



# Unique birthday celebrations

For ol' times' sake



**INDRA NARAYAN DAS**

THE DECISION TO GO through a full-time MBA program from one of the top 10 institutes in India was taken quite early by me during my graduation. MDI Gurgaon had been regularly ranked high in the B-school rankings and the feedback from friends, seniors and acquaintances who had studied at MDI was extremely positive. The reputation of the faculty, infrastructure and the placement trends were the most important factors for me to decide on MDI Gurgaon. The increase in workload for someone who is going in directly from graduation to an MBA in any of the top ranked institutes is quite high. MDI was no different. So initially the schedule was quite rigorous. The course was quite demanding with case study-based classroom sessions, live projects and various co-curricular activities. Nevertheless in 2-3 months' time, we all quickly learnt how to successfully manage multiple priorities. It is difficult to choose any one professor since so many courses and as many professors made a significant impact on my learning and development. To name a few, attending the classes of Prof. Vinod Kalia (sales and distribution) and Prof. Mukul Gupta (advertising) was an enriching experience. Dr Punam Sehgal (HR) also made a significant contribution to the knowledge that I attained in MDI.

Favourite memories: I think each one of us fondly remember the unique birthday celebrations in MDI. The birthday boy/girl used to be brought in front of the dining hall, in the open and the intensity and frequency of the birthday bumps were independent of the number of years completed. It was more a function of how loved/hated was the victim!



I think the two-year MBA program in MDI Gurgaon is still very young if I were to compare it with other premier institutes of the country. In that respect it has made big strides in rubbing shoulders with the best institutes to give successful managers and thought-leaders to the industry.

For ol' times' sake



**NISHI MALHOTRA**

"RIGHT FROM MY school days, I had aspired to do my MBA from one of the leading B-schools in India," says Nishi Malhotra. "MDI was set up in 1973 by a joint effort of the World Bank, ILO, UNDP, UNIDO and the Industrial Finance Corporation of India," she rattles off. "In those days Gurgaon was coming up as an industrial hub and MDI was one of the most sought-after B-schools because of its rigorous admission procedure and best faculty. Alumni, infrastructure and great career prospects were the major motivating factors for getting



enrolled at MDI. Being located in one of Asia's biggest corporate hub Gurgaon, MDI has a locational advantage with great alumni and corporate network. Sprawling over 37 acres, it offers a great environment for academic excellence," says Malhotra, of her decision to choose MDI. I graduated specialising in MBA (Finance) and till date crave for the BFBV (Behavioural Finance & Business Valuation) sessions taught by Prof. Sanjay Bakshi, International Corporate Finance

taught by Prof. T.P. Ghosh, Market Research by Prof. Nand Dhameja and Marketing by Prof. Chetan Bhagat. Our alumni committee organises various events to keep the network intact. Besides being nostalgic, it's always a value add to visit MDI and have a look at the latest events and updates across various academic programmes, grab a book at Gyan Grah and make use of the vast intranet databases. MDI is indeed one of the best B-schools in India for all aspiring corporate leaders.

## Dons in demand



### PROFESSOR DEBI SAINI

A DESCRIPTION OF Professor Debi Saini's qualifications takes up an entire sentence. He is an

M.Com, LLB, LLM, PhD, GPHR and professor and chairperson, human resource management at MDI. Before joining MDI in 2004, Saini has had stints as a professor at the Delhi University, Gandhi Labour Institute, Ahmedabad, and IILM, New Delhi.

So after collecting so many degrees, what is it that drew Saini to teaching? "There is no bossism in teaching," he explains. "You decide what you want to do. You decide what you want to research, what books to read, what books to review, what courses you want to teach, etc. There is no command and control in teaching. I like lecturing and researching. Over the years, I've received many offers – maybe 15 offers or so to become a director or director general for twice or thrice the money I'm making now. But I just can't give up teaching," he adds. At MDI, Saini teaches strategic human resource management, strategic employee relations, employment law, human resource management (HRM) and international HRM.

