India sustainable, is what drives Munjal.

Whether it is entrepreneurship or scuba diving, he knows how to stay absolutely calm and composed at all times. Looking at the 'bigger' picture a lot of times, he has built a strong business or so to say dived in the deep open waters even when things were not going his way. He has had way too many such experiences doing both – building a business in a new uncharted world and diving in the deep waters with sharks around you! Here's Munjal talking about the therapy and thrill in diving. *By Punita Sabharwal*

First scuba dive plunge:

At the Palawan Islands, Philippines, 1998

Numerous experiences of scuba dives across the world:

I have dived in various parts of the world – Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Maldives, Greece, Hawaii, Oman, Turks, and Caicos. I got my first PADI scuba certification in Bali, Indonesia.

Favourite Scuba diving destination:

Maldives – It is one of the most beautiful places to

dive – crystal clear waters with abundant marine life and if you're lucky you would have Manta Rays and Whale Sharks swim by you! I saw quite a few reef sharks but not the Whale Sharks. I did a lot of wreck diving in Maldives, quite a few sunken boats and ships not too far out in the ocean and a lot of them are easily accessible at 15-20 metres. However, we went down to one which was at 44 meters and even at that depth there was light filtering through, the waters were that clear! I would absolutely

love to go back diving in Maldives very soon.

Favourite Sports:

I enjoy watching Formula 1 and am 'forced' to watch football and cricket by my son who absolutely loves watching sports! Another sport I love watching is Snooker, but that unfortunately is not that widely telecast any longer!

Fitness regime:

I'm an early riser and seldomly will sleep beyond 7 am or so even on a holiday. Generally, I am up by 6 am or so

and then either exercise (pre-covid days) or these days am just walking outside and enjoying the peacocks dancing on our roof and their loud calls to each other!

Wheels I own:

A BMW X7 SUV. I've always been fond of SUVs and prefer them to be the wheels of my choice.

Wheels I am eyeing on:

Waiting for the Tesla! My choice would be the Tesla X. My other vehicle that I've been eyeing since quite a while is either the BMW R1250GS or now

the Harley Davidson Pan America motorcycles.

Favourite Food:

Spicy Chinese – Sichuan food! Also, Japanese Ramen, however being a vegetarian it's very hard to find good Ramen without fish in it!

Favourite movie

The Last Samurai

Life Hack

The ability to 'zoom' in and out of situations.

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