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India IT 2020

Global Leadership for Business & Society

India IT 2020: A conference with a difference



Ashok Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director, BPCL, inaugurating the India IT 2020 Conference
L-R Dr.N.L.Sarda,Mr.Rohinton Dumasia,Mr.Ahsok Sinha,Mr.S.Mohan and Mr.M.D Agrawal.

India IT 2020 – a path-breaking conference to define a roadmap for the strategic deployment of emerging technologies for maximum positive impact on business, infrastructure and society in our country – was jointly organized by the Mumbai Chapter of the CSI and the Bombay Management Association

Held in Mumbai from January 27-29, 2009, the conference saw an overwhelming response from delegates. The pre-conference tutorials were attended by more than 120 delegates, while the conference had attendance of more than 300 delegates and over one hundred top CIOs. The conference also attracted a large number of industry partners, which made it a grand success. Some of the prominent ones were Microsoft, TCS, BPCL, Polycom, Cisco, CA, D-Link, Appoint, CMC, CDAC and Capgemini.

The experts who conducted the

tutorials were brilliant, and this set the pace and tone for the entire conference. The strategic alliance of CSI and BMA as organizers for India IT 2020 was with a view to conceptualize the roadmap for our country to emerge as a global leader by the year 2020. India has so far emerged as a vital player in global IT and business arenas. The India IT 2020 event focused on how the country can leverage emerging technologies to attain global leadership on business as well as societal fronts. India's foremost industrialists, academicians, and thinkers have already postulated their vision of what India can achieve by the year 2020, but the roadmap to reach there still has glaring gaps – speakers at India IT 2020 highlighted these gaps and suggested ways to fill them.

Nearly 60 eminent speakers and panelists from India and abroad presented their views, in four parallel tracks spanning Business, Infrastructure, Technology and

Society. Perhaps for the first time ever, a diverse range of experts—including economists, business leaders, finance experts, technologists, sociologists and consultants—came together on a single platform to suggest strategies to endure the economic meltdown as well as prepare for future opportunities.

Explaining the basis for the India IT 2020, Conference Chair M D Agrawal said: “In times of economic strife people tend to despair because they focus only on the short-term. But as has been proven time and again in the past, downturns and slowdowns are temporary phenomena and it is inevitable that we will get back into a positive growth phase soon. We designed the India IT 2020 conference content to ensure that delegates not only got sufficient inputs to survive the downturn, but also got a picture of emerging technologies and what they need to do to thrive in tomorrow’s world.”

Conference co-chair Ravi Raman said: “The conference had a lot of breadth and variety and thus covered a very broad spectrum of topics. It was very current and addressed the top of the mind concerns relating to economic meltdown and terrorism. It was a thought provoking seminar which raised a number of questions and the industry will come up with answers to move it to next higher level of performance.”

In addition to the large number of parallel sessions, India IT 2020 also featured high-impact keynote addresses. Ashok Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director of Bharat Petroleum, spoke on managing a downturn. Ashank Desai, former Chairman of Mastek and member of Nasscom’s IT 2020 committee provided a perspective on the Indian IT industry.

Ajai Chowdhry, CEO, HCL Infosystems, set the roadmap for IT Industry to achieve the goals set in Vision 2020. Tarun Gulati from Microsoft India talked on the role of technology in empowering India with quality education. Prof Anil Gupta shared his experiences of innovations that have come out in rural India. Renowned sportscaster Harsha Bhogale of Prosearch dealt with the subject of technology in sports and described how it has revolutionized the way sports are played today.

In keeping with the Computer

Society of India’s traditional focus on in-depth education, the first day of India IT 2020 was reserved for tutorials on topics that are the need-of-the-hour for technology professionals.

Amit Mitra, Global Consulting, TCS, conducted a workshop on IT Strategies. Cyber security expert Vijay Mukhi explained how to secure wireless networks and put in place anti-terrorist measures. Anand Deshpande, Founder Chairman and MD of Persistent Systems conducted a highly technical workshop on trends and options for collaborative computing. Finally, the Business Software Alliance presented a tutorial on software asset management and software governance.

