January 2025 • Vol. 3 • Issue 1

Xplore

A LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE COLLECTIVE

SHAPING **TOMORROW'S EXPERIENCE ECONOMY**

INSIDE

- Byte Transformation
- Metaverse, Brands & Reality
- The Dynamic Conundrum
- Netflix vs Blockbuster

CEO LOUNGE

EXCELLENCE & INTEGRITY
XLRI
Xavier School of Management
For the greater good
1949 - 2024
ASPIRE BEYOND

Xplore

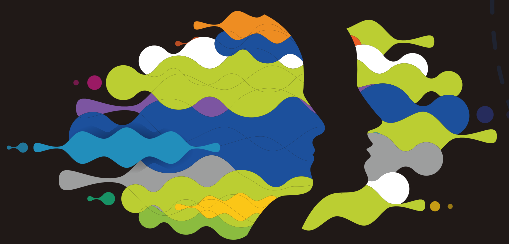
A LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE COLLECTIVE

IGNITING CONVERSATIONS
SHAPING FUTURES

Podcasts

Roundtables

Workshops



Speaker Sessions

Scan QR code to get in touch

or mail us at xplore@xlri.ac.in

@Xplore_XLRI @xplore.xlri @XploreXLRI

CEO LOUNGE

From Tesla's revolutionary approach to the automotive industry to Netflix's disruption of traditional media, these stories are packed with insights.

In this edition of Xplore, we unpack how some companies consistently outmaneuver competition and set industry standards that others aspire to reach.

We delve deep into Tesla's advancements in the electric vehicle and energy sector, highlighting how their sustainable technologies are pioneering changes far beyond just automotive. Simultaneously, we examine Netflix's strategy in personalizing viewer experience and content delivery, which has fundamentally altered media consumption worldwide.

This comprehensive analysis will equip you with insights on adopting disruptive strategies in your own business endeavors, whether you're leading a startup or managing an established company. Engage with this content to understand the dynamics of successful industry leadership and innovation.

We hope this edition not only informs but also inspires you to think differently and apply these lessons to achieve breakthrough success in your professional landscape.

Smitu Malhotra

Prof Smitu Malhotra
XLRI Jamshedpur

Xplore
A Leadership, Innovation & Excellence Collective

EXCELLENCE & INTEGRITY
XLRI
Xavier School of Management
For the greater good
1949 - 2024
ASPIRE BEYOND

FACULTY TEAM

Professor Kanagaraj Ayyalusamy
kanagaraj@xlri.ac.in
Professor & Convenor
Corporate Relation and Placements

Professor Narasimhan Rajkumar
rajkumar@xlri.ac.in
Associate Professor

Professor Rahul Kumar Shukla
rahul.shukla@xlri.ac.in
Assistant Professor &
Convener - Admissions

Professor Sunil Kumar Sarangi
sunilsarangi@xlri.ac.in
Assistant Professor &
Co- Convenor- Placements

CORPORATE RELATIONS

Mr Rajni Ranjan
ranjan.rajni@xlri.ac.in
Vice President - Corporate Relations

An ideal read for anyone eager to get a clearer picture of the current business climate and find ways to apply these lessons to their own professional life.

Today's business world is fraught with challenges that range from fierce competition to fast-paced innovation. In this issue of Xplore, we dive into how companies like Samsung navigate these turbulent waters, especially in their high-stakes battles with rivals like Apple. We're also unpacking lessons from ongoing global disruptions like the semiconductor shortage.

Join us for a practical look at these complex scenarios. It's an ideal read for anyone eager to get a clearer picture of the current business climate and find ways to apply these lessons to their own professional life. We'll explore strategies that these giants employ to maintain resilience and adaptability amidst market volatility and supply chain disruptions. Discover how embracing technological advancements and robust strategic planning can serve as a blueprint for weathering economic storms.

This edition is about deriving actionable insights that can help you enhance your competitive edge. Whether you're looking to innovate, pivot, or simply stay informed, these articles provide the knowledge and perspective needed to make informed decisions in an ever-changing business environment.

PC Padhan

Prof PC Padhan
XLRI Jamshedpur

STUDENT TEAM

Abhishek Banerjee b23174@astra.xlri.ac.in
Abraham Aby B24113@astra.xlri.ac.in
Afrin Pathan h23007@astra.xlri.ac.in
Akshay Birari b23365@astra.xlri.ac.in
Ananya b23369@astra.xlri.ac.in
Ankit Sengupta g24065@astra.xlri.ac.in
Anmol Singla H24128@astra.xlri.ac.in
Arpita Choudhury g24010@astra.xlri.ac.in
Ashrut Sharma H24133@astra.xlri.ac.in
Bhavya Taneja B24011@astra.xlri.ac.in
Dyuti Ghosh B24018@astra.xlri.ac.in
Gande Bhavya b23077@astra.xlri.ac.in
Gannu Murali Krishna g24015@astra.xlri.ac.in
Gowtham g24017@astra.xlri.ac.in
Karan Chauhan h23081@astra.xlri.ac.in
Kaushik Ghosh h23030@astra.xlri.ac.in
Khanak Sharma h23031@astra.xlri.ac.in
Konduru Sai Moukthik B24149@astra.xlri.ac.in
Kritika Singh h23085@astra.xlri.ac.in
Madhura Kuthe B24448@astra.xlri.ac.in
Mantri Sai Laasya B24137@astra.xlri.ac.in
Nandhini S b23333@astra.xlri.ac.in
Nandita Kumari h23035@astra.xlri.ac.in
Navneet Mangal b23143@astra.xlri.ac.in
Neelima Wadhwa h23093@astra.xlri.ac.in
Ojasvin Nagpal b23032@astra.xlri.ac.in
Priya g24031@astra.xlri.ac.in
Riya Jain H24047@astra.xlri.ac.in
Sagnik Das B24401@astra.xlri.ac.in
Setu Madhav B24466@astra.xlri.ac.in
Shreiya Tandon V24022@astra.xlri.ac.in
Shreyansh Thakur B24207@astra.xlri.ac.in
Srishti Sinha B23410@astra.xlri.ac.in
Suborno Gupta b23487@astra.xlri.ac.in
Sukanya Chatterjee h23179@astra.xlri.ac.in
Sumana Mukherjee g24107@astra.xlri.ac.in
Thrisha Santhosh H24114@astra.xlri.ac.in
Vashi Agarwal B24415@astra.xlri.ac.in
Vithal Gulati B24478@astra.xlri.ac.in

Ever imagined what it would be like to have a one-on-one with some of the most brilliant minds in the corporate and academic worlds? This edition of Xplore offers you a seat at the table with the leaders and thinkers who are at the forefront of shaping entire industries and nurturing the next generation of innovators.

This issue is packed with engaging dialogues that cut across various domains—from breakthrough strategies in talent management to revolutionary ideas that are rewriting economic theories. Each conversation is a deep dive into the intellects of those who have mastered the art of leadership and innovation.

Imagine this edition as your exclusive masterclass in the nuances of modern business challenges and leadership opportunities. The advice here transcends the ordinary; it's meticulously tailored to help you navigate the complexities of leading in a volatile economic landscape. Whether you're spearheading initiatives at a multinational, steering a startup through its growth phases, or shaping your career path in this unpredictable business climate, the wisdom enclosed within these pages is your strategic advantage.

Delve into this edition and let the richness of these discussions transform your approach to business and leadership. Allow the expertise of these seasoned professionals to inspire and provoke you, challenging your assumptions and encouraging bold, innovative solutions to both new and age-old challenges.

With each page, you're equipped to push the boundaries of what you thought possible, armed with insights that prepare you to excel and lead with confidence in a dynamically shifting world. Welcome to a richer understanding of the business landscape, and prepare to turn insights into impact.

Hari Govind Nair

Hari Govind Nair
Editor

Xplore
A Leadership, Innovation & Excellence Collective

January 2025 | Volume 3 | Issue 1

XLRI Xavier School of Management — Excellence & Integrity — For the greater good — Aspire Beyond — 1949–2024

PUBLISHER
Deepak Yadav
deepak@ceolounge.net

EDITOR
Hari Govind Nair
hari@ceolounge.net

DEPUTY EDITOR
Amit Ranjan Rai

ART DIRECTOR
Santosh Nirala

DESIGNER
Suman Kumari

DIGITAL STRATEGIST
Vikas Raghav

VIDEO & PHOTOGRAPHY
Gurvinder Pal Singh
Gagan Arora

CEO LOUNGE

EXCELLENCE & INTEGRITY
XLRI
Xavier School of Management
For the greater good
ASPIRE BEYOND

Xplore
A LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE COLLECTIVE

IGNITING CONVERSATIONS
SHAPING FUTURES

TESTING, TESTING... MIC CHECK DONE. WE'RE ROLLING
SPEAK UP, STAND OUT
LET'S HAVE A CHAT...

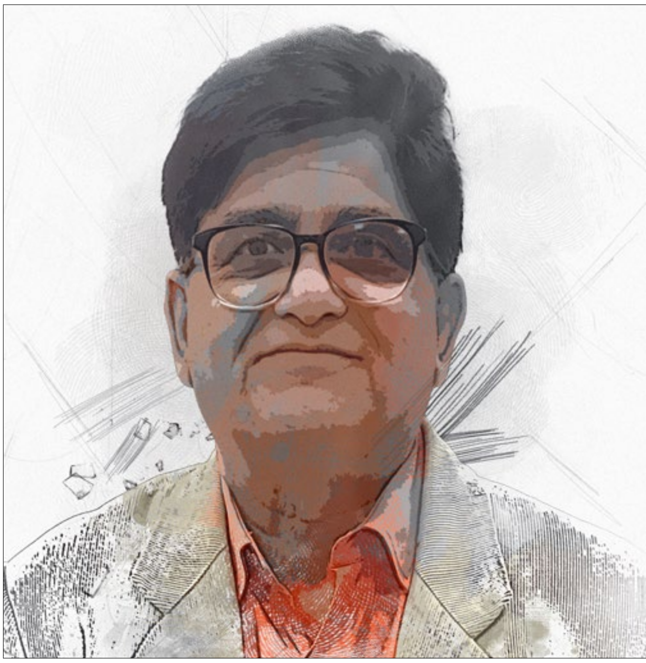
PODCASTS

Scan QR code to get in touch or mail us at xplore@xlri.ac.in

@Xplore_XLRI @xplore.xlri @XploreXLRI

CEO LOUNGE

WHAT'S Inside



Are B-Schools **Still Relevant?**

A recent students' roundtable examined the evolving role of management education in shaping leaders for a world in constant flux

In an era defined by disruption and rapid technological advancements, how relevant is management education? A recent XLRI student-led roundtable tackled this question, examining the evolving role of B-schools in preparing students to navigate industry complexities. From committee dynamics to curriculum innovations, the session unpacked how B-schools equip future leaders to bridge theory with practice.

A closer look into the insights shared by the panel.

Committees as Microcosms of Corporates

In B-schools, committees go beyond being mere extracurricular activities; they act as microcosms of corporate teams, fostering essential leadership and collaboration skills.

"Committees reflect the realities of organisations —some thrive on high performance, while others struggle with initiative. Leadership isn't just about results; it's about empowering your team to grow," shared Saurabh Shukla, Secretary of FLIX.

The panel explored how legacy committees focus on preserving culture and reputation, while newly formed committees operate like startups — risk-tolerant and innovative, offering students valuable insights into diverse organisational dynamics.

The Role of Leadership in Committees

Leadership within committees mirrors corporate responsibilities, offering students hands-on experience in decision-making and accountability.

"We rotate leadership roles within the team, allowing every member to take ownership and develop accountability," said Nitish Chand, Secretary of E-Cell.

The panelists highlighted that effective leadership emerges organically rather than being imposed, fostering team harmony and sustained motivation — key attributes for both committee success and organisational growth.

Bridging Curriculum with Real-World Skills

The panelists emphasised the critical importance of aligning academic curricula with the ever-evolving demands of the corporate world, highlighting the value of practical application and contemporary relevance.

"Our curriculum is a strong

> **Committees reflect the realities of organisations — some thrive on high performance, while others struggle with initiative. Leadership isn't just about results; it's about empowering your team to grow**

foundation, but it truly comes alive when integrated with real-world scenarios like the recent challenges faced by the Indian startup ecosystem," noted Shantanu Dash, Secretary of PEACE.

The discussion underscored the importance of multidisciplinary learning, blending HR and business management perspectives to cultivate a holistic problem-solving mindset. This approach equips students to navigate complex industry challenges, making them better prepared for dynamic workplace demands.

