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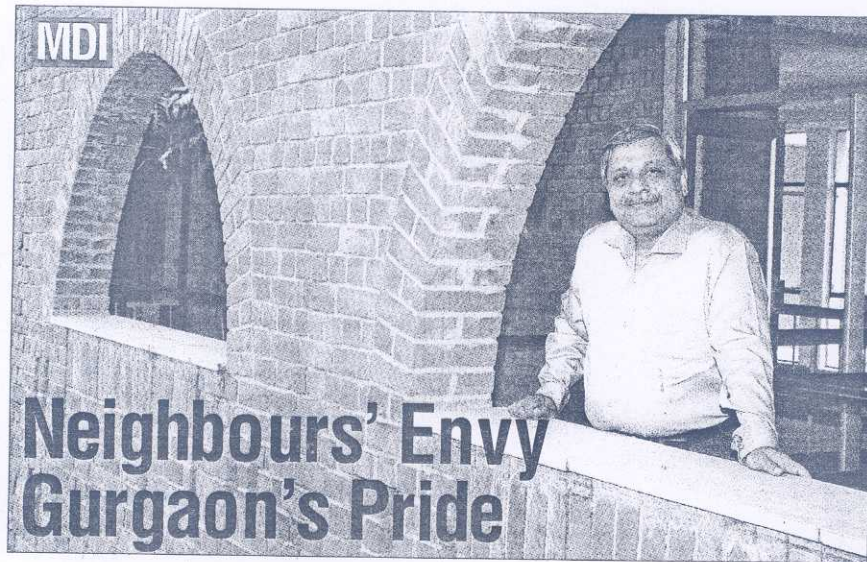
The slowdown in the economy has hit corporate expectations across India, making it difficult for even top B-Schools to ensure a hundred per cent placement for their students. The famed IIMs now assert that placements are not entitlements, but only an opportunity that arises as a result of knowledge creation – and is a by-product of the process. Fortunately, Management Development Institute (MDI), Gurgaon has managed to buck the trend – and ensured a hundred per cent placement. The presence of a strong alumni network, good performances during summer internships, and a focus on creating knowledge has helped the Institute in a big way, says Director Mukul Gupta.

Having been with MDI for the last 13 years, Gupta says that their focus has been to keep changing with the times, match the challenges offered by the complex business environment, and excel in whatever objectives are set. "As a School we want to design and develop new programmes, constantly upgrade curriculum, and have quality in the design and delivery of knowledge." The market, he says, has reiterated its faith in the MDI brand, which has been assiduously built over time. "Compared to a number of national institutes, we have been more involved in research, given more incentives, and created better opportunities for teaching," says Gupta.

To ensure that the students at MDI get a global perspective, the Institute has linkages with 50 institutions across the globe. The criteria for choosing the partner institutes is also rigorous – these should also be among top 5 of their respective countries. As a result of these linkages, around 25 per cent of the students are able to go abroad and study their courses. "We have

The placements at top business schools in the country hog media headlines every year, as corporates make astronomical offers to MBA graduates – which are unheard of in other professions. Placement Co-ordinator at MDI, Prof. Kapil Kanwal, opines that this year was even more difficult, than 2007-08, when the 'great depression' had engulfed the global economy. "We were lucky in the sense that a lot of MDI students got pre-placement offers, and the alumni also helped greatly in getting the students absorbed," he says. The next year offers more hope, says Kapil.

The average salary for MDI graduates was close to Rs. 13 lakhs per annum; and to ensure that all the students were placed, the Institute invited even more companies to the campus. Compared to 125 companies last year, there were 160 companies recruiting this time, informs Kapil. It was for



a large number of students from these partner institutions coming to MDI under the exchange programme, which helps in academic exchange, faculty exchange, research collaboration and development of academic material," says Gupta. MDI has also launched the International Summer University from this year, in which students from Class B towns' universities in India can come for short-term courses. These will be conducted by the faculty from the international institutes.