Saini's passion is to speak on employee engagement, an area in which he also does a lot of consulting. He focuses on diversity management and building co-operative employee relations. "I am advising a large automobile company and training over 150 managers through employee engagement," he elaborates. Saini has also travelled across



the globe to countries such as the US, Denmark, France, and Dubai as visiting faculty or a keynote speaker or as a consultant.

He describes his teaching style as practical. "I teach them (students) a lot of stories on how companies are doing, how great leaders are doing, especially with videos. I attend a lot of seminars/workshops," he explains. Saini says that his role as an expert on CII's committee on industrial relations also helps. He enjoys teaching his students with past and more contemporary examples of employee engagement. "I earmark important videos from YouTube or the Harvard Website. I critically decide what methodologies to adopt. I have also written two cases that are now sold on the Harvard Website. I write Indian cases, which are normally difficult to find. I try to make cases very realistic and very interesting. I'm currently working on a case on the Maruti disaster that happened a year ago," adds Saini.

The students, Saini says, are hungry for knowledge. "Their expectations are different. They don't appreciate pure expounding of theory. They want theory with real life examples. If you can juxtapose the two, then they like it. Keeping the students awake in my early morning class is quite a task and I am proud

to say I can keep them awake!" Saini adds laughingly.

Saini has a personal collection of over 1,500 books, and has reviewed over 145 books in learned journals. Before MDI, Saini says he used to have 400 pots on the roof of his house. He still loves looking at plants, but describes work as his hobby. "I am a workaholic," emphasises Saini.

## Dons in demand



### PROFESSOR VINOD KALIA

THE ONE THING in common between Professor Vinod Kalia's academic and professional

careers is how successful he has been at both. Long before he moved to academics, Kalia was CEO of Claas India Ltd, a joint venture of the billion dollar Claas KGaA of Germany and the Escorts group, which he transformed into a profit-making company. Before that, he headed and restructured another JV of the Escorts group. And even before that, he covered diverse products in organisations such as Eicher group, Larsen & Toubro, Jubilant and Shriram group. Kalia brings over 20 years of professional experience in marketing and sales.

Kalia has transitioned into academics just as successfully ("I wanted to do something different," he says).

He won the first 'Award for Excellence in Teaching' instituted by MDI in 2004, and won it again in 2006. He also won the Best Faculty award by the PGP class of 2007. And he's been invited as visiting faculty at IIM-Lucknow and IIM-Indore.

Now that he has been a professor for 15 years, with a focus on core marketing courses, Kalia says his favourite moments happen in the classroom when he can tell he's making an impact. "If you feel or get a sense of direction... when you're sharing knowledge with young minds and helping them look at their future careers. It is especially gratifying when students connect with you once they've started their careers."

Teaching also comes with its own set of challenges. "Nowadays, students want to go beyond the curriculum. They want to share your experience. The challenge is to get their minds hooked on to what we're talking about. Today's young people are smart and interesting. How do you make them feel involved so that they learn, is the key," he shares.

Kalia also is unhappy about the lack of industry collaboration with



academicians. "There is a great need for this in India. In the Western world, there is a lot of collaboration and it helps them tremendously. There is a big gap here. The industry people don't have a connect with academicians. If we can make that happen, it will be a win-win-situation for businesses, professors and the students. This area really hasn't got

the attention it deserves," he opines. He also laments of the paucity of good case studies in India. Kalia says that when he talks to industry people, they are reluctant to share their issues. This attitude, he says, misses the bigger picture and they look at it very narrowly.

When he's not teaching, Kalia's priority is his family. ♦

## What makes a good business school

Sitting in the aegis of the magnificent sandstone arch of the library, I ponder upon the parameters that define a good business school, differentiating it from the hordes of others who have cropped up in alarming numbers in the last few years in our country. The early morning sun streams in, professors and students may be seen in sparse numbers on the by-lanes, and a string of "Good-mornings" ensues.

