

Staying ahead

A software specialist working in Singapore specialises in change management, which he also talks and writes about

The biggest struggle in conducting workshops on his pet subject is to get people to attend, says Lalit Jagtiani. That was not a problem he faced on his recent trip to India, when he addressed a series of programmes in Pune, interacting with students, corporate professionals, academicians and businesspersons with small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Things have obviously changed after he wrote his book *When change happens!* Though it was not only that – he also spoke of his professional learnings as a digital thought leader and business transformation specialist with SAP, Asia-Pacific and Japan.

Jagtiani himself, explaining how as a young man ‘with an inflated ego’ pushing enthusiastically for change management and trying to implement what he had learned, he had lost almost all his friends overnight – because they saw him as ‘the chairman’s man’. “The theory doesn’t all come together,” he says. “Concepts have a place only to understand things from an intellectual position.”

Eventually, he and three friends sat together and figured out how to ‘change the way we are doing things’. A big part of this was the definition of a purpose, to define the outcome: “What will you achieve?” And in change management, as in so many other fields, there is no ‘one size fits all’ solution: each person needs to understand his or her contribution in making it work, what is coming in their way of achieving their targets. There is, for instance, a conflict between sales and operations people in most organisations because the concept of ‘all time in full assortment’ (ALTIF) runs counter to the fact that the ‘ops’ people are compensated on the basis of the operational efficiency they bring about.

“I wrote my book like a novel, which is like my own story,” Jagtiani says. “I wrote it all on flights, because my employers have a strict rule prohibiting



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Lalit Jagtiani,
Software specialist, Singapore

any customer work on a flight because of security considerations.” After one-and-a-half years of putting it all together, however, he ran into problems with publishers, mainly it was neither a management book nor a novel. “It was the first time in my life that I got so many rejections!” he grins. So, after having become a ‘tennis ball’ among many publishers, he decided to self-publish. “I got a professional editor, who was very involved and made me rewrite my manuscript

substantially,” he says – and his book saw the light of day.

Jagtiani’s Pune programme started with the BDB Book Club inviting him to share his book with its associates, clients, patrons and book lovers. The session was in the format of a panel discussion, which highlighted the fact that change is always collaborative – which is why his book includes the experiences of business practitioners, who have actively driven change in their organisations.

Business models

“The takeaways that emerged essentially out of the ‘practical stories and experiences and the clarity with which the speakers contributed to *When change happens...* have definitely added value to the narrative of change,” says Manish Kulkarni, director, strategy & business development, BDB India, a market research firm, which hosts the book club as part of its CSR. “This is what the audience will have benefited from.”

He positioned this event as the anchor programme to ride the road to Pune, where he spent five days beginning with a workshop for the faculty members of the Symbiosis School of Economics. The institution, which is preparing to complete a decade of existence, wanted to use this milestone to further the cause of transformation for ensuring a pre-eminent position for itself in the years to come. Jagtiani based his session on the ‘meaning of excellence’; the challenges to achieve this excellence and the actions to be delivered for the achievement of this excellence, and got his audience to wear the cap of change agents as against the cape of academicians.

The author addressed the members of BNI Prosperity, where a congregation of SMEs gave him a standing ovation for his presentation involving 55 proven business models from which all businesses emanate. He also conducted a session for the Department of Management Sciences of the Savitribai Phule Pune University (PUMBA), where he exposed the students to the Business Model Canvas and a quirky experiment of creating a viable business case for marketing a ‘silly elephant.’

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