Fostering Innovation and Risk-Taking

Committees act as platforms for experimenting with innovative ideas and embracing risk.

"During my Flipkart internship, I experienced a fail-fast culture. Committees need to adopt this mindset — take risks, learn, and iterate," shared Shukla.

The panel noted that legacy committees often resist change, reflecting the challenges faced by established corporations in adopting flatter hierarchies and fostering innovation. This resistance underscores the need to create a culture that encourages adaptability and bold decision-making.

Culture: The Underrated Glue

Culture plays a pivotal yet often overlooked role in both committees and organisations.

"Culture is the dark matter of organisations — it holds everything together, even if it's invisible," observed Kaushik Ghosh, Secretary of Xplore.

The panelists highlighted how nurturing a collaborative culture within committees strengthens team bonds, fostering trust and encouraging innovation. This emphasis on culture mirrors its critical importance in corporate settings.

Customisation in Education

The lack of flexibility in B-school curricula emerged as a significant concern during the discussion.

"Someone passionate about sustainability should have the flexibility to integrate HR or operations courses into their focus areas," suggested Nitish Chand, Secretary of E-Cell.

The panel proposed introducing competency mapping and iterative feedback systems to help students

> **Culture is the dark matter of organisations – it holds everything together, even if it's invisible**

tailor their learning paths to align with individual career goals, ensuring a more personalised and relevant educational experience.

Undergraduate vs B-School Committees

The discussion explored the contrasting dynamics between undergraduate and B-school committees, shedding light on key differences.

"In UG, you work with younger peers, but here in B-school, you collaborate with people who might even be older than you. This changes the way you lead and communicate," shared Haimi Praraj, Secretary of ExLink.

The panel highlighted that B-school committees often operate under tighter deadlines, cultivating a results-driven culture that closely resembles corporate environments.

The Case for Experiential Learning

The panelists strongly advocated for incorporating more experiential learning opportunities into B-school education, such as plant visits and field projects.

"Real-world scenarios demand integration across disciplines. Hands-on projects can teach students to embrace uncertainty and think critically," suggested Dash.

They also recommended the inclusion of open-ended cases without predefined solutions, encouraging creativity and innovative problem-solving among students.

Is a B-School Worth It?

In their closing reflections, the panelists emphasised that the value of a B-school education is ultimately determined by individual effort and engagement.

"B-school isn't just about lectures. It's a journey of personal growth, leadership, and experimentation," concluded Shukla.

The discussion acknowledged the imperfections in B-schools but reaffirmed their irreplaceable role as platforms for aspiring managers to embrace challenges and bridge the gap between theory and practice.

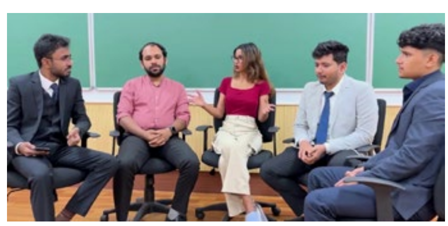
Saurabh Shukla
is a second-year PGDM (HRM) student at XLRI Jamshedpur and Secretary of Flix, XLRI

Haimi Praharaj
is a second-year PGDM (HRM) student at XLRI Jamshedpur and Secretary of ExLink, XLRI

Nitish Chand
is a second-year PGDM (HRM) student at XLRI Jamshedpur and Secretary of E-Cell, XLRI

Shantanu Dash
is a second-year PGDM (BM) student at XLRI Jamshedpur and Secretary of PEACE, XLRI

Kaushik Ghosh (moderator)
is a Second-Year PGDM (HRM) student at XLRI Jamshedpur, Secretary of Xplore by XLRI



"You can't copy-paste strategies; Rewrite the rules, think fresh, and adapt"

Dilip Sinha, CHRO of Vedanta, brings a wealth of experience from leading roles at Reliance, Jindal Steel Works, and the Indian Police Service. In this insightful interview with *Reibhu Sant*, he shares how agility, technology, and a performance-driven culture shape HR practices in today's dynamic business landscape. From fostering functional engagement through initiatives like Project Neev to prioritising diversity and inclusion, Sinha outlines his goals of building a balanced workforce and cultivating an environment where all voices are heard. *(Sinha was CHRO at Vedanta at the time this interview was conducted. He recently joined Jindal Steel & Power as President & CHRO. The references and context in the interview reflect his previous role at Vedanta.)*

Your career spans leading organisations like Reliance, Jindal Steel Works, and Vedanta. How have these experiences shaped your approach to HR leadership?

One part you missed: I was part of the Indian Police Service. My career, spanning government, retail, and core manufacturing, has shaped my HR leadership in unique ways. Early in my career, working in government, I developed strong decision-making capabilities and the courage to act.

Retail taught me agility — the ability to respond and perform quickly. At Future Group, for instance, running campaigns like "Buy One, Get One" for 2.5 million SKUs required immense adaptability and business acumen.

Core manufacturing, particularly at Reliance and Jindal Steel Works, taught me to think big and manage large-scale operations. At Reliance, I helped build the retail and Jio teams, overseeing a workforce of 4.5 lakh people. At JSW, during a major expansion phase, we aimed to double plant capacity, targeting 50 MTPA by 2030. These experiences instilled in me a mindset where even monumental challenges seem manageable. If your fundamentals are correct, I believe things naturally fall into place.

In today's rapidly changing business environment, how do you see the role of organisational culture evolving? What strategies have you found most effective in shaping it?

The only culture that exists in any organisation is performance culture — nothing else. Promoters or company leaders primarily focus on volume, cost, EBITDA, and cash flow. To align with this, you need to engage people and evolve a culture that reflects these priorities.

Engaging employees both behaviourally and functionally is key. Behavioural engagement is straightforward — building world-class infrastructure, such as gyms, swimming pools, and auditoriums, helps create a positive environment. At Vedanta, for instance, our township has seven swimming pools, a 650-seat auditorium, and state-of-the-art gymnasiums.

The real challenge is functional engagement. Young employees often feel disengaged with routine tasks. To address this, we launched *Project Neev* at Vedanta, allowing them to take on live projects across the company. I was amazed to see over 74 projects initiated by young employees. Each quarter, we reward participants, offer face time with the chairman and vice-chairman, and provide opportunities to attend international workshops.

Even if 10 out of these 74 projects succeed annually, the benefits to the company are immense. This approach fosters a performance-driven culture that motivates employees and drives results.

What were the performance statistics after implementing these strategies?

Vedanta is known for disproportionate growth. We are the largest producer of aluminium, silver, gold, and zinc, and we're now entering the semiconductor and display manufacturing sectors. As the largest natural assets management company, our growth trajectory speaks for itself. To support this, we've built a culture that aligns with and drives these ambitious goals.

The only culture that exists in any organisation is performance culture — nothing else. Promoters or company leaders focus on volume, cost, EBITDA, and cash flow

As HR functions continue to be digitised, what do you see as the most promising technologies, and how are they revolutionising traditional HR functions?
For me, digitisation isn't just about adopting software — it's far more comprehensive. Software makes up only about 10 per cent of the digitisation effort. I've would divide the process into three parts, based on my own approach to driving results:

1. Digitisation for the workforce
2. Digitisation for the workplace
3. HR delivery

HR Delivery involves systems like Darwinbox or SuccessFactors, which streamline processes effectively. However, workplace digitisation is equally critical. For instance, we've implemented geofencing to secure hazardous areas, PPE alarms, and safety measures for high-risk zones like potlines and casthouses.

For the workforce, digitisation includes initiatives like happiness indices and seamless exits. We recently introduced a facial recognition system (FRS) that tracks eight emotional states, helping us analyse why certain employees might feel dissatisfied.

Additionally, we've added barcodes to helmets, storing emergency contacts and blood group details. In an industry prone to accidents, having this information readily available can be life-saving.

How is technology transforming HR functions, and how have you leveraged analytics in strategic HR decisions?
Technology has become indispensable in managing a workforce of over one lakh, especially as our business expands across aluminium, copper, zinc, silver, gold, iron, and steel. For instance, when hiring 2,000 young professionals last year, we digitised the entire induction process a month in advance — traditional methods like filing forms are no longer practical.

HR today is data-driven. Managing a large organisation with plants, ports, and mining operations requires robust control systems. Workforce modelling, for example, helps increase productivity by relying on data to inform decisions. Expectations from HR have shifted dramatically. Promoters now expect HR to contribute to key business metrics like volume, cost, and cash flow. Concepts like cost rationalisation and workforce modelling were unheard of in HR a decade ago, but technology has made them essential for meeting these demands.

With rapid technological advancements and a surge of data, how is HR training evolving?
Training has transitioned to predictive modelling, where data drives decisions. For example, during expansion or cost rationalisation, HR goes beyond traditional approaches by focusing on skill assessment, workforce productivity, and cost optimisation.

Reducing costs isn't just the responsibility of operations — HR must innovate by analysing data, upskilling contract workers (who make up 80 per cent of our workforce), and implementing effective workforce modelling. These strategies ensure sustainable outcomes for the organisation.

Performance management is also constantly evolving. What unconventional methods have you experimented with, and how did they impact employee productivity and engagement?

We don't follow traditional performance management models like 360-degree feedback, MBOs (management by objectives), balanced scorecard, or OKRs (objectives and key results). Instead, our system is rooted in extreme common sense and practicality.

Our KPI delivery sheet is just one page. It answers four simple questions:

1. Where are we now?
2. Where do we want to go?
3. What's the timeline?
4. Who is the project manager?

Every quarter, we review progress and offer disproportionate rewards — out-of-turn promotions, significant increments, or awards. These rewards can even run into crores, tied directly to results delivered.

We also challenge traditional systems for employee growth. Recently, through an initiative called "V Desire," employees were invited to express their aspirations without barriers of age, qualification, or experience. For example, someone in HR could opt to work in CSR or advocacy. Out of 1,800 applications, we entertained 300, empowering employees to chart their own paths.

At Vedanta, age and experience don't dictate growth. There's no "two-year residency" rule for promotions. It's all about performance — creating a culture that prioritises and rewards excellence.

Your emphasis on performance and leveraging technology is inspiring...

Working with Vedanta has been very interesting. Our chairman often says, "Don't wait; just go ahead. Hundred per cent trailer fit cannot happen. Even if you are 60 per cent ready, take the leap."

This philosophy drives not just our decisions but also how we approach promotions. If someone is 60 per cent ready, we still move forward, ensuring the remaining 40 per cent through guidance and hand-holding. This approach helps us build agility while fostering confidence and growth within the organisation.

Looking ahead 5 to 10 years, what radical changes do you foresee in HR practices, and how are you preparing your team and organisation for these shifts?

I believe in keeping things simple.

My advice to the HR fraternity is to focus on four pillars: People, process, technology, and safety. These four elements are universal — whether it's retail, supply chain, or services, they drive every business.

People are the most critical asset, processes ensure efficiency, technology adds relevance, and safety is non-negotiable. No fifth factor is required. Simplifying HR practices into these pillars comes with age and experience. Understand operations, focus on these essentials, and move forward confidently.

If you could go back and advise your younger self starting out in HR, what would be the most valuable lesson you'd share?

I'd sum it up with key lessons: focus on people, process, technology (PPT), and safety. And, most importantly, embrace agility. Agility is the need of the hour — every promoter and business demands it. Without agility, survival is difficult. It's a trait that's indispensable in life and work.

Talking about agility, how do you see businesses that are pivoting their models also transforming their HR functions?

I wouldn't say that what you've learned is irrelevant. Your studies and theoretical

Our KPI delivery sheet is just one page. It answers four simple questions: Where are we now? Where do we want to go? What's the timeline? Who is the project manager?

If you are 60 per cent ready, take the leap. Even if you're not fully prepared, guidance and hand-holding will ensure the remaining 40 per cent

knowledge lay the foundation — they make you analytical and business-savvy. That foundation is constantly working in your mind, guiding your decisions. Having qualifications like an MBA adds depth to your wisdom, helping you use data, business acumen, and operational understanding effectively. But the most important factor is belief.

If you join a company and the leadership says, "We want to produce 10 million tons of steel this year," you have to believe it's achievable. That belief drives you to plan and work toward that goal. If you don't believe, and instead think 5 million tons is enough, your efforts will reflect that limit.

Life works the same way. For instance, if you truly believe you need to reach the office by 9 am, you'll take the necessary steps — wake up early, eat early, catch the first bus — and you'll get there on time. If it's not a priority, you won't take those steps.

How did you make it to XLRI? You believed in your goal of earning an MBA from a top institution. That belief drove you to prepare, work hard, and succeed. It's the same principle — belief is the cornerstone of achievement.