Of the aspects, there are many that come to mind – heritage, alumni network, faculty strength, quality of students, international linkages, infrastructure, and arguably the most important, return on investment. Doubtlessly,

all of them directly influence a prospective student's inevitable decision, but none of them is all-encompassing in itself. To my mind, a good business school must necessarily include all of the above traits in optimal degrees.

But more than that, it is the environment that is most important, and ironically, the most neglected. Management, for all its fancy jargon and immaculate nuances, is essentially a treatise in common sense. Allow me, for a moment, to continue with this blatant act of oversimplification. A manager's everyday roles, responsibilities and challenges are met

less with theoretical concepts and more with their practical implementation. While our business schools vie to establish modern curriculums, it is in the inculcation of this practical knowledge sharing environment where they truly lack.

With a few obvious exceptions, the finest business schools of the country find themselves on equal footing on most of the aforementioned parameters. The trick then, to carve a niche in this competitive environment, is to go beyond the obvious checklists to create an atmosphere that is conducive to creativity, a free flow of ideas and knowledge, and

empowerment. For this to happen, the barriers in idealistic perception and the structured, authoritarian way of running things needs to come down. Being microcosms in their own right, business schools have both the privilege and the responsibility of overcoming the precarious hurdles in the Indian education system, and break new ground. I do realise that such sweeping generalisations are not without their own perils, but if the sharpest minds of the country collectively while away their productive years into the structured acquisition of a greener paycheque, the irony is lost on me, and dubiousness begins to creep in.

♦ AASHISH BELWALKAR



# From Wall Street with love

## Mutual funds You can't keep a good Gordon Gekko down. The would-be finance types at many of our B-schools are in the business of making money from Day 1.



Credence Capital Investment Fund is their vehicle for fame and wealth. Started in 2005, it is a fixed-term mutual fund, being wound up at the end of each academic year and started again with a new crew of investors and fund managers.

The corpus of the fund is around ₹10 lakh; 60 students chip in a maximum of ₹50,000 apiece. There are 16 fund managers – eight from the first-year batch and eight from the seniors. The



fund is entirely managed by the students.

Credence has been achieving fairly decent returns, better than the Nifty or the Sensex. One reason perhaps is that the fund managers are willing to try out anything. Strategies include value investing, arbitrage opportunities, mathematical models, technical and fundamental analysis and bottom fishing. Good training to be sharks.



“Be fearful when others are greedy and greedy when others are fearful,” says the Unnati Investment Management & Research Group. Unnati is the mutual fund run by the students of MDI. It was conceptualised in 2001 as a diversified fund and a midcap fund was added in 2003. The corpus is currently around ₹20 lakh, all raised from the students.

Unnati's approach is a fundamental, value-oriented

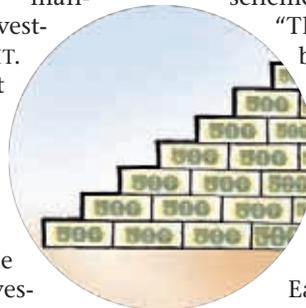


investment strategy. It helps the fund managers to get their *fundas* straight for future life.



“Never try the unknown and expect the unexpected,” says Finnacle Investment, the asset man-

agement and investment club of IMT. The club has just come out with a new fund offer (NFO). According to the offer document: “The objective of the scheme is to provide investors with opportunities for long-term growth in capital through active management



of investments in a diversified basket of equity stocks of companies listed on the NSE and the BSE.” The minimum investment size is ₹500. The scheme is closed ended.

“The scheme cannot be bought once the NFO closes and can be redeemed only at the end of the PGDM course.”

The fund is clearly turning more investor friendly.

Earlier, there was an entry load of 3 per cent. In NFO 2013, there is no entry or exit load.



“In its endeavour to be dynamic, Fin-Soc (Finance Society) is in the process of initiating a student-run mutual fund, a spin-off of its investment club to put theories to test in the real world.” You can't blame FMS for being tardy on this front; in Delhi, they have a different approach to making money.

