

Book Review

Connect the Dots

Author : **Rashmi Bansal (2010)**

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Entrepreneurship is the driving engine of the economy and accounts for over 70% of employment in India. Figures elsewhere are not much different. While the success stories of people like Narayana Murthy (Infosys), Sunil Mittal (Bharti Airtel) and Kiran Mazumdar Shah (Biocon) are well known and are in fact, part of the folklore now, not much visibility is given to the hundreds and thousands of other entrepreneurs of a smaller scale, who are successful in their own right. Ms. Bansal successfully fills the gap with her recently published book *Connect The Dots*.

Ms. Bansal's earlier book *STAY Hungry STAY Foolish* was about the success stories of several IIM Ahmedabad graduates who chose to go on their own and became entrepreneurs. Her attempt in *Connect the Dots* continues to be on Entrepreneurship, but this time she has chosen to chronicle the stories of entrepreneurs who barely had a degree and definitely no formal MBA. But they all have the entrepreneurial zeal – Belief in their Idea, Pursuit of Excellence and the Desire to succeed. They have all listened to their customer's voice and used common sense - to be 'different' – what the MBAs call 'differentiator'.

Ms. Bansal has chosen her stories with care, making sure that they represent a real cross section of society – in terms of education, income, language, geography etc. Obviously entrepreneurial success is independent of demographic factors and depends only on Passion, Perseverance and People. The spirit of entrepreneurship is the same whether it is Narayanamurthy of Infosys or Sriram of

Crossword. This is evident when one reads Rashmi Bansal's *Connect the Dots*.

Each story is followed by 'Advice to Young Entrepreneurs' that summarises the protagonist's wisdom in a nutshell. Coming from people who have seen it all, the snippets will prove inspirational. I am sure struggling entrepreneurs will be motivated by the stories in the book. The language is simple and direct. This helps the reader connect to the central character of each story.

If entrepreneurship is the driving engine of the economy, innovation is the driving engine of entrepreneurship. That is what differentiates pioneers from the also-rans. The theme of innovation is quite clearly one of the central ideas in Bansal's book. Product innovation as in the case of Prem Ganapathi's Dosa Plaza and Kunwer Sachdev's Su-Kam, clearly show that no matter how crowded the market, there is always place for the innovators. There are enough examples of service innovation, process innovation and marketing innovation also.

Quite a bit of Hindi is thrown in, in the form of actual quotes by characters. There is no English translation accompanying it. For a non-Hindi reader, this lack of translation might limit the insights that one might have otherwise gained. Each story stands on its own, so the reader need not follow any order in reading the book. While this is a good thing, a serious reader would expect articulation of patterns and themes that can possibly connect these stories, or in Bansal's words, connect the dots.

Overall, the book is worth reading, not only for an entrepreneur, but for everyone who is interested in understanding how to become successful in their chosen career. As Bansal writes, “ ...there is no spreadsheet column to sum up elements such as faith, perseverance and common sense’.

Reviewed by:

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