How does one make larger goals or projects more achievable?

The key is to break down your project into smaller, manageable steps. When you do that, it no longer feels like a mountain to climb. The way you design the project makes all the difference in its achievability.

When I was younger, I too faced challenges, but now, with more experience, I can make clearer decisions. Having worked across industries — retail, supply chain, metals, cement, FMCG — and in multiple countries, that wide-ranging experience helps me tackle challenges more effectively.

You've emphasised the importance of understanding the business thoroughly from the inside out. It's something that not everyone gets the opportunity to do, or even thinks to do...

It's simple — you need to make a sincere effort. The key is reading. Unfortunately, today's younger generation often lacks the patience for it. But there's no better teacher than reading. Books, articles — they're easy to access nowadays. When I started, we didn't have the luxury of

Diversity shouldn't just be a fashionable concept; it requires genuine, thoughtful effort. Projects like these need to align the mind, body, and soul

digital access. We had to refer to hard copies and visit libraries during specific hours. Today, knowledge is literally at your fingertips, anytime, anywhere.

Interestingly, I observe many of my peers and younger professionals struggling with the "cut-and-paste" mentality. Just because you've worked in a similar industry doesn't mean you can apply the same approach everywhere. When I worked with companies like Future Group and Reliance Retail, I had to think and operate completely differently. You can't simply copy-paste strategies; you need to rewrite the rules, think fresh, and adapt.

Consider, diversity, equity, and inclusion, but it's not always as straightforward as it seems. In sectors like retail, diversity is naturally higher because of the work environment — flexible hours, urban locations, and more. But in core industries like metal and cement, diversity is a real challenge. When I joined Vedanta, the female workforce was just 12 per cent. In two years, we've raised that to 22 per cent, and our goal for next year is 30 per cent.

Achieving this kind of diversity is not easy, and it's not just about talking the talk. Many companies focus on hiring women for enabling functions — HR, finance, and so on. But that's limited. The percentage of people working in these functions is small. To truly diversify, we've started hiring from all over India — Northeast, Kashmir, and rural areas — and even transgenders and people with special abilities. That's real diversity. It's not just about filling quotas; it's about changing how you look at talent and where you find it.

How do you plan to achieve 30 per cent diversity for Vedanta?

When the chairman told me, "I want to achieve 30 per cent diversity in our company," I kept thinking, "What can we do?" At first, I didn't have an answer. But one night, the solution struck me: create positions specifically for females on the shop floor. That approach is both sustainable and scalable, considering 80-85 per cent of our workforce operates there.

I identified positions where women could excel and took special permissions from the governments of Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh to employ women on night shifts, in addition to the general and day shifts. Once permitted, I launched a programme called Shakti, exclusively hiring women for the shop floor. This initiative has already made a significant impact.

Another key initiative is Project Panchhi, which is a dream project of our chairman. The idea was to hire 1,000 young women across India who had completed their higher secondary education but had dropped out due to financial hardships. These candidates had to belong to families below the poverty line, categorised under the orange and red ration cards.

Finding such candidates seemed almost impossible, but we've already onboarded 450 of them. These young women are being adopted as apprentices for four years. Through a tie-up with OP Jindal Global University, we've enrolled them in engineering and science courses to prepare them for shop-floor roles. This will not only empower them with skills but also address our diversity goals in a meaningful way.

We've also included transgender individuals in roles like material handling and security — another first for the industry. Diversity shouldn't just be a fashionable concept; it requires genuine, thoughtful effort. Projects like these need to align the mind, body, and soul — not just be HR initiatives. That's the approach I take.

The Revolution Called AI
Transforming Business, One Byte at a Time

From reshaping industries to unlocking untapped potential, AI and data modernisation are redefining the business landscape. Discover how these transformative forces drive growth and innovation

by Himanshu Jessie Wadia

The artificial intelligence (AI) revolution is no longer a distant promise; it is reshaping the business landscape right now. With a projected $10 trillion impact on the global economy by the end of 2030, AI is the undeniable driving force of the new business era. Industries are being re-clustered, retailers are optimising pricing, logistics companies are cutting emissions, and biotech firms are accelerating drug discovery, all thanks to AI. This is just the beginning, as ongoing R&D investments promise even more groundbreaking generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) applications and solutions. AI continues to be a foremost initiative for organisations today, with the majority having at least three GenAI use cases in production and aiming for more.

However, realising AI's full potential is not without challenges. Many businesses struggle to move beyond experimentation and achieve widespread, impactful adoption. Success requires a delicate balance of talent, strategic vision, and effective execution. Data management hurdles, outdated technology, and misaligned priorities can hinder progress, leading to wasted resources and missed opportunities.

To shed light on these challenges and guide businesses towards AI success, we present the *2024 State of AI* whitepaper. This article uncovers the key trends, pain points, and strategic choices shaping AI adoption now. It also explores the evolving effects of the GenAI boom, closely examining how organisations are pioneering its applications. By understanding these factors, businesses can navigate the complexities of AI implementation and unlock its transformative power for sustainable growth.

Generative AI has emerged as a massive disruptive force, rapidly reshaping every industry segment and department. With its unparalleled potential, GenAI has the ability to unleash imagination and drive innovation across global enterprises, revolutionising the business landscape. It transcends the boundaries of traditional AI applications, empowering businesses to reimagine their operations, strategies, and customer experiences like never before.

Legacy Systems: Anchors Weighing You Down

Imagine clunky, siloed data systems as anchors dragging you down. That is what legacy systems do — they limit growth, create data mazes, and offer outdated analytics. This makes it nearly impossible to:

- Understand your customers
- Manage inventory efficiently
- Gain real-time supply chain visibility
- Make data-driven decisions

Although data modernisation may seem daunting, it will propel your retail company into the future. Let us look at why it is not as hard as it may seem.

Debunked: Modernisation Myths

Myth #1: It's about technology only

Assessing the data landscape, defining goals, identifying best practices, and potentially introducing new tech are key steps. It is about optimising the entire data ecosystem for better results.

Example: A company replaced its existing ERP system, expecting instant improvement. However, data migration challenges and a lack of user training proved to be hindrances to progress. This highlights the importance of data quality, user adoption, and process changes alongside technology.

Myth #2: Legacy systems are fine

Legacy systems are often massively clunky, unorganised, and insecure, with siloed data. This makes analysing data and taking informed decisions difficult. Modernisation unlocks the full potential of your valuable data with new tools, insights, and technologies.

Example: A retail chain believed its legacy inventory system sufficed. Facing competition and stockouts, they realised it lacked real-time analytics. Modernisation provided granular data analysis, leading to fewer stockouts and an elevated customer experience.

Myth #3: It's a one-time implementation

Data modernisation is an ongoing, continuous journey. It is not a small overhaul. As your business evolves, your data needs to upgrade, and your platform needs to adapt. It involves continuously improving, incorporating new tech, and refining data management practices.

Example: A retail chain implemented a data platform for customer insights. While it delivered value, the retail landscape kept changing and diversifying. New customer trends, data sources (like social media emotions), and business needs emerged. The platform needed continuous updates to stay effective.

Myth #4: Cloud is risky

Modern cloud platforms offer robust security features like encryption and access controls. Additionally, cloud providers often have excellent scalability and robust disaster recovery compared to on-premise solutions.

Example: A manufacturing company hesitated to move data to the cloud due to security concerns. Upon evaluation, it discovered leading cloud providers offered robust security features and compliance certifications exceeding its on-premises data centre. Cloud migration ultimately improved data accessibility for research and development while maintaining strict security standards.

Myth #5: It's expensive

While upfront costs exist, as with any modernisation, the long-term benefits outweigh them completely. Improved data management translates to better decision-making, increased efficiency, and potential cost savings. Additionally, many existing cloud platforms offer pay-as-you-go models, making them accessible to businesses of all sizes.

Example: An organisation worried about upfront costs. They discovered that long-term cost savings from improved efficiency, reduced data silos, and better decision-making outweighed the initial investment. Modernisation also unlocked new revenue streams through data-driven product development.

Fuel Growth with Data Modernisation

Data modernisation is not a tech overhaul; it is a strategic upgrade that unlocks the hidden potential of your data. Here is how it fuels your success:

- **Become a data-driven supremo:** Clean, accessible data empowers smarter decisions. Modern platforms make it easy to find and analyse the information you need.
- **Unleash deeper value:** Advanced analytics tools uncover hidden trends and customer insights, helping you stay ahead of the curve.
- **Adapt like a pro:** Modernised

data infrastructure lets you adjust to changing markets faster, keeping you competitive.

- **Slash costs, scale profits:** Improved efficiency and streamlined operations lead to significant cost savings.
- **Know your data safety:** Modern platforms prioritise security with robust access controls and encryption, keeping your data safe.

AI is reshaping industries, optimising pricing, cutting emissions, and accelerating drug discovery, with a projected $10 trillion impact on the global economy by 2030

Data Modernisation: A Strategic Investment

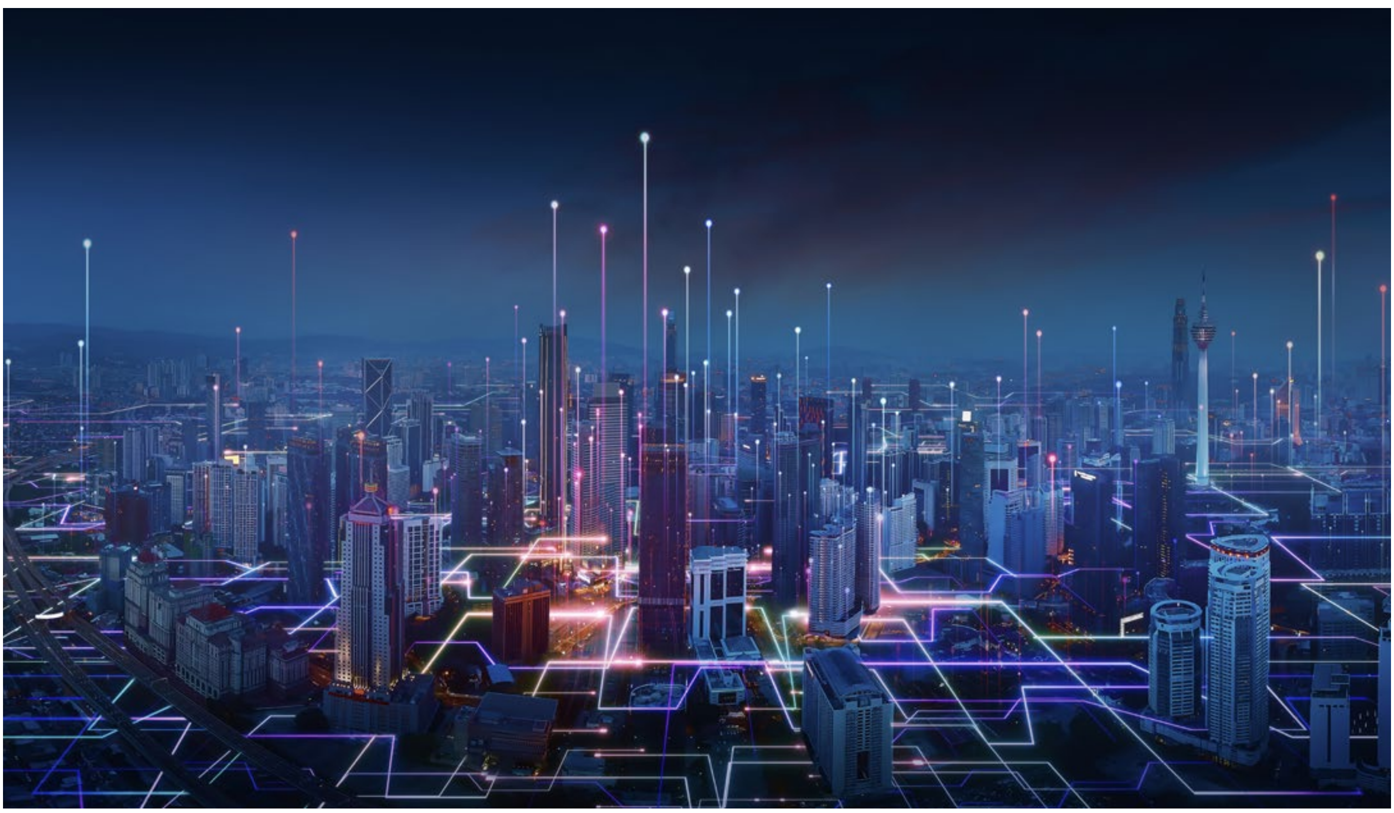
Let us navigate the process. Modernising your data platform requires a strategic approach, as defined below:

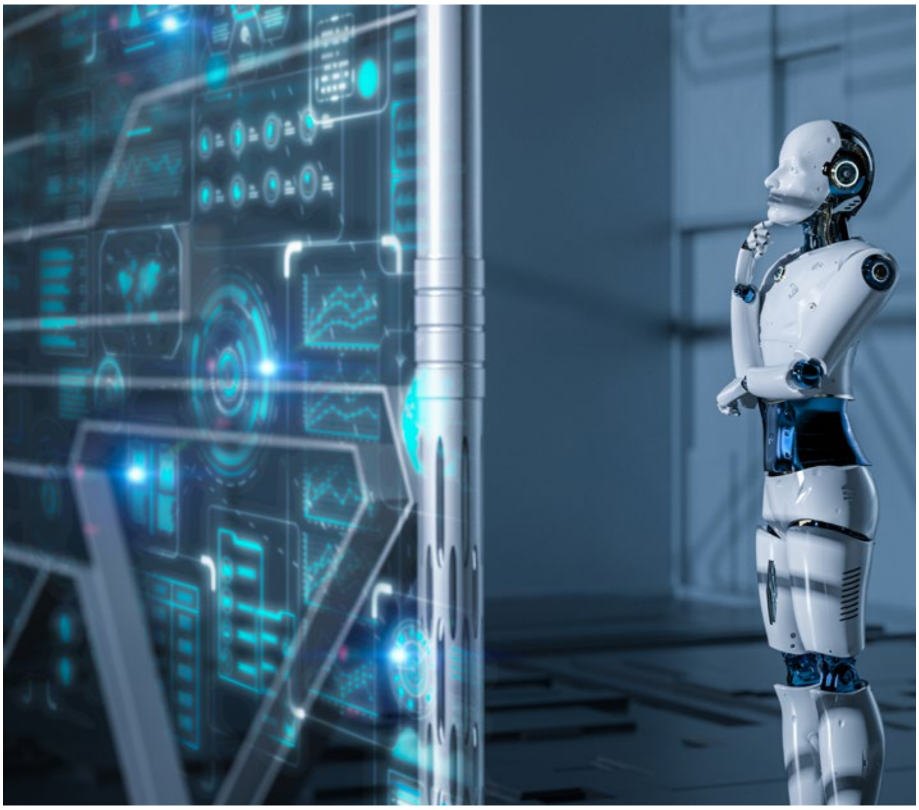
- **Mark your course:** Define a clear data strategy aligned with your business goals. Identify the data that fuels your success.
- **Embrace the technology:** Cloud-based platforms offer huge scalability, flexibility, and cost-efficiency. Explore options like Google Cloud Platform (GCP), Amazon Web Services (AWS), or others.
- **Organised data:** Implement robust data management practices to ensure quality, security, and compliance. Leverage tools like Data Lakes and Data Warehouses for centralised, easy-to-access data.
- **AI for the win:** Integrate AI and machine learning (ML) to automate tasks, improve forecasting, and generate valuable insights. Explore tools like Vertex AI on GCP or Amazon SageMaker for building and deploying AI models.
- **Scale massively:** Choose a platform that scales with your growing data volume and user base. Prioritise data security with strong access controls and encryption.

Cloud Launchpads: Choosing the Right Platform

Cloud-based solutions offer a universe of data management and analytics tools. Here is an insight into leading cloud providers:

- **Amazon Web Services (AWS):** A comprehensive suite including data warehousing (Redshift), data streams (Kinesis), machine learning (SageMaker), and business intelligence (QuickSight).
- **Microsoft Azure:** Azure Synapse





Legacy systems act as anchors, limiting growth and making data-driven decisions difficult. Modernisation unlocks insights, efficiency, and adaptability to stay competitive

provides a unified platform for data warehousing and large-scale data analysis. Additionally, Azure Machine Learning empowers retailers for tasks like demand forecasting and customer segmentation.

- **Google Cloud Platform (GCP):** Google BigQuery offers serverless data warehousing for analysis at scale. Vertex AI on GCP lets you develop and deploy ML models for product recommendations and churn prediction.
- **Databricks:** A unified platform for data warehousing, engineering, and machine learning. Its Lakehouse architecture allows storing and analysing all data types in one place for advanced analytics.

Choosing Your Cloud Path

The best platform depends on your specific needs. Factors to consider:

- **Your existing landscape:** Evaluate how your current infrastructure integrates with different cloud solutions.
- **Scaling for the future:** Consider your data volume and how it is expected to grow. Choose a platform that scales to meet your demands.
- **Security first:** Ensure the platform offers robust security features to protect your sensitive data.
- **Team expertise:** Assess your team's technical skills and familiarity with different cloud platforms.

Foundation for Success

Data modernisation is the launchpad to success. By understanding the benefits and considerations, you can choose the right cloud solution and unlock the true power of your data.

Reimagined — hyper-connected commerce for the future: The future of commerce is not an upgrade; it is a revolution. We are hurtling towards a world of unified commerce, where online and physical stores become seamless extensions of each other. Imagine a connected shopping experience that anticipates your needs before you even know them.

The engine of agility — the hyper-agile supply chain: This revolution hinges on a hyper-agile supply chain. Powered by real-time data and cutting-edge analytics, it predicts consumer shifts and reacts like lightning. No more stockouts or missed trends — just perfect inventory, always.

At the heart of it all — the customer: But this is not just about efficiency. It is about putting the customer at the centre of everything. We are talking about personalised experiences tailored to individual preferences and behaviours, powered by the magic of data and AI.

Unified commerce is about creating a cohesive brand experience. Every touchpoint, from your phone to the physical store, becomes part of a seamless journey. It is about captivating storytelling, intuitive interaction, and a sense of connection that keeps you evolving.

Are you ready to join the AI revolution?

Himanshu Jessie Wadia *is Director - IT Automation & Innovation at Amdocs*

Netflix vs Blockbuster
A Case Study in Disruption

What happens when an industry titan ignores innovation? Netflix's disruptive journey turned the tables on Blockbuster, reshaping entertainment and showing how agility beats complacency

by Vaani Verma

The journey of Netflix and Blockbuster captures the essence of industry evolution. Beginning with DVD rentals, this story escalated into fierce pricing wars, hardware innovations, and eventually transitioned to online platforms. This rivalry ultimately resulted in one clear winner: Netflix, which, as we all know, now dominates the streaming industry. As a mega-platform, Netflix reshaped how we consume entertainment by pioneering streaming and binge-watching.

One pivotal mistake changed the fate of Blockbuster: not buying Netflix for just $50 million.

A Tale of Two Titans

Let's delve into the history of these two giants that dominated in their respective times. Blockbuster, the iconic chain of movie rental stores, started in 1985 and became the industry leader by acquiring competitors and establishing a widespread presence across the US and internationally. It became a staple in the movie rental segment. Its iconic blue and yellow branding and reliance on late fees as a major source of revenue were key identifiers of the brand.

While Blockbuster was thriving, a budding startup was preparing to take its position: Netflix. The Netflix we now know as the streaming giant, boasting nearly 280 million subscribers worldwide, was founded in 1997 in Scotts Valley, California, as a DVD-by-mail service, directly competing with Blockbuster. With its unique selling propositions of doorstep delivery and no late fees, Netflix gained

Netflix disrupted the DVD market by listening to consumer demands, offering doorstep delivery, and eliminating pain points like late fees, while Blockbuster remained complacent

momentum during the dot-com bubble by maintaining large catalogues online to attract customers. It introduced a personalised web-based movie recommendation and rental system. With constant innovation, Netflix developed strategies like 'Netflix Originals', not only ensuring its survival but propelling it to the heights it enjoys today. Netflix disrupted the DVD market by listening to consumer demands and offering convenience, while Blockbuster, despite growing consumer frustration, continued to rely heavily on late fees.

Blockbuster's failure to go online at the right time and its disregard for rising consumer trends and preferences were key reasons for its downfall.

Missed Opportunities

Seeing the increasing popularity of Netflix and the consumer shift to online services, Blockbuster attempted to venture into the online market in 2006. However, it was too little, too late. Blockbuster failed to achieve significant milestones in this space and struggled to keep up. In 2000, Netflix offered to sell itself to Blockbuster and run the online segment for just $50 million, but Blockbuster refused. This turning point shaped history, showcasing one of the biggest mistakes Blockbuster ever made.

Meanwhile, Netflix received backing from major companies, enabling it to become the streaming giant it is today. Netflix overcame two major challenges — the delay of 1-4 days in DVD delivery and the high demand for new releases — by innovatively shifting to a subscription model. The subscription queues, combined with the movie recommendation system, led to a more uniform rental pattern across its content library.

The Rise of Netflix

Netflix's early collaboration with hardware platforms and its ultimate shift to the cloud were pivotal steps towards its success. These innovations

In 2000, Netflix offered to sell itself to Blockbuster for $50 million – a refusal that became one of the biggest missteps in business history

laid the foundation for the culture of streaming and binge-watching.

In 2011, Netflix made major changes to its business model, separating memberships for DVD rental and online streaming businesses. By overcoming the dominance of traditional video rental stores like Blockbuster, Netflix cemented its place in the industry.

The launch of 'Netflix Originals' was another significant milestone, inspiring other OTT platforms and becoming a critical part of Netflix's business model. Initiatives like fan events, such as 'Tudum', further solidified Netflix's position as a leader and innovator in the segment.

Lessons in Disruptive Strategy

In essence, Blockbuster's refusal to buy Netflix, a future-proofed company, led to its demise within a few years. Netflix deployed a disruptive strategy by being clear about its offerings, targeting the right audience, and fully adapting to the dynamic business environment.

Netflix demonstrated how identifying unmet consumer needs and embracing technological advancements can displace established market leaders. By offering convenience, personalisation, and eliminating pain points like late fees, Netflix successfully disrupted the DVD rental market. Furthermore, its transition to streaming and the creation of original content pushed the boundaries of what a traditional media company could achieve. Blockbuster's failure to embrace these changes underscores the critical importance of agility and foresight in maintaining a competitive edge. Netflix's rise remains a textbook example of disruptive strategy in action, highlighting the transformative power of innovation in reshaping industries.

Vaani Verma
is a second-year PGDM (HRM) student at XLRI, Jamshedpur

“India needs pragmatic policies to bridge inequality”

In an engaging conversation with *Ashrut Sharma*, Professor **Vishwa Ballabh**, a distinguished economist at XLRI, reflects on his transformative journey from agriculture to academia. He shares insights on economic policies, the challenges faced by smallholder farmers, and the necessity for systemic reforms. Offering candid advice to the youth, he emphasises the value of learning, societal contributions, and pragmatic approaches to solving India's economic challenges.

Your journey from studying agriculture to becoming an economist and transitioning into academia is fascinating. What key moments or factors drove this shift?

From my childhood, I was deeply interested in agriculture. By the time I was in the 6th or 7th grade, I had already decided to pursue agricultural studies. However, after completing my intermediate education, there was a brief hiccup. My brother suggested attending another institute in Naini, but my dream was to study at Pantnagar.

One memorable incident occurred during my first year of intermediate school when I met a student from Pantnagar who later became a District Cane Officer. His influence solidified my resolve to attend Pantnagar. I vividly remember being 16 years old, weighing just 38 kg, and travelling with a half ticket to get there.