Some of the prominent Speakers at the Conference were Dr C Mohan, IBM Chief Scientist; Tarun Gulhati of Microsoft; Padma Bhushan Dr F C Kohli; Dr Harrick M Vin of TCS; Dr Alan Nunes; Dr D B Phatak of IIT Bombay; Ravi Apte of NSE; Suprabhat Chatterjee of Cisco; Venkatesh Hariharan of Red Hat; Jagadish Babu of Intel; Jayesh Kotak, a Vice President with D-Link; and, Sitaram Chamarty, Principal Consultant with TCS.

The India IT 2020 conference also saw more than 100 CIOs of top companies gather to discuss the effects of the downturn and deliberate on leadership compulsions in turbulent times. The key speakers for this session were Dr Anil K Khandelwal, Ex-Chairman & Managing Director, Bank of Baroda, who spoke on the topic “Driving results in difficult times,” and Dr Ajit Ranade, Chief Economist, Aditya Birla Group, who delivered a talk on “Economic Outlook for India Inc”.

The presentations were followed by an hour-long Interactive Panel Discussion – Skill Sets of a Business Leader in Turbulent Times, moderated by Govind Ethiraj, Chief Editor, UTV. The panelists were Anantha Sayana (L& T), Munish Mittal (HDFC Bank), Sandeep Phanasaonkar (Reliance Capital) and Rajan Anandan (Microsoft).

The highlight of the conference was a felicitation ceremony for Ashank Desai, who was presented the CSI Fellow award during the inauguration of India IT 2020 for his outstanding contribution to CSI and the IT Industry.



Ashank Desai receiving the CSI Fellowship award from S Mahalingam (L)



Keynote speakers (L-R) Tarun Gulhati, S Mohan, Dr C Mohan and Ajai Chowdhry



Conference Chair M D Agrawal along with S Mahalingam and Ashank Desai



Microsoft Independent Consultant Alan Nunes speaks on IT in Green Energy for 21st century



Delegates listening intently to the proceedings at India IT 2020



Dr F C Kohli speaks on Natural Language Processing



Panel discussion on surviving an economic downturn. (L-R) Capt Raghu Raman, S Mahalingam, R Ramanan and Lalit Sawhney



Amit Mitra of TCS talking on IT strategy



Ravi Apte of NSE describes emerging business models in financial markets



Prof Anil Gupta of IIM Ahmedabad talks on innovation



Harsha Bhogale giving a perspective on technology in sports



(L-R) Dr Prasad Ram and Dr Kannan Moudgalaya discussing social networking and education with Srinivas Eranki



Team India IT 2020

Managing Downturns

At India IT 2020, Ashok Sinha, Chairman and Managing Director of Bharat Petroleum, provided some very sound advice for progressive business leaders keen on helping their organisations ride the recession storm and steering through to a bright future



The year 2008 was ushered in an environment characterised by all round optimism, particularly with regard to the Indian economy. Although there were rumblings about the potential problems in the subprime mortgages market in the USA, there was a belief that India will not be impacted much and that the Indian growth story was set to continue. The stock markets had touched record highs. Foreign capital flows were buoyant. Companies were aggressively tapping the capital markets for raising funds. Although the commodity prices had touched record levels and inflationary pressures were being felt in the economy, companies were generally confident of being able to deal with these issues and sustain their growth rates.

even for creditworthy customers.

Governments and Central Banks across the world have initiated emergency responses to deal with the situation. Huge amounts of money are being pumped into the global economy in a bid to ward off threats of imminent recession and open up the clogged credit lines. The problems in the credit market have been accompanied by a sharp fall in commodity prices as investors brace for a period of sustained global slowdown. Major economies like USA, Japan, Canada and some European countries are now in recession. The tight liquidity position and reduced spending levels have started hurting companies.

