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PRESENTS

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**GROUP
DISCUSSIONS
&
PERSONAL
INTERVIEWS**

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PREFACE

Every year, after successfully crossing the first hurdle (the MBA entrance exams), MBA aspirants immediately face the next hurdle in the path to their dream B-schools – the Group Discussions (GD) & Personal Interviews (PI).

These stages of the selection process give the selection committee of the B-schools a deeper insight into a candidate's personality.

During a GD a candidate's understanding of the topic, attitude, self-confidence, presence of mind and leadership skills are put to the test. Inadequate preparation can often sabotage a GD.

In a PI time is of the essence. Creating an impact within the limited time frame, under pressure, plays an important role here. Every candidate needs to be well prepared before facing the panelists.

To help our students through this daunting task, here is a book that explains exactly what to expect in a GD/PI. The material in this book outlines each step of the selection process and throws light on what is expected of a student at a GD/PI.

The compilation of theory lessons, articles by CAT 100 percentilers, user experiences and GD capsules in this book will definitely boost a candidate's GD/PI preparation. This book aims at providing students with the extra edge and confidence needed to crack the GD/PI session and secure a seat in a coveted B-school.

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SECTION 1

GDPI PREP

ARTICLES by CAT 100-PERCENTILERS

GROUP DISCUSSION PREPARATION

By Munira Lokhandwala

CAT 2008 100-Percentiler

Real time demonstration of behavioural skills is the basic rationale behind the inclusion of group discussion as one of the selection techniques. None of the other techniques test the candidate's managerial skills like communication skills, knowledge and ideas regarding a given subject, capability to co-ordinate and lead, etc. as well as a group discussion. Involvement of strangers in the discussion, lower familiarity with the GD topic and limited preparation time makes the job easier for the selection panel while making things difficult for the candidates.

A group discussion, by definition involves speaking before a group of people. This puts in some aspects of public speaking i.e. speaking and content. However, due to its interactive nature, a group discussion also involves listening to other people's ideas. A typical group discussion has 8-12 participants and lasts for 15 to 20 minutes. It means each participant gets an average of around 2 minutes to talk; the rest of the time is spent listening.

Consequently, group discussion preparation revolves around these three basic aspects.

Group Speaking Preparation

In a group discussion, a candidate should be able to convey his/her thoughts satisfactorily and convincingly before a group of people. Knowledge on a given subject, precision and clarity of thought are the things that are evaluated. One should speak only as much as necessary and try to avoid irrelevant talks and being verbose.

1. To enhance fluency, tone of voice and articulation, start by reading aloud from a book or an editorial for around 15 minutes daily. Once a week, try speaking in front of a mirror on some topic. This would also help in collecting your thoughts in an organized manner.
2. Most of us may be very vocal in a one – to – one conversation but are less so when we interact with a group; especially if it is a group of strangers. So, start having some discussions with a group made from your friends. Such discussions are a good way to begin as they allow students to focus on speaking without being distracted by the extremely competitive environment of a formal group discussion.
3. After content preparation for one or two weeks, start attending competitive group discussions with like minded groups.

Group Content Preparation

Presence of content will be a primary determinant of how you perform in any group discussion. If you are making a content heavy point, especially with some facts and numbers, then everybody else will listen to what you have to say. This generally helps in making subsequent entries in the discussion. For someone who keeps himself updated with current affairs, content preparation may not be an issue. For others, I advise the following:

1. Pick around 6 – 7 current affair topics, (events that took place in the past year) and start researching on these. Understand the event from different perspectives like personal, social, political, cultural, academic etc.
2. While reading magazines or newspapers, focus should primarily be on well covered articles or stories. Reading articles from the Sunday Express, the Mint, Business Standard and the Economist is a good preparation for group discussions. One may also look at some blogs that contain a few well researched articles.
3. While researching on topics, try to remember important facts and figures and form some opinions with justification.
4. In many discussions ranging from the recession to China as a threat to India for outsourcing; comparison between India and China or US is inevitable. So, it is advisable to know a lot of economic and demographic details of these countries like GDP, population, social structure, major industries etc.

Group Listening Preparation

A crucial but ignored part of group discussion preparation is listening. Often we undermine benefits of listening. A good listener would summarize discussions well; he/she may score by presenting a good case over an idea originated by another participant but lost in high decibel noise. Listening seems very easy; but what takes some preparation is to be able to listen and at the same time, structure your own thoughts.

1. Participate in some discussions as an observer. Listening exercise during such practice discussions would help you understand the dynamics of a typical GD that involves high-low noise levels. Such an exercise would provide you with some hints as to optimum moments for entering into discussions.
2. Listening to other people's ideas may help to evolve one's thought processes by adding different perspectives.

Group Discussion Tips

1. In a discussion, if you talk in a long winded way, then the other participants will not be courteous and wait for you to come to the point. Hence, speaking in a concise manner is very important
2. Address everyone in the group so while you are making your point you are not talking to one person only but the whole group. At the same time, do not look at the moderators as they are not a part of the group.
3. Dress formally and use formal language.
4. Address other participants with respect. Do not gesticulate a lot; if you are accustomed to using your hands while making a point ensure that you do not encroach into the space in front of other participants.
5. Do not point to a specific participant while talking. Do not get personal; try to be objective in your arguments.
6. Avoid using extreme words and extreme statements.
7. If you are disagreeing with someone else do it civilly. Disagree with the point and not with the person.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW PREPARATION

By Munira Lokhandwala

CAT 2008 100-Percentiler

1. Personal

Knowing yourself is the most important part of your interview preparation. It is not acceptable if a candidate cannot answer questions based on his/her own personality. It would give an impression of an immature or “self – unaware” person. A candidate hence needs to do a lot of soul searching on questions like: “Why MBA?”, Strengths and Weaknesses, Examples of Leadership abilities, long term/ short term goals.

Projecting a consistent personality demands clarity of thoughts. So the best and easiest way to manage this is to be honest with you.

Avoid saying something like “I do not have any weakness” as it is obviously an overstatement; such an answer implies either an arrogant person or a misinformed person and the panel would not want either.

Sometimes, introspection becomes quite tricky as various qualities may coexist in bits. One should always consider the dominant quality. In such cases, feedbacks from friends and colleagues can be quite effective. Try to supplement your answers with at least two relevant examples while preparing; so that during an interview you are not unnerved if the interviewer asks you for another example. It brings additional coherency in your thoughts. Quite a few interviews start with “Tell us something about yourself.” please refrain from giving a summary of what is already written in your form / resume. Try to use this question to lead the interview into your comfort zones. For example, if you are an avid reader then you could speak about the influence of your favorite books on your character.

2. Work Experience

If you have been working for more than six months then questions on your work experience will play a role during your interview. The obvious areas of questioning are work profile, your projects, organization chart of your company and where you fit in. You should be able to give some examples of team work and leadership from your employment.

You must also focus on the macro picture of your experience in the corporate life. What it has taught you? What kind of mistakes have you made? How it has influenced to make choices in specialization for your MBA? How you have influenced the goals of your department / company? Along with this, you should also do some home work on the industry in which your company operates the history of your company, the culture of your company / industry, etc.

3. Academics

If you have been working for less than 2 years then you are still supposed to remember some aspects of your education. Sounds pretty scary, considering that a lot of us do not know what we are studying even when we are studying it. Do not worry; you do not need to study everything, ensure that you know the basics of all the subjects that you have studied.

A good barometer would be curriculum till higher secondary. You should also have one or two favorite subjects (If you do not have one, pick one); for these subjects you should know your curriculum and maybe a little bit more in-depth.

4. Hobbies

Ideally, hobbies should be the area of your comfort and can really make interviews quite interesting as they can clearly make a distinction between you and the rest. Most IIM graduates possess influential hobbies like reading, playing some sports, (watching sports does not count unless you are a walking sports encyclopedia), dramatics, photography, trekking etc. Watching movies and listening to music do not count as hobbies unless you can discourse on topics like directorial styles or history of various genres of music. Not having a hobby is certainly negative; but worse is getting grilled for a cited hobby when you do not have one.

5. General Knowledge / Current Affairs

General Knowledge can be a really vast topic. However, this should not stop you from having opinions on current affairs. Familiarize yourself with the issue by reading magazines, blogs, and newspapers. Back your opinions with facts and justifications. Common knowledge like the capital of some countries should be known. Prepare for GK only if you have the time and have finished preparing for all the other areas.

Be systematic regarding your preparation, make a check list of what you do not know and work with it. If you are organized, you will definitely do well in your interview. Best of Luck!

Commonly asked questions

I. Personal

A. Background

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What would you like me to know about you that is not on your resume?
3. What are the three most important events of your life?
4. What was an experience in your life that you would want to go back and change?

B. Self Description

1. How would your friends describe you?
2. Give me three words to describe yourself.

C. Goals

1. What new goals have you established for yourself recently?
2. What are your five to ten year career goals?
3. What are the attributes of an ideal job for you? If you could do "it" all over again, what would you do differently?

D. Values

4. What does "success" mean to you?

5. What does “failure” mean to you?
6. Which is more important to you: money or the type of job?
7. Who do you admire? Why?

II. Management / Leadership Style

1. Define leadership.
2. Tell me about a time when you successfully resolved a conflict.
3. Give me an example of a leadership role you have held when not everything went as planned.
4. What two attributes are most important in your job?
5. How do you feel about working overtime?

III. Strengths / Weaknesses and Skills

1. What are your strengths/ weakness?
2. Give me an example of something that you have done that shows initiative.
3. What makes you stand out among your fellow students?
4. Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?
5. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
6. In what kind of work environment do you do your best work?
7. What kinds of tasks and responsibilities motivate you the most?

IV. Education

1. Why did you decide to get an MBA?
2. Why IIMA? (Or whichever institute you are being interviewed in.)
3. What made you decide to major in ___?
4. What electives have you taken? Which did you enjoy the most?
5. What college classes did you like the least? Why?

V. Extra Curriculars

1. What extra-curricular school activities are you involved in?
2. What have you learned from your activities?
3. What is your favorite book/movie/song/painting or author/actor/singer/artist?
4. Which magazines/newspapers do you read regularly? Which books have you read recently?

VI. Job / Company / Industry

1. What do you know about your company?
2. What do you predict is going to happen in this industry in the next 5 years?
3. Do you know who your competitors are?
4. What interests you most about this position? What parts of the job do you think you would find the least satisfying?
5. What concerns you about your company?

HOW TO DO WELL IN THE GROUP DISCUSSION

By Gourav Bhattacharya

CAT 2007 100-Percentiler

The Group Discussion stage forms an integral part of the admission process to most IIMs. It tests you on several aspects. The Group Discussion is an excellent platform for you to showcase your communication skills, reasoning ability, ability to be a team player and also your leadership qualities. All of these are essential in order to be a good manager.

The weightage that the Group Discussion carries in your final admission decision is also significant, ranging from 15-20%. More importantly, the Group Discussion is your first opportunity to make an impression on the panel that will be interviewing you later. First impressions always count, and you don't want the panel to have any negative preconceived notions about you.

The Group Discussion can follow any of several formats. Usually, the groups are of 8-11 people. The topic is given at the start. At this point, the panel may ask you to write on the topic for 5-10 minutes and then discuss it, or to gather your thoughts for a couple of minutes and then start. In either case, there is absolutely no excuse for not carrying a pen and paper into the Group Discussion room. If you are required to start after a couple of minutes, quickly jot down some points that seem relevant to you. Concentrate on thinking of as many points as you can at this point instead of trying to frame the points in your best language. If you have more time, you can present the points in a more coherent fashion. However, remember that substance is always more important than style. This does not, of course, mean that you should write abbreviations, sms-language, or use poor grammar, but there is no point in being unnecessarily verbose.

Group Discussion topics are of three types. The topic may be a social or political issue that the panel wants you to discuss e.g. climate change. It may also take the form of a case where you are required to think for a protagonist and decide on an appropriate course of action. Finally, it may be a completely abstract topic such as "Orange". A common variation in Group Discussions occurs when the panel asks you to select by consensus a topic to be discussed (without giving you any options), or asks you to choose between two topics the one you wish to discuss as a group. Remember that you are being judged even during the process of reaching a decision. Never assume that the Group Discussion has not begun because a topic has not been selected. Every word you speak in the Group Discussion room is on the record, as GDs are meant to simulate corporate meetings which are always painfully formal discussions in the real world.

There are some tactics that I used during my IIM GDs, which helped me a great deal. They are:

1. **Pretend like its real:**

In a real corporate meeting, you need to treat everyone with respect and also win their respect in order to bring everyone around to your point of view. There are several things that you simply cannot do in a real meeting that I find people do during Group Discussions, such as

putting someone else down or using a casual tone of voice. Pretending like it's a real meeting will automatically make you more alert and less prone to making mistakes during the GD.

2. Treat everyone with respect:

An important attribute you will be judged on is whether you are a team player or not. Being disdainful will therefore not help you. Be polite when dealing with opposing points of view. Try to explain with logical reasons why a person is incorrect, no matter how outrageous his line of reasoning is. Also, never ever tell someone that he is wrong. Use softer phrases like 'That's interesting but another point of view would be...' or 'That's true in some cases but I would also like to point out that...'

3. Don't panic:

The point you were just trying to make was just stolen. The person next to you is shouting down everything you're saying. Relax. The panel judging you looks at how well you can deal with people and situations. Take a deep breath, compose yourself, think of another point and jump back into the discussion like nothing happened.

4. Forget what your GD coach taught you:

Well, not all of it, but the parts about speaking at least 6-7 times in a 15 minute GD. Every GD is different. You can open your mouth just twice during a GD and end up looking like the best candidate in the room, or make 15 points and still find yourself on the list of rejects. There are no set rules that can be framed about the number of times you should speak. Go with the flow, and do what you feel comfortable doing. Quality and not quantity is what the panel is looking for. Remember though, that to get some points you need to speak at least a couple of times.

5. Get plenty of practice:

The more GDs you practice, the better you get. You can refine your style of speaking as well as your thought process with the aid of practice GDs. Practicing GDs also makes you adept at handling different types of situations and ensures that you're on top of your game when it counts. Practice both case as well as non-case GDs as you never know what the IIMs will spring on you.

6. Body Language is important, but not that important:

Most GD coaches put undue stress on your body language during a GD. While it is important to look alert during a GD, concentrating on how you look rather than on how you talk will only hamper your chances. Ensure that you do the basics of sitting up straight, looking everyone in the eye while speaking and not being too animated (e.g. waving your arms wildly about). Apart from that, make a genuine effort to listen to people. This will wipe that bored expression off your face, and also stop you from twiddling your pen and staring at your shoes.

7. Don't be scared to start:

Do not hesitate to be the first one to speak, if you feel that everyone has taken sufficient time to think during the GD. The panel appreciates leadership skills. At the same time, don't just say any old thing. Be prepared with a coherent opening statement, don't ramble, and never, ever summarize the topic given to you or start off with sentences like

“Dear Friends, we are gathered here at the GD of IIMX to discuss...” This is a formal discussion, and everybody knows why they are there.

8. Practice role-play:

For case GDs, practice writing down the names of the concerned parties and writing points from their points of view. This will help you gain a clearer understanding of the problem and help you channel your thoughts better.

9. Think before you speak:

Needless to say, there is no sense in shouting down someone only to blurt out half a sentence. This creates a bad impression. Mentally prepare at least a couple of sentences that you want to say. If someone cuts you off and prevents you from saying everything you wanted to, hey, at least you tried. The panel will appreciate the effort. Also, concentrate on only one point at a time. Don't try and touch on multiple points during a single foray into the GD, as chances are that not only will the second point not be heard, it will also be stolen by someone else.

10. Remember the summary:

Many IIMs require you to write a GD summary. Those that don't usually ask students for an oral summary. This is a great chance to make a good impression on the panel in a safe environment away from the bustle of a GD, as the panel gives their undivided attention to one candidate at a time. Therefore, never lose track of the GD in the rush to speak, and try and always have an overall 'feel' of where the discussion is heading.

11. Read:

Finally, it helps to keep abreast of the news of the world and the country. People quoting facts and figures during a GD create a fantastic impression if the figures are accurate and relevant. Even if the figures are slightly inaccurate, as opposed to blatantly ridiculous, they ensure the speaker a chance to be heard, as people usually respect someone who they perceive to have a deeper knowledge of the topic. A person who is well-read can expect to encounter few topics which are alien to him, which is a huge advantage in a GD.

The most important things in a GD are your maturity and confidence. When you speak, take your time. Try and show restraint in everything you do. Finally, if the unthinkable happens and you are confronted with an abstract topic or topic that you know nothing about, listen to what other people are saying for 3-4 minutes. You will pick up enough hints on things to talk about before jumping into the Group Discussion with your own points.

HOW TO TACKLE THE PERSONAL INTERVIEW

By Gourav Bhattacharya

CAT 2007 100-Percentiler

The Personal Interview is the last stage of your evaluation to get into an IIM, and by far the most important of the factors you can control (the others being your CAT score and the GD), where factors not under your control would include your school and college marks and overall profile. The Personal Interview (henceforth referred to as PI) offers a golden opportunity to create an impression on your panel which will evaluate you and perhaps deal with you in the future. Candidates that perform well in the PI despite being average in other areas are sometimes recommended for admission purely on the strength of their interview. On the other hand, there have been cases of candidates who, despite having fantastic profiles, choke under pressure and say something inappropriate which automatically leads to rejection.

There is only one way in which you can do well in the PI, and that is to believe with all your heart that there is an IIM seat with your name written on it, and that you are better than all of the other candidates that have turned up for the interview. This is not arrogance, but belief in yourself. There will be a hundred factors gnawing at your head before the PI (my GD was poor...my tie is awry...I don't have all the required photocopies...), and the only way to ensure that you do not crumble before the interview panel is to be firm in your self-belief.

At the end of the day, your interview is about yourself. I can (and will) tell you some techniques to help you, but your interview is a very personal thing. There is no standard method to do well on an interview, and you can never know how you have done. I have seen a lot of people coming out with smiling faces that have eventually failed to convert their calls, and many people with long faces who have been pleasantly surprised.

If you can maintain your composure during an interview and justify everything that you have put down on your Candidate Information Form (which will be mailed to you along with your interview call letter, and has to be submitted at the time of your interview), you will sail through the interview. Some basics to help you keep your cool are:

1. Be prepared:

Shine your shoes, adjust your tie-knot, comb your hair and arrange all of your certificates in chronological order. Carry photocopies of everything. Don't forget your CAT admit-card or the interview call letter. A well-organised candidate creates a good impression on the panel, and ensures that the PI has got off to a good start before the questions even begin. Also, when in doubt, always wear a suit.

2. Treat the panelists as humans:

The people interviewing you are not gods. They are professors whom you will have an opportunity to interact with in a few months' time. Don't assume that they know everything, and that they cannot make mistakes. The panelists often have a shallow knowledge of areas that they question you on, but ask questions with tremendous self-confidence. Therefore, it is up to you to not stumble at these points. Explain to them

what you know about the topic. Often, even the most rudimentary answers contain more information than the person asking the question has with him.

3. Be humble:

At the same time, never underestimate the panel. They have knowledge in depth of several diverse fields, and will definitely surprise you with their lines of questioning. They have far more experience and knowledge than you, and have interviewed candidates like you by the hundreds, so give them their due respect. By virtue of this experience, they can size you up pretty quickly, and they don't like someone who thinks he is better than them.

4. Don't give a 'stress' interview:

A 'stress' interview exists only in the mind of the interviewee. If the panel starts questioning you aggressively, sit back, smile and take your time answering their questions. They will appreciate your composure, and soon revert to a normal interview format.

5. Know what you have written in your Candidate Information form:

The form is one of the few sources of information that the panel has about you, and they will ask you several questions on it. Be prepared to justify every line of what you have written, and don't just write things down for the 'sake' of doing so. A good candidate who can defend his point of view is almost always preferred to a brilliant candidate with a half-hearted defence.

6. Be honest:

The panel will catch you out pretty easily if you are lying, unless you are a pathological liar. Dishonesty creates a very bad impression, and will almost certainly lead to rejection. Even if you do manage to hoodwink the panel, will you really be comfortable going to an IIM knowing you don't deserve to be there?

7. Say 'I don't know':

It is absolutely okay to not know the answer to something the panel asks you. They don't expect you to know everything, and will purposely keep asking you questions to test the limits of your knowledge. I'm not just talking through my hat here. In the 5 IIM interviews that I have attended (ABCLK), I have said 'I don't know' twice or thrice in every interview. Yet every panel saw enough in me to select me.

8. Speak slowly, look everyone in the eye:

Despite what GD/PI coaches say, avoid looking at all the members of the panel while answering a question. If someone has asked you a question, respect that fact and give him/her your undivided attention while answering. Speaking slowly helps you gather your thoughts and stops you from blurting out incoherent or inappropriate sentences.

9. Be diplomatic:

The IIMs like 'safe' candidates. This is because mavericks rarely make good managers, and are often more trouble than they are worth in the corporate world. Diplomacy is a valued virtue in any good manager. Therefore, avoid taking a stand during the interview,

especially on controversial issues. If you are forced to take a stand, justify completely why your views are what they are, and always admit that there may be opposing views as well. Finally, never criticize anyone, however deserving they may be of censure. Sidestep the question by saying something like 'I don't know enough to pass judgement.'

10. Ask questions:

The IIMs want you as much as you want them. When the interview is over and they indicate that you may ask questions, take the opportunity to ask intelligent questions and figure out if that IIM is right for you. Read up on the IIM you are interviewing for, and never belittle the newer IIMs. The panel will appreciate the effort you have made.

11. Don't time your interview:

A shorter interview just means that you were easier to 'read' for the panel and that they judged you faster than some of the other candidates. The duration of your interview has absolutely no relation to how good or bad the interview was.

Remember to always greet the panel with a smile and thank them for their time when you leave. Politeness will hold you in good stead inside the interview room, and outside it as well

SECTION 2

GDPI PREP THEORY MODULES

MODULE I: Introduction to GD and PI

I. Introduction

The selection of candidates for an MBA programme is a complex procedure. At the preliminary stage, candidates are selected on the basis of their minimum academic qualifications and/or work experience. Other important criteria for further short-listing of candidates are the competitive examinations such as the C.A.T, X.A.T, and C.E.T. Most b-schools then conduct group discussions group interviews and personal interviews for the short-listed candidates.

The group discussion and interview bring the selection committee face-to-face with the candidates. It is easier to analyse and understand a person by talking to him in person, rather than trying to analyse his resume or in evaluating his examination scores.

The selection committee gets a glimpse of the candidate's personality. As many different facets of a person constitute a personality, the task before the selection committee is to observe as many facets of the candidate's personality as possible.

Our intention is to simplify the complex process that a potential candidate is required to go through in order to get a seat at a coveted b-school. We will discuss the nature of the group discussions and interviews, the intentions of the selectors and point out ways in which candidates can pick up extra points. By pin-pointing these factors, the candidate can work out a strategy to tackle the Group Discussion (GD) and Personal Interview (PI). We will cover the topics in detail in these modules.

Different b-schools have a variety of schedules and procedures with respect to their venues, allotted time and other logistics. Most of the IIMs have multiple centres in all of the major metros for the GD and PI rounds. Other colleges such as TAPMI require you to travel to their college for a 2-day process comprising GD and PI.

As colleges do not arrange for accommodation, it is essential to account for the same while planning the journey. Most colleges do not allow rescheduling or changing of venue once you have indicated your preferences. Therefore, it is essential to plan beforehand. It pays to arrive at the venue well in advance. If it involves an outstation journey to a distant city, try and buffer a day each on either side of the GD/ PI days to provide for any contingencies. Also, in new cities, since familiarity with the roads and transport modes is less, start early in order to arrive at your location ahead of schedule. Sometimes, the entire procedure may extend late into the evening and it would be sensible to carry some snacks and water.

The above are factors adhering to which will not guarantee your selection; nevertheless, their absence may hinder your chances for selection. Hence, these are important in determining your overall preparedness for the GD and the interviews.

II. Group Discussion

A Group Discussion involves a group of candidates, assembled together to discuss a given topic. The group size is not fixed; however, it generally ranges from 5-15, depending on the college and its practices.

Generally, the time allotted for such a discussion is 15- 20 minutes, but based on the content, group size, etc. the time can go up to 45 minutes or even an hour. A common practice is to provide the candidates a few minutes before the start of the GD to marshal their thoughts and to jot down points on paper.

The sitting arrangement is variable. Most colleges have a semi-circular arrangement with the observer panel sitting across. In some colleges, the arrangement is for the candidates to be seated in a closed circle, with the observers sitting in the far corners.

Normally, the observers do not intervene and the group is left to conduct itself during the entire length of the GD. However, there have been instances where the panel has asked questions or provided insights to control the overall flow and direction of the discussion. Some or all of the candidates may be asked to summarize/ conclude towards the end. Questions regarding the GD may also be asked in the interview. Thus, each candidate needs to keep a track of the discussion and note salient points that were discussed.

Based on the topic, a GD can be classified into the following 4 categories.

A. Factual / Data driven

An example of a factual/data topic is 'India's growing FOREX reserves'. In such a discussion it is necessary for the candidate to know facts about FOREX, the current Indian FOREX reserves, comparisons with the past, reasons for recent growth etc. In such discussions, lack of data can be a serious impediment. However, not all factual GDs are difficult. The topics can range from History (e.g. Indian National Movement), Geography (e.g. Himalayas), Physics (e.g. theory of relativity), Current Affairs (e.g. Delhi Metro, Chandrayan Mission etc).