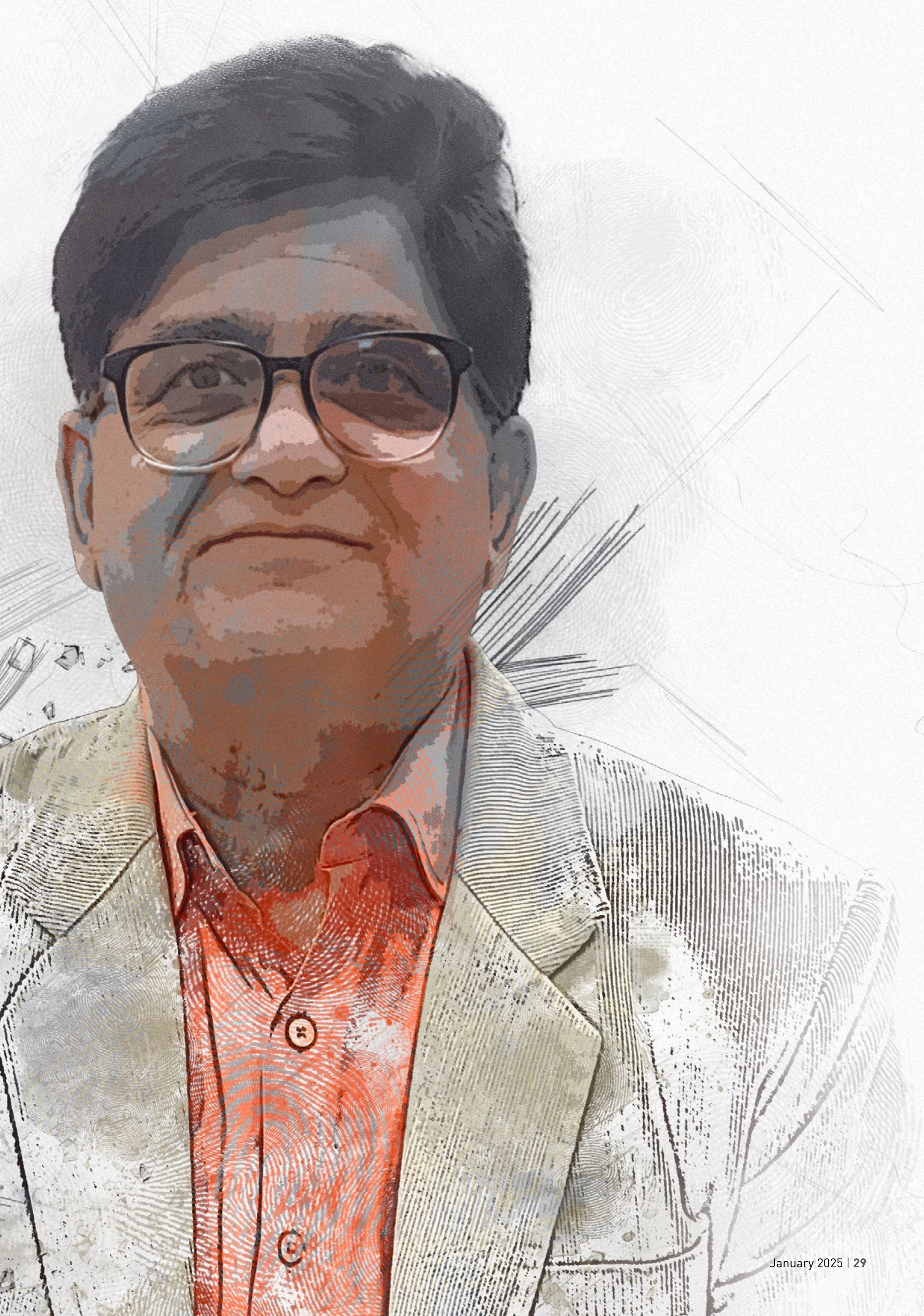
When I reached Pantnagar, I aspired to specialise in breeding and genetics. However, due to vision issues with my left eye, I couldn't effectively use a microscope. Friends advised me to consider agricultural economics instead. I soon realised that this field allowed me to contribute significantly to agricultural and rural development.

Later, I pursued a master's in agricultural economics and a PhD, focusing on challenges faced by farmers in regions like Eastern UP and Bihar, where recurring floods impacted livelihoods. My journey subsequently expanded to encompass broader economic development issues.

If you were the finance minister, how would you address the concern that many policies either uplift the poor or benefit the ultra-rich, often neglecting the middle class?

India's economic policies have evolved significantly since independence. Initially, we followed a Nehruvian economic model focused on socialism. However, over time, especially post-1991, economic reforms shifted the focus toward liberalisation.

The middle class often feels neglected because policies target either the ultra-rich, with incentives for industries, or the poor, through subsidies. One critical area is the



India must prioritise rural infrastructure and non-farm employment to address inequality and drive balanced economic growth

growing inequality. Without addressing this, we face risks like social unrest and weakened purchasing power among the masses.

Policies should focus on increasing rural infrastructure, creating non-farm employment, and improving supply chains. Moreover, the efficiency of public systems and subsidies needs attention. Often, funds intended for farmers do not reach the intended beneficiaries due to systemic inefficiencies. Addressing these issues could help balance the needs of all socioeconomic groups.

Do you think the current monetary and fiscal policies are appropriate for the present conditions, or are there areas for improvement?

The Budget allocations, particularly for agriculture, are sufficient. However, the utilisation of funds is critical. We need institutional changes to support smallholders, who now make up 88 per cent of landholdings, averaging less than two acres.

Subsidies alone are not enough; we must focus on developing inbound and outbound logistics, interlinking agriculture with non-agriculture sectors, and creating opportunities for smallholders to grow. This requires a paradigm shift from traditional policymaking to more pragmatic and innovative approaches.

Agricultural income in India, including that of wealthy farmers, is not taxed. Do you think this exemption is justified?

The majority of Indian farmers are marginal or smallholders who genuinely require support. However, there is misuse of this exemption by individuals transferring non-agricultural income into agricultural accounts to evade taxes.

Globally, agricultural development has always involved public support. What we need is a better system to ensure subsidies and income support reach those who

Prioritise learning over earning. Choose opportunities where you are needed the most and where you can grow, rather than being swayed by the name of an organisation or salary

genuinely need them. For instance, instead of subsidies tied to inputs, income support could be provided directly, as seen in other countries.

How do you think a second term for the Trump administration would impact India, particularly from an economic perspective?
Foreign policy should not depend on personal relationships. While Trump and Modi may share a good rapport, decisions will always prioritise America's interests.

Trump's "America First" policy means India must negotiate effectively to protect its interests. While he might appear favourable to India to counterbalance China, his administration would remain focused on its own advantages. It's important for India to approach such relations professionally and pragmatically.

You've managed various responsibilities, including admissions at Institute of Rural Management, Anand (IRMA). How did you ensure transparency and impartiality in the process?
At IRMA, we maintained a transparent admissions process, exclusive to our institution initially. When other institutions began requesting our scores, we ensured transparency in sharing data while safeguarding confidentiality.

For example, during my tenure, I revised the scoring system to better discriminate between candidates across different percentile ranges. This improved the selection process and addressed concerns of fairness. Building trust with stakeholders, including applicants and institutions, was key to ensuring the integrity of the system.

On a parting note, what advice would you give to the youth of the country?
My advice is to prioritise learning over earning. Choose opportunities where you are needed the most and where you can grow, rather than being swayed by the name of an organisation or salary. Focus on making meaningful contributions to society while advancing your knowledge and skills.

Marketing Meets the Metaverse
Brands Bend Reality

Step into a realm where digital and real worlds collide. Discover how brands like Nike, Gucci, and Coca-Cola are revolutionising marketing in the metaverse

by Vaishnavi Ojha

Nike's virtual showroom in Roblox -- a glimpse into immersive brand experiences (representative image)

Imagine entering a virtual store, trying on clothes that exist only in pixels, and purchasing them for an avatar that mirrors your digital identity. Welcome to the metaverse — a digital realm reshaping how brands engage with their audiences. With advancements in technologies like augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), blockchain, and now AI, the metaverse is becoming a dynamic space for immersive, personalised experiences and innovative economic opportunities.

Metaverse Magic: Brands Rewrite the Marketing Playbook

Leading brands are already transforming how they connect with consumers in the metaverse:

Once upon a time, in a realm that blurred the line between reality and imagination, brands discovered a new world: the metaverse. It wasn't just another marketing channel — it was a playground where creativity and technology joined forces to captivate audiences in bold, uncharted ways.

Nike was among the first explorers, creating "Nikeland" on Roblox. Here, users didn't just shop; they played, competing in virtual sports challenges while trying on digital sneakers. It wasn't about pushing products — it was about building a community of young fans who saw Nike as part of their virtual adventures.

Not far away, Gucci crafted a luxurious digital escape. Their virtual worlds on Roblox felt like stepping into an art gallery fused with high fashion. Gucci wasn't just selling style; it was redefining how luxury could thrive in the digital age, capturing the hearts of a younger, tech-savvy audience.

Meanwhile, Coca-Cola wove magic into this new universe with an AI-powered campaign that felt more like an art exhibit than an ad. Stunning visuals and personalised storytelling left users enchanted, proving that technology and creativity could dance together to create deeply memorable experiences.

The metaverse isn't just another marketing channel; it's a playground where creativity and technology unite to captivate audiences in bold, uncharted ways

Adidas took a different route, diving into the rising trend of digital ownership. Their NFT sneakers weren't just collectibles; they were status symbols, blending innovation with exclusivity in the growing virtual economy.

Even Coach joined the adventure, launching its "Find Your Courage" campaign on Roblox and Zepeto. By offering digital merchandise and hosting virtual events, it created a bridge between gaming and fashion, engaging communities in ways that felt fresh and exciting.

6G connectivity and multisensory tech will make virtual experiences almost indistinguishable from the physical world, transforming the metaverse into a mainstream phenomenon

Users explore the luxurious Gucci Villa as 3D avatars in ZEPETO virtual worlds

These weren't just experiments — they were the beginnings of a new era. In the metaverse, brands aren't just selling; they're building worlds, fostering loyalty, and showing us that in this limitless digital frontier, the only boundary is imagination.

What the Future Holds

The metaverse's transformation is only beginning, with 6G connectivity poised to take it to new heights. Faster speeds and near-zero latency will bring unparalleled realism, making virtual experiences almost indistinguishable from the physical world. Picture

Coca-Cola's AI-powered Christmas ad brings the festive spirit to life with stunning visuals

The metaverse offers limitless possibilities, but brands must navigate challenges like data privacy, digital addiction, and sustainability to create meaningful experiences

entering a virtual mall, where you not only see and try products in 3D but also feel textures or smell fragrances through multisensory technology.

Improved accessibility through 6G will drive mass adoption, turning the metaverse from a niche playground into a mainstream phenomenon. Diverse demographics, including underserved and remote communities, will gain entry into these virtual spaces, opening doors for brands to reach untapped markets. AI will enhance this experience, enabling real-time personalisation — whether it's holographic personal shoppers or tailored virtual environments based on user preferences.

For brands, this evolution creates limitless possibilities. Coca-Cola's AI-driven ad campaign hints at the potential for campaigns that adapt dynamically to individual consumers, while holograms and sensory touchpoints promise to make marketing more interactive and memorable than ever.

Navigating Challenges and Opportunities

The metaverse is a goldmine with a few landmines — data privacy, digital addiction, and sustainability are the elephants in this virtual room. Brands need to tread lightly, embracing transparency and green tech while reminding us to log off once in a while (yes, even in the metaverse, balance matters).

For savvy business managers, it's a playground of possibilities. AI-powered experiences? Check. NFTs and branded tokens fuelling digital economies? Double check. Imagine loyalty programmes where your avatar earns points for both virtual sneakers and real coffee. The metaverse isn't just a new market — it's a chance to innovate, captivate, and maybe even save the planet.

Imagination Unbound

The metaverse is where brands go to flex their imagination muscles. Nike's "Nikeland" turns sneakers into a sport, Gucci's virtual worlds feel like fashion on a psychedelic trip, and Coca-Cola's AI ads blur the line between art and marketing wizardry. Adidas? They're selling NFT sneakers you can't even scuff. Coach? Hosting virtual events like it's the Met Gala for avatars.

This isn't just marketing; it's a digital playground where anything's possible. The only rule? Go big or stay boring. The metaverse is calling, and the real question is: How wild will brands dare to get?

Vaishnavi Ojha
is a second-year PGDM (BM) student at XLRI Jamshedpur

Dynamic Pricing on the Menu

Fair or Foul?

Can dynamic pricing reshape the food industry without compromising trust or ethics? Explore its promises, pitfalls, and potential to balance innovation with humanity

by Vashi Agarwal

Food is not just fuel but culture, tradition — an emotional anchor for billions. Unlike products in the travel or tech industries, where dynamic pricing is thriving, food is a basic human need. Dynamic pricing — the art of adjusting prices in real time according to demand, supply, and market conditions — has turned industries upside down, from airlines to e-commerce. But can it really take hold in food, where ethics, survival, and culture are so inextricably linked?

Dynamic Pricing: A Double-Edged Sword

Dynamic pricing is hardly new. The airlines pioneered it back in the 1980s by showing just how price elasticity can balance demand and supply. Then, ride-hailing apps like Uber followed suit and gave the modern lexicon "surge pricing." Even Amazon uses it to outsmart competitors, reportedly changing the prices of its products millions of times a day. But food, being such a deeply personal and essential commodity, presents some unique challenges.

Consider food delivery platforms like Zomato and Swiggy in India. The platforms already resort to dynamic pricing during peak hours, where they charge high delivery fees in crowded time slots or offer discounts in lulls. Grocery chains like Amazon Fresh or BigBasket adjust their prices according to the quantity of items in stock or their freshness. Yet, as these experiments unfold, they raise pressing questions: Are we ready to pay varying prices for something as basic as food?