The Indian economy has not remained immune to the developments impacting the world markets. As global institutions rushed to raise the badly needed cash, emerging markets including India witnessed a rapid sell off in their stock markets leading to an unprecedented slide in the indices. This has had a severe impact on the exchange rate leading to a sharp jump in the cost of imports. Although crude oil prices have declined sharply, the depreciation of the rupee has meant that the favourable impact has been negated to a large extent. With the forecasts for the global economies being grim, Indian companies need to brace themselves for coping with the difficult times.

The recent past has seen a number of terms becoming a part of daily conversation. Words like bailout, recession, downturn, etc, have always been a part of discussions involving economists and accountants. Today a layman has come to use these terms in the normal course of his conversation. If the unfortunate events which shook Mumbai in late November 2008 are also taken into account, one can easily understand the depth of the current difficulties being experienced by all businesses.

'The World is Flat' is what the author Thomas L Freidman wrote in his book by the same name when he stated that globalisation has levelled the competitive playing fields between industrialised and the emerging economies of the world. The same view seems to be holding true even now when the slowdown has impacted economies across the world. Thus although the origins of the current problems can be traced back to the USA, it has impacted economies all over the world, including India.

Financial Crisis

Things changed once the financial crisis in the USA quickly moved from being limited to the subprime mortgage securities market to become a broader credit crisis involving the private issuance

Not since the Great Depression in 1929 has the world experienced a crisis like this. The travails of the financial system will impact the economy at large

of all debt securities. The US Government has had to intervene in an attempt to infuse confidence in the market. The crisis quickly spread to institutions across the world. Even countries were impacted badly. As losses mounted, a crisis of confidence enveloped the credit markets. The world is therefore seeing and experiencing a major credit crunch which is severely limiting the availability of credit

The world has been through several major crisis situations. This crisis is however, fundamentally different as it has badly hit the three pillars of the modern financial system viz capital, liquidity and confidence. Not since the Great Depression in 1929 has the world experienced anything like this. The travails of the financial system will impact the economy at large. The Boston Consulting Group, in a paper called

“Collateral Damage: What the Crisis in the Credit Markets Means for Everyone Else”, states that while no one can predict with certainty the severity and duration of the global economic slowdown, a recession now seems inevitable and is likely to be relatively long. In this context, it becomes very critical for companies to equip themselves so that they can manage the downturn effectively.

Implications for Businesses

As the Boston Consulting Group states in its paper, the combination of less available and hence more expensive credit, coupled with stagnant or even declining demand, will hurt even healthy companies. With financial institutions having suffered major losses, their ability and appetite for extending credit even to prime borrowers has been reduced considerably, which will only lead to increased cost of funds. Businesses are already experiencing difficulties in raising their fund requirements and even where available, the costs are significantly higher. Thus firms are going to face difficulties in ensuring availability of adequate funds that form the lifeline of business enterprises.

As raising funds becomes more difficult and expensive for businesses, companies having an excellent cash position will be perceived to be strong and markets will place a premium on such enterprises. In a difficult environment, all enterprises will encounter pressures on volumes and margins. As cash flows become difficult, a strong cash position can come in very handy to effectively tackle the situation.

One of the most important fallouts of the crisis is expected to be the sharp rise in credit losses. In this situation, efficient management of working capital becomes very critical. Also, there is a rising danger of asset price deflation due to which balance sheets of major companies are likely to be impacted. Further with the slowdown affecting all sections of the economy, companies have to brace themselves for a period when profit levels

remain depressed. Companies would also have to be prepared to live with rising volatility in areas like commodity prices, exchange rate of major currencies, etc, all of which will have a major bearing on their operations.

Finally, there are bound to be significant changes in consumer

Companies having an excellent cash position will be perceived to be strong and markets will place a premium on such enterprises

behaviour. Consumer spending will be adversely affected even as people become more oriented to savings rather than consumption, leading to a fall in demand in the market place.