B. Controversial / Contentious topics

In such a GD, the topic is such that it leads to taking sides and defending opinions. The discussion tilts towards debates. The topics generally centre on moral / ethical / ideological issues such as Banning Abortion, Stem cell research, Government Policies, Social development, euthanasia etc.

Such topics often lead to heated arguments and debates. Occasionally during a GD, there is a breakdown of order and chaos reigns. Such situations help in getting a glimpse at the very core of a candidate's temperament and personality.

C. Abstract topics

Abstract topics are different from factual or controversial topics. The topic does not indicate any concrete facts or issues. Instead, such topics need to be interpreted and concretized from the abstractions they represent.

For e.g. 'How green was my valley', 'Knock Knock', 'We didn't start the fire.'

These topics are abstractions till they are given some form and content. The topic 'How green was my valley' can be interpreted as the problems of the Kashmir valley and its diminished value as a beautiful tourist spot because of the insurgency and strife. Alternatively, it can be interpreted as the problems of the Narmada valley in the context of the dam and the resultant deforestation and resettlement.

Such topics enable the observers to form an insight into the creative thinking abilities of the candidates. As these topics are open-ended, they are open to several interpretations. The candidate requires the ability to think on his feet and to be a lateral thinker as well. Moreover, the discussion becomes multi-dimensional; the candidate needs to keep adapting his arguments and ideas as the discussion progresses.

As these topics do not have any intrinsic facts or details, they are open to several interpretations and it is the responsibility of the persons initiating the discussion to give it the direction and the interpretation which would continue throughout the discussion.

D. Case Study

The candidates are given case studies on a business, social, economic or any such related issue. The case study generally consists of a single page write up. After reading the case, the candidates are expected to discuss it, bringing in their viewpoints. They may be asked to provide solutions or suggestions.

For e.g. a case study on the marketing strategy of a beverage company may be provided to the candidates. It will contain relevant details, facts and figures and anticipated pitfalls. The candidate will be provided some time to study and analyse the given information. During the discussion, the candidate can quote relevant data or draw on analogies, while adhering largely to the information given in the case study.

A case study based discussion has several advantages as well as disadvantages over other types of GD. As the data presented to each candidate is identical and as not many external facts or knowledge is needed, the candidate can perform well without possessing a lot of external information. However, contributing *relevant* external data, viewpoints can be useful as it presents a fresh viewpoint, and shows the candidate's depth of knowledge. Correspondingly, the case study requires analysis and interpretation of the data, facts and information given and can serve to be a disadvantage at times.

The case study-GDs are most common at IIM-Ahmedabad and are important.

III. Group Discussion: Process and Requirements

The chapter on group discussion carries a list of the various GD topics and a detailed strategy on how to tackle the different topics.

Though the different topics can be classified as above, the various b-schools are at a liberty to modify this scheme of things. Therefore, it would not be wise to compartmentalize group discussions into these four categories only and prepare accordingly. Occasionally, case studies can be abstract or controversial. Sometimes basic factual or data driven topics are laced with controversial overtones. Hence, the candidate is expected to be equally adept at participating in discussions irrespective of the actual nature of the topic given.

Understanding the rationale behind the concept of group discussions will help the candidate to tackle them better and even prepare himself / herself to possibly turn things to his / her advantage. A discussion is built on the precepts of group participation and team effort. Candidates are expected to be good team players. The candidate's ability to effectively put forth ideas in a group while simultaneously receiving them is tested.

However, team effort is critical only in the backdrop of the actual content of the discussion. Candidates are expected to have command over different aspects of the issues being discussed. They should be able to articulate coherent and logical points, and bind them together into a convincing argument which is relevant to the discussion. Knowledge of pertinent facts and statistics is critical. General awareness and familiarity with recent events plays an important role. Thus, it becomes necessary to keep expanding his / her knowledge base as a means to be prepared to discuss any topic with strong conviction. Regular reading of newspapers and occasional glancing through a magazine is mandatory. Moreover, the candidate is expected to be conversant with the elementary concepts and theories in science, history, geography, basic philosophy, political science etc. The chapter on GD discusses tips and strategies on tackling the knowledge aspects of a GD in greater detail.

The actual delivery of content, vocabulary, diction and pronunciation, non verbal communication, etc is part of the unconscious, if not conscious part of the assessment of candidates. These aspects have been dealt with later in the chapter.

Thus, in conclusion it can be said that the actual content is as important as the focus on soft-skills. A detailed analysis of GD and practical tips on how to perform better in them are presented in the chapter on GD.

IV. Interviews

Interviews generally follow group discussions in the admissions process. Typically, the interview is conducted by a panel comprising senior faculty and administrators of the college and occasionally senior executives, industry experts and prospective employers. The composition of the panel is variable and largely depends on the b-school's policies.

A typical interview duration would be 20-25 minutes. However, the duration can range between 10 minutes to over an hour at times. A common myth prevalent amongst candidates is the supposed correlation between selection and interview duration. Candidates have been selected after just a five minute interview while others have been rejected after being interviewed for over an hour. Between this wide spectrum of interview duration, one can safely assume that the duration of the interview is variable and is not an effective indication of whether the candidate is being seriously considered for selection or not. In essence, the panel takes as much time as it needs to form an opinion about the candidate's suitability for that MBA program.

An interview focuses on the candidate's personality. The panel asks questions or sets tasks such that different facets of the candidate's personality are brought to light. The premise behind this exercise is to test the appropriateness of the candidate for the MBA programme.

Different b-schools have different formats for the interview. Candidates are expected to fill up a bio-data form before the interview in many cases. Some colleges insist on a bio-data coupled with a detailed questionnaire on interests, hobbies, work experience, likes, and dislikes etc. to be submitted at the time of application. Other colleges ask the candidate to carry a file of his academic and extra-curricular certificates along with his bio-data on the day of the interview. The panel interviews the candidate as per the information mentioned in the bio-data or the application form.

The nature of questions is diverse, ranging from personal habits, hobbies, technical knowledge, and domain-expertise in areas of graduation or work experience. In some cases, the interviewers ask general questions, logical puzzles, analysis of case studies, opinions on current issues etc.

These questions are necessary to construct an all-round understanding of the candidate and his capabilities. Character kinks or eccentricities can be detected via this process.

This interview format is sometimes altered so as to enable multiple candidates to be interviewed together. The number of candidates may vary, but generally 5 candidates are called in together. The time allotted and questions asked to each candidate may vary from candidate to candidate. All candidates may be asked a common question or they may be asked to comment on others answers. The panel is known to shift focus between candidates and engage in rapid fire questioning in an attempt to catch some candidates off their guard. Evidently, such interviews seek to develop a comparative understanding of the candidates and also to reduce the process duration.

As stated above, interviews facilitate a one-to-one interaction with the candidate. The process is sometimes designed to test different capabilities in candidates such as the ability to perform under pressure, to adapt and to think on one's feet. Such an intensive interview is sometimes labelled a 'Stress Interview'.

The candidate is badgered with complex, lateral, personal and sometimes demeaning questions. The ability to provide a rational, reasoned, reasonable and polite answer to these questions without losing one's confidence, patience and temper is appreciated.

The chapter on interviews deals with different kinds of questions that are asked in the interview and possible strategies for preparing appropriate responses.

V. Tackling the GD / PI

An insight into the objectives and dynamics of the GD/PI process leads us to the following aspects as important:

A. Communication Skills

The GD and PI are conducted after a screening process for aptitude, and sometimes, knowledge. Besides these two abilities, effective communication is an important attribute for any future manager.

Communication is a two-way process. The common perception is that it mainly centres on good oratorical ability. Without doubt, oratory is important. However, the ability to speak logically and coherently is as important as the actual delivery of the words. Effective listening is also crucial.

1. Listening V/s Hearing

Listening is active, whereas hearing is passive. Listening involves the actual hearing of the words and duly processing them. An effective listener is a full participant in the communication process.

Hearing is just the physical process of taking in the words without any thinking or analysis involved. A person merely hearing out someone without comprehending what he is hearing, creates gaps in the communication process, where misunderstandings and arguments breed

This distinction is also displayed by a person's overall mannerisms and body language. A good listener generally looks at the speaker, makes eye contact and at times nods, indicating his participation in the communication process. The chapter on non-verbal communication discusses these aspects in greater detail.

In a group discussion, the ability to listen is tested. A good listener focuses his attention on the speakers, absorbs the content they are providing and then applies his cognitive ability. He can thus use this information to elaborate on his arguments, provide counter arguments and point out flaws etc.

An important trait of a good listener is his ability to allow the speaker to continue speaking without interrupting or cutting him short.

2. Speaking V/s Talking

Another distinction we can build in this context is effective speaking contrasted with mere talking. We define speaking as a purposeful action, which requires prior thought.

Talking can be defined as mere voicing of words. It does not involve active and cognitive processes.

A candidate is expected to think rationally and articulate his thoughts before voicing them. Such effective speaking skills are effectively tested both in the GD and the PI.

Ideally, the panel looks for a good speaker and not a mere smooth talker. The negative connotation attached to 'talking' is mild yet important.

Talking may be mere theatrics, but speaking is integral to effective communication.

3. Conversing Coherently

This is an important aspect of communication. Coherence is required on both fronts: logical continuity and verbal continuity.

An effective communicator will align his thoughts and ideas rationally. He will choose the correct expressions and the correct syntax to get the points across. Any discontinuity can lead to a breakdown in communication.

In case of GD's, this ability is put to test. Interacting with a group of 10-15 people, amidst all the interruptions and cross-conversations, and still maintaining a coherent link in the conversation becomes difficult. An effective communicator is expected to rise to this challenge displaying capabilities which will be crucial in the future roles of team leaders and managers.

In an interview, the interviewers have a better opportunity to test this skill. Thus, it is recommended that before answering any question, the candidate should give a few seconds of thought towards forming his answer. Afterthoughts and modifications to the original answer are to be avoided.

Looking through actual interview questions in the chapter on PI will give a clearer and better understanding of dealing with this issue.

4. Choosing the right Words and Sentences

Articulation in speech is also a function of the right vocabulary, the correct use of phrases and idioms. It is necessary to focus on correct diction, and pronunciation. Sometimes, candidates use a lot of jargon or vernacular phrases which may not be well received by others, especially due to regional and linguistic differences.

Thus, it is advisable to keep the language crisp and functional. Further, avoiding verbosity and idiomatically superfluous language is helpful.

As the candidates in a group discussion come from diverse backgrounds, the language should be such as to allow for communication. This calls for minimum reliance on technical terms and usages.

Some candidates are able to write effectively, and yet are not effective in oral communication as they tend to employ long-winded sentences, with a lot of difficult words and clauses. The listeners often lose track or interest in the communication, and the point being made is consequently lost. Such a situation reflects poorly on the candidate's communication skills.

B. Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are an important attribute of a manager. B-schools appreciate a healthy mix of effective interpersonal capabilities. The candidates are expected to be frank, team players with the ability to connect with their fellow students and colleagues, such that a healthy and congenial environment prevails.

1. Be part of a Team

The group discussion is an effective tool to test this ability. A good team player will participate in a discussion in a frank and forthright manner. He will put forth his ideas and opinions, while simultaneously being receptive to the ideas and opinions of his fellow participants.

Such candidates are active listeners. In many cases, consensus on issues is sought and a good team player is expected to work towards the larger interests and decisions of the group as opposed to his personal choices and beliefs. The GD helps in providing an insight into this trait in a candidate.

Likewise, certain b-schools ask their students to participate in team activities and projects during their coursework. The b-schools replicate such activities in their GD or case studies set during the selection process.

A healthy blend of individualism and the ability to be an effective team player is expected of a good manager.

2. Control and direct the discussion

Different candidates play different roles in the GD. Some candidates take on the responsibility of controlling the overall flow of the discussion by asking pertinent questions, maintaining order during heated disagreements and by asking the more silent participants for their views.

Such behaviour is appreciated in a prospective manager. It hints at the candidate's skill of working with people from diverse backgrounds and opinions while working towards a common goal.

3. Evolve as team-leader

As a group discussion progresses, certain candidates show a distinct flair in emerging as the unspoken group leaders. They seem to be highly involved in the group efforts, they direct the overall flow of discussion and they try to get everyone to a conclusion, while prompting the silent ones to contribute. Such candidates forcefully put their points across and try to get others to accept the logic of their arguments. Such team-leaders demonstrate leadership skill, which is a much desired quality in managers and business leaders.

During the interview, the panel tries to probe into the candidate's background. Previous experience in leading teams in their colleges or workplaces is counted as a major plus point. Leadership experience in diverse fields such as social work, college committees, office administration points to a natural ability to lead. The interviewing panel generally appreciates this initiative.

C. Analytical Skills

1. Grasping ability and Comprehension

Communication and interpersonal skills are important aspects of a candidate's abilities. However, the GD and PI also stress on the candidates overall aptitude and intellectual capabilities.

By introducing abstract and diverse topics in a discussion, the observers can test firsthand the candidate's conceptual ability and his capacity to work with this understanding. The interview questions, based on data interpretation or innovative case-studies work towards analysing the candidate's fast and effective cognitive skills.

Given the diverse nature of MBA coursework and its subsequent application in the job market, the candidate is expected to be a fast learner and one who can understand and work with different sets of information and concepts.

2. Logic and Reasoning

A candidate is expected to think logically and have superior reasoning and analytical skills. Although future business leaders are not expected to be bookish scholars, they should be able to think in a rational manner.

To test these abilities, the interviewers occasionally field questions requiring lateral thinking. Case studies are presented to the candidates to ascertain their ability to reason effectively.

For example, a candidate was once asked to provide the number of trees in his college campus. The focus is not on the actual answer, but the candidate's ability to logically arrive at his approximation.

Even in discussions, the focus is on the logic and reasoning employed by a candidate in putting forth his arguments. Statements based on pure beliefs and opinions, which are not backed by reasoning, reflect poorly on the candidate.

D. General Awareness and Current Events

An MBA aspirant is expected to keep abreast with the latest events that concern his life, the country, social issues, as well as international economics and politics. The focus is not on acquiring an in-depth knowledge and analysis of the events, but the candidate must have the overall gist and awareness.

This information is important in the context of his understanding of the b-school coursework and his future career.

Ignorance in certain areas is permissible, but absolute lack of knowledge in these areas is severely detrimental to the candidate's prospects of securing admission.

Consequently, the GD topics revolve around economic facts, political events, social issues and their analysis. A candidate having sound knowledge of these can discuss them at length and include all the relevant facts and considerations. His participation will not be superficial and this will be noticed by the panel.

Likewise, interviewers occasionally pose questions in the above mentioned areas. A candidate is asked to canvass his views. A knowledgeable person can provide a relevant and well informed opinion. This is a definite advantage over displaying complete ignorance or bluffing one's way through.

As mentioned before, regular reading of newspapers and magazines, exposure to good books and developing an interest in national / international events is necessary.

E. All round personality

A candidate's personality is a sum total of the above factors. In the current scenario, where there are a large number of candidates, and few seats, every added advantage that you can acquire matters. Hence, achievements beyond the curricular domain are important in demonstrating a well-rounded personality. Thus, along with the above mentioned aspects, any achievement in the academic, extra-curricular or hobby domain is an added advantage.

Candidates are frequently asked to elucidate on their extra-curricular activities or hobbies. Thus multi-lingual candidates, candidates with artistic temperament and achievements or those who have excelled in music, sports etc find that they have an edge over the others with similar academic credentials but lacking in such diverse achievements.

The interviewers probe the candidates to ascertain their seriousness for their hobby, their level of involvement and their degree of proficiency in it. Credit is given to sports and achievements at the national or international level is appreciated.

VI. Conclusion

We have had a glimpse of the different skills and attributes of a candidate's personality being put to the test during the GD / PI process. We have seen that personality is multi-faceted. Different aspects of a person's personality can be displayed at different instances in a GD and PI. A b-school wants to provide for a healthy mix of demographic, cultural and intellectual diversity on its campus. It is assumed that out of such a confluence of different ideas and opinions will forge true visionaries of the future. Hence, b-schools employ such an elaborate process of GD and PI to choose the right candidates. The next chapters are designed to further analyse this process and equip the candidates with the wherewithal to develop strategies in order to tackle the selection process in a confident manner.

MODULE II: Essentials of Non-Verbal Communication

I. Introduction

Communication by a person is more than just spoken words. People send and receive non-verbal signals all the time, even though most of the time they are unaware of it. Non-verbal signals include attire, gestures, posture, eye contact. They are sometimes called 'Body Language'. Moreover, these non-verbal expressions are often involuntary.

Non-verbal communication provides insights into the candidate: his emotions, attitudes and even personality. It works in tandem with the verbal aspects of communication. In the GD and PI process, non-verbal aspects of the candidate's communication can influence the interviewer's perception of the candidate.

As there are no clearly defined terms and interpretations of non-verbal communication, our intention is not to prescribe any set means of action. Instead, we offer a glimpse into a few commonly used non-verbal expressions and their possible interpretation. *While, we do not insist that a generally accepted 'body language' would assure the candidate's selection in a B-school, we believe that ignoring certain essential aspects of non-verbal communication can have a definite negative effect on the candidate's chances of selection.*

Also, non-verbal signals may have goals other than communication and can often reveal insights which candidates may not intend to. At the same time, certain candidates may be able to simulate certain expressions to their advantage. Thus the interviewers / observers would limit the importance given to such non-verbal cues.

Many researchers have tried to quantify the significance of non-verbal communication as a percentage of the actual communication process. Some have rated it as high as 80 % of all communication. However, conventionally accepted opinion seems to place the value in the range of 40% - 50%, wherein much importance is given to the tone of the voice amongst other forms of non-verbal communication.

As mentioned above, many of the gestures, facial expressions, voice modulations etc, whether voluntary or involuntary have certain commonly accepted interpretations. Our task in this chapter is to explain the same and provide possible strategies to use them for maximizing the candidate's GD and PI scores.

The different types of non-verbal communication that we will deal with in this chapter are:

A. Appearance and Attire

First impressions are generally important. The first glimpse of the candidate helps the interviewers get an insight into the candidate's personality by observing his appearance. General appearances and the apparel play an important role in the non-verbal communication process.

Candidates can use the following information to decide upon a presentable appearance for the GD / PI process, which is the generally accepted norm.

1. Appearance

Important considerations that go towards defining general appearance are hairstyle, make-up, spectacles, earrings and jewellery etc. These considerations are, naturally, different for men and women.

Hairstyles

In case of men, long hair and pony tails convey a casual or cavalier attitude. Though, there is no rule against such hair styles, people recommend finely cropped hair, which conjures up an image of preciseness and discipline. It would be avoidable to experiment with spiked hair or extensively gelled hair, just before the interview. Candidates who maintain comfortable, finely cut hairstyles generally project a professional, serious image.

In case of women, there are fewer norms. However, the generally accepted convention is hair tied in a bun or a plait or just left loose, but neatly arranged. It is essentially important to project a confident and professional look, without going over-board in trying to be fashionable.

Makeup

The concept of make-up generally does not apply to men; and in the case of women a commonly accepted practice is to use as minimal facial make-up as possible. As the interview process can extend for a greater part of the day into the late evening, it may be sensible to carry the basic makeup equipment for any last minute touch-ups if necessary. Any make-up mishaps or smearing can project a negative image.

Spectacles vs. Contact Lenses:

There is no well set convention or rule regarding the use of spectacles and contact lenses. However, people tend to look a bit older and possibly a bit more intellectual with spectacles. Contact lenses project a younger and perhaps more confident look. Contact lenses allow a direct glimpse into the eyes and as such aid some people with expressive eyes. However, comfort and ease of use are more important in making this choice.

Earrings and Jewellery:

Earrings used by men or excessive, dazzling jewellery in case of women can have a negative connotation, projecting a casual attitude. The candidate can opt for ornaments and jewellery as long as it helps project the image that is intended.

2. Attire

It is often said that attire proclaims the man. Thus, attire can have a defining effect on the non-verbal aspects of communication. Different conventions accord different interpretations to the choice of clothes, colours, fashion etc.

As the GD / PI process is a formal, serious procedure to seek admission into a B-school, it is suggested that the candidate should chose suitable formal attire.

In the case of men, it would mean a formal shirt and trousers, matched by leather shoes. A common convention is that the shirt is solid or striped and of lighter colours, while the trousers are a darker matching shade or a pastel shade. Some candidates, according to their comfort and the weather conditions choose to opt for a business suit. Others still, especially in hotter climes prefer cotton shirts and trousers.

A tie though not *de rigueur* is a much preferred accessory, which conveys a smart, professional and formal image. Naturally, the tie should be plain and should match with the shirt, trousers, socks and shoes. Colourful, pictorial ties are often used in a non-formal context and may not gel with the overall serious tone of the interview.

In case of women, the common attire is a sari or a salwar-suit as the Indian formal attire. Alternatively, shirts and trousers or skirts can also be worn. Much depends of course on individual preferences. It is suggested though that gaudy or bright clothes may be avoided during the GD / PI.

In this context, we must mention that there are some instances where candidates appeared for the interview wearing shorts, T-shirts and chappals. Often, one hears of such differently attired candidates having been selected by a B-school. Yet, such instances are rare. In conclusion, one might say that the choice of clothes, the colours and the overall fashion can influence the perception about the candidate.

B. Body Language

Body language is an important part of non-verbal communication, which relies on the use of movements, gestures, facial expressions, voice modulation instead of, or in addition to, the spoken verbal language. It is often considered an integral part of paralanguage, which is described as all forms of human communication that are not verbal.

Body language is both voluntary as well as involuntary. It includes even the most subtle movements that most people are unaware of, such as twitching eyebrows, mild blinking and slight movement of facial muscles, etc.

Body language is important both at the transmission and the reception levels of communication. For instance, hand gestures while speaking may add to verbal communication. Likewise, nodding or shaking the head, blinking etc can be an aid during the listening process.

Body language is said to generally reflect the communicating person's thoughts and emotions. In such cases it is said to be in concordance. However, if the person is lying or communicating contrary to this thoughts and feelings, the body language expressions show discordance. We will briefly look at these aspects and possible strategies to employ to avoid any pitfalls.

1. Hand Gestures

Hand gestures constitute a language of their own. These gestures allow individuals to express a wide range of feelings and thoughts. Gestures can be used to show negative emotions such as anger, hostility or they can be used to show approval, affection, concern etc. Most people use gestures in addition to words when they speak.

However, in many cases gestures and their interpretations vary with different communities, cultures and regions. We will discuss the relatively common gestures and their significance.

The generally accepted norm is to use minimal gestures during the GD / PI. Candidates can display a composed and confident nature by resting their palms on their knees.

Hands folded in front signify a closed or prejudiced outlook. Likewise, a clenched fist can mean anger, defiance or hostility. Twiddling the thumbs or crunching the bones of the fingers can imply nervousness. The candidate can avoid making these gestures if they make a conscious effort. Conversely, if the underlying emotions are addressed, then these involuntary expressions may be reigned in.

Rubbing hands is considered a sign of joy or glee. It can give away the person's thoughts. Hiding hands behind the chair or under the table is an implication of the desire to avoid cooperation or communication. It shows a stubborn and closed outlook. Cupping of hands gently represents delicateness of the idea or concept discussed. It also implies earnestness. However, if the hands are cupped tightly, it implies anxiety or pleading.

While conversing, the fingers on either hand can be used to enumerate points while speaking. This gesture can be useful if used sparingly and effectively. However, excessive pointing or using the thumb's up sign for approval can be distracting. Similarly, clapping or back slapping in a GD can have a casual or negative connotation.

Handshake – Handshake is technically not a gesture, but it says much about a person's personality.

On entering the room, when proffered a hand by the members of the panel, it is considered insulting not to shake hands, unless there is a valid, important reason. Conversely, if not offered a hand, it is not particularly advisable to offer one's hand to the interview panel. Likewise, after the interview the candidate may be offered a handshake as a sign that the interview is over.

A handshake is with the right hand. If the palm is perpendicular to the ground and if the clasp is firm, it implies a confident, comfortable personality. Likewise, a dominating and aggressive nature is implied by a firm, finger-crunching clasp. Timidity and fear is implied by a weak grasp. Similarly, if the palms are sweaty, it could imply extreme anxiety or fear.

A handshake is generally crisp. A prolonged handshake implies excessive friendship or amity, which may be out of place in an interview.

2. Standing posture and Gait

The interviewers can observe the candidate's gait while he walks into the room and the way he stands, which together project a certain personality.

Gait is the movement of the limbs to achieve locomotion. The way a person walks reflects his personality. A straight, even-spaced stride shows confidence. Walking with the head bowed and shuffling on the feet shows trepidation and nervousness. Rushing into the interview room indicates anxiety and the desire to get the process over with.

The general concept of human posture refers to 'the carriage of the body as a whole', 'the attitude of the body', or 'the position of the limbs'. While standing, the person and his posture can communicate different things.

Good posture while standing is attained when the joints are not bent and the spine is aligned. A good posture represents optimum balance, body mass and framework. It thus shows confidence, well being and good health. Conversely, slouching and a bent spine convey weakness and lack of confidence. Leaning on one side, with one knee slightly bent and the foot of the other leg tapping symbolizes restlessness. Moreover, standing with the chest thrust out and back arched can be misinterpreted as aggression and defiance.

The distance between the feet is also an important indicator. While standing, if the feet are aligned with the shoulder spacing, it implies a stable and confident personality. In case of a wider stance, the implication is of power and dominance. Conversely, if the feet are too closely spaced (less than shoulder width), then it implies nervousness and anxiety. Crossed legs while standing imply shyness or discomfort.

