

Pratidhwani - The Alumni Conclave 2017



The 4th Alumni Conclave of the Institute of Management, Nirma University was held on 4th Feb, 2017. The Alumni Conclave is a platform where alumni from different sectors share their views on a common topic from the perspective of their respective fields. The conclave is a medium for strengthening the bond between the alma mater and its alumni base. It also provides a wonderful opportunity for students to gain practical business knowledge by interacting with the alumni and learning from their rich experiences. Through the conclave, the institute encourages industry interaction and prepare its students for the grueling corporate world.

The theme for Pratidhwani, 2017 was “**Uncertainty is the new Normal**”. The theme captured the current scenario where the world is experiencing increasing disruptions that have created uncertainties in every sector. The aim was to address the need for leaders and managers to formulate strategies that enable their organizations to sustain and grow in the face of these uncertainties.

The structure for the conclave was panel-based comprising of 5 panels - Marketing, Finance, Operations, Entrepreneurship and Human Resource. The conclave started at 9 am. It was inaugurated by the Entrepreneurship panel consisting of some of the most respected alumni of Institute of Management, Nirma University, namely, Mr. Amol Bhagwati, Mr. Nishith Modi and Mr. Sharad Kumar.



Mr. Amol Bhagwati (1997-99 batch), Owner, Inspiron Engineering Pvt. Ltd talked about points of uncertainty with a real life example. He said that being a member of a company belonging to his own family, he was neither considered a professional nor a family member.

Mr. Nishith Modi (1998-00 batch), Director, Karnavati Chemicals compared Entrepreneurship with a roller coaster ride. He added that even a downward ride in a roller coaster ride is enjoyable but it is not the same with Entrepreneurship. Saying this, he talked about how to handle uncertain things like demonetization. He shared his very own understanding of business. Mr. Modi said that while running the business, if every business is shutting down, our business should be the last one to be shutting and if everyone else is doing well, we should be first on the list of performers. He concluded by advising the audience to help themselves before helping others!

Mr. Sharad Kumar (1997-99 batch) talked about disruptions and according to him most of the disruptions were related to money. He was of the view that MBA curriculum teaches us to be an entrepreneur or a consultant and not a professional. Because, in jobs, one needed to possess particular functional knowledge whereas being a consultant or an entrepreneur required one to have knowledge about almost everything.

The three of them then had a panel discussion where they shared their views on the theme 'Uncertainty is the new normal'. They discussed on how one should not let his/her life attain

stagnation. All of them were of the view that disruptions and innovations will help us create a new paradise of thoughts and new revenue models and thus aid in betterment.

The next session on Marketing, started around 11:00 AM. The three guests for the session were Mr. Sapan Oza, Mr. Vaibhav Kathju and Mr. Rajat Dang.



Mr. Sapan Oza (1999-01 batch) was the first to address the audience. He is currently the Regional Manager at TCS. He said that we are all surrounded by uncertainty. Uncertainty has been increasing in the business world ever since. One should never get disheartened by uncertainties that result in failures. If we react to situations, we get under the control of those situations. But if we learn not to react to situations, we will control them. We should always have a strategy to keep ourselves prepared to respond to such uncertain times.

Mr. Vaibhav Katju (2000-02 batch), the next speaker, currently works as the VP Strategic Alliances, at HDFC LIFE. He said that there have been significant changes in the industry in recent times. Most of the industries have gone online. This has brought a change in the business model and has increased the customer base for these companies. Responding this way to uncertainty has increased revenues for these companies, thus turning uncertainties to success. He said that if companies don't have alternate plans to respond to uncertainties, they fail. He said that Blackberry and Nokia failed to survive since they did not have alternate plans. He also added that nowadays, companies have specialized teams to know about the trends taking place in the industry to come up with strategies to manage the same.

The next to address the audience was **Mr. Rajat Dang** (2003-05 batch). He currently works as the head of Customer Care, Abbot India Ltd. He said that since marketers are always involved in

knowing more about the customers and coming up with innovative ideas, they have to be abreast with the changes taking place to manage the uncertainties. Life is exciting with uncertainties. Without them, life would be quite routine and boring. With the right attitude, we can manage uncertainties very well and emerge and successful personnel.

The plenary sessions on Operations kicked off with a lecture from **Mr. Chintan Mehta** (1998-00 batch). Mr. Mehta is the DGM (Pre-sales & Delivery) at Code Solutions, which is the IT Division of GNFC Ltd. He talked extensively about inventory management, implementation of IT systems, ERP and Big Data Analytics in the Business scenario. Through his experience in the industry, Mr. Mehta was able to highlight all the important applications of IT in the corporate world. Using the examples of the 2014 General Elections, he highlighted the importance of Social Media Analytics in the Political scenario as well.