The Promise: Flexibility and Revenue Optimisation

From a business perspective, dynamic pricing offers tantalising benefits. Allowing menus to reflect real-life


FLASH SALE
ENDS AT 1 PM
GOURMET PIZZA
₹600
GET IT FOR
₹299
FRESH SALAD
₹400
GET IT FOR
₹199
BIG BURGER
₹300
GET IT FOR
₹170
HURRY UP !
SURGE CHARGE
RUSH FEE

operational realities, restaurants charge more for a prime dinner slot, much like a Broadway show charges a premium price for its best seats. Conversely, off-peak slots can offer discounts to boost footfall when tables typically sit empty.

It doesn't hurt grocery retailers either. Consider, for instance, perishables such as fruits, vegetables, or bakery items. Dynamically pricing products based on approaching expiration dates would help businesses reduce food waste by appealing to budget-conscious shoppers. Apps like Flashfood in Canada have already created a successful model by offering consumers surplus inventory at discounted rates.

Even sustainability narratives benefit. Imagine incentivising customers to order during low-demand hours, reducing delivery emissions by grouping orders efficiently. Such strategies align with broader environmental goals, offering a win-win scenario for businesses and consumers alike.

The Pitfalls: Trust and Ethics

But dynamic pricing in food is a minefield. Food is not a luxury like an airline seat or a concert ticket; it is a staple. Surge pricing during festivals or emergencies — situations where demand for food soars — could go horribly wrong.

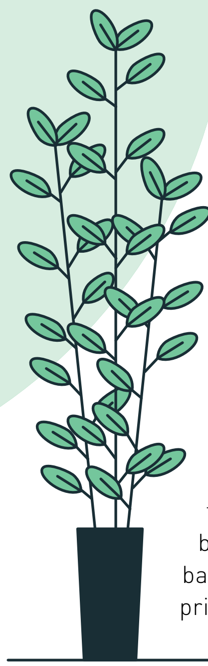
Consider the 2020 pandemic, when e-commerce platforms faced criticism for exorbitant pricing on essentials. In the US, Instacart's pricing adjustments during lockdowns drew ire for exploiting vulnerable shoppers. A similar backlash could emerge if dynamic pricing is perceived as profiteering, particularly in countries where food security remains a sensitive issue.

Dynamic pricing has revolutionised industries from airlines to e-commerce, but can it work in food, where ethics and culture are deeply intertwined?

Trust is yet another battlefield. Much of the food industry exists in relation to trusting relationships, and dynamic pricing can break that trust. Imagine a scenario where consumers find themselves paying significantly different prices for the same carton of milk or loaf of bread, simply because they shopped at a different time of day. Without clear communication and minimum transparency, such practices are sure to cause frustration and even mistrust.

Can Dynamic Pricing Find Its Sweet Spot?

Not all is gloom and doom, however. There are ways to fit dynamic pricing into the food industry without driving customers away. How? Balance practicality with transparency. For example, Domino's Pizza in India makes delivery charges for peak hours very clear, positioning them as a "rush fee" rather than a surreptitious charge. This transparency gives customers a sense of control, even when the price does change. For dynamic pricing to be successful in the food industry, businesses must also follow suit in making the thought process behind price changes transparent and explainable.



A Global Perspective

Looking beyond India, dynamic pricing is already shaking things up in some surprising places. In South Korea, the leading grocery chain eMart employs dynamic pricing on fresh produce as it nears the end of its shelf life. The customers get notified on their apps when such items go into a sale mode, generating a sense of urgency and rewarding loyal users.

Even fast-food chains like McDonald's get into the action. In some regions of the US, McDonald's has dynamic pricing on delivery apps such as DoorDash, where prices are higher during peak hours but are deeply discounted when orders slow down.

What works here is psychology. Consumers are more likely to accept dynamic pricing when it feels optional. It's the difference between paying ₹50 for a cheeseburger at 3 pm because it's "Happy Hour" versus being forced to shell out ₹80 for the same burger during dinner. The former feels like a reward; the latter, like exploitation.

> **Transparency is crucial for dynamic pricing to succeed in food – customers need to understand the reasons behind price changes to build trust**

The Path Forward: A New Consumer-Industry Contract

So, can dynamic pricing survive the food industry? It can, but it's going to take a rewrite of the playbook. First up: transparency. Instead of surreptitiously changing the prices, why not tier the pricing into categories like "Early Bird Specials" or "Late Night Savings"? Consumers are far more forgiving when they know what they're signing up for.

Finally, there is room to incline towards value-based pricing. Upscale bakeries can increase prices by using dynamic pricing for premiums promised on quality and exclusivity. Would you pay more for freshly baked croissants at 6 am versus afternoon leftovers? Many people would; it's just that they don't position that as dynamic pricing.

Dynamic pricing isn't just a technical shift; it's a cultural one. For the food industry to thrive under this model, it must transform consumer relationships from transactional to collaborative. By using pricing as a tool to reduce waste, reward loyalty, and enhance experiences, businesses can reframe this strategy as a win-win.

Vashi Agarwal
is a first-year PGDM (BM) student at XLRI, Delhi


levi's

“Culture drives strategy, talent supports both”

For **Harish Rajagopalan**, Head of Talent and Culture at CRED, culture isn't just a buzzword — it's the foundation that shapes strategy and talent. In an insightful interview with *Kaushik Ghosh*, Harish discusses the evolving role of HR across industries, the harmony between culture and competencies, and how Gen Z and AI are transforming workplace dynamics. His emphasis on building impactful solutions and fostering a purpose-driven environment provides valuable insights into modern HR leadership.

You've worked across diverse industries. How do HR priorities shift depending on the company's stage and industry?
It's fascinating how HR priorities evolve. At an early-stage company, the focus is heavily on *building* — hiring the right talent, creating structures, and defining processes. It's about laying the foundation. But in a more mature organisation, especially in a well-established industry, the priorities shift towards *managing* — developing talent, fostering organisational effectiveness, planning for succession, and ensuring strategic alignment.

What remains constant, however, is the mindset of the leadership. If the CEO and board see organisation-building as a core driver of competitive strategy, HR's role becomes much more integral and impactful. On the other hand, if it's just treated as a contextual necessity, the depth and seriousness of HR's impact can be limited.

You've often said that culture and competencies are key. Can you explain why these are so critical?
Culture and competencies are the two pillars that hold an organisation together. Culture defines *how* things are done — it's the ethos of the workplace. Competencies are *what* is required to deliver on the strategy. The two must work in harmony.

Imagine this: You have the best talent, but the culture doesn't allow them to thrive. It's like having a star player on a dysfunctional team. For example, if you're in a customer-facing industry but lack a culture of empathy and customer obsession, even the most skilled employees won't succeed.

Culture amplifies competencies. It provides the environment where competencies can be applied effectively to achieve organisational goals.

When building an organisation, what comes first — talent or culture?
It's always culture. The way you want things to be done defines the kind of talent you bring in. For example, if your business thrives on customer satisfaction, you need a culture that prioritises customer-centricity. Talent serves that culture. It's important to remember: culture drives strategy, and talent supports both culture and strategy.

Competencies can seem complex. How can organisations simplify and integrate them strategically?
Competencies should be the foundation of every HR process. Hiring, development, performance management, succession planning — they all revolve around competencies.

Think of competencies as the anchor of the organisation's "product." Employees, as customers of this product, should see how competencies enable them to succeed in their roles and grow as individuals. For example, if you define leadership as a core competency, it should reflect in your hiring process, development programmes, and even how you manage performance.

This alignment ensures employees feel supported and valued while driving business results.

Gen Z is redefining the workforce. How do you view this demographic, and what challenges or opportunities do they bring?
Gen Z has fundamentally reshaped workplace dynamics. I've noticed three major shifts:

1. **Redefining loyalty:** For them, loyalty is tied to purpose and impact, not tenure. They're driven by the value they can create, often leading to shorter tenures and an increased preference for gig work.
2. **Demand for expression:** They want platforms to share their ideas and be heard. Organisations must listen empathetically and create environments where expression is encouraged.
3. **Meritocracy over bureaucracy:** They thrive in meritocratic environments. They want their ideas and efforts to make a tangible impact, and they're quick to disengage if bureaucracy stifles creativity.

Engaging this demographic requires organisations to foster inclusivity, create purpose-driven missions, and actively encourage innovation.

Competencies should be the foundation of every HR process – hiring, development, performance management, and succession planning must all revolve around them

How is technology, especially AI, transforming HR?
Technology has elevated HR from being a process-driven function to a strategic enabler. In the past, tools like HRMS and LMS primarily improved efficiency. Today, AI and machine learning are enabling predictive hiring, personalised employee engagement, and even customised development journeys.

For example, AI can analyse behavioural patterns to recommend personalised career paths or predict employee burnout. The combination of technology and behavioural science is revolutionising how HR supports both business goals and employee well-being.

Can you share a career milestone that shaped your approach to HR?
One project stands out. We had to align strategy across a geographically dispersed organisation. Instead of using traditional communication or training

Culture drives strategy, and talent supports both. The way you want things done defines the kind of talent you bring in

methods, we implemented the balanced scorecard as a strategy deployment tool.

This wasn't just about cascading information; it was about embedding strategy into daily operations. We aligned every team's objectives with the company's mission and vision, ensuring strategy execution became part of the organisation's DNA.

The biggest lesson? When you approach problems creatively and systemically, the impact can transcend individual or team performance — it can redefine how an organisation operates.

Retention and engagement are significant challenges today. How can organisations address these?

Competencies and culture are the bedrock of retention and engagement. When employees see their skills aligned with organisational goals and feel supported by a strong culture, they're more likely to stay and thrive.

Gen Z, in particular, seeks purpose, recognition, and opportunities for growth. By linking competencies to culture and creating an environment where employees feel they are making an impact, organisations can naturally attract, engage, and retain top talent.

If you could give one piece of advice to your younger self as a fresh graduate from XLRI, what would it be?

I'd thank my younger self for staying curious — it's the one trait that has fueled my journey. But I'd also advise:

- Look beyond the surface of problems. Solve them in ways that create long-lasting impact.
- Build a legacy by inventing new solutions rather than relying on traditional methods.
- Always keep your eyes and ears open to understand the business deeply before proposing solutions.

Any final thoughts for aspiring HR professionals?

Treat the organisation as a product and its people as customers. Understand the business deeply — its challenges, customer needs, and competitive landscape. Approach HR not as a function but as a strategic enabler that drives business outcomes.

HR is at a fascinating juncture. With the right blend of curiosity, creativity, and strategy, you can build solutions that leave a legacy and truly transform organisations.

SHAPING **TOMORROW'S EXPERIENCE ECONOMY**

Pune's Xplore roundtable brought together industry leaders and XLRI faculty to delve into the intricate dance of customer experience in today's economy. Discussions ranged from redefining customer success to managing feedback fatigue, with a sharp focus on creating deeply engaging, experience-driven business models.

The conversations at Pune opened with a dive into the modern consumer's mindset, emphasising that today's market demands more than just goods; it craves experiences. As discussions unfolded, it became clear that successful businesses are those that manage to stitch experiences seamlessly into their offerings. Whether it's the comfort of shopping from home with a virtual try-on tool or the excitement of a pop-up event that feels more like a community festival than a sales pitch, what truly resonates with customers are the memorable moments that make each interaction special.

Experience Over Everything

The discussion highlighted the necessity of shifting from a product-focused approach to an experience-driven mindset. For instance, the atmosphere of a Starbucks isn't just about the coffee; it's about the ambiance, the aroma, and the community feel, all of which combine to turn casual visitors into loyal customers.

Customer Success Redefined

The panel delved into deep customer relationships, acknowledging that mere satisfaction is outdated. Modern customers seek deeper engagement, more value, and greater trust. The conversation explored how genuine connections transform customers into brand advocates.

Is Customer-Centricity Just Lip Service?

This challenging session scrutinised whether companies genuinely place customers at their core or merely claim to do so. The panel shared case studies of companies that authentically prioritise customer-centricity, illustrating how it's not only ethical but also strategically advantageous.