3. Sitting posture and leg movements

Posture while sitting is also considered a significant aspect of body language. Sitting with the back straight implies confidence. Leaning back into the chair is generally interpreted as a relaxed, carefree attitude. Similarly, leaning forward, while resting elbows on the thighs, is considered to be a sign of showing interest accompanied by nervousness. Leaning or shifting weight to one side or perching on one armrest of the chair can show a distant or detached outlook.

When sitting, your legs can indicate many things. Evenly spread legs are considered to be a sign of stable, assured, positive and receptive outlook. Crossed legs indicate a closed, prejudiced outlook. Crossed legs thrust back under the chair could indicate a defensive position. Stretching the legs far out indicates a relaxed state of mind. Similarly, twitching of the legs or knocking of the knees indicates a jittery, nervous person.

4. Facial expressions and speaking with the eyes

Facial and eye expressions constitute a significant part of the communication process. These expressions enhance the emotive expressions and reflect attitudes. They are said to complement verbal communication.

The movement of facial muscles and the opening / closing of eyes together represent different things. A person registering shock or embarrassment goes red as blood rushes into the face and a person registering fear is said to go white as blood flow reduces. These are extreme cases though.

More commonly, it is said that anxiety is shown by moist eyes, twitching of the lips, closely arched eyebrows and a bent down head. This may be relevant in the case of an interview, where the interviewers may notice anxiety or nervousness in the candidates.

In a GD the use of facial expressions to show interest and participation are relevant. Interest is conveyed by a steady gaze of eyes, lips pursed together, head held straight and possibly tilted towards the person who is speaking.

Conversely, boredom or lack of participation can be interpreted by an unsteady wavering gaze or staring blankly into space. The head is propped on one hand and the lips are turned down or to a side as in the case of a frown.

Similarly, the nature of eye contact has significance in non-verbal communication. In a GD it is an accepted norm to maintain eye contact across the different members of the group, while maintaining an engaging contact with the person speaking. While holding a steady gaze is important, prolonged eye contact can be threatening and send out negative signals. In certain cases during an unruly GD, this ability to stare down others can be important. This can help in bringing order to a group and in getting an opportunity to speak.

In an interview, the candidate is generally expected to look at the panel member who is asking the question. While replying, the candidate can maintain eye contact with different members of the group. These are conventionally followed norms, which generally imply a balanced, composed and confident personality.

5. Voice Modulation

Voice modulation is an important part of the non-verbal aspect of speaking. By varying the tone and volume, a person changes the entire implications of his words.

Voice modulation would vary according to the demands of time and place. A person trying to show domination or aggression would raise his volume and his tone would be harsh. Contrastingly, a relaxed and confident person would use a medium volume, but his words would be clearly and firmly enunciated. A nervous or anxious person could drop his volume to barely audible levels and possibly stutter or stammer.

Similarly, different emotions such as anger, assent, boredom, disbelief, dissent, encouragement, surprise etc can be demonstrated by varying the tone and the volume.

In a GD scenario, the candidate may have to raise his voice and harden his tone to make his opinions heard during an unruly, argumentative discussion. Occasionally, the tone needs to be altered to convey different emotions. In the interview, the voice modulation should be such that the panel can clearly hear the replies and the tone implies a confident and relaxed person.

6. Stray movements, fidgeting, shifting positions

Other than the above mentioned expression, many stray actions or movements play a significant part in non-verbal communication.

Preening of hair is considered to be a sign of vanity or of nervousness. Brushing one's fingers through the hair is construed as a sign of dishonesty. Scratching of the head is interpreted as

confusion or lost for a lack of words. Rubbing the ears or nose can be a sign of trying to avoid a response.

Similarly, laughing nervously while avoiding a gaze implies dishonesty or a lying nature.

Fidgeting or shifting weight when standing or sitting symbolises nervousness or restlessness. Similarly, rolling the tongue or clicking of the teeth betray that the person may not be calm and composed.

7. Fitness

It is said 'A healthy mind in a healthy body'. This generally accepted perception makes fitness an aspect of non-verbal communication. It could be advantageous to present a sign of health and fitness.

While preparing for the GD / PI process, some time and effort can be devoted towards fitness. A regular jog or swim is said to be beneficial. However, it could be unwise to over-indulge in exercise right before the GD/ PI process which could lead to depleted energy levels.

As the GD / PI process could involve travel to different cities and consuming 'outside' food, it can be advantageous to take care of health. Even a minor illness or malaise can affect the candidate's performance in the GD / PI.

Conversely, it will be observed that general good health will help in raising vitality levels and confidence.

C. Nervousness, Anxiety and Confidence

The above three aspects are important considerations in non-verbal communication as they influence the different manifestations of this form of communication. Anxiety is normal. If it is used positively, it can keep a person alert and account for more focussed and calculated responses. Confidence comes from the realisation that anxieties can be used positively. However, nervousness implies the inability to control anxiety. Responses coming out of fear do project a negative image.

Therefore, confidence has the ability to influence different subtle aspects of non-verbal communication, which can be used to portray a person in positive light. Likewise, nervousness can take the shine out of the traits of a good personality.

Hence, a lot can depend on the person's ability to tackle anxiety and pressure.

II. Different types of body language

We have identified 7 types of body language categories, which are generally observed. Different gestures, posture, facial expressions etc constitute each type. These categories are not water-tight categories and people may show a blend of body movements from different types at the same time.

The body language types can help the candidates in observing different people and get a glimpse into their personalities. This can help strategise in a GD or PI.

Likewise, the candidates can also analyse their own performance based on the basic pointers mentioned below. They can make a conscious effort to avoid showing any signs which can have negative connotations.

A. Aggressive body language or 'Sharpshooters'

Aggression is generally denoted by a combination of a number of body movements. Facial expressions are one of the most common indicators of aggression. A frown or pursed lips or

snarls are general indicators of aggression. It is also observed that when aggressive, a person may squint or look the other way in order to prevent the other person knowing where one is looking. Other non-facial indicators of aggression include clenching of fists or lowering of body for seeking stability. The willingness to be exposed to an attack is another indication of an aggressive body language.

Gestures are another form of indicators that are often insulting to others or offending. The common aggressive gestures include single or double fingers pointed upwards, thrusting of arms and chin tilts among others. The suddenness of these gestures make these gestures aggressive and denote the extent of aggression. The size of the gesture denotes the level of aggression.

B. Attentive Body language or 'Diplomats'

Attentive body language is an indicator of interest and curiosity. This leads to a reciprocation of attention and facilitates better communication. The body sends signals to the other person as to how attentive you are to the conversation with that person or his ideas and thoughts. An attentive person is inherently a good listener. In order to be a good listener, a person needs to effectively ignore other distractions and be focussed on what is being said. By being focussed and neglecting distractions, the speaker gets a hint that you are interested and hence the speaker becomes more interested in the entire conversation.

Keeping one's body still is a key indicator of attentiveness. Body movements indicate a lack of distraction-free attention and hence should be avoided. A tilt in the head indicates concentrated focus and attention.

Generally, a person paying attention blinks less so that he/she doesn't miss any detail of the information. This gazed look is a sign of attentive body language. The furrows on the brow also act as a key indicator of attention and interest.

A slow nodding of the head or responding to the speaker with noises showing interest like 'hmm', etc shows the talker that you are interested in the conversation. This makes the speaker more interested and thus brings about an effective conversation.

An attentive person generally displays a few traits and characteristic behavioural responses. An attentive person is generally patient and does not interrupt the other person. He/she will put forth his/her view or opinion only after the other person has finished speaking or making his point.

This can have a positive impact on the functioning of the GD. A person with an attentive body language would be better appreciated in the group and it would enhance his chances of vying for the de facto group leader's spot.

C. Bored body language

A bored body language gives out the signal that the person is not interested in the conversation or discussion. Consequently, a bored person is thus difficult to convince or fruitfully engage in a GD.

Impatience is an important characteristic of bored body language. A bored person is constantly distracted. He generally looks away from the person speaking. Another indication of a bored person is the constant repetition of certain body movements. An increase in the frequency of these actions indicates a sign of boredom.

Another common indication of boredom is the display of tiredness. Common indicators include yawns, dropping of the shoulders, resting the head against some support and so on.

The main reasons behind having a bored body language are primarily a lack of interest and the state of having already being convinced. When a person is not interested in a certain topic

of conversation or in the person speaking, he tries to switch off from the discussion. Such a person may come across as being bored and uninterested.

Such a negative body language can be harmful in the GD.

D. Closed body language

A closed body language involves body movements that give out signals that generally denote a defensive stance. In closed body language, the hands are generally folded holding each other at the sides. There may be varied tension in the hands and the manner in which the hands hold each other. Legs generally cross each other. They can be crossing each other at the ankles, knees, etc. Legs are generally considered to be a more accurate indicator of tension as it is not easy to uncross hands to put forward a relaxed attitude.

When the head is moved away from the other person or is deliberately pointed towards the ground, it generally denotes a closed body language. A person generally uses closed body language when he is defending himself. It is a sign of being scared or threatened and is a defence mechanism.

A closed body language can also indicate that the person is hiding something. When a person has something that he is hiding from others, he becomes defensive and closed.

These aspects of body language are more relevant in the PI. A closed body language can indicate insincerity or indifference on the part of the candidate.

E. Dominant body language or the 'Leaders'

A dominant body language is closely related to aggressive body language. However, it is slightly toned down or reduced. A dominant body language generally uses the body to announce superiority or domination.

This domination or superiority is announced by making the body big, high or mighty. Having ones hands on the hips and making the shoulders wide with elbows out makes the body seem larger than it is. By thrusting the chest out and spreading ones legs apart, one can give an appearance of having a larger body. This is a sign of a dominant body language.

A dominant person often uses facial signals to prove his superiority. Disapprovingly frowning upon someone or chuckling at someone's idea is a common trait of the dominant person. A dominant person often looks down and humiliates other people to show superiority over the other person.

A constant unblinking look at another person is another way of showing dominance and a show of power. Another style of showing dominance is when a person doesn't look at another person so as to look down on him by not giving him importance.

The person who speaks first in the conversation generally has control over the conversation and the dominant person invariably has the first word to mark his strength.

A dominant body language would give the candidate an edge in a GD. However, overdoing the domination could amount to aggression, which can have negative connotations.

F. Open body language

An open body language consists of a number of movements of the body. This is the reason why an open body language is often confused with a closed one. Since both these body languages involve change of body movements and posture, they are quite similar to each other, except that the body movements are opposite of each other.

The open body language consists of different postures or body positions that show an openness to listen and the lack of anything to hide.

Uncrossed or unfolded hands and legs denote a more relaxed state and the feet are often parallel to one another. The open body language involves a relaxed eye contact and the head is directed towards the person who is talking. Thus it leads to a more attentive conversation.

However, an open body language can often be mistaken or used for other purposes. The open stance of the body is also looked upon as a sign of power. It can come across as a stand wherein the person is trying to be bold and assert his power and fearlessness.

At times, the open stance can also be considered aggressive. If a person with an open body language has clenched fists, it might come across as aggressive. It can be viewed as if the person is prepared to get into a fight.

A relaxed person will also have a somewhat open body language. The open stance is an indication of a person who is relaxed and who is without any fear or worries about anything. It denotes a person who is comfortable and stress free.

Such body language can appear pleasing in a GD or PI. It can help portray positive traits in the candidate's personality.

G. Relaxed body language

A relaxed body language shows a relaxed, carefree attitude. A person is generally not concerned and is comfortable.

A relaxed body is generally loose with all the muscles relaxed and not tensed. The upper body is completely without any stress or strain and shoulders might droop as a sign of relaxation. The breathing is generally steady and slow.

Likewise, the face is not flush with blood, which is considered to be a sign of anger or embarrassment.

The eyes of a relaxed person are generally dry and are highly expressive. They are relaxed without any signs of tiredness or boredom. The eyebrows show no signs of worry or discomfort.

A relaxed body language indicates confidence, without appearing dominating. It can be useful during the PI. However, caution needs to be observed as an over-relaxed body language can indicate a care-free attitude, which lacks seriousness.

III. Conclusion

Determining the way forward

The technique of 'reading' people by their body language is used frequently. Either consciously or unconsciously, people interpret different body signs to form a perception of the other person's personality. Thus, the GD and PI panel may respond to the body signals and other aspects of non-verbal communication that a candidate displays. Positive signals will be well received and will be to the candidate's advantage. Likewise, negative signals can influence the panel to negatively assess the candidate's effort.

Moreover, the study on non-verbal communication has an added advantage. A candidate conversant with different aspects and interpretations of body language can use it to his advantage. He can gauge the body language of his fellow participants in the GD and accordingly plan his strategy. Likewise, during the interview the candidate can get active feedback by observing the interviewer's body language and can adapt his answers if need be.

Non-verbal communication can aid the candidate in presenting the better aspects of his personality. His appearance and attire can enhance his confidence levels as well as help him project a positive image. Good health is always an added advantage. Moreover, the candidate can amplify the impact of his words by using subtle cues with his body. In many cases, good speakers do this involuntarily. However, it can be learnt and developed to a certain degree. A

slight nodding of the head or the use of an outstretched finger can add much value to the communication. But, these have to be used sparingly and carefully in a GD / PI. Excessive theatrics can be distracting.

While using non-verbal communication, care needs to be taken that there is concordance between the body language and the spoken words. It is necessary to synchronize the effect of the words with the actions, which will be in line with the overall personality traits. Otherwise, a meek and timid candidate may use powerful words and imitate an aggressive body language, yet give it away by showing fear and anxiety in his eyes. Thus, he would make the artificial effort obvious. A perfect blend of different cues is the only solution. Assiduous practice, coupled with regular feedback can help the candidate prepare for such synchronized efforts.

However, there is a word of caution. More often than not, body language is involuntary. By excessive control or effort, body language can be altered, but any artificial efforts may leave tell-tale signs. Also, the constant conscious effort may amount to lack of concentration in the main aspects of the GD / PI. Non-verbal communication is an aid to the spoken communication but it cannot replace it entirely. Thus, emphasis is on both aspects equally.

Thus instead of sending mixed messages, which show discordance, it would be advisable to alter very little of the sub-conscious expressions. Instead non-verbal communication can be used as a map to track your own thoughts. By keeping tabs on what your sub-conscious mind is trying to say, you can be more articulate in your communication.

V. Summary

The aspects of Non-verbal communication, which can matter in a GD / PI, are:

1. Appearance & Attire

Hair Style: Hair style, which is neat and tidy, projects a confident and cultured image. Dishevelled hair may be avoided as it projects a careless or carefree attitude.

Make up: It is advisable to wear the bare minimum of makeup. Excessive makeup may be perceived negatively.

Spectacles/Contact Lenses: The decision between spectacles or lenses should be made on the basis of which suits better- in both comfort as well as seriousness.

Jewellery: Jewellery should only be used to enhance the intended image to be projected.

2. Body Language

Hand Gestures: These can be used to amplify one's verbal communication. Care must be taken to ensure that they are not excessive.

Standing position and gait: Should try to exude confidence. Bending, hunching of shoulders, etc. is a sign of insecurity or lack of confidence.

Sitting position and leg movements: Comfort is of utmost importance in the sitting position. The sitting position should strike a fine balance between relaxation and alertness.

Facial expressions and speaking with the eyes: They can be used to demonstrate interest and participation. The use of pursed lips, steady gaze of eyes, head held straight and preferably tilted towards the person, who is speaking, is a well accepted way to use facial expressions and eyes.

Voice Modulation: The pitch and intensity of voice should vary depending upon the situation and its demands. However, it is useful to modulate one's voice in order to be polite and well mannered.

Stray movements, fidgeting, shifting positions: As these actions can connote negative emotions, care must be taken in order to prevent giving out signs of nervousness, dishonesty, fear, etc.

Fitness: A healthy body is an indication of a healthy mind. All signs of good health can definitely be construed as positive indicators of a healthy personality.

3. Nervousness, Anxiety and confidence

Nervousness or confidence in a candidate is indicated by his body language. Hence, it is important that the candidate be aware of the different signals and signs, so that he can anticipate the messages that he may transmit to other candidates as well as the reviewing panel of members.

4. Body Language

Different expressions, eye movements, gestures etc put together become a person's body language. As personalities are unique, their respective expressions via body language would be unique too. The above mentioned body-language types serve as mere guidelines to identify the general category that a candidate may fall under.

MODULE III: Group Discussions – Demystified

I. Introduction

A. Concept of Group Discussion revisited

A group discussion is an opportunity for the selection committee to observe the candidate from up close. They get an insight into his personality, his verbal and non-verbal communication skills, his morals and value structure.

In a Group Discussion, a group of candidates are assembled together and given a topic to discuss. The number of candidates per group, time per discussion, nature of topic and other variables vary from college to college.

Most colleges sit candidates in a semi circular arrangement with the observer panel sitting across. In some types, the arrangement is closed circular seating with the observers sitting in the far corners.

A typical GD would have around 10 candidates and would go on for around 20 minutes. Most colleges provide the candidates a few minutes after announcing the topic, to structure their thoughts before the discussion commences.

In common practice, the observing panel does not actively intercede during the course of the discussion. However, certain Group Discussions may have the panel intervening to provide insights or to direct the overall flow of the discussion.

Moreover, in certain colleges, the panel, towards the end of the discussion, may ask some or all candidates to conclude the discussion orally or submit a written summary, which would be graded separately.

B. Purpose and parameters of GD

As mentioned above, the primary purpose of a GD is to test the candidate's knowledge as well as his/her personality during a one-on-one interaction.

Generally, the panel would have multiple parameters to test the candidate's suitability for the course. The observers in a GD would focus on the following essential aspects while evaluating the candidate: content, logical coherence in thought process, communication skills, non-verbal cues / body language, ethics and value structure.

II. Anatomy of a Discussion

We will breakdown the GD into its various considerations and parameters. By analysing these smaller aspects of the GD we can try perfect our preparation for the same.

A. Working the topic

The GD topic is generally provided a few minutes before the GD. The nature of the topic varies from college to college.

As mentioned in the earlier chapter, a GD can be classified into 4 general categories.

1. Factual / Data driven

A factual GD normally centres on a topic, which is associated with certain pertinent facts. The knowledge of these relevant data would enable the student to effectively participate.

For example: the topic 'Fluctuating oil prices', which would revolve certain basic facts such as types of crude oil, rising demand from India, China, demand in winter, OPEC regulation of prices, commodity trading, speculation etc.

In such a discussion it is necessary for the participant to know all the basic facts about the given topic. Conversely, the lack of data can create major obstacles.

The best way to prepare for such GD topics would be regular perusal of newspapers and magazines. The candidates can prepare a scrapbook maintaining important articles and editorials about the latest issues and current affairs.

2. Controversial / Contentious topics

Controversial GD involves moral/ ethical or opinion based topics. Such a discussion may degenerate into a debate or heated argument. The topic involves taking sides and defending opinions.

For example: Should capital punishment be allowed to continue?

To prepare for such topics the candidate should have in depth knowledge and data about various contentious / controversial issues. The candidate can present a valid argument in favour or against only if he has a deep analysis of all the relevant facts.

3. Abstract topics

Abstract topics are different from factual or controversial topics as such topics are subject to various interpretations and need to be concretized from the abstractions they appear to be.

For example: 'Tic Tac Toe' or 'Red Vs, Blue'

Abstract topics call into play the creative thinking and innovative skills of the candidates. General these topics are open-ended and the candidates can add various interpretations to the topic such that the discussion is multi-dimensional.

These topics generally do not have any facts or details attached and hence preparing for such GDs may be difficult.

4. Case Study

Some of the IIMs conduct the GD based on case-studies given to the candidates. The case studies can be on business, social, economic issues etc. A single page case study is presented to the candidates and they are expected to discuss the case, bringing in their viewpoints. They may be asked to discuss solutions or provide suggestions.

A case study based discussion has the advantage that it makes the discussion more of a level playing field. The data presented to each candidate is the same and not many external facts are needed, the candidates are mainly required to provide in-depth analysis and interpretations of the case.

B. Identifying the keywords/ relevant data

Once the topic is provided the candidates should begin the task of identifying the relevant data to be used in the discussion. On the basis of the given topic of discussion, it is necessary to identify the keywords related to the topic. These keywords set the tone of the discussion and help assert the different points. These key words must be strategically used in the group discussion. The keywords used in the GD can often be questioned upon during the interview. Hence, it is important that the opinions and viewpoints put forth in the interview and the keywords mentioned are kept in mind and the necessary relevant information is read upon.

Based on the knowledge and understanding of the topic, it is necessary to note down the keywords and the key phrases that are generally used in relation to that particular topic, so

that they can be used effectively in the discussion. For example any discussion on ‘The sub-prime crisis’ would need to address keywords such as Prime lending rate, Property Mortgages, Risk Analysis, Credit Rating agencies, Derivative trading.

Or consider the example of a group discussion on the ‘Population concerns of India’. The keywords would be sex ratio, crude birth rate, crude death rate, Human capital, voluntary control and contraception etc.

It is essential that during the time allotted before the GD, after the topic has been introduced, relevant data, factual as well as interpretative, should be recollected and noted down for making and countering the points and arguments of others. This data should be accurate and should not lead to ambiguity in the minds of other members of the discussion or the panel marking the performance of the discussion members.

Incorrect or inaccurate data would lead to a negative impression, and it will lead to a negative rating of that candidate. The candidate should thus use data which he is sure of. One should not venture data, which is not totally accurate. A possible fallout would be the arguments and counter arguments on the mere validity of the data. This issue is occasionally observed in GDs where candidates make spurious statistical claims to justify their points. For e.g. ‘Fifty percent of the people do not believe in God’ or ‘90% Indians are lazy and under motivated.’ Such percentages are technically unverifiable and could be thus avoided.

C. Planning / Mapping the GD

After the essential data and keywords have been identified, the candidates can devote some amount of preparation time for planning the course of the discussion.

In a GD, on an average, a candidate would get approximately 2-3 minutes of talking time. One may not get many opportunities to speak. Planning one’s participation is thus important to make maximum use of the air-time.

The use of all the intended points in the beginning would lead to an exhaustion of key points early in the discussion. However, if the GD changes direction or becomes unruly, the candidate may not get another opportunity to speak to add more points.

Thus, the dynamics of the GD vary and there cannot be a hard and fast rule for planning one’s participation. However, it is a common convention to use all the important and significant points and keywords in your first contribution to the discussion. The smaller and less significant points and subjects can be used for contributions in the latter part of the GD.

Moreover, the flow of the discussion is often controlled by some candidates who sets the tone of the discussion by making the opening statements. Hence, a candidate may use this to his advantage by introducing such relevant aspects early in the GD, which can shape the direction of the GD to his advantage.

D. Making the opening statements – Pros and Cons

First impressions are often lasting ones. This is why a lot of importance is accorded to making the opening statements in a GD.

The person speaking first possesses the ability to take initiative. Also, the opening statement sets the general direction in which the discussion will proceed. The candidate can use this opportunity to emerge as the de facto leader of the group, provided he uses his chance well.

The opening statement shouldn’t be too short or merely repeat the given topic. If enough points are not made in the opening statement, it is viewed negatively.

At the same time, opening statement should not be excessively long and repetitive. Generally, the opening statement should be used to lay the groundwork for the rest of the GD, define the topic, and key terms in the topic. It should provide a base for the discussion to move forward,

and the candidate to contribute. Voicing strong opinions and taking stands at the beginning is advised against. Also, it could be advisable that approximately 70% points that are noted down be used in the opening statement, keeping the rest for the latter part of the GD, as the inability to bring forth new points later can take away the credit of having made the opening statement.

It is important that all the points that are raised in the opening statement are accurate and supported by relevant information and data. The candidate may set the GD off course by making an incorrect remark right at the beginning. Moreover, he will provide an opportunity for other candidates to counter his point. Overall, being imprecise creates a negative impact on the candidate.

The candidate can link and relate different points to set a holistic, diverse tone to the discussion. As the opening statements generally face the least interruptions, the candidate should use this opportunity to provide the other candidates and the panel members an idea of his command of the subject.

However, only one person can open the discussion. Thus, making the opening statement is not a fool proof method of ensuring higher marks. You cannot be sure that you will get the chance to open all GD's. It is at most a catalyst for a better GD performance.

E. Effective participation, articulation and contribution

Consistency in the candidate's participation throughout the GD is appreciated. The candidate, who is able to articulate his points and convey them effectively, is appreciated. Here, both verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication are important.

It is appreciated if the candidate's contribution is precise and concise. Thus the ideas or views expressed should be clear and succinct.

Each contribution to the discussion should ideally aid the discussion in moving forward. Much value is accorded to uniqueness and richness of content. Candidates bringing in accurate statistical data and relevant examples and analogies are noticed.

Moreover, a good candidate would be able to convince the others about his viewpoints and opinions. Such candidates would, arguably, be marked higher on their communicating skills.

If a candidate is successful in generating consensus and leading the discussion to a conclusion, then his efforts would be further appreciated.

Thus, the candidate's participation rests on articulation and effective contribution.

F. Taking a stand

On the basis of the topic of discussion, it is possible to decide whether a stand or a firm opinion need be maintained. In a data driven or a factual GD a hard-line position may seem out of place. In controversial discussions involving moral or ethical issues a stand is possible. Especially, when it comes to issues such as abortion, capital punishment etc, and the candidate may present his opinions based on a certain moral viewpoint.

However, it would be appreciated if the candidates refrain from taking such positions which may hurt the sentiments of others, or which are extreme in nature. Moreover, the candidates should be able to defend their position logically and not merely passionately.

