

PREPARING YOUTH TO ADAPT TO THE NEW WORLD

Webinar

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Speaker

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Preparing Youth To Adapt to the New World

You have been a Wipro Alumnus and then a behaviour scientist with mastery in design and systems thinking and also a choice architect. How do you sum up your experience so far? And what are looking forward to?

I started my career as a software engineer, 21 years back. Roughly around 12-15 years back, I used to write programs and run it on a device, I particularly worked on embedded systems, I used to program small devices. So the interesting thing here was I write any program and run it at any point in time and it worked exactly as I wanted. Later after 4 to 5 years, I was also taking responsibility for leading a team, where I observed that the same process does not fit in here. The programs as I said, worked always at any time. But, with people it was different. Humans are complex, and so is understanding humans. One can't program them for achieving desired results!



Vineesh Sathianathan

There began my journey to solve this complexity, I tried to understand people more. I pursued a masters course in Psychology and then PhD in behavioural sciences. So, I started as a Computer Engineer, I am still an engineer but one who likes to engineer human behaviour. I always wanted to know why humans behave the way they behave. Hence, I ended up here as a behavioral scientist.

You have developed the DYD program, tell us more about DYD.

DYD (Dare Your Dreams) is a platform which began after observing and self-testing my own life. My interaction with my team members. As I said, 15 years back when I had started managing teams, I was surprised to see them with so many complexities. This pushed me to know deeper about human behaviour. DYD started somewhere during that time itself. There was another interesting observation which followed, many people, particularly my team members were unhappy with their work. The paradox is that an individual dedicates most of his awake hours in the office. Research by Gartner in 2019 said that 76% of the employed individuals are unhappy with their jobs. There are numerous researches conducted to study employee engagement and have had similar findings. I began thinking about why are people unhappy with their work. There, I began doing my research.

Most of the graduates have ended up where they are today because they have been mechanized to be there. I realized this happened because the idea of “becoming” or “pursuing” something is second-handed. From childhood, it's the society who decides what should be pursued. Therefore, the impact leads to an individual who fails to think of what he wants to do. People do not try to figure out who they are, what they want to do and if they can do what interests them.

Human beings are born for a purpose. DYD, therefore, is a platform which aspires to help the youth as well as the older generation to redesign their life by helping them connect to a larger purpose. It is a program based to bring out individual strengths over 15 weeks, more like a snapshot of my life. Where the person introspects through various research-proven exercises to understand the self. It is an intensive program where much of the outcome is dependent upon an individual's work, i.e introspection and reflection. Since it is a compressed version of my own life, it gives me more confidence that this is possible.

What need did you see to initiate DYD program?

A majority of the people, especially in an Indian context, are living somebody else's dream today. DYD has been initiated for the people such that they connect to self, to get the answers of questions like what are they and what the purpose of the life is. Our country has around 37% of the youth population which is about 500 million people. Even if 0.001% of these youth connect to their purpose, realise their choices and fulfil the dreams that could result in a ripple effect in the impact generated by them. This would change the way our society looks at something, particularly this is going to be very important in the post-covid world.

Do you feel that as a nation we are yet to tap the potential of youth?

I come from an engineering background. I would give an example of my experience. Every year I used to get about 25% fresh graduates in my team. Out of these at least 70 to 80% ended up here because they were moulded by the society to take up Engineering, not as a personal choice. Before a decade or two, there were only a few countable career options. The scope for change or freedom was restrained because of various family and financial commitments. But today situations are different and better. There is much freedom. Yet, the students pick out of the box of limited choices. They take up what the peer group, their family or the society as a whole decides for them. Consider the level of transformation these young minds could have brought if they were on their self chosen path, to fulfil their purpose. Yes, there is a huge underestimation of youth potential in our nation, which we are yet to tap.

Often the career choices of young minds are influenced by the parents, peers and significant others... This has come up as a trend and we still find students and professionals struggling with their choices. How this career culture and mindsets influence in later (mid) life?

Ours is not an individualistic culture like that of the Western Countries. We have grown up in a culture where we also make others feel comfortable with our choices and decisions from our very childhood. To continue doing that at some point in life we also sacrifice our aspirations.

I will take a hypothetical example of an individual who gets stamped as say, an engineer because somebody from his family or neighbourhood had pursued it before or people pushed him towards it. Over time, the person gets used to the embossed tag name as well as gets habituated to the money that flows in return. Eventually, gets married and has children. As responsibilities increase, so does the loans, etc and various

EMIs, children's education and their future planning! He feels stuck, that something is missing. The person entangles himself in a web created for fulfilling demands that do not end. With such responsibilities, commitments and social needs hovering, even though going back have been there in the mind somewhere but he can't go back. This is the reason why 76% of the people are not engaged with their work, they live passively throughout. This is how the career culture and the wrong choice affects in the midlife of an individual.

How stakeholders in education can be part of this movement?

Our education system is considered to be like a factory. This also is hierarchical, because pupils are categorized in various careers as per their IQ. Their educational institutes, their jobs all are pre-defined as per it. Teachers have a prominent role to develop the life of an individual right from childhood. This demands a question, who should be a teacher in the first place? Unfortunately, not every teacher is passionate about his/her job or may be they landed where they never wished for. At least a majority of the teachers today, never wanted to be teachers. The one who shapes the lives of so many, should be a dreamer first, who accomplishes his purpose as he wished to and now with his interest educate the newer generation. As a responsibility towards building the next generation, today we are just creating replicas in a factory model, we need to shift to customized models. The entire education system has to be redesigned effectively aligning it with the systems thinking approach.

What, in your views would be the urgent need of post-covid young generation who are still in colleges? How should the young generations prepare themselves for the new world?

There are observable changes in the post-covid world. People, in the last few days, have been introspecting much. They would re-evaluate their values as they get enough food for thought as to what in reality matters. Few purpose-driven organizations would use these reflections for reshaping their modus-operandi.

Earlier it was an extroverts' world, as they gained energy from outside. But there is an interesting observation for the new world. This would be the "world of introverts". This time will prove to be instrumental in designing the world for those who invest in introspection and reflection and gain energy from within. The urgent need for the young generation who are still in college is to focus upon their Emotional Quotient. Our management schools, unfortunately, do not teach that. The current situation has given enough time to develop the same which can prove instrumental in influencing their entire life.

How the mindset shift in the work culture, and management can be observed in the post-covid world?

The work culture and the management process would experience a paradigm shift. The organizations have begun experiencing the tremors in their current working culture where many doubt how to pay the employees in the coming months. The post-covid world will encourage remote working as work from home would become the new normal. This will also help in reducing the carbon footprints as people would save

energy by avoiding unnecessary travel. Way of working would be measured by outcome. Secondly, we would focus more on hygiene. The habit of regular sanitizing and leading a hygienic life has been etched among the masses. Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, the organizations would now be more purposeful which will help them survive the post-covid world. Only purpose-driven organizations will sustain as consumers will become more conscious of their choices. Hence, a purpose-driven work force would be celebrated.

From people's perspective, technology would be ever more prioritized and would demand more people to be tech-savvy. From remote working culture through online education to availing necessary services, everything would be technology-driven. Another thing is, people need to be self-starters as it would be difficult to be monitored. 'Self-Starters' will have a higher edge in the job market. There is a very positive change which is being witnessed already, that people and organizations are getting more connected to the culture. The local enterprises will get better opportunities in the market as their demand would increase as against global players in their respective geographical area due to various restrictions.

This period is taking humans back to re-visit the roots!