Action Plan

Any crisis situation calls for urgent action. This can either be a 'knee jerk' reaction or it can be a well thought out plan of action. Typically, the first category will include decisions like zero capex, delaying creditor payments, drastic pruning of inventory, etc. The second category will cover actions like an organisational redesign, revisiting the corporate strategy, decision on selling parts of the business, etc. While the first category is extremely short-term, the second is quite long-term in nature and needs time which may not be available. The challenge therefore lies in achieving a balance between the two approaches. This will typically involve creating awareness, motivation and action towards accelerating a value-focused culture while simultaneously generating real bottom-line impact through a careful and smart consideration of the cost base.

Given the criticality of the situation and the challenges confronting businesses, experts have come out with

their suggestions on areas that companies should focus upon in these difficult times. The Boston Consulting Group in their paper referred to earlier talks about 16 key measures that companies need to focus upon. The suggestions include reducing trade credit, restructuring of debt, reassessment of investment programmes, exploring out of the box pricing policies, divestment of non-core businesses, installation of crisis monitoring teams, closely watching the cash position, etc.

Patrick Harlington in an essay on 'Managing in a Downturn – Shaping your business for the future' suggests that companies should focus on increasing top line sales in a downturn i.e. maintaining customers; reducing costs i.e. tightening the business; and, getting better prices and price increases through regularly and quickly i.e. keeping the business profitable.

These are some examples of what experts have identified in terms of what levers CEOs should focus on in these difficult times. In all these, the key focus is on strategy, funding and people and stakeholder management. The one thing that comes out quite starkly is the need to manage cash. Effective cash management can guarantee the survival and growth of the enterprise notwithstanding the current tough times.

Given that 'cash is king' today, companies need to adopt what can be termed as a 'cash lab' approach. The

Business model innovators achieve higher operating margins than those companies focused on product or service innovation

objective of a cash lab is basically to monitor and improve the company's cash position. This will require an excellent cash monitoring and forecasting system. Simultaneously, it will be critical to identify the internal and external cash levers that can have the maximum impact. These levers would typically include capital turnover levers, operating expenses levers and capital structure levers.

The cash position can be looked at on three levels—cash from operations, cash from investing and cash from financing. Each of the levels will have their sub-branches, and attention needs to be focused on these so that all available opportunities for cash generation are utilised.

On the operations front, the challenge will lie in managing the simultaneous activities of protecting volumes, reducing costs and increasing prices. Managing these critical levers that impact the operating margins will hold the key to the success of the enterprise. As Patrick Harlington states, “Whilst reducing costs and protecting volume is essential for managing a downturn, there is a need to focus upon price management to shape the business for the future.” Although these are tough times, it is a fact that difficult economic conditions throw up numerous opportunities. Companies that can grab these would be in a position to take a leadership position when the economy picks up. It is therefore critical to judiciously manage the capital expenditure plans notwithstanding the current difficult scenario. Finally, all options for reducing the funding costs need to be explored with a view to achieving a lower level of cost of capital.

The benefit of adopting this approach is that it will bring about stability and full control of cash position, which is so critical for the survival and growth of the business in these extraordinary times.

Business Model Innovation

Besides focusing on cash, the current economic conditions make it critical for companies to think creatively. It is no longer a “business as usual” scenario. It is therefore essential for businesses to have a re-look at their existing business models. It is an ideal time to look at Business model innovations. Business model innovations have reshaped entire industries and redistributed billions of dollars of value. They have caused powerful companies

operating according to traditional models to fail while those that adopt new models—often new entrants—achieve fantastic growth.

Three primary components—customer value proposition, profit formula, and resources and processes—form the core identity of a business and make up the base upon which the rest of it is built. By necessity, they precede strategy. The business model defines a venture's playing field, structure, priorities, and identity, but

The economic cycle would turn in the future and when that happens, a company that is well prepared can leverage the opportunities and establish a leadership position in the market

strategy determines how it applies its business model, how it differentiates itself, succeeds, and wins.