Thus, taking a stand in a group discussion has its pros and cons. If a person can defend his or her stand and support it with valid reasons and relevant data, then, it is viewed as a positive.

Sometimes, the candidate may want to alter his position during the discussion if he agrees with the views stated by others. Since a GD is not a debate, the candidate can alter his opinions. However, it would be better appreciated if the candidate can do this gracefully. A

sudden *volte face* may have negative connotations. Note that unless there are strong reasons to change a stand, it should be avoided.

G. Listening

Speaking is an important aspect of the GD. However, listening is very important too. A candidate actively listening to the other candidate's words is better poised to participate effectively in the GD.

Listening is an active process which goes beyond merely hearing the words being spoken. Listening involves processing and analysing the information. Candidates can use this information to further enunciate their points or use the data in their counter arguments.

H. Handling exceptions, tackling interruptions and effective intervention

In a group discussion, every candidate wants a say in the matter. At times, the GD becomes increasingly heated and takes the turn of a debate.

Such discussions are marked by interruptions. Occasionally, the candidates address the candidates next to themselves and many smaller discussion groups are formed within the discussion. There is a general chaos and lack of direction to the GD.

A sign of an effective communicator / leader is one can bring order to this chaos. The candidates who are adept at handling such cases impress the panel by their group management skills.

Occasionally, a candidate may not get the opportunity to complete his statements because of constant interruption from one or two other candidates. In such cases, the candidate may politely, yet forcefully, request the others to stop interrupting till he finishes. This had to be done carefully without antagonizing the others. Moreover, a display of tolerance and the ability to make one's point despite the interruptions could effectively highlight the team playing skills and communication ability of the candidate.

Often the candidates may have to themselves interrupt others or intervene when others are talking. Sometimes, the discussions may go out of focus and the candidate may need to intercede to bring it back on track.

Ideally, such interventions can be made as soon as the person talking has finished a sentence. Interrupting a person in the middle of a sentence is considered rude and contrary to the principles of a discussion.

In the event that such intervention interrupts another person, it is advisable to politely allow that person to finish making his/her point, while clearly stating that the candidate would want to clarify the point later.

I. Crowd management and 'The sole voice of reason'

As mentioned earlier, a group discussion can often lead to a debate-like atmosphere. In such situations, the candidates can impress the panel by successfully quelling the chaos and by restoring decorum.

A person who successfully manages the members of the discussion becomes the 'sole voice of reason.' This accentuates the ability to control people and is a sign of a focussed individual. Leadership and team management skills may be implied by such actions.

Moreover, if the discussion tends to sway away from the topic, then the candidates who help bring it back on track are noticed. This may be viewed as a positive quality which can be construed as the ability to control situations.

However, directing the flow of the GD would be appreciated if the candidate tries to dominate the other members into following his opinions. This is a dynamic concept and the candidate

showing effective crowd management skills should ideally be able to generate consensus amongst the others.

J. Moving towards the conclusion / summary and paraphrasing

Possibly, the closing statements and concluding remarks are as important as the opening statement. Steering the discussion towards consensus or an acceptable conclusion could speak in the favour of the candidate attempting this. However, this has to be done carefully keeping in mind the overall discussion time and varied opinions of the other candidates.

Occasionally, the panel may ask one or more candidates to summarize. Summarizing a GD would require recollecting the major points during the course of the discussion. It is also effective to refer to points made by the other people in the GD and give them due credit.

Concluding a discussion is different from summarizing it. The conclusion goes beyond the summary by adding unique closing remarks or drawing conclusions based on the earlier discussions. A conclusion can be unbiased or it may include the candidate's opinions.

The conclusion of a group discussion involves the mentioning of the different view points and the result of the discussion. At times, the discussion often ends without a significant agreement over either of the view points. In such cases, the conclusion will not specify a stand.

K. Relevance of silent participants

Often, certain participants keep silent or do not actively participate or do not get the opportunity to speak throughout the GD. There are conflicting views with regards to the candidate's position with regards to such group members.

Ideally, a good team player and leader would want to involve all the group members in the discussion. However, in an actual GD such behaviour may be impractical. Each candidate is concerned with driving his points across and he may not have the opportunity to reach out to the silent participants.

However, if a candidate does step out of his way to involve all the group members in the discussion or intervenes on behalf of some other candidate, then his efforts may be noticed. This action, if done gracefully, can yield positive implications in the grading of the candidate's personality.

III. Roles People Play

Different candidates assume different roles in a discussion. We have tried to identify certain stereotypes of roles that candidates play.

A candidate may develop an insight into his fellow group members by tagging them as per the given roles. This may help him strategize his effective participation in the discussion. These categories are however not foolproof and nor are they absolute. Different people may show one or more characteristics of the different role types mentioned below.

1. Sharp Shooters

Some candidates play the role of sharp shooters. These people are quick in their retorts to other people's points. They keep cutting down other people. They would interrupt or debate. A candidate may want to side-step any such salvos these sharp shooters may fire.

2. Interviewer

People acting as Interviewers keep asking questions. Instead of participating in the discussion by contributing points, such people would instead ask questions, which can unnerve the other candidates.

3. Ring Master

Ring masters, de facto, take the responsibility of managing the group. They intervene in case of disagreements or general chaos. They take on the role of managing the decorum in the debate. They may occasionally intervene or interrupt others to let some other candidate speak. However, such people can be used to one's advantage.

4. Empathizer

Empathizers instead of contributing valid points or arguments keep sympathizing or empathizing with the opinions of the other candidates. They are prone to make statements such as "I understand" or "I believe I know how you feel" etc. Such people can be developed as allies during a particularly contentious discussion.

5. Flipper

A flipper does not maintain steady opinions or views. Instead he would keep shifting his standpoint and occasionally ally himself with the stronger argument. Such varying standpoints may not be particularly appreciated by the panel.

6. Observer

Observers appear to be intelligently observing the discussion without actually contributing. They are either faking their interest or waiting for the right opportunity to enter the discussion but never get the opportunity.

7. Still Waters

Still waters are similar to the observers. But, still waters run deep. They are actually thinking and collating information as the GD is progressing. They seize the best opportunity to enter. They provide an articulate and effective response. With a few words they make a lasting impact.

8. Travellers

Travellers too are similar to observers. Yet, travellers show body language which displays lack of interest in the discussion. These people merely travel with the general flow without any contribution made to the overall discussion.

9. Salesman

A salesman is generally a glib talker. His intention in the GD is to convince the others about his points and views. Such people go out of the way to get the others to accept their particular opinions. Salesmen are often persuasive.

10. Moralist

A moralist takes a moral view about most points in a discussion. He insists on taking a high moral ground and keeps referring to values, culture, religious beliefs etc to justify his stand. Such people may take extreme, non-practical stands.

11. Statistician

A statistician keeps ready facts and figures to drop in a GD. He may shoot off percentages and statistics, which are often confusing or misleading. Such people lack actual analytical content, which they may try to cover up with hurling data around.

12. Dominating Leader

A dominating leader has typical loud voice and overbearing personality, matched by corresponding body language. Such people wish to browbeat others in a GD. They try to speak the most and speak the loudest. They may resent any challenge to their presupposed role of the de fact leader of the group.

13. Time Keeper

A time keeper merely keeps track of the time during the GD. Instead of contributing valid points such people comment on the time past and the time remaining. They try to appear to be effective managers or leaders yet fall short as they show no real authority.

We have observed how different people play different roles in a discussion. These insights may help prepare for an effective strategy in handling different types of situations in an actual GD.

IV. How to prepare: Short term and long term strategies

Having observed the dynamics of a GD and the different types of GD participants, we now turn our attention towards preparing for GD. As mentioned earlier, the primary focus will be on the Content, Communication Skills, Interpersonal skills and overall Personality traits.

1. Content

A prospective MBA student is expected to have an overall aptitude and intellectual capacity which would enable him to participate effectively in the program. The diverse and often abstract topics in a discussion enable the observers to test first-hand the candidate's grasping ability and his capacity to work with this understanding. He has to keep himself abreast of the latest developments in the field of business, world economics, politics, science and technology, etc.

Though in-depth research in these fields is not expected, mere superficial knowledge will not be advantageous either. Thus, to prepare for the content aspect of a GD, the candidate must expose himself to as many positive influences as possible. Regular reading of newspaper articles, editorials, current issues magazines along with different fiction and non-fiction books becomes important.

The candidate can also gain substantial knowledge from following various news channels and television debates. Also, documentaries on various subjects in political science, technology, social issues etc will be helpful. Such documentaries can be sourced on various television channels such as national geographic, history channel, discovery channel etc.

The candidate however has to remember the relevant data and using it effectively in discussions. The focus should also be on a logical and reasoned approach towards collating the information. Mere remembering of facts will not help, if substantial analysis does not back those facts. Thus, making statements based on beliefs and opinions, which are not backed by reasoning, will not be appreciated in a GD.

2. Communication Skills

Communication skills are an important tool in the GD. As mentioned earlier, communication is a two way process. Thus, it extends beyond good oratory. The candidate is expected to be articulate and coherent. He should be conversant with the right words and phrases. Also, effective listening becomes an important aspect of communication.

Coherence, while speaking in a GD, should involve both: logical continuity and verbal continuity. Logical continuity pertains to the continuity of thought and ideas, which follow from each other and thus appear well integrated. It is important that the statements made by

a candidate are logically coherent. Verbal continuity pertains to fluency and the ability to maintain a clear and concise use of language. The statements made should not be repetitive or verbose. They should be precise and the sentences should be well connected with each other for enhanced clarity and understanding. An effective speaker will try to rationally align his ideas. By using correct expressions and grammar, he will effectively get his points across.

Moreover, articulation in speech involves the right vocabulary, correct idiomatic usage and effective pronunciation and accents.

Preparing oneself for speaking effectively is thus a long term process. The candidate can consciously practise keeping his language crisp and functional. He can request feedback from friends, family, teachers, colleagues, bosses etc. Efforts can be directed towards avoiding long-winded sentences, with a lot of difficult words and clauses.

Practicing in front of a mirror is considered an effective method to generate feedback. Audio and video recording can also provide effective feedback mechanism to improve on the communication skills.

Along with effective speaking, effective listen is as important in communication. The candidate can keep making conscious efforts towards actively listening and participating in different day to day communications.

3. Non verbal communication

The non-verbal aspects of communication go a long way in aiding the overall communication process. The chapter on non-verbal communication provides different insights and strategies to work on the non-verbal aspects.

4. Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are also integral towards defining the candidate's personality. Developing this facet is also a long term strategy. Right from the formative years, these values are instilled in us.

The candidates can keep a positive outlook when it comes to these matters. They should make conscious efforts to develop the qualities of leadership, team play etc.

Ideally, these qualities cannot be taught. Yet, the candidate can observe and emulate the people around him to instil such qualities.

5. All round personality

Personality is the product of many years of influences, choices, education etc. It is a unique sum of different factors, which vary from person to person.

Academic expertise, work experience, value structure, extra-curricular activities, travelling and exposure to the world, etc add different dimensions to the personality. A candidate cannot change his personality or rebuild a perfect personality overnight.

Instead efforts can be directed towards looking inward and observing these different aspects. A candidate can analyze his strengths and weaknesses and use them effectively.

The above mentioned strategies are of a long term nature. Candidates preparing for the GDs in the near future can instead focus on the content and communication aspects. Personality and interpersonal skills may take years to form, but developing basic communication skills backed by strong content can be relatively easier.

As the dates for the GD approach nearer, the candidate can devote more time towards perusing newspapers and magazines. A synopsis of various current events, connected statistics and their implications can be prepared for last day revision. Participating in mock GDs or engaging in discussions with friends can be useful.

In conclusion, there are various approaches to tackling a GD; the pointers mentioned in this chapter can serve as directions and not as solutions. Candidates will need to experience different concepts practically to develop their unique strategies.

V. Summary

- **Purpose:** The purpose of the GD is primarily to test the candidate's knowledge and overall personality.

Working the topic: The topic is generally one of the four types:

1. Factual
2. Controversial
3. Abstract
4. Case Study

Identify the keywords/Relevant data:

It is important to understand the topic and note down the key words and the relevant data that would be used in the course of the GD.

Planning/Mapping the GD:

A small amount of time should be given to the planning of the GD. This would allow the candidate to decide the overall direction in which he/she would want to direct the GD. Noting down of points allows the candidate to have them ready for use during the course of the GD.

Make the opening statement:

The person making the opening statement is perceived as a leader capable of taking the initiative. The statement should be concise and clear and should not be excessively long. It will decide the overall tone and direction of the GD.

Effective articulation, participation and contribution:

The candidate must be consistent in his participation and the contribution towards the GD. The candidate must be clear and concise in his statements.

Take a Stand:

A stand must be taken carefully on the basis of the nature of the topic of discussion. The stand should not hurt other candidates' or the review panel's sentiments and should be supported by logical reasoning. It is advisable against changing one's stand unless supported by strong reasons

Listening:

Effective listening allows for better participation. Thus, listening to other candidates' opinions is an essential part of the GD.

Handling exceptions, interruptions and effective interruption:

Exceptions and interruptions should be handled politely and calmly. Since it's a discussion, the overall atmosphere of the GD should not be disrupted and a certain level of politeness is essential.

Crowd Management:

A GD can often move towards being a debate. Hence, in order to prevent this, a candidate can use this opportunity by displaying his managerial skills and manage the other candidates.

The Move towards the conclusion/Summary:

Towards the end of the GD, a candidate must summarize the various opinions and viewpoints that are put forward. The candidate must summarize the entire discussion and put forth the conclusion met in the discussion, if any.

Relevance of the silent participants:

In an ideal situation, it would be appreciated if the leader of the GD involves the silent participants of the GD by asking them for their opinions, viewpoints etc. However, in an actual GD, this might often not be possible as each candidate wants his/her point to be put across.

- **Roles:**

It is useful if the candidate is aware of the various roles that people play in a discussion. Thus, a candidate may strategize and make statements and counter the various statements made by other candidates on the basis of the different roles played by those candidates.

- **How to prepare**

Content:

In order to prepare for the content of the GD, a candidate must be abreast with the different events and happenings in the world. Thus, regular reading of newspaper articles, editorials, current issue magazines and novels helps in preparing for the GD.

Communication Skills:

Logical continuity and verbal continuity are important aspects of effective communication skills. Effectiveness in communication skills can be achieved by regular practise and use of English as a language of conversation.

Nonverbal Communication:

The knowledge of nonverbal communication cues help one prepare for bringing about the effectiveness in nonverbal communication.

Interpersonal Skills:

These skills cannot be taught. However, a candidate can observe and emulate people around him/ her in order to instil such qualities.

MODULE IV: Interview Specifics

I. Introduction

The personal interview is generally the culmination of different selection rounds in the admission process. The personal interview allows the interview committee an opportunity to assess the candidate and his qualities on a one-on-one basis. During the interview, the committee can question the candidate on his achievements, awards, and personality among other things.

Different facets go towards building a personality and the task of identifying these subtle aspects appears to be a daunting task. The task before the interview panel is to assess the resume of the candidate and question the candidate on the information mentioned. The interviewing panel is keen to assess the communication skills and the confidence level of the candidate.

The interaction between the members on the interview panel and the candidate provides various clues about the candidate's overall personality and his level of preparedness for that particular course. The panel comprises a number of interviewers. The number and composition of the panel varies across different colleges. Generally, three to four members form the panel. These panel members are senior faculty, college directors, expert professionals, industry leaders, etc. Some colleges are known to have invited psycho-analysts for a specialized psychological assessment.

Often, the perception is that the personal interview can make or break a candidate's claim for admission. As, has been noted before, the selection procedure is long and tedious. Multiple factors such as academic record, extra-curricular activities, competitive examination scores, GD performance are considered in the selection. The interview is an important factor. However, it is often not the final obstacle as it is made out to be.

Nevertheless, the interview does provide the candidate with an opportunity to display any special talents or attributes that cannot be put down on paper, yet can impress the interview panel. Thus, a candidate can use this interview to put forth his case, which will make him stand out from the rest of the candidates.

It is conventionally noted that interviews focus as much on the manner in which the answers are given as the content of the answers. Confidence is thus considered an important tool to ace the interview. In the end, what appears important is the ability to convince the selection committee about the candidate's aptitude to be selected.

As mentioned in the earlier module, the interview is primarily a test of the candidate's personality. Like a group discussion, the panel in the interview reviews similar aspects for evaluating the candidate: logical reasoning, confidence, composure, communication skills, non-verbal cues / body language, and value structure.

The content and the communication skill make important aspects in determining the personality. Without doubt, they need to be focussed on. However, body language appears to be one of the more important parameters that are judged both directly and indirectly. The members of the committee observe the manner in which the candidate reacts to questions or comments.

II. Deconstructing the Interview

A. Making your entry

It is said that the entry into the interview room is one of the more crucial parts of the interview. First impressions are often the ones that last the longest. Hence, the entry sets the tone for the interview.

The entry is often linked to the appearance, attire, politeness and body language messages. Also, the gait and manner of walking into the room is often significant. The chapter on non-verbal communication discusses different messages that one can send with one's body posture and attire.

A well measured, confident stride while entering the room is appreciated. It is generally the convention to wish the panel according to the time and the hour. The candidate is expected to stand until asked to take the chair. Till then, an upright stance, which signifies confidence, is generally the norm.

As a manner of simple etiquette, the candidate should shake hands, if offered so by the panel members. A detailed write up on the different types of shaking hands and their implications is in the second chapter on non-verbal communication.

Appearance and Attire

As mentioned in the earlier chapters, the appearance and attire for the interview is expected to be formal. The various considerations involved in the appearance include dressing, hairstyle, accessories, makeup etc. There are no pre-set rules that govern the general appearance and attire. However, some general tips and considerations have been included in the previous chapter.

There are no strict guidelines for men's or women's hairstyles. However, long hair, or pony tails on men give an impression of a casual attitude. Tidily cropped hair that gives an impression of discipline and seriousness is generally the norm. Experimenting with the hair prior to the interview is not advisable.

Women have fewer restrictions on their hairstyles. Women can tie their hair in a plait, bun or leave it open. However, it must look tidy and systematically arranged. Dishevelled hair looks unprofessional and untidy. This gives a disorganised impression.

Jewellery is normally pertaining to women. Earrings or face piercing by men should be avoided. It is looked upon as unprofessional and informal. Women should wear jewellery that is suitable for the occasion and it should not be excessive.

It is an ongoing debate as to whether spectacles or contact lenses should be worn at the PI. Spectacles make one look older and more serious whereas the contact lenses give out a more confident look. Contact lenses allow the panel members to take a look at the candidate's eyes and thus can help candidates who have expressive eyes. Hence, the use of spectacles or contact lenses should be decided more on the comfort aspect than the appearance. Comfortable is often the better looking and hence, one should always be attired in whatever makes one comfortable.

B. Introducing yourself

Very often, the first question to the candidate is, "Introduce yourself". Introducing oneself is thus a standard expected question and one for which a candidate should definitely be prepared for in advance. The introduction should be crisp and articulate.

There is no set content associated with the introduction. It can start off with the candidate's name, educational qualification, work experience, any unique characteristics or personality traits that the candidate wants to share, etc.

The panel may want to feel the candidate at ease by asking him to talk about himself. Thus, this is an opportunity to drive the conversation in the direction of the candidate's choice. The candidate can try to mention any achievements or extra-curricular activities in the introduction. If the questions that follow are on those topics, the candidate can be favourably placed.

Conversely, it may be said that topics highlighting negative aspects or weaknesses should be steered away from in the introduction. It would be standard practice, not to allow the panel to exploit the chinks in one's armour.

Honesty and clarity of thought are appreciated. Occasionally, some candidates may work around the facts to please the panel. If the panel gets the impression that the information provided is not entirely authentic, then the entire interview may get derailed.

Thus it is very important that the introduction be made in a confident and crisp manner without much fumbling or attempt to mislead.

C. Bio-data Details / Résumé

A résumé or a bio data provides detailed information about the candidate's education, work experience, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, hobbies, interests and any other achievements. Some colleges require the candidate to carry a copy of the bio-data to the interview. Some colleges have standardized résumé forms, which have to be filled. Other colleges have their application forms designed in such a manner that the relevant information is to be filled at the time of the application itself.

The information on the résumé can be a key area on which the interview questions are based. Thus, it is essential that the résumé be lucid, precise and concise. In case the candidate has to carry his own résumé, then it should be cleanly typewritten or printed. There are different formats available and the candidate can choose any which suits his purpose.

However, it may be a good idea to position the data on the résumé in such a way that all the key points are clearly highlighted. Any work experience or academic distinction may be clearly positioned. Thus, considerable effort needs to be put in to ensure that the résumé is clear and concise.

III. Key aspects in the Résumé

1. Education and academics

Educational background and academic competence is often an important consideration for selection. Some colleges attribute higher weight age to educational achievements. This section of the résumé should include the various undergraduate, graduate and professional degrees acquired and the average score/ grade. The class X and Class XII scores may be mentioned.

The education and academic section can be supplemented by mentioning different projects, academic theses and dissertations undertaken. These would indicate a wider perspective of the candidate's knowledge and a diverse experience.

Consequently, the panel can base some of their questions on the core subjects of the candidate's education. It would be useful to quickly revise these topics, when preparing for the interview.

The questions asked very often are about the conceptual topics, rather than advanced ones. Hence, be prepared at least with the basics, the subjects covered in the first year of your degree college, or even at the 10+2 stage.

2. Work experience

Many colleges consider work experience to be an added weight age point in the selection process. The work experience section allows the panel to understand the extent of the candidate's experience in different industries and in different capacities. Thus, the experience conveys the extent of knowledge the candidate has gained in that industry.

The general perception is that academic knowledge is significantly different from knowledge gained from industrial experience. The challenges that one faces in the industry are different from those faced in academic institutions.

Positioning work experience on the résumé, with the intention of highlighting the different aspects of experience is thus important.

3. Hobbies and Interests

In a personal interview, hobbies and interests play a significant role as indicators for judging the candidate's nature, personality and character.

The interviewers appreciate multi-faceted individuals. Hobbies and interests primarily accentuate these aspects of a person's character.

For example, a person with an interest and considerable achievements in sport is generally perceived to be fit and active. It is assumed that such a person has the capacity to work hard.

This section can be used to display any talents or skills, which can convince the interviewers that the candidate will be a unique aspect adding to the diversity of the student body. Such a glimpse into the candidate's personality would hitherto not be noticeable from the candidate's academic or industry experience and achievements.

A bouquet of a varied list of achievements will highlight the wide range of interests of the candidate. Yet, care must be taken to provide the list in a systematic and concise manner. There must be an element of truthfulness, as the panel may assiduously verify the details mentioned.

IV. Anticipating Questions in the Interview and their preparation

The interview tries to unravel as many aspects of the candidate's personality as possible. Hence, the candidate can expect a wide variety of questions.

A. General questions based on personality

The interviewers ask questions to the candidate in order to assess his personality. They want to select candidates from different backgrounds, showing varied positive traits, which adds to the richness of the student body.

Thus some of their questions hover around their strengths, weaknesses, likes, dislikes, etc. The questions may start at the elementary level, but the panel can probe further. This further probing is aimed at testing the candidate's ability to introspect and to assess the depth at which he knows himself.

The questions also seek to identify the candidate's willingness to share information about his/her strengths and weaknesses. The intention may not be to disconcert the candidate, instead, the objective may be check for a desire to improve on any weaknesses and build on the strengths.

Candidates have been known to provide laziness as a weakness. On further questioning they seem to justify their laziness. Thus, they may be caught in a trap, which exposes many negative aspects of their personality. Instead, the interviewers may appreciate the integrity and the willingness to accept one's faults and the desire to rectify them suitably.

The nature of questions varies on the basis of the information provided in the resume. The panel generally asks questions from the hobbies section. It would be pertinent to mention here the difference between hobbies and interests. Hobbies are those activities which a person actively chooses to follow in spite of his regular schedule. Interests are of a more passing nature, without a lasting passion or commitment. Thus watching cricket on TV would be an interest, while playing the game professionally for a club team on weekends would be a hobby.

Occasionally, the interviewers may want to know the reasons why a candidate likes a certain hobby, sport or recreational activity. For example, it is common to be asked why one likes the sport of football. The answer to this question can vary from the fact that it is an excellent exercise to the fact that one is passionate about the sport for its dynamic fast paced nature.

Though no standard answers exist, it would be the responsibility of the candidate to provide convincing arguments in support of his answers. The failure to reply to this question in a convincing manner casts doubts on the authenticity of the information in the resume. Such an eventuality could mar the chances of admission.

It is worth noting that the questions on strengths and weaknesses are primarily aimed at assessing a candidate's thought process and introspective ability. Hence, to prepare for such questions, the candidate should allocate certain time and effort to introspect and align his thoughts.

The preparation however remains simpler as compared to that for other questions. A detailed thought can be spared for the résumé and certain standard answers for the questions mentioned above can be formulated.

B. General Questions based on academics and domain knowledge

Students and working professionals are often asked questions on their academic performance. Candidates are quizzed on the most and least favourite subjects. They are often asked specific questions from those subjects. General plan for further education and career, shifts in education streams, gaps in education etc are often probed.

Working professionals may be subjected to questions on different aspects of their work. For example, a candidate working as an engineer in the field of telecommunication may be asked fundamental concepts in telecommunication. The questions can then spread to the latest developments in that field. The lack of knowledge about such latest technological developments can often take away the credit of an impeccable academic record in the field of telecommunication engineering.

Preparing for such questions means reviewing the major concepts in the area of graduation, while keeping an eye out for any recent developments in those fields. This preparation thus spreads over a longer time and effort.

