
What they don't teach you at B-Schools?

- A Case Study

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Neither the industry nor the B schools are doing any great favour to the students by inducting them as trainees. It is the need of the industry and B schools are helping the industry by providing the resource. However the resource is not ready to deliver from the day one. Therefore it is an investment with great potential of splendid returns. The success or failure of this human investment has to be owned by all concerned – the resource itself i.e. the MBAs and PGDBM students, the B schools and the industry. Who has to own higher share of this responsibility could well be a matter of debate.

A dilemma that has to be gone through by all the fresh MBAs of B-Schools- A case Example

Asmita Shanbhag was still not able to come to terms with developments since last morning. It was well past 6 months that she had joined Amrit Technologies Limited as management trainee straight from campus. She still vividly remembers the third day of placements at campus. 30 of the batch of 65 were already placed in first two days. Somehow she trailed either in GD or the interview and missed the placement. With determination, however, she fared so well in GD, the psychometric test and finally the interview. On third day she got selected with ATL on a pretty good compensation of Rs 3 lac a year and got her first choice of marketing. That ATL is not a FMCG didn't really bother her.

The company sold both the process technology as well as chemical equipments to a plethora of customers. Out of Rs.400 crore revenue that ATL earned last year, about 40 % was forex earning. ATL has been earning good profits as well. The company is good, the growth prospects seemed very bright going by its past record

of management trainees making rapid progression, compensation has not been an issue and people around have been quite nice. Asmita was so elated to join ATL. But excitement evaporated pretty soon and Asmita had been feeling unhappy for more than a month. She felt she was doing most mundane things like assisting the marketing chief in making presentations for prospective customers, getting data from juniors who did not seem to like parting with data easily, sitting at desktop for endless hours at redoing slides at boss's whims & fancies.

Despite indirect suggestions to bosses, they didn't take her along for meetings with clients. She thought she was wasting her formative period in unimportant routines and missing out on strategic inputs. With a first class engineering degree baked up by on MBA from a well-recognized B school, Asmita was expecting something much better. She wanted to be sitting in important meetings and taking decisions, leading people, negotiating with clients and interacting with management committee. In pre placement talk at the campus as well as during induction program HR chief and functional heads had talked so much about training in strategic, commercial orientation and what not. Nothing of that seemed to be coming true. As against her experience, Amar Rajgopal management trainee in finance and Pritam Singh another trainee in HR seemed to be doing all kinds of interesting assignments. They always talked excitedly of their

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management training. She decided to whip up the issue with boss and get it sorted out. But as the meeting took place, the boss gave her a long lecture on all virtues such as hard work, devotion, commitment and patience. He clearly said one has to get through this drill before one is involved in decision-making process. He talked a lot about how he nursed his career on his own and how luckier she has been to get structured training. Since that meeting Asmita had been feeling worse than before. She was wondering what should she do – Take it up with HR? Seek an appointment with CEO and say it all? Look at openings elsewhere? Seek a change of function within – finance had been her 2nd elective, should she try there? Will they agree? Or just give up and take whatever comes her way?

Weary, confused, agitated, frustrated, unhappy, indifferent – she herself did not know what her state of mind was. She remembered in the 2nd year of her MBA programme some outside faculty had conducted a half-day workshop on emotional intelligence. She tried to put some learning out of that workshop to use. She attempted to find some mental comfort for herself. But to no avail she felt more and more remorse.

Pranay Jain the Head of Sales and Marketing on the other hand was wondering what has gone wrong with this bright girl Asmita. He had readily agreed with HR's proposal, that ATL inducts management trainees in all major functions. He himself wanted to take 3 to 4 management trainees but HR prevailed upon him to be contented with just two. Asmita and Ram Kumar got selected and joined his team. Between the two, Ram Kumar had been silent worker and made himself comfortable with entire team. Certainly he scored less on competencies like functional knowledge, intelligence and commercial orientation. But Pranay had no problems on that. Ram Kumar made it up with interpersonal relations with team. He maintained a low profile and joined the rank and file of old timers in the department. Asmita, smarter, more intelligent, more ambitious, much more articulate and far more assertive fared far too better on managerial competencies. Fast paced in generating ideas and in a great rush to get them implemented, she disturbed the equilibrium in department, which had more number of old timers in comparison to Finance and HR. Initially she impressed all with her academic knowledge. However, as time went by, her assertion bordering on aggression, her nature of rushing and jumping the

gun started becoming a sore point. She also wanted to be there in everything – be it preparing project documentation for client, meetings with clients and making presentation, negotiating with sub vendors and whatever be it. Asmita slowly got isolated. Pranay appreciated her strengths and wanted her to do well in career but generally felt alienated due to her fussy nature. When she sought to meet him to discuss some issues, Pranay looked forward to counsel her and bring her back on right track. However, Pranay was more than surprised with her adamant stand. A seasoned professional that he is, he kept his irritation aside and tried to counsel her. But much to his chagrin, she did not seem to have taken it well. Pranay will take it up with HR though he sincerely wishes all well for Asmita.

This is not just a fiction. Several fresh MBAs go through this dilemma and equal numbers of HODs also face it. What must be done? How do we ensure that freshers bond best with the industry? Here are some pearls of practical wisdom not out of any bookshelf but straight from the experience.

Let us first line up some action on part of management trainees.

1) First understand, accept and gracefully acknowledge that MBA/ PGDBM is only an entry ticket. It is by no means a sure shot of guaranteed success in organizational hierarchy. It is not a bullet that automatically hits the jackpot. Ask anyone in management – HR Director, Chief of Marketing, CFO, Head of Supply Chain or even a CEO. They all will tell you – yes MBA/ PGDBM as degree is required but only at entry level. Thereafter it is your performance that determines all.

2) And what is the measure of performance initially? It is how best you bond with the rest. The rest of course means the organization, its people, its culture and its character. And people include not only seniors but also more importantly juniors who have put in long years of service and have done well so far without any MBA or PGDBM. Obviously, the non-MBA juniors will not respect you from day one just for your MBA. More often they will feel jealous of you. It is you who have the prime responsibility to win them over. The HR, structured induction and training programs will provide you with necessary environment but you have to use it judiciously to work your way up. In fact the