Business model innovation is the introduction of a compelling new business model to a market. Innovative business models can be fundamentally new—entirely fresh formulations from the ground up; or incrementally new—strong existing models applied in new contexts. Either way, they reshape markets by changing the basis of competition; if calibrated correctly.

Business model innovation is difficult, but the following approach makes it increasingly achievable and repeatable:

1. Discover the job: Figure out what type of innovation—low-end, high-end, or new market—to pursue based on unmet customer needs.

2. Design the value propositions: Shape the value-creating components of your business model—the customer value proposition and the profit formula—to deliver attractive performance to consumers and to your corporation.

3. Align resources and processes: Make sure that corporate resources and processes are optimized for your new

business.

4. Test and build: Identify foothold markets, iterate towards success, and begin to scale.

Business Model Innovation is increasingly becoming a recognised driver of long term growth. Most firms approach innovation as the development of new products, services, or technologies. Recent research, however, is pointing to innovative business models as the source of the greatest and most enduring growth. Furthermore, research suggests that business model innovators achieve higher operating margins than those companies focused on product or service innovation.

Conclusion

A key aspect of managing in a downturn is the need to continue to look for opportunities and plan for the upturn. It is important for companies to continue with their innovations and investment in areas that offer growth opportunities for the future. The economic cycle would turn in the future and when that happens, a company that is well prepared can leverage the opportunities and establish a leadership position in the market. Thus managing cash and being prepared for the future will hold the key for the ability of a business enterprise in not only surviving but also growing in the coming days.

It is said that every dark cloud has a silver lining. In the Indian context, it is the expectation that India will be one of the countries that will ride the storm of recession. Given the fact that India has a low exposure to global trade, favourable demographics and long-term growth potential, the future holds considerable promise for business enterprises. Also, experience shows that appropriate response to recession typically makes a big difference in the long term. Studies undertaken by McKinsey of companies in the USA show that during the period 1998-2002 when there was a recession-like situation, only 60% of companies that were in the top quartile before the recession retained their leadership position after the recession. Similarly the companies managing better than their peers in recessionary times delivered better returns to their shareholders.

Ten (Plus Three) Ways to Use LinkedIn

Guy Kawasaki

Most people use LinkedIn to “get to someone” in order to make a sale, form a partnership, or get a job. It works well for this because it is an online network of more than 8.5 million experienced professionals from around the world representing 130 industries. However, it is a tool that is under-utilised, so I've compiled a top-ten list of ways to increase the value of LinkedIn.



1. Increase your visibility.

By adding connections, you increase the likelihood that people will see your profile first when they're searching for someone to hire or do business with. In addition to appearing at the top of search results (which is a major plus if you're one of the 52,000 product managers on LinkedIn), people would much rather work with people whom their friends know and trust.

2. Improve your connectability.

Most new users put only their current company in their profile. By doing so, they severely limit their ability to connect with people. You should fill out your profile like it's an executive bio, so include past companies, education, affiliations, and activities.

You can also include a link to your profile as part of an e-mail signature. The added benefit is that the link enables people to see all your credentials, which would be awkward, if not downright strange, as an attachment.

3. Improve your Google PageRank.

LinkedIn allows you to make your profile information available for search engines to index. Since LinkedIn profiles receive a fairly high PageRank in Google, this is a good way to influence what people see when they search for you.

To do this, create a public profile and select “Full View.” Also, instead of using the default URL, customise your public profile's URL to be your actual name. To strengthen the visibility of this page in search engines, use this link in various places on the Web. For example, when you comment in a blog, include a link to your profile in your signature.

4. Enhance your search engine results.

In addition to your name, you can also promote your blog or website to search engines like Google and Yahoo. Your LinkedIn profile allows you to publicise websites. There are a few pre-selected categories like “My Website,” “My Company,” etc.

If you select “Other” you can modify the name of the link. If you're linking to your personal blog, include your name or descriptive terms in the link, and voila! instant search-engine optimisation for your site. To make this work, be sure your public profile setting is set to “Full View.”