C. Questions on career and future plans

The interviewers often intend to assess the candidate's personality on the basis of his future plans and the projections of his career. The questions can be general and straight forward or they may be complex and at times hypothetical. The critical part in either type of questions is the concreteness of the plan, the measurable goals identified and the possible fallback options.

For example, candidates may be asked to speak on 'Where do you see yourself 5, 10 and 15 years from now?'

Certain colleges offer specialised MBA courses. The panel may question the candidate on the choice of specialisation and the reason behind it. These questions seek at gaining a perspective into the candidate's awareness about the courses that are being offered and the scope of work it entails after the completion of the course. Incomplete knowledge or improper

planning shows the candidate in bad light. The general perception being that a candidate should have clear understanding of the scope of work in the projected industry that he aims to make a career in.

For example, if a candidate answers such a question stating that he wishes to pursue an MBA in finance and make a career in investment banking, it is expected that he is aware what investment banking as a career involves and what it deals with.

However, it is not absolutely necessary that a candidate is firm about his future plans. Plans can change with circumstances. The interviewers mostly want to assess whether the candidate has a structure that he wishes to follow in the future. It is generally understood that though the basic course of action for the future can be decided, it is difficult to precisely chart the future.

Preparing for such questions can be tricky. The candidate has to project his thoughts into the future, plan his career in the slabs of 5, 10, 15 years at times. It makes the task a bit daunting. However, as mentioned earlier, the structure is important, not the intricate details.

D. Questions on General awareness

The panel also poses questions based on general knowledge and awareness. This line of questioning is often to check the breadth of the candidate's knowledge base and his keenness and interest in his surroundings.

General awareness questions would revolve around the major events happening in the world and their relevance. These questions are mostly of a current time span.

General knowledge questions need not focus on current events alone. Nevertheless, the questions are of a nature relevant to the candidate's academics, work or future goals.

Candidates are often asked questions from history, geography or political science even though these subjects may not be opted for by the candidates during their graduation.

Business is often interconnected with different social, economic and political factors. Future managers and business leaders need to keep abreast of such happenings. Their insight and knowledge about these events often shapes their vision. Hence, the panel may judge aspects of the candidate's personality by the responses to such questions.

Preparing for such questions is also a long time commitment. Daily perusal of newspapers becomes necessary. Along with the headlines, the readers should also focus on the editorial pages for in depth analysis. Television news and analyses, coupled with magazines are added tools to brush up on the understanding of current events.

The preparation for such questions in the interview goes hand in hand with the preparation for the General discussions. A detailed note about the same is found in chapter 1 and chapter 3.

E. Opinion based questions

Candidates are often asked questions which require their opinions on social, political, moral or ethical issues. Such questions can be revealing, when it comes to the subtler aspects candidate's personality. Opinion based questions often provide insights into the candidate's thinking process and views and opinions on various issues.

The very nature of these questions makes them controversial. The candidate has to often take a stand on topics, which means that he may be asked to defend his opinions.

However, it needs be mentioned that an extremist position on sensitive issues can disturb the equilibrium between principles and prejudices. An extremist stand can hurt others' sentiments. Such a person is viewed as stubborn or headstrong.

An example of an opinion based question would be as follows:

What according to you is the solution to the problem of influx of migrants into Mumbai? Do you agree on the stand taken by Raj Thackeray?

The answer to the latter half of the question is quite straightforward and is a simple yes or no question. However, it is expected by the committee that the reasons for a positive or a negative answer are provided as a justification of the answer.

The first part of the question can be answered on the basis of the candidate's personal opinions. It is advisable to support one's answers to these questions with a sound logical base. Though these are opinion based questions, the use of arbitrary answers will go against the candidate's favour and would fetch him negative marks. Moreover, it is critical that the candidate's argument is coherent and cogent.

Sometimes, the opinion of the candidate and the members of the review committee might be contradictory. In questions dealing with moral considerations such as the abortion issue or capital punishment, it is a tough task changing the opinions of others. However, by supporting one's stand by citing examples and analogies the candidate can persuade the panel members to accept the rival viewpoint as being logical and well thought.

For questions pertaining to opinions, the panel members may contest the candidate's views and put forth a more logical viewpoint. In such a situation, the candidate should concede one's stand and gracefully accept that viewpoint. Taking a stand and obstinately defending a certain flawed logic can be perceived negatively by the interviewers.

Preparing for such opinion based questions would involve analysing various current issues and events. A careful study of the facts and their interpretation can help in forming well reasoned opinions.

F. Case study based questions

Another set of questions generally asked in a personal interview include questions based on case studies. A case study is presented to the candidate and questions are asked on the basis of that specific case.

These questions seek to test the candidate's understanding and grasp of information. Sometimes, subtle nuances are hinted at in the caselet. The candidate's ability to highlight any such aspects would yield better appreciation by the panel.

Case study based questions are generally logic based and give the members of the committee an opportunity to judge the candidate's ability to support his decisions on logic and use supporting information to strengthen the decision.

The review committee tries to analyze the candidate's personality on the basis of the answers to these case study questions.

For example, a case study involving a truck company that manages transport vehicles across India. The case study states that the trucks return to the base point empty and thus, the company loses revenue. The candidate is asked for strategies to reduce the losses and possible solutions based on his understanding of the problem.

Thus, the answers in the above paragraph should be supported by sound reasoning as supporting the candidate's solution. It can be an added advantage to mention the pros and cons of this proposed solution. This displays a sense of logical awareness and is generally appreciated.

The preparation for the case studies is similar to that for the group discussion case studies. Thus, no special preparation is needed.

G. Lateral thinking and logical questions

Lateral thinking and logical questions are mainly asked for testing a candidate's alertness, quick thinking, decision making etc. Candidates often find these questions troublesome during interviews. The primary cause behind the fear of these questions is the fact that the nervousness of the moment leads the candidate unable to answer these questions quickly.

Lateral thinking questions often require the candidate to think out-of-the-box. In many such questions, there are no set answers. Instead, each unique answer can be a solution. However, the key is in answering quickly and confidently.

A commonly cited example is as follows:

Question: Without turning behind, tell me, what is the colour of the wall behind you?

This may flummox the candidate at first. It is simple reasoning that the colour of the wall behind would invariably be the same as that of the wall ahead. Hence, this question can be answered. Here, the actual colour of the wall is not very significant. The explanation about the logic used to answer this question is highly significant.

Other examples of such lateral questions would be as follows:

Question: How many tennis balls can fit into a Boeing 747 aircraft?

Question: If this glass is dropped on the ground, how many pieces would it break into?

Question: Which make was the car parked in the first parking slot in the parking lot in the courtyard?

Question: How many trees are there in your college / office courtyard?

Question: Why are manhole covers round?

Question: If you were situated in the southern hemisphere, then in which direction would the sun rise?

Question: Can you answer this question?

Question: What will be your mass at the North Pole?

Question: Why did the chicken cross the road?

Such questions do not always have correct or incorrect answers. As long as the answers are based on logic, they are correct.

Hence, as demonstrated by the three examples above, the confidence with which a candidate answers a question and the logic that he supports it with is more important than the answer itself. Preparing for such questions may be a tough task. Repeated practice at stretching one's imagination and coming up with unique lateral solutions would be useful.

H. Stress Interviews

Though most colleges do not have a separate stress interview as such, often, the questions can get taxing. The panel may want to push the candidate to a wall. Management can be a stressful responsibility. Thus, the panel tries to assess how much stress a candidate can sustain.

One way to conduct a stress interview would be to constantly bombard the candidate with difficult questions. In spite of the candidate professing ignorance, the panel would continue that line of questioning.

The panel wants to observe the manner in which the candidate reacts to the constant bombardment of questions by the interviewers.

Another strategy in a stress interview would be that the panel purposely tries to set the candidate off the track by ignoring his answers, talking amongst themselves or staring blankly into space.

Sometimes, the candidates are asked personal questions or even demeaning questions. The panel tries to nudge the candidate into losing his temper or letting down his guard.

Certain stress interview questions are about the candidate's ability to managing and responding to conflicts. The committee members often ask questions pertaining to various situations that might lead to a conflict at a workplace or an institution.

Examples of the above mentioned questions are as follows:

Question: If a fellow student is cheating on his/her coursework, what would you do?

Question: Do you feel that this interview is going well?

Question: What if I slapped you now?

Question: What if we told you before even starting the interview that we do not intend to select you?

Questions mentioned above often put the candidate on the back foot. This allows the members on the interview panel to further intimidate the candidate and thus assess whether he/she buckles under pressure.

The trick to being successful in a stress interview is to keep calm. It is necessary to understand that the members of the committee are purposely trying to intimidate the candidate or to put the candidate on the back foot. Thus, it is crucial that the candidate does not show any signs of irritation or listlessness. The committee members will often doubt the authenticity of a candidate's answer to induce irritation and anger.

V. General Tips

Preparing for the interview is a lifelong process. It is a test of the candidate's personality. Personality traits often take years to form and as such cannot be changed overnight.

Yet, the following considerations are important. They have been dealt with separately in the earlier chapters in more detail.

Content

A prospective MBA student is expected to possess aptitude and knowledge about a large number of things in general and a few things in particular. The interviewers often field questions to check these. To prepare for such content, the candidate has to keep himself abreast of the latest developments in the fields of business, world economics, politics, science and technology, etc.

Here again, in-depth research is not expected yet superficial knowledge will not satisfy the interviewers either.

Often the candidate may be asked a question to which he may not know the answer of. In such cases, it would be acceptable to clearly acknowledge that the answer is not known. Bluffing one's way through may yield negative results.

Communication Skills

Communication skills are important tools in the interview. When answering the questions, the candidate is expected to be articulate and coherent. It will be more effective to use the right words, idioms, correct diction, grammar etc.

The replies should be fully audible and coherent. It is essential that the panel is clearly communicated of the answers.

Developing communication skills is a long term process. The candidate can consciously practise keeping his language crisp and functional. He can request feedback from friends, family, teachers, colleagues, bosses etc.

Practicing in front of a mirror is considered an effective method to generate feedback. Audio and video recording can also provide effective feedback mechanisms.

Along with effective speaking, the candidate should also consider active listening. Often, the candidate may misinterpret the question asked and accordingly, his answer may not meet the requirement.

Non verbal communication

The non-verbal aspects of communication are important in projecting the personality of the candidates. The chapter on non-verbal communication provides different insights and strategies to work on the non-verbal aspects.

All round personality

As mentioned earlier, one's personality is the product of years of influences, decisions, upbringing, education etc.

Academics, work experience, values and ethics, hobbies etc. add different dimensions to the personality. As major changes cannot be accommodated into one's personality, efforts must be more towards introspection and generating awareness about oneself. An analysis of one's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) can help in planning for the interview strategy.

Of more immediate focus, the candidates preparing for interviews to be conducted in the near future should concentrate mainly on the content and communication skills.

VI. Summary

- **Making your entry:**

First impressions are often lasting ones. Entry is linked to appearance, confidence and politeness. The entry should be confident, calm and relaxed.

Appearance and Attire: Appearance and attire must be formal and neat. It should not be outlandish.

- **Introducing Yourself:**

The introduction should be used to drive the interview in the direction that the candidate wishes to. This opportunity should be used carefully, honestly and with clarity.

- **Bio-data /Resume details:**

The interview is often based on these details. It is essential to highlight achievements and outstanding performances in the different sections of the resume.

- **Anticipating questions**

Personality based: These questions test the candidate on the various aspects of his/her personality. The panel seeks to probe into the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate's personality.

Domain knowledge and Academics: These questions test the candidate on the candidate's field of domain and expertise. These questions are aimed at understanding the extent of knowledge and proficiency of the candidate in his/her academic field.

Career and future plans: These questions are primarily aimed at understanding the awareness of the candidate about various career options, the scope of work and the understanding of the various offerings and the demands of such courses/specialisations.

General awareness: These questions test the candidate's understanding and awareness of the various events and happenings around the world. Generally, these are contemporary events and happenings.

Opinion based: These questions seek to gain a perspective into the candidate's viewpoint on various issues. Generally, these questions are based on controversial subjects.

Case Study based: These questions are aimed at testing the understanding and comprehension abilities of the candidate. It aims at gaining an insight into the candidate's logical reasoning, awareness and attention for detail.

Lateral thinking and logic based: These questions test the candidate's alertness, decision making skills and quick thinking. Confidence is one of the most important qualities in answering such questions.

Stress interviews: These interviews aim at testing the candidate's ability to handle stress and his/her decision making skills under stress. These questions also intend to test the candidate's ability to respond to and resolve conflicts.

SECTION 3

GDPI PREP

Student Experiences

How my interviews went at IIM A

As written by Rahul Jha
CAT 2008 - 99.97 Percentile

We were 8 students in our panel and there were 4 such panels.

Essay

We were given 10 mins to write an essay in the area provided in the interview form. We were forewarned to stop right-away when we are asked to stop. Essay topic was how other games were not eclipsed by Cricket and something like that.

I wrote a decent essay. Examples from Olympic winners not getting Padma awards etc. All in all a good 10 mins to start with.

Interview

I was last in the panel and the panelists told us that they will take 15 mins each. They took a break just after the 7th guy left and it started to scare me.

P1: Old prof to my left

P2: Old prof to my right. (Mr. Rajendra Patel) IIMA>Faculty & Research>Faculty>Details

M: me

P2 called me in.

Pleasantries and was asked to sit.

P2: Please show me this certificate and explain what it is.

I stood up went close to P2 and showed the Gold medal certificate and explained it was given to me for getting the highest marks in CBSE Board amongst all thirteen schools run by Bokaro Steel.

P1: Good, Very Good!

P2: Ok XXX , you have done electrical engineering from IIT Kanpur.

M: Yes Sir!

P2: There were a few electrical engineers before you, what did they tell you?

M: Sir, they told me you were asking probability questions?

P2: Probability? What probability?

M: Sir, they were telling you gave questions about probability etc

P2: Ok.

P2: How would you explain to a layman why he pays for electricity? Electrons come to his home

and then he returns it back, he doesn't keep any why should he pay for it?

M: Sir, although he is not keeping any electrons, but energy is required to maintain this flow of electrons and the power company thus needs to be compensated.

P2: Speak in layman's terms

M: Sir, it is like the current won't flow unless there is potential difference.

P2: Speak in layman's terms.

M: Sir, we can think it as water flowing, water flows on a slope similarly .

P2: Ok

P2: Ok tell me how will you explain integration to a layman. And don't tell me area under the curve, ok!

M: Sir, it is basically a better form of summation when the function is discrete you can use sum, but when it is continuous it can't be summed, so we break into parts.

P2: Now you are using discrete continuous, I have told you four times speak in layman's terms.

M: Sir, take a Asymmetric figure, now if we need to find the area of this figure, summation would not help us, but we would need integration to do it.

P2: Do you know transmission losses form the major part of power losses?

M: Yes sir

P2: What is done to prevent these losses?

M: Electricity is transmitted a very high voltage 11 KV or 22 KV or even higher. This is done to reduce i^2r losses.

P2: Any other?

M: We can use better equipment, better transformers

P2: Is the purpose of transformer to cut power losses?

M: No sir, that's not it primary purpose but in course of transmission we need a lot of transformers and if we have efficient ones, we can reduce losses.

P2: What is the primary purpose of a transformer?

M: Either to step up or step down voltage depending on the need.

P1 Takes over

P1: Ok XXX, You have done electrical engineering from IIT Kanpur, Can you make electricity flow without a wire

M: Sir it won't be practical but it can be done.

P1: How?

M: Sir, if we apply voltages at sharp points, the air around the points will breakdown into ions and then start conducting. Sound and corona discharge will accompany this phenomena and this will be very inefficient way of transmitting electricity.

P1: How far?

M: very small distances around 1 mm.

P1: Ok, this sound and light thing doesn't look practical. Any other way?

M: Sir, basically what I did there was made air a conductor and replaced wire by air. If we have to remove wire, we can use any other conductor (smile). May be water.

P1: Yes (smiles)

P1: Ok do you know function of a function, can you differentiate it? (passes me a paper) We use a lot of calculus in Management.

M: Sir, it is basically defined when the independent variable is not a basic.

For example $y=f(x)$ and $x=g(z)$ then $y=f(g(z))$

P1: Now differentiate it?

M: $y'=f'(g(z))g'(z)$

P1: What is that prime business ? (smiles) write simply

M: $dy/dz=d(f(g(z)))/d(g(z))\times d(g(z))/dz$

P1: Why is this a product and not a sum? Can you prove it?

M: Yes sir.

I prove it using basic definition of derivative and the chain rule of limits. He takes the paper and verifies it.

P1: Give me an example

M: $\cos(\sin x)$

P1: Now differentiate it

M: $-\sin(\sin x) \cos x$

P1: XXX, Can you tell me the difference between electrical force and gravitational force?

M: Electrical force can be attractive or repulsive but gravitational force is attractive only.

P1: Ok, Do you know the nucleus; there are only protons, are they like charges?

M: Yes sir.

P1: Then why don't they come out and break the nucleus?

M: Sir, there are three forces inside the nucleus; Electrical force, gravitational force and nuclear force. The gravitational force is very small and hence neglected. But to counter the repulsive electrical force there is a nuclear force which keeps the protons inside the nucleus.

P2 takes over

P2: Ok, Where are you from?

M: Bokaro Steel City

P2: Hmmm, have you heard of the city Mclean? Can you tell me the country it is in?

M: No sir! (I did not take a guess)

P2: Brussels?

M: Belgium?

P2: Do you know why most Indian rivers originate from north and then flow into east or west?

M: Sir, the melting ice of Himalayas act as the source of rivers, hence they originate from there. The rivers then flow southwards due to the slope and they move eastwards or westwards due to the terrain they face in their course.

P2: Ok, can you tell me the names of all major cities on the banks of river Ganga from west to east?

M: Haridwar.

P2: Before Haridwar?

M: Rishikesh.

P2: Ok, continue

M: Rishikesh, Haridwar, Kanpur, Allahabad, Banaras, Patna, Sultanganj, Kolkata.

P2 looks at P1

P2: Take a toffee

I pick an alpenlibe from the bowl

and say thank you to both of them

P1: All the best.

I am out now.

There was no one left who could tell me the time but it was approx 20-25 mins.

Verdict: Waitlisted

[Discuss with Testfunda users.](#)

IITB GD/PI Experience

As written by Sumit Khanna

Educational Profile:

X: 81.4

XII: 89.2

Btech: 78.8

JMET rank: 132

Work profile: Infosys 14 months and Career launcher 4 months

My GD was scheduled on 8th March 2009, 1:30 slot

We were taken into an auditorium where we were first sent for registration. Don't rush for registration. Your slots are already fixed.

After that there was a presentation on som followed by a video (Slumdog effect had MIA paper planes as background score, I think b-schools are smitten with SM as in Delhi interview it had dreams on fire as background score) , overall was nice ..then was followed by a presentation by a SBI folk about the loan scheme that you will get, was of great help and most of the claps went for that pres..

Also at the Registration desk we were given a form in which we have to fill our semester wise marks and extra-curricular activities along with work experience

As i was filling the form we were called for the Case study

Case was about a supervisor Suresh Kumar for a distribution firm had appointed a new young technical grad, Sameer into managing the workers in the offload process and he was facing problems as workers were not much motivated and were not doing their work properly by taking frequent breaks and all....Sameer tried motivated them but they didn't listened and end result was he was boycotted from their social activities....there was a senior worker named Shankar dada who talked with Sameer and Sameer said thank god I am leaving you people soon enough as I don't want to be like you..to which Shankar retaliated that if you would have been long here you would have become one of us.

It was followed by two questions:

- 1) Was the role of supervisor encouraging or discouraging the workers to their job
- 2) Was Shankar dada's statement right or wrong

We were 11 people(1 was absent) and were given 5 min to think and 15 min to discuss

Case study went fine...in the end we were left short of time for discussing the second question so panel stopped us and asked 4 of us who hadn't spoken much to give their views.

Ok, done. Then we were lead back to the auditorium (to ADCOM the delta alpha method and all that co-ordination with walkies was superb)

Their the form was verified and make sure that whatever you are mentioning in the form you have proof for that without proof they won't consider anything.

Interview:

Was fourth in order of interview and there is a coordinator assigned to you before interview (helped me a lot) , he told me that one is a prof and the other one is a INFY guy

So here we go

The convention Prof : P , Infy Guy : I and Me: M

M: Entered. Good afternoon and all

P: Sit

P: So, Sumit what is your rank?

M: Sir, 132

P: No, your class rank?

M: I said 5th or 6th (he wrote 6th in a form)

P: How many students were in your class?

M: 45

P: Tell us something about yourself which is not in the form.

M: Told them about my nature and in the end added that I was working for infy (the infy guy suddenly wakes up)

I: Ok, so which department of infy do you work for?

M: Mentioned the dept along with the IBU and the domain

I: what is this IRB infotech (my previous organization)

M: Sir it's a franchise for career launcher, was responsible for consulting and quant skills trainer

I: So, you good at quant?

M: Gave a sheepish smile

P: So, Sumit what are your hobbies? (He was continuously looking through my file)

M: Watching movies, watching cricket, playing table tennis (kyun bola yeh)

P: Ok, so which level have you played?

M: I just play as a timepass not at a particular level.

P: Ok, so what are different shots in TT?

M: Mentioned serve, spin shot, drop shot, chop shot and one or two others

P: Can you draw the graph for the spin shot on xy axis? (WHATTTTTTTTTTTTTT)

M: Drew something

P: Which mathematical graph does it represent?

M: Said quadratic eqn then said no, its parabola

P: Draw the graph and eqn for a parabola.

M: Kar diya

P: What's the focus and focal length for parabola?

M: Muttered something

P: What are the forces acting on the ball?

M: Spin that you have entitled and the friction by the table?

P: Is friction a force?

M: Yes sir

P: What is the other?

M: Acceleration. No, no sir, spin , pata nahi (forgot the rotational force here)

I: What is the best thing you find about infy?

M: Told him about the work culture and low power distance stuff

I: How many number of DC's infy has?

M: Goofed up here; mentioned all except Bhubaneshwar DC

I: Ever heard of Bhubaneshwar?

M: Yes sir, forgot that one

P: So, tell me something about Ludhiana (my native place)

M: Told him about the textile sector and that it is known as the Manchester of India

P: Is it really known like that?
M: Yes sir
P: Tell us more
M: Hero cycles and PAU is there
P: When was PAU formed?
M: No idea sir
P: How many districts in Punjab?
M: No idea sir , around 7 may be not sure
P: Named 10 districts
M: Gave a sheepish smile
I: What are the qualities that should be there in the code?
M: Mentioned about readability, modularity , coding conventions
I: Any other
M: No sir
I: Scalability
M: What's that sir
I: Extensibility
M: Yes sir it should be extensible
P: Tell us about your final year project (yeh kahan se aa gya)
M: I had to recollect a lot, but bata diya
I: What should infy do in this period to overcome recession
M: Focus more on maintenance projects, go into products a bit more and look outside US
I to P: Anything else, sir
P: No
M: Thanks sir

The interview lasted around 13 mins

Final Result: Waitlisted at 64

[Discuss with Testfunda users.](#)

SIBM-B GD/PI Experience

As written by Abhishekh Mathur

SNAP Score: 72

Work Experience: 29 months 21 days

Venue: Catering College, Dadar, Mumbai

Date: 22nd February 2009

Time: 10 a.m.

Selection for SIBM-B is done on the following criteria:

SNAP: 50

Academics: 05

Work Experience: 10 (0-12 months Zero, 12-30 months Five & >30 months Ten)

GD: 10

PI: 25

I reached the venue at 9.30 am. At around 10 a.m. they started scrutinizing the documents. The names of the candidates and their respective batches were displayed on a white board. I was in group 'E'. After checking the documents they gave an impressive presentation about SIBM B. The campus looks neat.

We started the process with a GD. My group had 8 members, 3 with work ex. and 5 freshers. Our GD topic was an interesting and an innovative one. One of the three panelists said (topic), "I can choose only 2 of you. You have 15 min to come to a conclusion". The GD started with people marketing themselves. Each one spoke about why they should be chosen. Finally we decided to vote and choose the 2 candidates who should be selected. Each candidate had to vote for 2 people. I won, 6 out of 8 voted for me. Everyone chipped in; we stayed away from the fish-market and reached a conclusion in time. All in all, a good GD.

PI's started immediately after the GD. The panelists were same as for the GD. I have listed the questions below:

1. You were the most popular guy in the GD, I think you bullied your group members; I do not want to hire you.
2. Why MBA? Why SIBM? Why not try for IIM-A or ISB?
3. What have you achieved as an engineer?
4. Three things about you that you would want to improve.
5. Three things you do other than work.

My interview lasted for around 10 minutes. It was a fun interview and I think I did well.

Overall a great experience. Coordinators were helpful, panelists were smiling and polite and the whole process was over by 11.30 a.m.

[Discuss with Testfunda users.](#)

IIM L GD-PI experience

As written by Rahul Jha

Date: 8th march

CAT 2008 - 99.97 percentile

There were 8 students in the list but two were absent.

Essay and GD:

We were given a topic to write an essay for 20 minutes and then 15 minutes more to discuss the same topic. The topic was "Beginning of a journey doesn't guarantee success"

I started my essay with "Well begun is half done" but what about the other half? Later followed on with examples of hare and tortoise, Edison, football cricket and all other. Added valuable points how we can turn a good or a bad start into success. Overall a very simple topic and I wrote a decent essay will give 8-9/10

GD was chilled out, I chipped in with valuable points like continuous evaluation is required. Redefining of goals, review of achievements etc, Gave examples again of Edison, football. Only 6 people were there, all chilled out. I think we were finished in 12 mins and profs felt that we have nothing more to discuss and said that is fine.