When asked how MDI has managed to ensure that the curriculum remains upgraded, and in tune with the industry requirements, Gupta says that MDI trains around 3,000 top and mid-level managers every year, through the management development programmes. "We have access to the latest information, issues and problems related to industry. This helps us in honing the curriculum to their needs," he says. A strong association with the industry is also maintained through

"Teaching has never been rewarded in this country. There have neither been incentives for the performers, nor punishment for the non-performers. This culture has to change, if India wants to seriously become a knowledge economy," he asserts. There needs to be a relook at teaching as a profession, and we all need to decide whether we want teachers who are knowledgeable, skilled and passionate, or those who have taken up teaching as a last recourse.

regular conferences, talks and guest lectures. MDI is also setting up a Finance Lab, which will simulate market-like conditions, and help the students learn the different facets of finance in a real time scenario. "We already have a Language Lab,

where students hone their language skills and improve communication," he says.

In the face of the dwindling quality of management education across the country, and even in Gurgaon, the MDI Director feels that there is need for more regulation and monitoring of MBA institutes. "Right now the entry and exit barriers are too low, and any one can set up an MBA institute. This has led to uncontrolled expansion in the number of schools, as not much hardware is required to set up a B-school," says Gupta. The need of the hour is to improve the functioning of such institutes, so that they can impart worthwhile skills to their students. Otherwise many will continue to languish without jobs. We at MDI have been fortunate. Most of the teachers here are passionate, and serious about research – for creating and sharing knowledge," says Gupta. The teachers are accordingly given the freedom, flexibility and incentives.

Asked about the strengths and weaknesses of Indian

the first time in a decade that summer placements were completed within a week. "The IT and auto sectors are facing multiple issues. IT is a cyclical business, and as a result companies have stopped hiring, as they have just a few projects in hand. Outsourcing has become a major issue abroad, and this also affected Indian companies badly," says Kapil. IT and Auto have been heavy recruiters in the past. The Consulting and Finance sectors have proved to be saviours, and a large number of MDI students have been hired by Goldman Sachs, American Express, Deloitte and several others. The key values that recruiters are now looking for, from candidates, are: their value fit, their drive to meet goals, and their out-of-the-box thinking. They must also have the strength and ability to negotiate the rough and tumble of the real world outside the simulated environment of B-schools, opines Kapil.

students, compared to their peers abroad, Gupta says that Indians have more knowledge about affairs of the world in general, and are well-informed on various issues. "Indians are also flexible and rounded, whereas foreign students have more depth in the subjects that they specialise in. The all-round perspective of Indians is of good help in the increasingly globalised scenario," he says. Multi-national companies have also realised this, and have started placing more Indian managers abroad.

On the issue of ethics and values in business, which have nowadays assumed an even more important role, Gupta opines, "We have to reinforce our traditional value system. We tell the students that personal growth and success should not be at the cost of people around them. We emphasise that being ethical is always profitable in the long run." MDI was the first institute in the country to start a compulsory Business Ethics course. The Institute has a very strict policy, and does not tolerate non-ethical behaviour.

An Institute never grows in a vacuum; the geographical location plays a very important role in its development. In that sense MDI has been lucky that it chose to operate from Gurgaon, which has gone on to become India's fastest growing city. Gupta says that when MDI started, the local population was merely 50,000. "We have a very strong linkage with the City. MDI has helped put Gurgaon on the national and international map as a premier location for business education," he asserts. The Institute also has a strong connect with the local community. MDI students have helped villagers in Gurgaon, particularly from Sukhrali, to manage their 'sudden' wealth – which came on the sale from their land. "Our students adopted one family each in the village, and helped them in managing their finances. At our annual Diwali Mela, we invite local residents to participate. We also have collected a lot of data on the residents of Gurgaon, for various studies," says Gupta. The MDI campus is the greenest institute in the City.

When asked what is it "that they don't teach at MDI?", Gupta smiles and says that they do not teach the students religious fanaticism. "Loyalty to the nation and the family is prime – the rest should not come in the way," he says. As a parting advice to MBA aspirants, Gupta suggests that they should look at an institute's infrastructure, academic facilities and reputation. ♦