

## GLOBAL EXECUTIVE EDUCATION

# LEARNING SPECIFIC SKILL-SET AND UPSKILLING EFFICIENCY

**Dr Jitin Chadha, Founder of IIAD speaks to Shelvin Pauly in an exclusive interview**

**What is your opinion on the role of and scope for Executive Education Programs? Do you think they are here to stay?**

Executive Education Programs are filling a new and very important niche in the education sector. They are designed for learning a specific skill-set and upskilling efficiently, to add greater value to one's work, change business verticals mid-career or for intellectual development and growth. As such, they are availed widely by executives from mid-to-large corporations, and to a lesser degree by entrepreneurs looking to unlock avenues of growth. From a company's point of view too, they tantamount to investment in human resource training and development, and are a good strategy to make employees feel valued and thus help in retaining them. With the job market evolving rapidly on account of technological change, the need to frequently up-skill and re-skill is greater than ever, and likely to grow further. Given the financial responsibilities, time con-

straints and relatively specific learning needs of people who are already part of an economy's workforce, executive education programs present a great solution, offering large potential productivity upside without much productivity loss. The scope for these programs thus seems very strong in the coming years. In fact, I too have enrolled for an Executive Education Program – it is offered by Stanford University and has been designed specifically for entrepreneurs. I am really looking forward to it.

**What was the reason for you to select Stanford's Seed Transformation Program (STP)?**

Having founded and grown an economics, management and finance college over the last 13 years, and a design school for nearly 4 years now, I was looking for an opportunity to assess our vision and strategy, make improvements with the help of guided introspection and expert insight, and hopefully unlock new growth for both institutions. A friend happened to mention Stanford's STP to me, and I hap-

pened to look it up. Being an intensive program that aims to enable business leaders in emerging economies to create value and shared prosperity, it seemed to fit my need very well. The opportunity to engage with renowned faculty and industry experts from one of the top institutions of the world, as well as that of interacting with fellow entrepreneurs from a range of industries is also very exciting. All these got me interested in applying for the program.

**In your view, how does an Executive Education Program benefit entrepreneurs specifically?**

The key to growing is to constantly evolve. Due to lack of time, and because it can be quite lonely at the top in any venture or organisation, evolution in the true sense can, however, be quite evasive. An executive education program such as this one solves both these problems beautifully. Being designed for active entrepreneurs who are looking to scale their organisations, it must, and does, take into account executives' pressing time constraints. The schedule

lasts a year, but is intelligently designed, asking entrepreneurs to participate in only four intensive Immersion Weeks, which are complemented by innovative tools such as Leadership Labs and In-Company Workshops, with the common thread of a Transformation Plan running throughout the program. I believe that such a program can afford entrepreneurs the priceless opportunity to brainstorm, share ideas, exchange notes with and learn new things from "batch-





mates”. It also helps one upskill for today’s rapidly changing business environment, strengthen organisational leadership, and transform the value chain one’s organisation.

**What are the benefits of the In-Company Workshops that one undertakes in the Stanford STP?**

The four In-Company Workshops are a unique aspect of the program. They will be conducted with the leadership teams of the entrepreneur’s organisation, and

will be led by Seed facilitators. Each workshop will follow an Immersion Week and offer the opportunity to translate its learnings into the organisations’ individual contexts. The preparation and post-work around each workshop will enable every entrepreneur/organisation’s team to progressively build the organisation’s plan for transforming itself.

This is a great example of how the program’s design and delivery come together to facilitate its

learning outcomes, a pedagogical technique known as “constructive alignment”. I am really looking forward to these workshops, and I know the senior management at ISBF and IIAD are too, for the workshops truly embody the spirit of hands-on learning, and represent an opportunity to take time out and systematically plan for the organisation’s future.

**What strengths does one look to accrue from developing the Transformation Plan for one’s business during the tenure of the STP?**

The Transformation Plan is the spine of the STP – it is central to both the name and the aim of the program, and is a thread which weaves together the different workshops, labs and lectures held throughout the year. It is where all learning outcomes must manifest, in order to achieve the course objective of helping entrepreneurs scale their organisations over the next 3-5 years. Each entrepreneur, along with her/his team works on the plan for the first 9 months, then presents it to gather Seed feedback and finally the last 3-month phase focuses on implementing the plan.

This is invaluable for us, because in the day-to-day working of any organisation, one seldom gets a chance or a pretext to sit back and reflect, often due to concerns about the fruitfulness and time op-

portunity cost of doing so. So at both ISBF and IIAD, we’ve had several discussions in the past few months which have directly or indirectly been about strategy and future planning, but we haven’t formulated one plan based on those discussions, nor have we vetted many of the assumptions that fly around during such discussions. That is why we are seeing the STP’s Transformation Plan as an invaluable opportunity to take stock and plan concertedly for the future, with the guidance and feedback of Seed’s experts and facilitators.

We are even looking forward to internalising the nuances of making such a plan, and to learning about different aspects of scaling – market research, funding, product development, marketing and collaboration with other organisations. Eventually, with Stanford Graduate School of Business academicians and expert facilitators helping us develop and implement the Transformation Plan, we hope to make a telling contribution to our organisations as well as to the society and economy they are an integral part of. ■

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