Interview:

P1: Prof to my left, Prof. Sanjeev Kapoor

P2: Prof to my right, Prof Krishna Kumar (Not sure though)

M: me!

P1 came and called me in.

Pleasantries and P2 asked me to sit. Thank you etc.

P2: xxx, You have done elec engg from IIT Kanpur. You have done very well till +2, what happened there?

M: Gave my reasons.

Some discussion follows, both look convinced.

P2: Ok, tell me the recent developments in elec engg.

M: I speak about smaller and smaller chips, new semi conductors etc.

P2: But that is all electronics? Tell me about electrical.

M: Sir, I am more focused towards electronics and communication, at IIT, we are taught all three and have to pick one or two for specialization. Still in electrical, the nuclear deal can be said the latest development when concerning India. India is going to upgrade from 4000 MW to 20000 MW of nuclear power by 2020.

P2: Ok, have you heard about clean gas technology in power?

M: No sir!

P2: Ok fine. What do you read apart from electrical engineering?

M: Sir, I am a follower of football and read anything and everything about it. I am also into blogging.

P2: good, football ok!

P2: Who is the current world champion?

M: Sir, Italy won the last world cup in 2006 and Spain is currently ranked 1 in FIFA rankings.

P2: When is the next world cup.

M: 2010 in South Africa.

P2: Which is the most important position in football?

M: Sir, people think it is the central forward, but I believe it is the goalkeeper. I think his mistake can be very costly. One mistake of the goalkeeper can cost us a match. Attackers get numerous chances to score goals. But, once a goalkeeper lets an easy one in, the whole team is put under pressure. He is the most important player on the pitch.

P2: Do u know Pele? What was special about him?

M: Sir, he is regarded as the best footballer ever. He had this amazing knack of cutting through defenders, but he was a team player, his goals were full of passes. One of his goals is very famous when from midfield he took the ball and the goal was scored after 13 passes.

P2: Good!

P2: Do you play football?

M: Yes sir, but had to quit.

P2: Oh, because of the operation?

M: Yeah sir!

P2: Ok

P2: What else do you read?

M: Sir, I am not that big a reader. But the last two books that I read are, Atlas Shrugged and Kite Runner.

P2: And? (He didn't hear kite runner properly)

M: Kite runner sir!

P2: Who is the author of Atlas Shrugged?

M: Ayn Rand

P2: What is so special about this book?

M: Sir, the imagination is very vivid. One can find any all kinds of emotions in this book. She has seen the world of today so early. Her imagination of reservations and fight between capitalism and socialism is very much what is happening and has happened.

P2: The book is very thick and has very small print (says to p1 and me). How much time it took you?

M: About one and a half month.

P2: Good! Have you heard of the book alchemist?

M: Yes Sir, I have heard the name of the book, not read it.

P2: Do you know the name of author?

M: No sir!

P2: That's fine.

P2: Suppose in your job it is necessary to bribe the customer to get business. What would you

do?

M: Sir, I am not in favour of bribes. One should try other means.

P2: Suppose there is no other way. And your company, although does not encourage bribes but sees no wrong in it either and has funds allocated for it?

M: Sir, in that case, I will have no option. If the company can get no business, we are losing everything.

P2: Ok

P1 Takes over

P1: Yeah, bribing is called facilitation fee. There is nothing wrong in it?

M: Sir, well it is not ethical but when you have no other options, you have to go for it.

P1: Right!

P1: Can you tell me the probability of you getting into IIM L?

M: Do you want a mathematical answer, or you want me to take a prediction?

P1: Give a mathematical answer.

M: Sir, for that I would need some stats and also.

P1: What do you need?

M: No of seats and no of calls given .

P1: Assume 500 calls and 100 seats.

M: Sir, we would need to assume that there will be no absentees in the interviews and everyone who gets an admit joins.

P1: Ok, then.

M: then probability of my selection is $\frac{499C99}{500C100}$ which will be $\frac{499!100!}{400!/500!99!400!} = \frac{100}{500} = \frac{1}{5}$

P1: Suppose we have 50% reservations for girls?

M: We will need to reduce the number of girls candidates called from 500 and the calculations would change.

P1: Fine.

P1: So, you are from Bokaro Steel City, Tell me about your family?

M: Sir, My father works with Bokaro Steel Plant and my mother is a homemaker. My elder brother is a mechanical engg working in Pune. My younger brother is studying mechanical engg from NIT Jamshedpur.

P1: Oh all engineers. Good, very good.

M: Yes sir (smiles)

P1: The guy who left before you asked me to ask you a question. Should I ask you that?

M: Sure sir!

P1: What is the size of a football field?

M: Sir, it depends; what kind of a match it is. For international matches it is 70-80 yards in width and 110-130 yards in length. For domestic matches, it can be different.

P1: It is meters?

M: No sir, yards.

P1: Good, why do you think he asked me to ask you this?

M: May be because I spoke about football in the GD.

P1: Good, how does this answer tell me that you are suitable for management?

M: Sir, this answer shows I am well informed about my hobby and follow it with passion. Thus, this shows that I will do justice to my management studies and will do the same in my work thereafter.

P1: How many interviews you have had? All over?

M: This is the fourth, I have IIM C left.

P1: Which calls you have?

M: A C I KL

P1: Which don't you have?

M: B and S.

P1: Ahh! You have so many calls; you will convert one of them, and will get into management, very good chances.

M: Yes sir, I am very confident of converting at least two.

P1: Good, that was I asking tell me your probability of getting into IIM L.

M: Sir, I would give myself 70%.

P1: Why 70 and not 100?

M: Sir, 10% weightage is for work ex. and 5% for grad score. So, I am basically competing for just 85% and I have done reasonably well for 70%. So I said 70%.

P1: Fair enough!

Looks at P2.

P1 and P2: That will be all, Thank you.

M: Thank You sir!

All in all feel good, they never stressed me out. P2 laughed throughout the interview. P1 was also very cordial.

Verdict: **Rejected**

[Discuss with Testfunda users.](#)

IIM K INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE

As written by Rahul Jha

CAT 2008 - 99.97 percentile

Date 27 Feb

Venue IMI New Delhi

We were 8 students in our panel and 2 were absent.

GD: It was a case study about how students used to pay their teachers and how that should be the case today with students deciding the salary of professors so that they teach relevant stuff. Decent GD. No fish market as was warned of. Entered 4-5 times with examples. would rate 7/10

Interview

My panel gave 30 minutes to each student and asked acads and maths mainly.

P1: Young prof to my left

P2: Old prof to my right.

M: me

P1 called me in

Good afternoon and stuff, they asked me to sit. Thanks and proceed

P1: Asks about my poor engg score.

M: Didn't study for various reasons

P1: What should I ask you from elec engg?

M: Not a big fan of it, you may ask maths

P2: Ok, we will ask maths as well

P1: But, why nothing from elec..

M: Keep quiet

P2 takes over

P2: There is a cat like test, with 25 questions and 5 options for every question. If the marking is same as CAT. Suppose a student guesses all the answers, find the probability that he gets 20 correct and 5 wrong

M: Sir, the probability of getting one answer right is $1/5$ and hence wrong is $4/5$, thus by using Bernoulli's equation we get ${}^{25}C_{20}(1/5)^{20}(4/5)^5$

P2: Good, Can you give me an estimate of this number?

M: You need an approx value?

P2: Yeah

M: If we multiply num and den by 2^{25} , then the denominator becomes 10^{25} and numerator 2^x

We can write $2^{10}=10^3$ and hence proceed.. Similarly for the ${}^{25}C_{20}$ term we can approx all terms as 20 and proceed.. I found a value..

P2: That's right! Can you do it using Poisson's?

M: Sir, I know Poisson's but I am not sure how to do it here.

Some discussion about Poission goes on.

P2: If we continue with the last question, what is the average score of a person?

M: Is there negative marking?

P2: Yeah, its cat like exam

M: 0 will be the answer.. $4(1/5) - 1(4/5) = 0$

This is the reason why cat has this marking scheme!

P2: I know why cat has! its not necessarily for that reason.

P2: Plot the graph of $x + \sin x$

M: Plot it with some help

P2: Can it be decreasing?

M: No sir, thats an approx plot

I show him using derivatives it can't be decreasing at any point

P2: define e

M: $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (1 + 1/n)^n$

P2: Is e rational or irrational

M: Its irrational

P2: Prove that $2 < e < 3$

M: Prove it using binomial expansion

P2: Ok this is your final question?

P2: There are 10 diff books and 3 boys, find the number of ways that each one gets at least one.

M: Find the number, he keeps helping as I was determined to show the process of arriving at answers..

P2: Good. You have good aptitude, but you must prepare as well. Engineering scores will not be required in management but one must try to do well.

M: I will try my best, Sir!

P2: Ok then!

I was about to stand

P1: What is electromechanical energy conversion? How does a motor do that?

M: Told

P1: Can there be a 5 pole motor?

M: No (biggest goof up)

P1: Why?

M: Magnetic poles appear in pairs..

P1: Ok what do u blog about (blogging is my hobby, my blog has been ranked among top 100 wordpress blogs)

M: I have 2 blogs, one is general; other is maths

P1: Why this obsession with maths?

M: I enjoy it!

P1: Tell me other platforms of blogging

M: Blogger and wordpress are the ones I use.

P1: Any other?

M: Sir, others generally use these two. But there may be other platforms. These two are the most popular.

P1: Why is it called a blog?

M: Did not answer this

P1: That will be all

P2: You can leave

M: Thank you sir!

All in all it lasted around 30 mins. P1 was not very happy with my acads. He was using his laptop all the while P2 was asking me maths questions

Verdict: Waitlisted (It changed to convert)

[Discuss with Testfunda users.](#)

My SIBM Pune Experience

As written by Tushar Sem

Total seats : 180 (for all categories)

Total calls issued : 900 (approx figure given by some students there when I asked them about it)

So, the ratio is about 5:1

As soon as the calls to the candidates were issued, they sent an Annexure to everyone that contained 5 questions to be answered in 1 week. They were,

1. Explain in brief your long term goals and your reasons for applying to SIBM Pune? How will SIBM Pune help you in achieving these goals?
2. Suppose you had to choose two people to travel with you on a cross-country trip. Who would you choose and why? What would you hope to learn from them?
The people could be alive now, from another era or fictitious characters.
3. What single achievement or event has been most significant in your life? What were your learnings from this event or achievement?
4. Describe an ethical dilemma you have experienced firsthand. Discuss how you thought about and managed the situation.
5. What do you consider to be your major strengths and weaknesses?

The D-Day

My interview was scheduled on Jan 29th 2010 at 1 PM. In the call letter we were asked to reach the SIBM old campus at Senapati Bapat Road, Pune by 11.30 AM as there was a bus leaving for the new one at Lavale from there. The bus journey was quite comfortable, the bus had good speakers and some nice songs were playing at a high volume. It was fun. During the journey I saw a lot candidates reading the newspapers and mugging up different kinds of figures. I, on the other hand, was enjoying the beautiful countryside outside my window.

It was a 45 min drive till the new campus which was located on top of a hill. The view was just outstanding. I cant even begin to imagine what that place must be like during the months of August-October when Pune is at its best. Anyway, as soon as the bus reached, there was someone waiting for us and guided us to a auditorium. We sat there for about 15 mins after which the registration process started. During the process, they just checked the our marksheets and certificates, and gave us a name tag. Then each individual was sent to an Assembly Hall where he/she was made to sit according to his group. Each group had a coordinator (GC) assigned to it. Ours was a guy by the name Sanjeev Balachandran. He was of a lot of help as he cleared almost all our doubts and gave us invaluable insight into the whole process.

Anyway, my group had 12 people out of which one was absent, so in all we were 11. There were **3 stages, Group Discussion (GD), Group Task (GT) & Personal Interview (PI)**. There wasnt any particular order for them. Before all this, though, they showed us a presentation about SIBM. It was quite interesting.

Our group started with the PIs first. I was the second one to go.

Personal Interview

There were 3 people in the panel,

L1 : Young lady to my left

P1 : Old (but cool and jovial) professor right in front of me

P2 : Medium-aged professor to my right

Me : (Knock at the door) May I come in ?

L1,P1 : Yes yes please

Me : Good Afternoon

All 3 : Afternoon. Please sit down.

(I sit down on the chair)

L1 : What is this surname 'Sem' ? Are you Sushmita Sen's cousin ?

Me : No, madam its not Sen, its Sem, with a M. I am a Punjabi Brahmin.

P1 : Where do you belong to ? Whats the history of your surname ?

Me : (Gave a gist of the story)

P1 : Hmmm, tell me why does an engineer like you who is currently working for HSBC need to do an MBA ? Ok forget that, first tell me why did you join HSBC ?

Me : (I answer)

Some discussion about HSBC continues. They ask me about the CEO of HSBC GLT (GLT is arm of HSBC I work for)

Questions about the cross country trip question from the annexure follow, and some discussion goes on.

L1 : Now, tell me about a life-changing experience of yours that is not an achievement.

Me : Can it be an underachievement ?

L1 : No

(Actually I was stumped by this question, but then told them about an incident. Later on, when I came out, a lot of better answers came to my mind. :P)

P2 : (Finally spoke) What are your hobbies ?

Me : Answer (also included watching Hollywood movies)

L1 : Why not Bollywood movies ?

Me : I explained about how the Hollywood movies had more of a storyline and logic and less of masala.

L1 : (Still not convinced) Which genre do you prefer in Hollywood ?

P2 : (Simultaneously asked) Tell me your top 5 Hollywood movies.

Me : Answered both.

All 3 look at each other.

L1 : Am done.

P1 : Ok, you can leave.

Me : Thank you.

The whole interview took just about 10 mins I think.

Group Discussion

After that we were taken for the GD. Just before we entered, our GC told us that the guy in the panel was a retired Army Colonel and looked for confidence and strong communication skills in a candidate. And of course, he didnt like any guy cutting a girl while she was talking. With this in mind, we went inside and sat according to our numbers. He announced that there would be negative marks for a fish market. He then proceeded to introduce the second person in the panel asked a few questions to the group (like how was our day, what did we have for food etc).

The topic for the GD was 'A bend in the road is not the end of the road unless you fail to make a turn'.

Time for thinking was 5 mins and for the GD was 10 mins.

Overall, I think it went fine. Everyody except two people in the group spoke. They were then asked about what they felt about the topic and later 2 people were asked to summarise. (The panel said that there wont be any extra points for this.)

I started late in the GD, was I think the 4th speaker, but then explained the topic in detail. Gave an example of Sir Albert Einstein, who failed 300 times before inventing the bulb. And after each attempt, he would say, that, "I have not failed, I have just discovered another way that does not work."

Also gave the example of Japan as to how they were bombeb by the US and today they are the second largest economy in the world. I think spoke for about 4-5 times in all.

Then our GC took us for snacks. They were quite tasty and were really needed by everyone in the group. We had a nice chat with our GC about the whole culture and life at SIBM.

Group Task

The last thing in the day was the GT. In that, we were first asked to give a psychometric test, had 30 questions to be answered in 3 mins. Then we proceeded for the task. We had to stand (all 11 of us) on 2 bricks for 15 secs consecutively. We had 3 mins to strategize and execute the whole thing. We tried hard but only 8 could stand. As soon the 9th person came, our Burj Dubai became the Leaning Tower of Pisa and we collapsed. There wasnt time left for another attempt. Then we were asked specific questions about the task and about our performance.

Ours was one of the lucky groups. The whole process was done by 5.30 PM. We exchanged our mail ids and then took the bus back to Pune city.

Results Expected : Feb 9th, 2010

[Discuss with Testfunda users.](#)

SECTION 4

GDPI PREP

GD Capsules

Is it Time to Change the Face of Team India?

Stakeholders: Indian Cricket Team, Senior members of the team – Saurav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, V.V.S. Laxman (collectively called the Fab Four) and Anil Kumble, the BCCI, cricket fans in India and across the world

Background

- The poor performances of senior members of Team India in recent tours (before Australia's tour of India) intensified the calls to replace them with younger cricketers. In the wake of this, the BCCI came up with a proposal to ensure dignified exits for these great players who had served the country with distinction for so long.
- The proposal received mixed reactions. Some ex-cricketers insisted that the players should be allowed to decide how long they wished to continue playing. The BCCI also received a lot of flak for the timing of the proposal, coming as it did on the eve of the Australia series.

Key Points

- According to the proposal, senior cricketers could voluntarily approach the board with their future plans and ask to be considered for a specific period of time till a certain series before quitting. Provided the timeframe was not too long, the board was willing to accommodate the players.
- The player's decision to quit after the timeframe would be made public and they would have to retire irrespective of how they performed.
- This would not only ensure graceful exits for the seniors but also give the BCCI enough time to groom youngsters to step into the shoes of the greats.
- Some ex-cricketers rejected the proposal, saying that it would not work in the Indian context and that it should be left to the players to decide how long to continue.
- Anil Kumble, then Captain of the Test team, denied being pressurized to quit the game on account of his age. He blamed the media for placing players under scrutiny, without respecting their achievements.
- In the midst of all this came Saurav Ganguly's decision to quit after the Australia series. Though it was on the cards, it still came as a shock. The famed Fab Four that had bolstered the Indian middle order for so long had lost their inspirational captain.
- Ganguly's decision shifted the focus on to Sachin Tendulkar, V.V.S. Laxman, Rahul Dravid and Anil Kumble to follow suit.
- Under fire from several quarters for their immature handling of a sensitive issue, the BCCI did a volte-face and denied ever having proposed such a scheme to the senior players. But the damage had already been done and the seniors vs. juniors debate was once again out in the open.
- The below par performance of the seniors in the first test at Bangalore did not help their case much. It only added fuel to the debate.

Why the seniors may want to accept the Proposal

- There are no two opinions about the fact that the seniors deserve a chance to bow out of the game with dignity. With their futures decided, they can play their last few games without undue pressure.
- As great as these players are, they cannot go on forever. The squad needs fresh blood. Youngsters, such as Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina and Rohit Sharma, are biding their time on the benches because there is no place for them in the Indian middle order.
- The performance of the seniors has not been inspiring of late. Their disastrous tour of Sri Lanka, where they fell to the guiles of Murali and Mendis, bears testimony to this fact. The selectors may be forced to take the harsh decision of axing these greats any time now. Tendulkar and Laxman redeemed themselves somewhat with solid performances in the Australia series, but the question of the longevity remains.
- The players will find it difficult to quell allegations that they are holding on to their positions for the sake of records and endorsements. Even Kapil Dev, India's greatest ever all rounder, was accused of desperately hanging on to break Sir Richard Hadlee's then record of 431 test wickets.
- With the advent of T20, cricket is increasingly becoming a young man's game. Even Test cricket is played at a faster pace than before. This requires players to be extremely fit, which is not the case with some of the seniors in the team.

Opposition to the Proposal

- The seniors, especially Tendulkar, have at least two good years of cricket left in them. Older players, like Hayden and Jayasurya, are doing exceptionally well in international cricket.
- The youngsters have not done enough to fill the shoes of these great players. Even Yuvraj Singh, the most accomplished of the lot, has had a patchy test career at best.
- Team India would find it very difficult to bounce back from a situation where a clutch of their most experienced players have retired almost simultaneously. It might be a better idea to follow a rotation policy and blood in some youngsters while still retaining some experience.
- It is unfair to judge players of this caliber on the basis of one poor series.
- The players would know when it is time to hang up their gloves. Considering that they have had such glittering careers, they would be the last to want to spoil it at the very end.
- The proposal would affect the selection procedure. It would virtually ensure that the senior players would be picked even if their performance does not merit them a spot in the final eleven.

More Links

- [Age becoming an issue for 'Fab Four'](#)
- [Fab Four debate gathers momentum ahead of Border-Gavaskar Trophy series](#)

Group Discussion Topics

1. Is Team India ready to look beyond the Fab Four and Kumble?

For

- India has done exceedingly well in the shorter versions of the game without them. The team won the T20 World Cup in 2007 (without these players) and the one day series in Australia in early 2008 (with only Tendulkar, out of the said players).
- Leg spinner Piyush Chawla made life difficult for the Aussies in the only warm-up game they played. He is ready to take on the mantle from Kumble. Leggie Amit Misra also proved himself in the Australia series.
- Mahendra Singh Dhoni has shown that he is a very good captain in the shorter versions of the game. He looks prepared to take on that responsibility in test cricket as well. India won both the test matches he captained in the Australia series and drew both matches played under Kumble.
- India has to blood in more youngsters in the test team. Test cricket is the true test of a cricketer's character. And it is strong character that will help India erase the bad memories of the 2007 Limited Overs World Cup debacle and do well in the 2011 World Cup.

Against

- The next generation of Indian cricketers is completely untested in international cricket. Many teams, like the Australians of the late 80s, have struggled through a period of rebuilding after their most experienced players have called it quits.
- With the Fab Four quitting, players like Yuvraj Singh, Harbhajan Singh and Virendra Sehwag would become the senior pros in the team. These players are temperamental and need cool heads to guide them. It is difficult to see them as the players that youngsters in the team can idolize at this stage.
- The retirement of the great players will put a lot of pressure on the youngsters replacing them. They would be expected to do as well as the players they are replacing. Many players could break down completely under that kind of pressure at the very beginning of their careers.

Losing their Way at Singur

The Stakeholders: The government of West Bengal, The opposition, led by Ms. Mamata Banerjee, Tata Motors, the people of Singur

Background:

- The Tata Nano was first presented by India's Tata Motors at the 9th annual Auto Expo on January 10, 2008 in New Delhi.
- Its price tag of Rs.1, 00,000 made it the world's cheapest car and earned it the sobriquet of the "People's car".
- When Tata Motors was on the lookout for a suitable piece of land, the CPI (M) government of West Bengal went all out to woo the company by offering it a 1000 acre tract of land in Singur, near Calcutta.
- Finding the land suitable to its needs, Tata motors began building a factory at the site.

Key points:

- The Tata Nano factory at Singur ran into trouble when the Trinamool Congress rallied "unwilling land losers" and demanded the return of about 400 acres from within the project site.
- This demand was unacceptable as the company needed the land to house vendors who supplied parts of the Nano. This was an important factor in making the Nano the world's cheapest car.
- The protests and incidents of violence prompted Tata Motors to stop work. Repeated talks between the government and the opposition failed to break the deadlock.
- The government's compensation package was rejected by the opposition. The protests intensified. The assault of security men at the Nano complex sealed the fate of the project. The Tatas decided to pull out of Singur.

Everybody involved ended up on the losing side. Here's a look at how some of the biggest players fared.

The Government

- The government's decision to set up an industrial project on fertile land was heavily criticized. It also drew a lot of flak for forcing owners to sell land under the 1894 Land Acquisition Act.
- The government's promise to return "maximum" land from within the project to "unwilling" farmers, without consulting Tata Motors, prompted accusations of "lack of transparency".
- The government's compensation package hiked the returnable area but still fell way short of the 300 acre figure being quoted by the opposition. This was touted as a breach of trust.
- The pullout is a major setback for the CM's grand plans for industrial revival. West Bengal continues to be seen as an industry-unfriendly state.

The Opposition

- Mamata Banerjee's protest was seen by some as a means to further her political ambitions rather than genuine concern for the land losers.
- Her political acumen was questioned when her assumption that the Tata group was vulnerable enough to accept her demands backfired and the company decided to shut shop at Singur.
- Tata Motors accused her supporters of violence against company workers and theft of machinery.
- By rejecting the offer to hike the returnable are, she missed an opportunity to claim a major victory.
- The state might hold her responsible for the loss of a prestigious project and jobs. This could seriously affect her standing with the rural populace. In fact, she may have just handed the government another term in power.
- She has also not endeared herself to the middle class, which possibly continues to see her as the main threat to industrialization and progress.

Tata Motors

- The company stands to lose a whopping \$ 350 million invested in the project. Shifting machinery to facilities in other parts of the country will also be a hugely expensive affair.
- Its plan to roll out the Nano in time for the October festive season has also taken a major hit.
- The standoff may also cost Tata some goodwill. Though the land was acquired by the government and not the company, Tata may have trouble absolving itself of all responsibility.
- A question that begs to be asked is why did the company not check if the local farmers had sold their land willingly? There is a lesson somewhere in there for all future investment hopefuls.

The People of Singur

- The people of Singur were the hardest hit of the lot. Many of them sold their fields unwillingly just because the plots happened to be within the 1,000 acre area earmarked for the Nano project.
- A few of them did show interest in the compensation package offered by the government. But their interest was thwarted by the agitating opposition.
- Even if the land were to be returned to them, a big question would be whether it is as fertile as before.
- By losing out on the jobs and commercial opportunities created by the project, they probably lost their only chance to salvage something worthwhile out of the entire episode.

Further Developments

- The CM, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, wrote to Ratan Tata assuring him of all help, including security at the Nano factory.
- Discussions fell through and Nano moved out of Singur.
- The Gujarat government offered the Tatas a plot in their state. The Nano will now roll out of Gujarat.

More Links

- [Will Tata Nano revolutionize personal transport?](#)
- [Tata Nano failure a lesson for investors](#)

Group Discussion Topics

1. Is it acceptable to use agricultural land for industry?

For

- This is beneficial to small-time land owners, who only barely manage to make a living out of the land.
- While a piece of land might support the farmer's family, industrialization ensures jobs for many.
- There is no alternative in case only fertile land is available.
- A lot of factors go into selecting a factory site. For instance, the factory should be well connected to ports and markets by good roads and railways. If the plot meets the aforementioned conditions but also happens to be agricultural land it cannot be helped.
- As long as the farmers have willingly sold their land, it is acceptable.
- Rapid industrialization is essential for progress. No state can afford to be left behind in the race.