The second lecture of the session was taken up by **Mr. Rakesh Kumar**. A graduate of the 2010 batch, Mr. Kumar is the Manager of Strategic Sourcing and Supply Chain at Suzuki Motor Gujarat Pvt. Ltd. Through his lecture, Mr. Kumar mainly focused on the employee perspective of Inventory management and Supply chain management and gave his insights on the challenges and uncertainties faced in the same sector.



The post-lunch session was kicked off with the Finance panel, the guests for which were Mr. Saurav Gupta, Mr. Hrishikesh Deshmukh and Mr. Kshitij Johari.



Mr. Saurav Gupta, (2000-02 batch), is currently a finance controller at Cap Gemini. He began the discussion by sharing an incident from his personal life. He demonstrated the concept of not to worry about things that we can't control and to work for things which we can control. He told the audience how transparent one needs to be while doing business forecasting and not to divulge or hide things in rows and columns.

Mr. Hrishikesh Deshmukh (2004-06 batch), is currently a Manager Business Analysis at BNY Mellon. He began by addressing the crowd regarding what is uncertainty and how can one make things certain or favorable. He made the audience aware of the threat that artificial intelligence will impose over their jobs and how to deal and tackle with the upcoming technologies. He also told how robo advisor is the next big thing and how it will kill the lower jobs in near future. So in order to survive in the competitive and technological world outside, one needs to develop out of the box skills which are generally not thought in an MBA college.

Mr. Kshitij Johari (2006-08 batch), is currently the Senior Relationship Manager, Non-Resident and International Priority Banking at Standard Chartered Bank. He began by talking about 1991 liberalization era which led to the emergence of middle class and prosperity to the nation which was mainly due to decisive actions were taken by the then finance minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. He further talked about the financial peak that happened in the month of January, 2008 and after that, it fell and it took about six years to recover till the Modi government came to power. He concluded his speech by explaining how consumer behavior is changing post demonetization, For example, when there was a shortage of flow of money, even those reluctant of using digital wallet were forced to use wallets such as Paytm, etc.

Commencing the HR panel discussion was **Mr. Sumit Bhatnagar** (1999-01 batch), Vice President, Human Resources, at Wells Fargo. Relating it to the uncertainty theme, he shared how his life's journey that started with marketing, continued with financial operations and ended up with HR in the corporate world has been able to strike a perfect analogy of uncertainty in one's life. He quoted an example of dell computers, who disrupted with the customization in the PC world, a totally new affair then. Be it southwest airlines or AMUL in Gujarat, it is the newness in the business that helped reached these organizations where they are today. The speed of evolution is itself speeding up. Sustainability thrives on uncertainties and how one deals with it. VUCA – Velocity, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity pretty much sums up the businesses across the globe. He termed challenges as not just HR challenges, but business challenges. Talent acquisition, training and collaborating with new business partners are the most uncertain and risky part of HR in recent times that the organizations are facing. On the concluding note, he emphasized on the path that must be adapted in order to face the challenges and convert them into opportunities. One must be aware of the content through voracious reading, embracing technology, up-skilling regularly, managing the business of business – an HR's role and balancing health. These factors form a smart strategy to deal with unexpectedness the corporate world brings about.



Lastly, **Mr. Shiv Kiran Nath** (2002-04 batch), Business Head, Human Resources, at Apollo Health and Lifestyle, shared his insights with the audience. Starting on a funnier note, he relived his journey until now. From IMNU's B-school life to the restaurant industry, he traveled through

a series of uncertainties to reach to where he is today in the HR world. And they needed to adapt it very fast before it becomes obsolete and the business suffers. According to him, recruitment forms the most challenging part for any HR in an organization. And Google spots on with this process in the most innovative way. HR needs to innovate continuously, and this they need to inculcate in the culture of the organization as fast as possible. Being technologically challenged is an oxymoron for any HR, since HR's are always considered to be a people's person. The most important role of HR should focus on making a smooth transition from technology to human touch for the organizational employees. More the technology evolves, more the job is created. Hence, HR should focus on employee engagement, to keep them stable and reduce the attrition rate. Human touch and leadership define why HR is so important that even technology cannot provide. Finally, diversity should form the base for any organizational human resource that continuously creates new pathways in the business world. Balancing between technology and people is what an HR is expected to do in recent times.