Attendees: **Kaustav Sil**, Rieter; **Abhey Kalia**, Rheinmetall; **Kavita Sheen**, Marketsandmarkets; **Dipu KV**, Bajaj Allianz; **Varun Guliani**, Grihum Housing Finance; **Rahul Mhatre**, Sahyadri Hospitals; **Pooja Bansal**, Piaggio; **Karan Rajpal**, Coforge; **Rupinder Kaur**, Executive Coach; **Shashwat Mitra**, KPIT; **Ankit Goel**, Goel Ganga; **Girish Kanitkar**, Medline; **George Verghese**, Kirloskar Group; **Saumil Dhru**, Arya Omnitalk; **Sudarshan Ch**, Unitherm Engineers; **Abhijit Puri**, LTIMindtree; **Pravin Patil**, Elevate Consulting

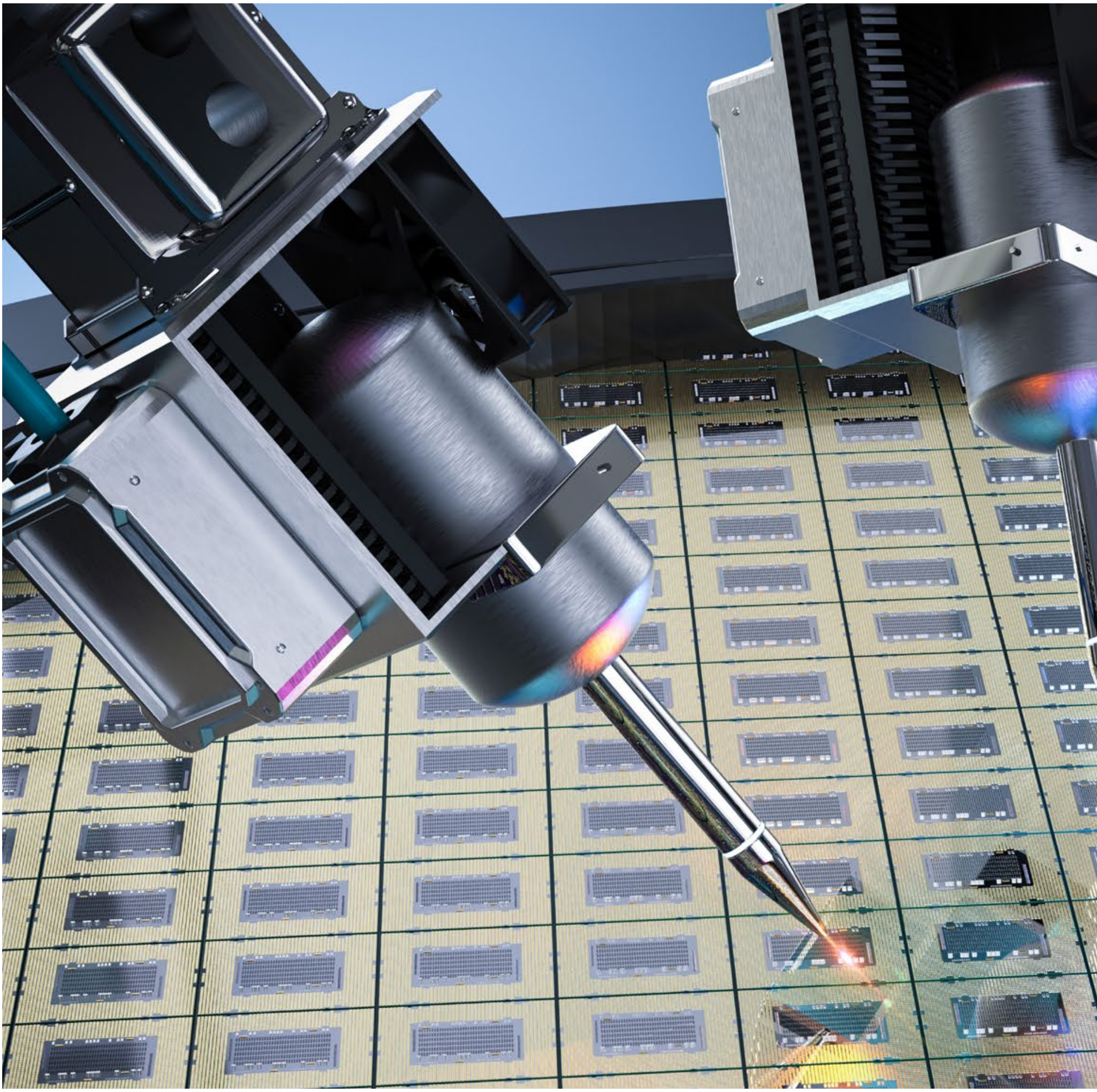
When Feedback Becomes Overwhelming

The panel addressed the dilemma of feedback fatigue, discussing strategies to balance acquiring valuable insights without inundating customers. The focus was on finding a balance where feedback is collected respectfully and efficiently.

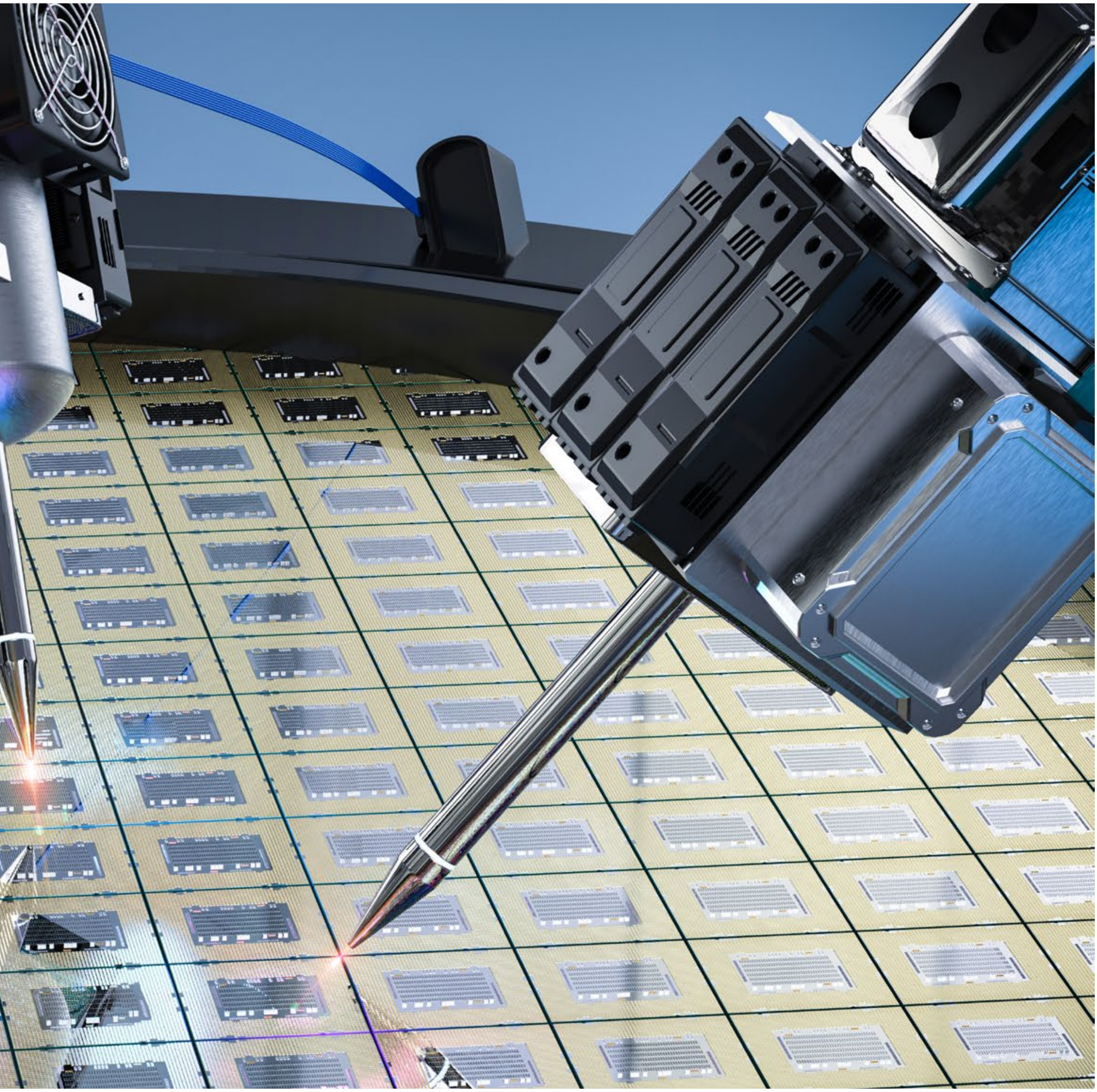
Making It All Work Together

The concluding discussion focused on the practical challenges of embedding customer-focused strategies throughout organisational processes. The panel emphasised the importance of a unified approach where the entire organization operates in synchrony around the customer.

The insights from Pune emphasised that in the quest to innovate, the real measure of success is how businesses enhance the customer's experience. Attendees left equipped with actionable strategies to make their customer interactions more meaningful and impactful.



The Global Semiconductor Race
Shaping Future Supply Chains



The semiconductor shortage reveals critical vulnerabilities across industries. Discover how nations and companies are adapting by addressing supply chain disruptions and bridging talent gaps in a tech-driven world

by Nishith Khare

Semiconductors have become a vital component of the global economy, driving progress in sectors such as defence, household electronics, and smartphones. The chips inside these products are revolutionising the way we live, and the pace of technological advancement is so rapid that the industry struggles to meet growing demand. The ongoing 'chip war' underscores the strategic importance nations now place on semiconductor dominance.

The semiconductor industry is projected to reach a $1 trillion value by 2030, but overcoming talent shortages and supply chain gaps is crucial for success

As Chris Miller notes in *Chip War: The Fight for the World's Most Critical Technology:* "Chips from Taiwan provide 37 per cent of the world's new computing power each year. Two Korean companies produce 44 per cent of the world's memory chips. The Dutch company ASML builds 100 per cent of the world's extreme ultraviolet lithography machines, without which cutting-edge chips are simply impossible to make. OPEC's 40 per cent share of world oil production looks unimpressive by comparison."

Let's take the example of a smartphone chip and trace its journey from raw material to the final product. First, the design and cutting-edge technology come from engineers in the US and are sent to foundries (or fabs) in Taiwan. In these fabs, the chips are fabricated, and afterward, they are shipped to assembly lines in China. Here, they are put together using machines from countries such as the Netherlands, Japan, South Korea, and the US to produce end-products, such as smartphones, for clients like Apple. In China alone, about 450,000 people are employed in assembly lines tied to semiconductor production.

Given the widespread geographic involvement in this value chain, external disruptions, such as the pandemic, have exposed vulnerabilities. McKinsey projects the semiconductor industry to reach a value of $1 trillion by 2030, but to achieve this, the industry must tackle critical challenges, including talent shortages and supply chain gaps.

India's Semiconductor Push

The semiconductor wave has already touched many economies, and now the Indian government, through the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), is pushing manufacturing industries with Production Linked Incentives (PLI). With growing headlines about acquisitions, mergers, and joint ventures involving companies from the US, Japan, Taiwan, and China partnering with Indian firms, the market is shifting. For instance, PSMC partnered with Tata Electronics for FAB, Foxconn is in talks to set up the biggest FATP in Karnataka, and Dixon's deal with Google signals a promising industry shift. Not only India but also other Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, are inviting companies to manufacture.

Following the 'China plus one' policy, companies are more open to

Following the 'China plus one' policy, India and Southeast Asia are emerging as key players in semiconductor manufacturing, offering a new route for global partnerships

conducting business with India and creating a complete end-to-end hub, including designing within the country. By doing so, companies can overcome supply chain issues. Regarding the talent shortage, cultivating engineering talent requires more time and investment than developing technicians, prompting companies to upskill technicians and broaden their roles. Additionally, the demand for construction workers has surged, but workforce development efforts are lagging.

Bridging Talent Gaps in the AI-Automation Age

With artificial intelligence and machine learning, many shopfloor operations can be automated, as seen in Micron's fabrication plant in Taiwan. However, subject matter expertise needs to be nurtured and inculcated. To address this, nations are building institutions to develop the required talent, while expats are flown in globally to transfer knowledge. The talent shortage is expected to persist for the next five years until the industry creates a niche category for itself explicitly.

The reliance on human expertise in critical areas of design, engineering, and fabrication remains indispensable. While AI and automation can streamline routine processes, the rapid advancements in semiconductor technology require not just operational efficiency but also innovation, design expertise, and a deep understanding of fabrication complexities. Therefore, companies are collaborating with public and private entities to cultivate the necessary talent and expand workforce development efforts. A revolution is underway, with significant developments already visible in southern states. Cities are evolving, policies are changing, and workforce dynamics are shifting rapidly. The definition of blue-collar jobs is set for a transformation. Much remains to be done to meet these demands by both companies and the Government of India.