Against

- It is difficult to replace agricultural land. Land used for any other purpose cannot be reverted to agriculture as its may never regain its fertility.
- Industry may not generate enough jobs to cater to all land losers.
- The generated jobs may be too specialized for the local population. In this case, they would not only lose their lands but the jobs would go to outsiders as well.
- The factory's future depends on the success of the Nano. If the car does not sell well or becomes economically unfeasible, the factory would shut down. People would end up losing their jobs. They would also not have their agricultural land to fall back on.
- The government could explore the possibility of increasing the yield from farmlands to make agriculture profitable. Farmers will not be tempted to sell off their lands.

2. Is Mamata Banerjee's protest against the Tata Nano factory at Singur only a gimmick seeking political mileage?

For

- Her protest when the Tata factory was on the verge of production does seem opportunistic. She probably sensed that the Tatas had far too much at stake to ignore her demands.
- If she succeeded in forcing Tata Motors to return some land from the site to farmers, she could tout it as a major victory. This would endear her to the rural populace and help her immensely in the next elections.
- She clearly does not want the Nano to leave Singur. Her urgent meeting with the governor to reinstate negotiations with the government when Tata decided to shut shop suggested that she was caught unawares. She obviously could not afford to be held responsible for the state losing the project and for people losing jobs.

- Her rejection of the government's compensation package was not beneficial to the people. It could have been intended to preserve her image of a hard-bargaining politician. Some of the protesting farmers and even her party colleagues had expressed interest in the package.

Against

- The protest rightly questions the government's decision to set up a factory on agricultural land.
- Political backing has probably encouraged the "unwilling land losers" to come out and openly protest against the acquisition of their lands.
- She has advocated the return of unused land from within the factory site to the farmers who are not willing to take any other form of compensation. She has also suggested an alternative site just across the Durgapur highway to house the vendors of parts of the Nano.
- She has advocated the return of unused land from within the factory site to the farmers who are not willing to take any other form of compensation. She has also suggested an alternative site just across the Durgapur highway to house the vendors of parts of the Nano.
- She could have easily accepted the government's compensation package and proclaimed it a great victory. Her rejection of the package could be seen as a single-minded determination to win back their lands for the "unwilling land losers".

Mumbai's Shanghai Dream: What Ails the City?

The Stakeholders:

The citizens of Mumbai and the rest of the country

Background:

- A short while after coming to power, the Vilasrao Deshmukh government began harping about its plans to make Mumbai a “world-class city” like Shanghai.
- But very soon the plans got caught up in the usual problems that Mumbai faces – uncontrolled migration, slums, appalling infrastructure and political pressure.
- Can Mumbai ever become a Shanghai? Should it even aim to do so, or should it be content with developing the existing infrastructure and confronting its other problems?

Key points:

- Migration of unskilled workers from all parts of the country into Mumbai in search of a livelihood has been the city's biggest problem. Many of the other issues the city faces can trace their roots to this problem.
- The uncontrolled migrations have also put a severe strain on the infrastructure of the city. Housing and transport are the two sectors that have been hit the hardest.
- A sizeable number of these migrants end up on the pavements or in the slums that dot the city. The number of slums in the city has risen dramatically over the years. A lot has been said about relocating slum-dwellers to other parts but precious little has been done, mainly due to political pressures.
- While many of the slum-dwellers are seekers of legitimate means of earning their livelihood, it is believed that the slums also harbor anti-social elements and illegal migrants from neighbouring countries. This could be a threat to the security of the nation and needs to be taken seriously.
- Mumbai depends heavily on its local railway network and roadways for transportation. These facilities have been stretched to the maximum due to the rapidly rising population of the city.
- The roads in many places are riddled with potholes and are, in general, in a bad state. Also, the development projects of the government – which includes building flyovers and a metro railway for the city – are currently causing a lot of inconvenience to people who have to travel by road.
- The city badly needs at least one more international airport to ease some of the pressure off the lone international airport currently at the city's disposal.
- Not enough attention is paid to environmental issues. The air quality in the city is dangerous and the Mithi River that flows through the city is in a pitiable state.
- There is a lack of consensus as to whether the government is going about the development projects in the right way.
- Recently, there have been violent protests organized by a regional party against migrants from North India. The repercussions of the agitation were felt in many parts of the country.

- While the agitation was widely condemned by people, it also brought to the fore the wave of dissent flowing through some sections of people in the city.
- The recent terror attacks, which held the city hostage for over three days, have also raised serious concerns over the security of the city.
- In the past, the city has seen hostile sectarian violence and serial bomb blasts in local trains and business establishments. The security situation in the city does not exactly inspire confidence.
- Should there be a change in the way the city is governed? Should there be a CEO exclusively for the city? These are some of the questions being raised on account of the various problems the city is confronting.

How Mumbai can become a global city

- Get the infrastructure back on its feet. Improve roads, transportation systems and drainage systems.
- Speed up public sector projects like the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP), which includes road works, introduction of new buses and improved trains.
- Focus on Public-Private Partnership projects such as the Mumbai Metro and the setting up of the second international airport near Navi Mumbai.
- Speedup slum rehabilitation programs.
- Improve hygiene; improve air quality by enforcing the use of cleaner-burning fuels and phasing out outdated taxis and trucks.
- Upgrade security systems. The city needs a better-trained police force.
- Focus on conserving the environment. Plant more trees and have more parks and green spots in the city.

Why Mumbai's Shanghai dreams may be unrealistic

- The political structures in the two countries are very different. China bulldozes its way through projects in public interest with scant regard for public opinion. In India, development projects are constantly stalled by well-organized public demonstrations or are caught in vote-bank politics.
- Mumbai wages a constant war against the common evils of unplanned urbanization – pollution, encroachment and traffic congestion.
- The slums that have cropped up all over Mumbai are a major hindrance to development. It is very difficult to relocate slum dwellers because of the support they enjoy from political parties who view them as vote banks.
- To free up precious land required for development projects, the Vilasrao Deshmukh government started razing shanties that had come up after 1995. This rendered many people homeless and was viewed by the Central government as contrary to its pro-poor image. The demolition drive was stopped and only slums that came up after 2000 were allowed to be demolished.
- It is not just the housing or the transport system in Mumbai that is being stretched. The ancient drainage system also acts up every monsoon, leaving large parts of the city inundated.

- Mumbai has been allowed to develop haphazardly. It is very difficult to reverse the process at this stage without resorting to some authoritarian behavior.
- In recent years, Mumbai has shifted from being an industrial city to a city that provides service. But, it has not effectively managed to rehabilitate mill workers and their families.
- The attitude of the citizens also makes a major difference to the way the two cities have developed. Mumbai has an appalling record in basics like hygiene when compared to Shanghai, or to any major city in the world.

More Links

- [Can Mumbai become Shanghai?](#)
- [Should Mumbai be a City State?](#)

Group Discussion Topics

1. Should Mumbai be governed like a corporate, with a CEO in charge of affairs?

For

- Mumbai needs a corporate pattern of governance with a CEO. This kind of government will be able to focus entirely on the city's problems, rather than getting diverted by happenings in the rest of the state.
- With the city being run like a corporate, the focus will be entirely on making it profitable. This will invariably ensure that every department performs efficiently.
- To make the venture profitable, more money would be invested in development of infrastructure. This is one sector that really needs to improve if Mumbai wants to compete with other cities around the globe.
- Such a government will be more accountable, since the parameter to gauge their success will purely be their performance.
- Since the appointment of the officers and CEO will be non-political, they can also be taken to task in case of non-performance, without worrying about any political or popular repercussions.
- Mumbai can choose to invest a large portion of the annual tax collected from its citizens into development projects that benefit the city.
- Chief Ministers are not generally from Mumbai. They are usually from other parts of Maharashtra, where they have a sizeable vote bank to answer to. So, they tend to focus on developing the regions they hail from, ignoring Mumbai.
- Given its rather cosmopolitan nature, Mumbai cannot be considered part of any state. It belongs as much to the rest of the country as it does to the state of Maharashtra. It needs to be governed separately.

Against

- Mumbai's isolation from Maharashtra will not be acceptable to the rest of the state. In the 1950s a proposal had come up to anoint Mumbai as an autonomous city-state. But the Samyukta Maharashtra movement opposed this, even in the face of violent police intervention, and Mumbai was declared the capital of Maharashtra.

- Like for the rest of India, Mumbai is vitally important to the state of Maharashtra. Maharashtra will find it very difficult to establish another business hub to fill the void left behind by Mumbai.
- The CEO will be a non-political appointment, which means that the citizens of Mumbai will have no say in the appointment of the person in charge of governing the city.
- If the CEO is given a free hand to run the city, there is every possibility that he will resort to authoritarian rule to achieve his targets. This will be akin to a China-like state of affairs, where projects in “public interest” are carried out without taking into account the feelings of the public.
- If, on the other hand, the CEO’s authority is limited, he will not be any different from the many Chief Ministers who have had to abandon development projects due to political pressure.

What we can learn from the Satyam case

Background:

- The astounding confessions of B. Ramalinga Raju, ex-Chairman of Satyam Computers, has not only hit investors and employees badly, it has also tarnished the reputation of India's IT sector.
- Amidst fears that clients would do a rethink on business commitments, the bigwigs of India Inc are desperately trying to paint the Satyam case as an exception.
- While Indian corporations really need to do everything possible to salvage the situation, they also must pay heed to some lessons to be learnt from the scandal.

Key points:

- Satyam was indiscreet in its actions, but it will be unfair to view the rest of India Inc in the same light.
- It would be equally unwise, however, to think of the fraud as an isolated case. The IT sector must understand that there might be other Satyams out there, waiting to be discovered.
- A serious investigation needs to be carried out into business ethics, or, more specifically, the lack of it.

Why would Satyam have been tempted to break the law?

- Post 1990, in what is known as the liberalization period, the corporate sector has played a major role in the Indian economy.
- There must have been times when the increasing competition forced big corporations to seek unethical ways of conducting their business.
- Ramalinga Raju might have been tempted to spice up Satyam's account to show the company's performance in good light. Infosys, Satyam's competitor, has been recording tremendous growth over the years. Even after the Satyam scandal became public news, Infosys' performance remained largely unaffected.
- It could also have started off as an attempt to cover up the bad performance in one quarter. As Raju admits in his letter, what was initially a small gap between the actual and reported operating profit, became unmanageable as the company expanded.
- Overconfidence in his ability to turn things around before they got out of hand could have been another compelling reason.
- Raju could have sincerely believed that the minor adjustment was in the general interest of everybody concerned, as it would retain investors' confidence in the company.

- Experts refuse to believe that the operating profit of Satyam could be as low as 3%. This leads to speculation that some of the money could have been siphoned off.

The way ahead

- Regulatory measures that demand accountability need to be imposed on the corporations.
- All companies need to come to a consensus to practice ethical behavior. The top-rung companies need to take an initiative in this and set an example for the smaller players.
- The corporate sector is the beneficiary of a huge amount of public funds and state-sponsored bailouts in times of economic crises. Therefore, it becomes the right and duty of the state to subject the sector to rigorous public oversight processes and systems.
- Auditing firms, like Pricewaterhouse Coopers also need to be brought under the regulatory umbrella. Without monitoring, it will be difficult to tell if the auditor and the company are working together to tamper with the accounts.
- Law enforcers must ensure that the people who devise dubious ways to siphon of funds must be punished.

More Links:

- [The Satyam Scandal](#)
- [Satyam fraud scandal: Timeline](#)

Group Discussion Topics

Should Satyam be saved at all costs?

Yes:

- Satyam is a flagship of the Indian IT sector. Its downfall will be an indelible mark on the reputation of the entire industry.
- The government needs to rally around and pull the company out of its present state. Only this will reestablish the confidence of clients and investors in the IT industry.
- The jobs of nearly 53,000 employees are at stake. If you add to this the number of people who have bought Satyam shares, you end up with a significantly huge number of people whose lives could be badly affected by the fall of this giant.

No:

- Satyam must pay for its actions. The government must not set a precedent by bailing it out. They will have to do the same in all cases where a company finds itself in a similar situation.

- This is a clear case of market justice meting itself out. You tamper with the rules, you face the consequences. Satyam should be an example to all other players in the arena not to indulge in nefarious tactics.
- Satyam does not represent the entire Indian IT industry. Its fall won't be the death knell of the sector. This needs to be made clear to clients and investors.
- If a tainted organization like Satyam is allowed to continue, the IT sector stands to lose a lot more than it hopes to gain.
- Any possibility of a loss of projects on the account of the fall of Satyam is unfounded. There is a fairly high probability of the se projects being redistributed among Satyam's competitors in India.
- The same applies to the employees of Satyam. Trained professionals like them are bound to be lapped up by other companies to handle the redistributed projects.

The India Model Vs. The China Model

Stakeholders: India, China

Background

- China and India are among the world's fastest-growing major economies.
- They compete for foreign investment, access to energy and diplomatic clout.
- But the most fascinating aspect is the startling difference in their political models. While the India model is based on the principles of democracy, the China model is based on unrestrained government authority.
- Which model is successful in the long run remains to be seen.

Key Points

- The high annual growth rate of nearly 10% indicates the success the Chinese model has achieved.
- The Chinese model typifies classic Asian strategy -- exporting labor-intensive, low-priced manufactured goods to the West.
- But experts raise doubts as to whether such a rate is sustainable in the long run in a country like China.
- While the Chinese government exercises complete authority over the people, it pays very little heed to their aspirations and ignores negative criticism.
- India has relied on its domestic market more than exports. It is a consumption-driven model, which focuses more on services than on industry.
- The Indian growth rate is not nearly as spectacular as the Chinese one. Yet, based as it is on a rather stable democratic framework, the rate is sustainable.

Where China scores over India

- In China, the government has complete authority and lets nothing stand in the way of projects that it believes is in public interest. On the other hand, in India even small groups of people have stalled development projects. For example, slum dwellers living alongside the road to Mumbai's international airport have stalled road-widening plans.
- China has focused on exporting labor-intensive, low-priced manufactured goods such as toys and clothes to the West. By doing this, it created a large number of low-end manufacturing jobs. Since India focuses on services and high tech manufacturing, it has been unable to create as many jobs.
- It looks like India has jumped from being an agrarian economy to one driven by services, entirely skipping the intermediate Industrial revolution phase. India is industrially weak as compared to China.
- In India, the bureaucracy is a major hindrance in setting up a business.
- China has the advantage of having high tech manufacturing hubs like Hong Kong and Taiwan in its vicinity. Coupled with the cheap and abundant labor available on the mainland, this proves to be a major boost for the Chinese economy. India does not have this luxury.
- China provides excellent infrastructure such as efficient roadways and railways. India lags way behind China in this regard.

- China enjoys the dual benefit of massive investment and cheap but hardworking, literate and easily trained labor. This has made the country a favored location for production of everything from textiles to semiconductors.

Where India scores over China

- The educated classes in India know English. This gives them a decided advantage over China in informational sciences and services. Chinese strength lies mainly in the manufacturing sector.
- Focused as it is on its domestic consumers, the Indian economy remains more or less insulated from global economic downturns.
- The existence of a strong opposition in India puts a check on the government and also stabilizes Indian democracy. This makes Indian growth predictable. Chinese growth, though more spectacular than India's, is comparatively volatile.
- China has a poor record on human rights.
- The Chinese government bulldozes its way through obstacles to carry out development programs, without taking into account the feelings of the people who have to relocate. This builds up resentment for the government and social unrest. In India, the presence of a strong opposition and protest groups puts a check on the government.
- Chinese media is shackled. India, on the other hand, has a free and powerful media and a very well developed judicial system.
- In India, higher education is of a very high quality. Institutes such as the IITs are world renowned and produce a large number of well-qualified professional graduates.
- Experts estimate that the number of well-qualified professional graduates in India will be two times the number in China by 2008.
- The Chinese age pyramid is expected to overturn very soon. There will be a small number of young people supporting a large number of elderly people. In India, half the population is below twenty-five years of age.

More Links

- [India vs. China: The Race for the Future](#)
- [Eyeball to Eyeball at the Top of the World](#)
- [China VS. India: A Battle of Ideas](#)
- [Can the Elephant Dance with the Dragon?](#)
- [How Chindia will impact the world economy](#)

Group Discussion Topics

1. Can India and China work together?

For

- India and China have skills that complement each other. India has what China lacks and vice versa.
- India has a very well developed service industry. Its core strength lies in high tech, rather than low tech manufacturing. China, on the other hand, specializes in making and exporting low-end manufacturing goods like toys and cloth. Together, these two countries can dominate the manufacturing and service industry.

- In China, the literacy rate is very high. But English, the lingua franca of the corporate world, is not a commonly used language. India does not have as high a literacy rate as China. But, the educated class is well versed in English.
- At some point in time China will need to focus on services and India on developing industries. Both countries can help each other in this regard.

Against

- India and China share a hostile history of border skirmishes and territorial disputes. They even went to war in 1962. The two countries would need to bury their differences if they wish to work together.
- Another obstacle is the difference in the political ideologies of the two countries. China is headed by an authoritarian communist government. India is a democracy.
- The fact that a democracy like India can have a strong and rising economy would force the Chinese to reexamine their economic model. People are bound to express their discontent with the government.
- Though the Chinese media is shackled, reports of public unrest and demonstrations are leaking out. It is very difficult to predict what China will be like twenty years down the line.
- India's close ties with the US and China's links with Pakistan could be deterrents in the development of any business ties between the two countries.

Agitation against North Indian Immigrants in Mumbai

Stakeholders: MNS, North Indian workers in Mumbai, people of Maharashtra, Government of Maharashtra, political leaders of the SP and RJD

Background

- The **attacks on North Indians in Maharashtra** began on February 3, 2008 after violence erupted between workers of the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) and Samajwadi Party (SP) in Mumbai.
- MNS chief Raj Thackeray defended his party workers by blaming the attack on the provocative and unnecessary show of strength by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar migrants and their leaders.
- Raj Thackeray accused migrants from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar of threatening Maharashtrian culture. He termed the celebration of Chhath Puja by North Indian migrants an unnecessary show of arrogance and strength.
- He accused actor Amitabh Bachchan of favouring his native state Uttar Pradesh over Maharashtra, citing that the actor chose to start a school in UP instead of Maharashtra, where he attained fame and popularity.
- The state government finally swung into action on February 13, 2008, arresting Raj Thackeray and local SP leader Abu Asim Azmi for instigating violence and causing communal tensions. They were released on the same day with a gag order forbidding them from making further inflammatory remarks.
- The time leading to Raj Thackeray's arrest was marked with tension across Maharashtra. North Indians were attacked in various parts of the state by MNS workers.
- On October 19, 2008, MNS activists attacked candidates who had arrived in Mumbai to attend the Railways Recruitment test.
- On October 21, the Maharashtra government arrested Raj Thackeray on various charges of inciting violence.

Key points

- Thousands of North Indian workers fled the state following the violence.
- Politicians from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were quick to criticize the attacks. Raj's views also came in for a lot of flak from Bal Thackeray, his uncle and the chief of the Shiv Sena.
- Though many people sympathised with Raj Thackeray's cause, his methods were severely criticized.
- The question as to whether Maharashtra was for Maharashtrians alone became a matter of discussion.
- The political motive behind the MNS agitation was also questioned. Was Raj Thackeray genuinely concerned about the people of Maharashtra or was the agitation a political gimmick?

What are the implications of the MNS agitation against the North Indians?

- The MNS started off by enlisting people irrespective of their cultural and regional backgrounds. While the MNS failed in this attempt, the Shiv Sena tasted some success.
- The Shiv Sena was successfully reaching out to people and taking up political issues, like farmer suicides in Maharashtra. Some political observers think that the MNS attacks were a calculated move to unseat the Shiv Sena as the true representative of the Marathi-speaking people. For its own survival, the MNS needed to embarrass the Sena by taking away its mass base.
- The timing of the MNS agitation has hurt the Shiv Sena's efforts to reach out to North Indians. The MNS actions remind people of the Shiv Sena's own agitations against South Indians in the 60s, prompting them to be extra cautious in their dealings with the Shiv Sena.
- The Shiv Sena is now in a situation where it not only has trouble connecting to the North Indians, but also stands to lose ground with the sizeable Marathi-speaking population of the state. The popular sentiment of that group seems to be swinging the MNS way.
- By taking up the cause of the Marathi-speaking people, Raj Thackeray is portraying himself as the true successor to Bal Thackeray.
- The rise of Raj Thackeray could work in favour of the Congress and the NCP (Nationalist Congress Party), as it would curb the growing strength of the Shiv Sena in the state.
- The violence that followed Raj Thackeray's arrest on October 21 affected normal life in Mumbai. Though it brought the agitation against the North Indians into the limelight, it also could seriously affect Raj Thackeray's chances at the elections coming up next year.
- The exodus of workers from Maharashtra caused a major shortage in labour in local industries. It is estimated that the financial losses amounted to between Rs. 500 crore – Rs. 700 crore.
- Following the violence in Maharashtra, threats were reported against Maharashtrian families residing in other parts of the country.

Is Raj Thackeray justified?

Yes

- The vast migration of people from other states into Mumbai has put a severe strain on the infrastructure in the city, lowering the quality of life of the citizens. Mumbai will find it difficult to cope with further influx.
- Due to this heavy influx, a majority of people live in appalling conditions. It is a known fact that there are a significant number of Bangladeshi immigrants in the city.
- Violence of any sort is unacceptable. But it is not wrong to hold that encroachments should be stopped, that people must not be allowed to occupy pavements, or that the cut-off years for regularisation of slums must be strictly adhered to.
- Raj Thackeray contends that it makes sense for settlers from other states to learn the local language and become part of the local culture. This is the norm all over the world and Maharashtra should not be an exception.
- If North Indian leaders use a festival like the "Chhath Puja" to tap into a vote bank, it could lead to unrest in the city. Politicizing of traditional and cultural events is not desirable.
- The exams were for recruitment into Grade 3 and Grade 4 jobs. These jobs don't require specific education qualifications. It makes sense for local people to be considered for these jobs rather than finding recruits from other states.

- With a growing influx of migrants, Mumbai stands to lose a distinctly Maharashtrian identity. Since the city is the capital of Maharashtra, this may not be acceptable to Maharashtrians.

No

- People migrate to Mumbai because they have very limited job opportunities in their native states. The solution to Mumbai's immigrant problem is to develop an alternative trade hub elsewhere in the country. This idea needs to be put across peacefully. Violent agitations will only result in the inevitable backlash.
- Some Maharashtrian families living in other parts of the country are bearing the brunt of the MNS agitation against North Indians. If the MNS is justified in its actions, are they ready to accept retaliatory actions against Maharashtrians settled in other states?
- Mumbai is perhaps India's only truly cosmopolitan city. Though it is fair to expect it to reflect Maharashtrian culture to some extent, it is not right to believe that it will be like the rest of the state or even like any other city in the country.
- In India, people are free to seek employment and residence in any part of the country. Employment opportunities are equally available to all people. It is not like the immigrants are taking away jobs from the Maharashtrians. Most immigrant workers are taking up jobs, like vending vegetables or driving taxis, which are normally shunned by Maharashtrians.
- The contribution of various communities in making Mumbai the commercial capital of the country should not be forgotten.
- The notion that any city or part of India belongs only to its 'natives' is unconstitutional and damaging to national unity and integration.

More Links

- [Shobhaa De on Mumbai vs. Bombay](#)
- [The Downward Spiral of Maharashtra State Politics](#)

Group Discussion Topics

1. Is Mumbai becoming intolerant?

For

- A cosmopolitan city tolerates people with different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds. In the light of the recent violence against North Indians, it can be said that Mumbai is losing its cosmopolitan outlook.
- The city, apparently, is being divided into pockets that are dominated by particular communities. It is believed that people belonging to other communities are dissuaded from buying homes in these pockets.
- Ironic as it may seem, migrants from other states also have had a hand in destroying the cosmopolitan image of the city. In a truly cosmopolitan city, citizens blend in with the local culture, while still retaining their individual identities. By refusing to learn the local language and becoming part of the local culture, the migrants are doing their bit in rupturing the cosmopolitan fabric.
- Agitations are on the rise in Mumbai. Those targeted include famous artists, exhibitions and movies.

Against

- The violence instigated in the city against North Indian workers is the handiwork of a few people motivated by political gains. It does not represent the view of the common people who actually make up the city.
- In times of great crisis, like the floods of July 2005 or the serial bomb blasts of July 2007, Mumbai has shown its true spirit and rallied as one putting aside all cultural, religious and linguistic differences.
- People belonging to a community tend to stick together. This phenomenon is not unique to Mumbai. It is more a matter of convenience than any religious divide. For example, Catholic communities tend to grow in the vicinity of churches.

Mumbai's Shanghai Dream: What Ails the City?

The Stakeholders:

The citizens of Mumbai and the rest of the country

Background:

- A short while after coming to power, the Vilasrao Deshmukh government began harping about its plans to make Mumbai a “world-class city” like Shanghai.
- But very soon the plans got caught up in the usual problems that Mumbai faces – uncontrolled migration, slums, appalling infrastructure and political pressure.
- Can Mumbai ever become a Shanghai? Should it even aim to do so, or should it be content with developing the existing infrastructure and confronting its other problems?