5. Perform blind, “reverse,” and company reference checks.

Use LinkedIn's reference check tool to input a company name and the years the person worked at the company to search for references. Your search will find the people who worked at the company during the same time period. Since references provided by a candidate will generally be glowing, this is a good way to get more balanced data.

Companies will typically check your references before hiring you, but have you ever thought of checking your prospective manager's references? Most interviewees don't have the audacity to ask a potential boss for references, but with LinkedIn you have a way to scope her out.

You can also check up on the company itself by finding the person who used to have the job that you're interviewing for. Do this by searching for job title and company, but be sure to uncheck “Current titles only.” By contacting people who

used to hold the position, you can get the inside scoop on the job, manager and growth potential.

By the way, if using LinkedIn in these ways becomes a common practice, we're apt to see more truthful resumes. There's nothing more amusing than to find out that the candidate who claims to have caused some huge success was a total bozo who was just along for the ride.

6. Increase the relevancy of your job search.

Use LinkedIn's advanced search to find people with educational and work experience like yours to see where they work. For example, a programmer would use search keywords such as “Ruby on Rails,” “C++,” “Python,” “Java,” and “evangelist” to find out where other programmers with these skills work.

7. Make your interview go smoother.

You can use LinkedIn to find the people that you're meeting. Knowing that you went to the same school, plays hockey, or shares acquaintances is a lot better than an awkward silence after, “I'm doing fine, thank you.”

8. Gauge the health of a company.

Perform an advanced search for company name and uncheck the “Current Companies Only” box. This will enable you to scrutinize the rate of turnover and whether key people are abandoning ship. Former employees usually give more candid opinions about a company's prospects than someone who's still on board.

9. Gauge the health of an industry.

If you're thinking of investing or working in a sector, use LinkedIn to find people who worked for competitors—or even better, companies who failed. For example, suppose you wanted to build a next

LinkedIn

generation online pet store, you'd probably learn a lot from speaking with former Pets.com or WebVan employees.

10. Track startups.

You can see people in your network who are initiating new startups by doing an advanced search for a range of keywords such as "stealth" or "new startup." Apply the "Sort By" filter to "Degrees away from you" in order to see the people closest to you first.

11. Ask for advice.

LinkedIn's newest product, LinkedIn Answers, aims to enable this online. The product allows you to broadcast your business-related questions to both your network and the greater LinkedIn network. The premise is that you will get more high-value responses from the people in your network than more open

forums.

For example, here are some questions an entrepreneur might ask when the associates of a venture capital firm come up blank:

- o Who's a good, fast, and cheap patent lawyer?
- o What should we pay a VP of biz dev?
- o Is going to Demo worth it?
- o How much traffic does a TechCrunch plug generate?

These additional ideas came in through comments:

1. Integrate into a new job.

When people start a new job, ordinarily their roots aren't that deep in the new company. However, with LinkedIn, new

employees can study fellow employees' profiles and therefore help them get to know more people faster in a new company. (contributed by Vincent Wright)

2. Scope out the competition, customers, partners, etc.

This seems like it's a no-brainer, but you can use LinkedIn to scope out the competition's team as well as the team of customers and partners. For example, your competitor's VP of marketing came from Oracle...she'll probably believe that business is war. (Kev)

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Glimpses of CIO Club meet at India IT 2020 "Leadership in Turbulent Times"



Dr Anil Khandelwal, ex-CMD, Bank of Baroda



Dr Ajit Ranade, Chief Economist, Aditya Birla Group



"Passionate member of India IT 2020 team who worked tirelessly to give shape to Conference program along with Mr.M.D.Agrawal and Prof N.L.Sarda."



Panel discussion on "Skill Sets of Business Leaders":
(L-R) Sandeep Phanasaogkar, Rajan Anandan, Govind Ethiraj, Anantha Sayana and Munish Mittal