Nishith Khare
is a second-year PGDM (HRM) student at XLRI, Jamshedpur

"The principles of OB remain intact, their application evolves with time"

From a mechanical engineer to an organisational behaviour (OB) professor at XLRI, **Manish Singhal's** journey has been marked by twists and turns, including stints in management, social work, and spirituality. In this interview with *Anmol Singla*, he shares his perspectives on OB's evolution in the face of technological changes, his unique teaching pedagogy, and advice for MBA students.

Can you share your life journey from a mechanical engineer to a PGDM in finance to an organisational behaviour (OB) professor at XLRI?

There have been quite a few twists and turns, really. Mechanical engineering was more of a default choice during my time. If you were capable, you became a doctor or an engineer. If you were incapable of that, you did a BSc; if not, then a BCom; and if you were completely incapable of anything else, then you did an Arts degree. That was the environment back then. Because I used to get more marks in maths than anything else, I became an engineer. Midway through that, I realised that I was not cut out to be an engineer.

Right from my second year, I started preparing for management entrance exams to escape engineering. Though I got calls from all the IIMs in 1990-91, I couldn't succeed in my first attempt and took up a job with JK Synthetics. Later, I joined XIM Bhubaneswar for my PGDM, but even then, I felt it wasn't the right fit. I applied to NGOs from the XIMB campus and joined PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action), where I worked on voluntary sector projects.

After working at PRADAN, I joined Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari, as a missionary. There, I was involved in anthropological research at the Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture in the Northeast. My interactions with scholars and professors led me to realise that my true calling was in academics. Eventually, I pursued a PhD at IIM Calcutta on "Spirituality at Work," a topic aligned with my experiences at Vivekananda Kendra. Since 2006, I've been teaching at XLRI.

From being a missionary to studying again and now becoming a professor at XLRI, how do you see the subject of organisational behaviour changing, especially with the advent of remote working, outsourcing, and other technological changes that were not as prevalent when you started your journey?

While the principles of organisational behaviour remain intact, their application must evolve to meet the demands of virtual and hybrid work environments

Organisational behaviour draws heavily from disciplines like psychology and sociology, so its core principles remain largely unchanged. What evolves is how these principles are applied in different contexts. For instance, managing face-to-face interactions with teams or subordinates may no longer be as prevalent in today's increasingly virtual environments. This shift demands greater attention to elements that gain importance in non-face-to-face settings.

For example, when working on projects with non-co-located teams, communication needs to be more deliberate and explicit to ensure that intent and meaning are clear. While technological advances have significantly improved efficiency — like making transcription and professional formatting faster and easier — they have also reduced the human touch. The engagement and group dynamics experienced during face-to-face classes or meetings are hard to replicate in virtual settings.

This challenge extends to organisations, many of which are encouraging employees to return to offices, acknowledging that remote work can't always match the synergy and effectiveness of in-person collaboration. Remote working can be effective when interdependence is low, such as with freelancers. However, in environments where interaction and teamwork are critical, traditional OB principles still apply but must be adapted to the new medium.

For instance, virtual reward and recognition ceremonies often lack the energy and emotional connection of their in-person counterparts. This highlights the importance of recalibrating traditional approaches to suit the realities of remote or hybrid work environments.

Working from home comes with unique challenges. For instance, during this interview, I had to signal someone to lower their voice — an issue unlikely in an office setting. During Covid, many executives noted how bosses would say,

"You're at home, how much work can there be?", while in reality, work hours increased as boundaries between work and home blurred.

The constant presence of smartphones has further eroded this balance, leaving people perpetually connected and prone to burnout. Outsourcing, while a cost-saving strategy, raises questions about its impact on organisational culture.

Technological advancements like generative AI bring both benefits and risks. Over-reliance on tools like Grammarly may weaken language skills, just as smartphones have made people forget even basic information like phone numbers. Such concerns echo past debates about the impact of television and now AI.

The challenge lies in using technology wisely — enhancing efficiency without becoming overly dependent. In countries like India, where manpower is abundant, automation raises a critical question: how will the displaced workforce adapt? This concern resonates globally and underscores the potential for social unrest.

While technology transforms organisations, the core principles of organisational behaviour remain intact. It's their application that must evolve to fit new realities.

In recent lectures, you've often referred to ancient religious texts. How relevant do you think they are in modern times, and how do you integrate them into your teaching pedagogy effectively?

It's crucial to distinguish between religious texts and dharmic texts. Religion is primarily a belief system, while dharmic texts represent an experiential knowledge system rooted in evidence. These texts emphasise three forms of validation: *pratyaksha* (direct observation), *anumana* (inference), and *shabda pramana* (testimonies from texts, verified through personal experience). Unlike rigid adherence in religious systems, dharmic systems encourage exploration and experiential learning.

I often remind my students that we are heirs to a profound heritage of wisdom that remains relevant even today. Disregarding this knowledge is akin to ignoring gravity before it was formally discovered — it existed regardless of our awareness. Similarly, truths found in dharmic texts are timeless. The Sanatana philosophy, meaning "eternal," teaches us to respect both the wisdom of the past and the innovations of the present. It's about harmonising ancient insights with contemporary realities.

Technology enhances efficiency, but over-reliance risks eroding skills and connections, raising critical questions about its impact on organisational culture and society

In my pedagogy, I encourage students to reflect on what might have been overlooked in modern education. For example, the widely recognised "Triple Bottom Line" approach — focusing on profits, people, and the planet — has its essence mirrored in ancient Indian principles of Dharma, which inherently balance individual, societal, and universal well-being.

To integrate this wisdom, I

Effective networking isn't just about what's in it for you — it's about trust, honesty, and support, making you a dependable friend and colleague

challenge students to explore traditional knowledge systems, assess their relevance, and apply them to modern contexts. A metaphor I often use is that of a tree: the deeper the roots, the wider its branches can spread. By reconnecting with our roots, we not only gain stability but also uncover greater purpose and meaning in life.

Networking is quite the buzzword in B-schools. Everyone says you need to network to get ahead. How can students establish effective networks?
Your network determines your net worth. A B-school offers the perfect opportunity to build that network. Think of every individual as a node, with interactions and relationships forming the network's structure. Broadly, there are two types of networks:

- **Advice networks:** Professional connections that establish your reputation for competence.
- **Friendship networks:** Personal connections built on warmth and trust.

To build an effective network, students should focus on:

1. **Building a reputation for competence:** Be sincere, proactive, and reliable in your work. People should trust you to deliver. Avoid being seen as someone who "freeloads" in group work.
2. **Demonstrating care and concern:** Beyond competence, people need to like you. Relationships built on warmth are crucial. Genuine care is key — if you're faking it, people will notice.
3. **Break barriers:** Interact beyond your comfort zone — engage with peers from different regions, genders, and backgrounds..
4. **Participate in shared activities:** Join committees, clubs, and

Use your two years to extract academic value, build networks, pursue hobbies, and cultivate inner stability to navigate life's challenges with purpose

group projects. Shared goals let others see you in action and build trust.

Finally, networking is not just about "what's in it for me" but about paying it forward. Ask yourself: Are you the kind of friend others can rely on? Cultivate qualities like trust, honesty, and support that make you a dependable friend and colleague.

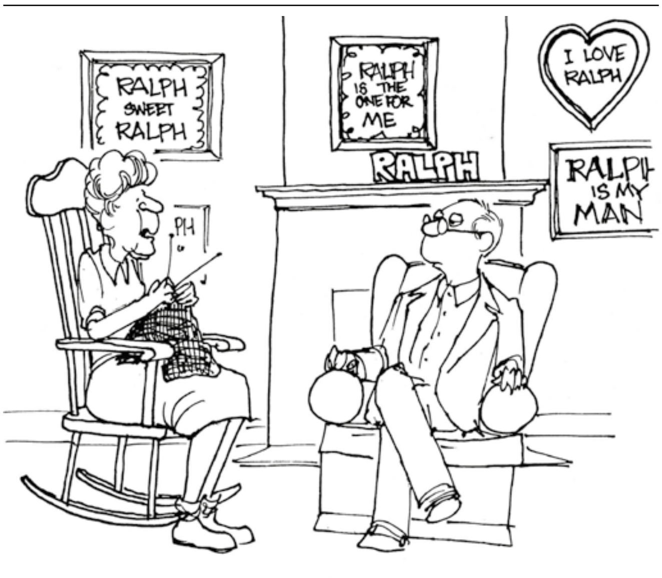
Finally, what advice would you give to MBA students to effectively use their two years in a B-school environment?
Make the most of these two years. Here's how:

1. **Extract the most from academics:** Pay attention in class. If you focus during lectures, you won't struggle during exams. For most students, this is the last phase of formal education — don't waste it.
2. **Build your network:** Cultivate a strong reputation for competence and develop deep, meaningful friendships. These relationships will support you throughout your professional and personal life.
3. **Develop hobbies and interests:** This is the last chance to explore activities you love before stepping into the grind of corporate life. Pursue hobbies that reduce stress —whether it's sports, art, music, dance, or reading. These passions will stay with you for life.
4. **Strengthen your roots:** Reflect on your traditions and invest in your inner stability. Cultivate a strong core that will help you face external challenges. I'll illustrate this with two analogies:
   - *The movie screen analogy:* You only see the movie clearly when the screen is steady. Similarly, inner stability allows you to face external turbulence.
   - *The road analogy:* When driving, the road's steadiness allows the vehicle to move. If the road is unstable, the vehicle skids. Likewise, a steady core enables you to navigate life's challenges.

These two years are long enough to fortify yourself for the future. Develop stability, purpose, and meaningful connections.

"Next time, don't start the presentation by asking, 'Can you tolerate ambiguity?'!"

"Exile will be great. We can start a garden."



"What do you mean you're thinking of changing your name to Steve?"

Twisters by **Anmol Singla** and **Abraham Aby**

1 X originated in the 18th century as the publisher of a reference work compiled by three Scottish printers. Over time, it evolved into much more, including websites and educational software. What is remarkable about the company is its ability to survive for over 200 years by constantly adapting to the times. A notable example is its decision to end the "print edition" of X in 2012, which was one of the reasons X was widely known. More recently, it has evolved into an AI company, selling artificial intelligence agent software that powers applications such as customer service chatbots and data retrieval systems. Identify X.

2 "Y accumulation" is the term used to describe the huge amount of Z bought or gathered by a wallet. The Z market is full of different kinds of traders and investors. Among these participants, there is a community of individuals who own or have enough funds to buy large amounts of assets. This community, particularly in the business world, is known as the Y. In a totally different context, Y are mammals, and they share the defining traits of that group: they breathe air, are warm-blooded, give live birth, suckle their young on milk, and have hair. Identify Y and Z.

3 This company started as a battery manufacturer but has been making waves in the EV industry lately. It is also the third-largest automobile manufacturer by market capitalisation. Identify the company. Additionally, name at least one car in the Ocean series by the company.

4 One of the biggest scams in history was carried out through a certain blockchain-based trading instrument, based on the fanfare generated by a certain fictional show. Notably, the show and the instrument were not related to each other. Identify the common word that connects both.company.

1. Britannica 2. Y – Whales; Z – Cryptocurrency 3. BYD (Build Your Dreams); Car - BYD Seal or BYD Dolphin 4. Squid (Squid Game)

EXCELLENCE & INTEGRITY
XLRI
Xavier School of Management
For the greater good
ASPIRE BEYOND

Xplore
A LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE COLLECTIVE

IGNITING CONVERSATIONS SHAPING FUTURES

REAL-WORLD STRATEGIES

NAVIGATING THE MAZE

FORESIGHT FOR INSIGHT

WORKSHOPS

Scan QR code to get in touch

or mail us at xplore@xlri.ac.in

@Xplore_XLRI @xplore.xlri @XploreXLRI

CEO LOUNGE

EXCELLENCE & INTEGRITY
XLRI
Xavier School of Management
For the greater good
ASPIRE BEYOND

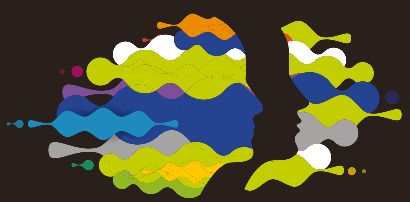
Xplore
A LEADERSHIP, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE COLLECTIVE

IGNITING CONVERSATIONS
SHAPING FUTURES

Podcasts

Roundtables

Workshops



Speaker Sessions

Scan QR code to get in touch

or mail us at xplore@xlri.ac.in

@Xplore_XLRI @xplore.xlri @XploreXLRI

CEO LOUNGE