Key points:

- Migration of unskilled workers from all parts of the country into Mumbai in search of a livelihood has been the city's biggest problem. Many of the other issues the city faces can trace their roots to this problem.
- The uncontrolled migrations have also put a severe strain on the infrastructure of the city. Housing and transport are the two sectors that have been hit the hardest.
- A sizeable number of these migrants end up on the pavements or in the slums that dot the city. The number of slums in the city has risen dramatically over the years. A lot has been said about relocating slum-dwellers to other parts but precious little has been done, mainly due to political pressures.
- While many of the slum-dwellers are seekers of legitimate means of earning their livelihood, it is believed that the slums also harbor anti-social elements and illegal migrants from neighbouring countries. This could be a threat to the security of the nation and needs to be taken seriously.
- Mumbai depends heavily on its local railway network and roadways for transportation. These facilities have been stretched to the maximum due to the rapidly rising population of the city.
- The roads in many places are riddled with potholes and are, in general, in a bad state. Also, the development projects of the government – which includes building flyovers and a metro railway for the city – are currently causing a lot of inconvenience to people who have to travel by road.
- The city badly needs at least one more international airport to ease some of the pressure off the lone international airport currently at the city's disposal.
- Not enough attention is paid to environmental issues. The air quality in the city is dangerous and the Mithi River that flows through the city is in a pitiable state.
- There is a lack of consensus as to whether the government is going about the development projects in the right way.
- Recently, there have been violent protests organized by a regional party against migrants from North India. The repercussions of the agitation were felt in many parts of the country.

- While the agitation was widely condemned by people, it also brought to the fore the wave of dissent flowing through some sections of people in the city.
- The recent terror attacks, which held the city hostage for over three days, have also raised serious concerns over the security of the city.
- In the past, the city has seen hostile sectarian violence and serial bomb blasts in local trains and business establishments. The security situation in the city does not exactly inspire confidence.
- Should there be a change in the way the city is governed? Should there be a CEO exclusively for the city? These are some of the questions being raised on account of the various problems the city is confronting.

How Mumbai can become a global city

- Get the infrastructure back on its feet. Improve roads, transportation systems and drainage systems.
- Speed up public sector projects like the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP), which includes road works, introduction of new buses and improved trains.
- Focus on Public-Private Partnership projects such as the Mumbai Metro and the setting up of the second international airport near Navi Mumbai.
- Speedup slum rehabilitation programs.
- Improve hygiene; improve air quality by enforcing the use of cleaner-burning fuels and phasing out outdated taxis and trucks.
- Upgrade security systems. The city needs a better-trained police force.
- Focus on conserving the environment. Plant more trees and have more parks and green spots in the city.

Why Mumbai's Shanghai dreams may be unrealistic

- The political structures in the two countries are very different. China bulldozes its way through projects in public interest with scant regard for public opinion. In India, development projects are constantly stalled by well-organized public demonstrations or are caught in vote-bank politics.
- Mumbai wages a constant war against the common evils of unplanned urbanization – pollution, encroachment and traffic congestion.
- The slums that have cropped up all over Mumbai are a major hindrance to development. It is very difficult to relocate slum dwellers because of the support they enjoy from political parties who view them as vote banks.
- To free up precious land required for development projects, the Vilasrao Deshmukh government started razing shanties that had come up after 1995. This rendered many people homeless and was viewed by the Central government as contrary to its pro-poor image. The demolition drive was stopped and only slums that came up after 2000 were allowed to be demolished.
- It is not just the housing or the transport system in Mumbai that is being stretched. The ancient drainage system also acts up every monsoon, leaving large parts of the city inundated.

- Mumbai has been allowed to develop haphazardly. It is very difficult to reverse the process at this stage without resorting to some authoritarian behavior.
- In recent years, Mumbai has shifted from being an industrial city to a city that provides service. But, it has not effectively managed to rehabilitate mill workers and their families.
- The attitude of the citizens also makes a major difference to the way the two cities have developed. Mumbai has an appalling record in basics like hygiene when compared to Shanghai, or to any major city in the world.

More Links

- [Can Mumbai become Shanghai?](#)
- [Should Mumbai be a City State?](#)

Group Discussion Topics

1. Should Mumbai be governed like a corporate, with a CEO in charge of affairs?

For

- Mumbai needs a corporate pattern of governance with a CEO. This kind of government will be able to focus entirely on the city's problems, rather than getting diverted by happenings in the rest of the state.
- With the city being run like a corporate, the focus will be entirely on making it profitable. This will invariably ensure that every department performs efficiently.
- To make the venture profitable, more money would be invested in development of infrastructure. This is one sector that really needs to improve if Mumbai wants to compete with other cities around the globe.
- Such a government will be more accountable, since the parameter to gauge their success will purely be their performance.
- Since the appointment of the officers and CEO will be non-political, they can also be taken to task in case of non-performance, without worrying about any political or popular repercussions.
- Mumbai can choose to invest a large portion of the annual tax collected from its citizens into development projects that benefit the city.
- Chief Ministers are not generally from Mumbai. They are usually from other parts of Maharashtra, where they have a sizeable vote bank to answer to. So, they tend to focus on developing the regions they hail from, ignoring Mumbai.
- Given its rather cosmopolitan nature, Mumbai cannot be considered part of any state. It belongs as much to the rest of the country as it does to the state of Maharashtra. It needs to be governed separately.

Against

- Mumbai's isolation from Maharashtra will not be acceptable to the rest of the state. In the 1950s a proposal had come up to anoint Mumbai as an autonomous city-state. But the Samyukta Maharashtra movement opposed this, even in the face of violent police intervention, and Mumbai was declared the capital of Maharashtra.

- Like for the rest of India, Mumbai is vitally important to the state of Maharashtra. Maharashtra will find it very difficult to establish another business hub to fill the void left behind by Mumbai.
- The CEO will be a non-political appointment, which means that the citizens of Mumbai will have no say in the appointment of the person in charge of governing the city.
- If the CEO is given a free hand to run the city, there is every possibility that he will resort to authoritarian rule to achieve his targets. This will be akin to a China-like state of affairs, where projects in “public interest” are carried out without taking into account the feelings of the public.
- If, on the other hand, the CEO’s authority is limited, he will not be any different from the many Chief Ministers who have had to abandon development projects due to political pressure.

Marketing 101 – Obama and Ghajini

With the financial meltdown, businesses are going through crunch-time in terms of marketing budgets. Advertising budgets are being frozen by many companies. Web marketing offers a cheaper, cost-effective method for businesses. There are no geographical limits online; there is no time limit to online advertising and marketing – it works 24X7; the social networking sites online are throbbing with activity; online is where the market is, and that’s where the buzz has to be created it seems. *Obama’s* political campaign and *Ghajini*, the movie campaign, leveraged the power and potential of the online media.

Cyberspace – A Marketing Playground

- Social media is becoming increasingly popular. It all started off some years back as a means of entertainment and communication for teens. Today the social networking sites are the living rooms of increasing populations who differ vastly in their social, cultural, political, and economic make-up.
- Myspace and Facebook are some popularly used online social networks with millions of registered users worldwide.
- Blogging has become almost addictive. People have opinions on everything and they love voicing those opinions through web logging – popularly called blogging. Some blogs have become so popular that people follow it like they would a favourite soap opera or even a newspaper.
- Sharing videos and photos through YouTube and Flickr has become commonplace.
- Xbox offers games that allow people to network across the world.
- Following up carefully on the audience of a blog, or analysing the content of what the blogs are talking about, or even connecting with people on the social networks can help a business segment, analyse, and target the potential buyers.
- Using all the tools and social media online, businesses are using viral marketing strategies.

What is Viral Marketing?

The term was coined by Jeffrey Rayport, a Harvard Business School Professor, back in 1996. It is a marketing strategy that relies on the usage of existing online social networks to further the advertising message or campaign of a business. It is a cost effective strategy of reaching out to the users immediately. Introducing a brand within an online social network that already exists gets people talking about it. The product then self promotes itself. Consumers feel more involved and in control since they have the power to endorse or reject a brand. A product endorsed by someone within your social circuit is more likely to be accepted by you. There have been debates about the efficacy of viral marketing, but the year 2008-09 has seen some brilliant examples of how this concept can help sell.

Brand *Barack Obama*

- The campaign kicked off with a well planned website.
- The website was not merely a static or frozen advertising brochure. It was participative – users could create their own blogs and forums, they could communicate with Obama and most importantly they were made to feel in control. The campaign was in sync with the phrase used to define a democracy: “Of the people, by the people, and for the people”!

- *Team Obama* used search engine optimization (SEO), to ensure that the website would show up as the first listing if the user searched with the words “Obama” or “Barack” on any of the search engines.
- The campaign messages and endorsement of *Brand Obama* were initiated on the social blogs by the people themselves. People were adding their own YouTubes, music videos, and photos. They were blogging, twittering, chatting, giving advice and opinions, raising money, and before you know it, the viral marketing strategies had pulled in the crowds.
- Appearing for shows on aired on local and national channels would have a limited viewership. Although Obama used traditional media, he became ubiquitous by being on the internet and had a larger audience following his every move.
- Obama’s net savvy team tirelessly sent emails, posted blogs, replied to comments and posts and updated the viewers about the latest happenings. It helped to have the co-founder of Facebook on the team!
- The youth who practically reside in the social media, engaged with the campaign from start to finish. The existing social networks helped Obama’s team in establishing credibility, profiling the potential voters and winning their trust and support.
- By the time the 44th American President was sworn in, he had created history – in more ways than just being the first African-American President. The unprecedented viewership of his inauguration set new internet records.

Brand Ghajini

Movie marketing is a very critical component in the movie’s success. With competition rising and advertising budgets falling, there is a need for creative marketing. Movie makers bank on the opening week for maximizing collections. A good opening week requires a good marketing plan.

- There was a whole range of PR strategies behind the box office success of Ghajini. What was interesting and different with *Ghajini* was that the producers of movie tied up with a digital media company *Hungama* to chalk out an online marketing plan for the film.
- An interactive website was setup to engage audience attention. The official website - www.rememberghajini.com was unique. It did not disclose anything about the movie’s story, plot, or characters. It simply engaged users’ attention by providing lots of videos and images. The site was reflective of the movie’s overall mood.
- Besides the official website, *Hungama* also helped in setting up two other websites that had viral applications. This initiative was one of the first of its kind for movie marketing in India. These sites were highly interactive and allowed the users to upload their own photos and data and be able to simulate the movie experience. The online community was soon buzzing about the movie.
- Aamir Khan, the movie’s lead actor was closely involved in the marketing of the movie. Another creative online strategy was to invite media people to upload their photos on the movie’s official website and thereby create their profiles. Aamir would interact online with each journalist based on some memorable detail from the profile. The concept of Aamir engaging at a personal level with media helped further the online buzz.
- The critics may or may not have raved about the movie; the audience may have been left with mixed opinions. Brand *Ghajini* however, has broken all records on its first week box office collections. The hype and buzz was in a large part contributed by online marketing – a fact that did not go unnoticed.

Web marketing has tremendous power and potential and can be used to market anything from a political candidate to a movie. Creativity is the use of internet marketing is going to

count. One big challenge that web marketing faces is probably security risks. Large and small businesses are moving towards online viral strategies. The appeal of web marketing is already resonating in Indian politics.

L. K. Advani's political campaign is adopting *Obama's* online marketing tactics. How effective is it going to be...we'll have to wait and find out after the elections!

More Links

- [Obama Raised Half a Billion Online](#)
- [Ghajini breaks convention, even on the Web](#)
- [Obama's Web Marketing Triumph](#)

Social Networking: Connecting or Distancing Humanity?

6.5 BILLION people and only 6 degrees of separation?

On the one hand you have population experts sounding warning bells about an ever expanding population worldwide – “6.5 billion people and the **world is growing**”; on the other hand is an interesting theory known as the six degrees of separation which talks about a shrinking world.

The six degree theory suggests that each person is only 5 relationships away from knowing the sixth human being on this planet. So if you were to pick any random unknown person on earth, you would be connected to that person through a chain of just **5** common acquaintances. This makes the world appear **smaller and more connected** despite the huge population. Several have tried to prove this theory of social networks; several still consider it an urban myth. This six degree of separation idea is important because it was the basis of the social networking sites that we know today.

Social networking sites mushroomed in the mid 90s. People are spending more and more time online. Today the blackberry toting, net-surfing pod population is busy blogging, Twittering, Flickr-ing (uploading pictures), playing *Second Life* and networking with others, using the tools of social media. Yet paradoxically, people seem to be feeling more isolated than ever **despite the digital closeness**.

So, are the social networking sites connecting people or distancing them socially, culturally, and emotionally?

Connecting people

- Social networking sites defy geography. Given the busy lifestyles and the fact that people are scattered across the world, social networking helps people to stay in touch.
- Social networking sites provide ways to extend offline relationships, giving people ways to arrange meetings and events easily. Twestival, an event organized by the Twitter community is just such an example where the online community finds ways of socializing offline.
- Social networking sites provide ways for like-minded people to share ideas and collaborate, making them feel more connected.
- People with disabilities who find it difficult to go out and meet people, feel more connected using these sites.
- The older generation is also finding ways to stay connected with grandchildren and other family members scattered through the world.
- Social media is proving to be useful in education. Recently Imperial College in London is experimenting with using *Second Life* (the virtual 3D world) to help medical students learn how to treat patients.
- Politicians are using social media. Campaigns are no longer local but are becoming international. Social media is connecting global communities of people.
- Social media is here to stay. With the web becoming mobile, people are going to embrace social media even while on the move. Technology is only as good as the people using it. If used properly, social media can help bridge distances between people. Social networking has the power to make you feel connected to every sixth person in the world!

Distancing people

- Social networking sites are addictive. While many people use it to extend their friendship, others simply use it as a replacement for real world friendships.
- A social media user may have over 1000 friends but the ties with all 1000 are unlikely to be strong.
- Online relationships do not require the same interpersonal skills needed in the real world. Social skills such as tact, sensitivity, empathy, and anger management are getting lost online. In the real world, people do not just walk up to you and ask to be your friend – they have to earn the right. Online however, relationships can be made or broken with a click of the mouse. This possibly increases the feeling of disconnection.
- A Facebook *poke* is no replacement for a real world hug.
- There is no divide between what is private and what is public. Online public suicides, voyeurism, and other intimate details revealed through micro blogging are not an indication of “connecting” with people.
- *Second Life* is a free virtual world where users can socialize and connect. This virtual world has a population of 100,000. Each person (known as a resident) controls a three dimensional puppet known as an avatar. The avatar often reflects the personality of the user. The avatar can be programmed to display a range of human emotions and indulge in virtual activities like dancing, partying, and shopping. They can create and trade virtual property. Users interact and socialize with each other in the virtual world through these avatars. How can sitting **alone** in front of the computer be a real interaction or connection with people?
- The virtual world is no longer a static page. It is a 3-dimensional space made to resemble the real world. Addiction to this virtual world is disconnecting people from having real and more meaningful relationships. It is also disconnecting the users themselves from reality.
- People spend endless hours reading trivia about others in the virtual world. This takes away time that could be used to socialize in the real world.
- The person you “think” you are connecting with is possibly “hiding” behind an adopted online persona.
- British scientists are indicating that social networking sites have a negative impact on the social skills of children.
- People in office are using office hours for social networking sometimes at the cost of not interacting with their office mates. A common scenario in an office meeting is that people are checking out their Facebook accounts or sending and receiving Tweets. This may be coming at the cost of actually *participating* in the meeting, *listening* to others, and being involved in *meaningful dialogues*. This could only serve to alienate people and hurting team spirit.
- The online community is furthering a **digital divide** between those that have access to internet and are members of social networks and those that do not have access to the internet or don't use it effectively. The digital divide exists between countries. It can also exist within a country. Social networking was used extensively by the Obama campaign. In such political campaigns, Facebook and MySpace became part of a participatory culture. Those who do not have access to internet are getting marginalized and isolated. Imagine the digital divide that already exists within India. Providing net access to India's 1 billion is still a distant dream. So the divide will continue to exist.
- The Pope has warned people against extensive use of social networking as it could marginalize a lot of people worldwide.

Seldom has technology been received with open arms at the very onset. Television, the internet and every other innovation has had to deal with criticism to begin with. Social media is no different. In this case, the criticism is not entirely unfounded. Social media maybe reducing the degrees of separation but it is also reducing the quality and depth of the links that people have, thus leading to a sense of increasing isolation. But, like other innovative ideas, social networking is here to stay. People of all age groups and all walks of life are going to increasingly warm up to the idea. Its judicious use can only be left to the individual's discretion.

More Links:

- [The Rise of the Social Nervous System](#)
- [Social Media Cuts Six Degrees of Separation to Three](#)
- [Proof! Just six degrees of separation between us](#)

Return of the Native – India’s Brain Gain

Brain Drain

During the 80s and 90s India’s intellectual energy was migrating out of the country. Talented students, research-oriented people, and the high-skilled and technical workforce were moving out to seek better opportunities in the US and other developed nations. People cried “foul” against these migrants for leaving after the government had invested in them. But, in a country of a billion people, the out-migration of a minor percentage was initially not a cause of great concern for the leaders of India.

The wake-up call

The people who were leaving were the top-tier talent pool. It was India’s intellectual capital -the value of which cannot be measured directly, but the loss of which often translates into loss of financial capital. The leaders realized the long-term losses for the nation. Science and technology, innovation, and the health care industry were being hit. India was in a state of flux. Liberalization, economic reforms, globalization, and the IT sector were changing the Indian landscape...perhaps readying it for the reverse brain-drain.

Reverse Gear

A study in 2006 estimated that 60,000 IT professionals from the US had moved back to India. By 2007, 5000 doctors had moved back to India from the UK. More and more Indians are returning home. The global economic recession appears to be adding momentum to this reverse brain drain.

Why do people migrate? It is due to push and pull factors. Push factors are the unfavourable characteristics of a place that force people to leave. Pull factors are the characteristics of a place that seem attractive enough to draw people there. Push and pull factors could be social, cultural, economic or even political.

Push factors in the US

- Non pragmatic and restrictive immigration policies are frustrating Indians. The US issues 65,000 H1-B visas to foreigners who want to work in the US. The visa cap is restrictive compared to the number of applications from world over. The permit allows the worker a period of 6 years during which there are several restrictions in terms of jumping jobs. The delay in issuing green cards is another factor. Post 9/11, the immigration policies have become even more stringent.
- The dot-com bubble in the US burst in the first half of this decade. The exodus of IT workers from California had begun. The current financial crisis added the momentum. The subprime mortgage, the economic meltdown and the weak job market has left the Indians in the US disillusioned. The massive number of lay-offs coupled with the difficulty of finding a new job has got many Indians packing their bags.
- The economic turmoil has impacted the US universities. Students are prolonging their graduation since the job market is down. They cannot get a work permit which means they need to prolong their graduation (to retain student status), take up another degree or return to India. Getting financial aid/research grants is getting difficult. Even the best universities like Harvard and MIT are going through budget cuts and lay-offs.

- Post 9/11, Indians (along with other foreigners) were increasingly becoming victims of hate crimes. In the last year or two, there have been increased news reports about murders of Indian students. While the motives behind these murders could be diverse, the security and safety issues are possible psychological push factors.

Pull Factors in India

- Economic reforms in India during the last one decade have stirred a sleeping giant so to speak. The deregulated Indian economy has seen a tsunami of foreign investments. Improved infrastructure, improved healthcare, access to amenities and better work opportunities are drawing Indians back.
- Despite the global recession, a lot of the Indian firms are still hiring. Locally, India is reeling under the Satyam scam, recession and competition but the global community perceives the Indian job market to be a lot safer.
- India is an emerging market in finance. Hit by recession, the traditional financial nerve centres like London, New York, and Tokyo are staggering to stay afloat. Headhunting companies in Mumbai are reporting that the number of job applications is increasing from the US. The interesting fact is that the job applicants are not just Indian NRIs. Many foreign nationals are also indicating their interest in the Indian finance market which seems relatively safer than the traditional brand names globally.
- Overseas Citizenship Certificate in India allows returning Indians to enjoy the benefits of Indian citizenship without surrendering their foreign passport. This government initiative has acted as a pull factor attracting many NRIs to India. They feel “safer” in knowing that they could return if things don’t work out.
- Investment banking, private equities, and IT sectors in India are attracting business graduates from the US. India with its burgeoning software exports industry is an international IT hub. It is no longer back-end work. IT is now becoming more product-oriented. India is attracting experienced people.
- India is rearing to position itself as a global knowledge based research and development centre. The latest type of outsourcing work coming India’s way is R&D. This is coming from manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and a variety of other sectors. Cost of innovation in India is relatively less than in the western world. It’s not just cost but also the highly skilled workforce in India. Entrepreneurs find it easier to set up labs here. The large and readily available market also helps. R&D is a major pull factor. It is also attracting major investments from global corporations.
- The success of the Chandrayaan moon mission played a critical role in enhancing India’s image in the space technology department. There have been reports of Indian scientists working in NASA showing interest in working at ISRO. Whether or not it attracts scientists from NASA to work at ISRO remains to be seen.
- Cultural and social ties remain strong in Indians. People often return to be with family. The emotional bonds act as strong pull factors.

Plugging the Drain

India needs to capitalize on this brain gain. An experienced, multicultural, high-skilled workforce is going to further fuel India’s economic growth. Here are some possible measures that India needs to take in order to retain the intellectual capital:

- Provide quality education with more emphasis on research. A large number of students migrate to the US for research degrees. Improving the research sector is critical in retaining the best.

- The government needs to step up its spending on R&D.
- Tie-ups, collaborations, and partnership with foreign universities can help improve competition and quality of education. Foreign universities are already shopping in India and planning on opening campuses. Whether a Harvard-like campus in India can provide the same educational experience is debatable.
- Improving infrastructure and amenities will encourage more foreign investment.
- Go green and adopt green business practices.
- Terrorism is a threat that needs to be dealt with in order to ensure that India retains its talent pool and continues attracting others.

India is attracting its own back again. It is also opening doors to foreign workers and students. What started as a trickle is increasing into a stream. What remains to be seen is whether this reverse brain drain is significant enough to offset the drain that took place over almost 3 decades. Is India's brain gain going to sustain once the global economy recovers? Until then, it appears to be *Namaste* India!

More links

- [Why skilled immigrants are leaving the US](#)
- [India Inc looks for expats and NRIs](#)
- [ITians no longer prefer U.S. as job destination, says study](#)

Popular GD Topics at the IIMs

1. A chain gang is a modern form of slavery.
2. Affirmative action draws people to work they never considered before.
3. Any education other than Professional education is a waste of time.
4. Are there extraterrestrials who influence events on Earth?
5. Are we raising a generation of burnt-out children?
6. Bigamy
7. Breast Implants
8. Bribery in Business is not unethical
9. Business and ethics cannot co-exist.
10. Can India become a permanent member of the UN Security council?
11. Can India compete with China?
12. Caste enumeration – what purpose will it serve?
13. Cats are better than dogs.
14. Chinese goods – competition or dumping?
15. City curfews help to prevent juvenile crime and to protect youth from victimization.
16. Computer Viruses are works of technological art
17. Conspiracy is a very common form of political behaviour.
18. Desire is the root of all suffering
19. Direct mail is a special form of junk mail.
20. Discuss the pros and cons of having a credit card.
21. Easing of restrictions on cross border movements of foreign exchange under the capital account will lead to higher capital inflows into the country
22. E-commerce is the face of the new economy.
23. Economic reforms are stipulated measures of IMF
24. English should be made the official working language and Hindi a regional language.
25. FIIs are not an important source of capital for India
26. For sustainable growth India should focus on manufacturing?
27. Hidden Persuaders motivate consumer behaviour
28. In business ‘what you know’ is not as important as ‘who you know’.
29. In this age, poetry has lost all its relevance
30. India in AD 2020
31. India. Would it die a natural death?
32. Inflation is inevitable in a developing economy seeking rapid growth
33. International trade barriers work.
34. Is bureaucracy a hindrance to economic reforms in India?
35. Is honesty the best policy for an ordinary citizen of India?
36. Life imprisonment is a good alternative to capital punishment.
37. Listening is as important as speaking.
38. Marijuana has a medical value.
39. Moral Majority loses
40. Most people support embryonic stem cell research.
41. Online dating chats have nothing to do with a search for a soul mate.
42. Passive smoking is equally harmful.
43. Political awakening of backward classes

44. Political correctness is essential for business
45. Primary education should be complete privatized
46. Print media should be banned and replaced by digital media to save the earth
47. Promotion of tourism is against the Indian value system
48. Prosperity of the individual leads to prosperity of society.
49. Should India quit the WTO?
50. Should schools distribute condoms?
51. Sustainable urban living without the use of excessive natural resources must be our future.
52. The economic boycott causes most of the problems in Cuba.
53. The Hippocratic Oath is a big hoax
54. The Nostradamus Code is a guide to the future
55. The pros and cons of a female President.
56. The real learning in a B-school takes place outside the classroom.
57. The U.N. is dead. Long live the U.N.
58. The U.N. is mainly based on diplomacy and enhancing relationships.
59. There are no facts, only interpretations.
60. Vegetarianism is the way of life in the future
61. Western movies, music, dance, and culture are hurting Indian culture.
62. What is wrong with child labour?
63. Why drinking and driving is dangerous to yourself and others.
64. Women activists are spoiling/hampering the cause of women.
65. Women empowerment will lead to social development

Note: The above data has been collated from information provided by previous IIM students and call-getters.

For more GDPI links and resources log on to <http://testfunda.com/gdpi>

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