

# Start-ups: Changing the richness of jobs

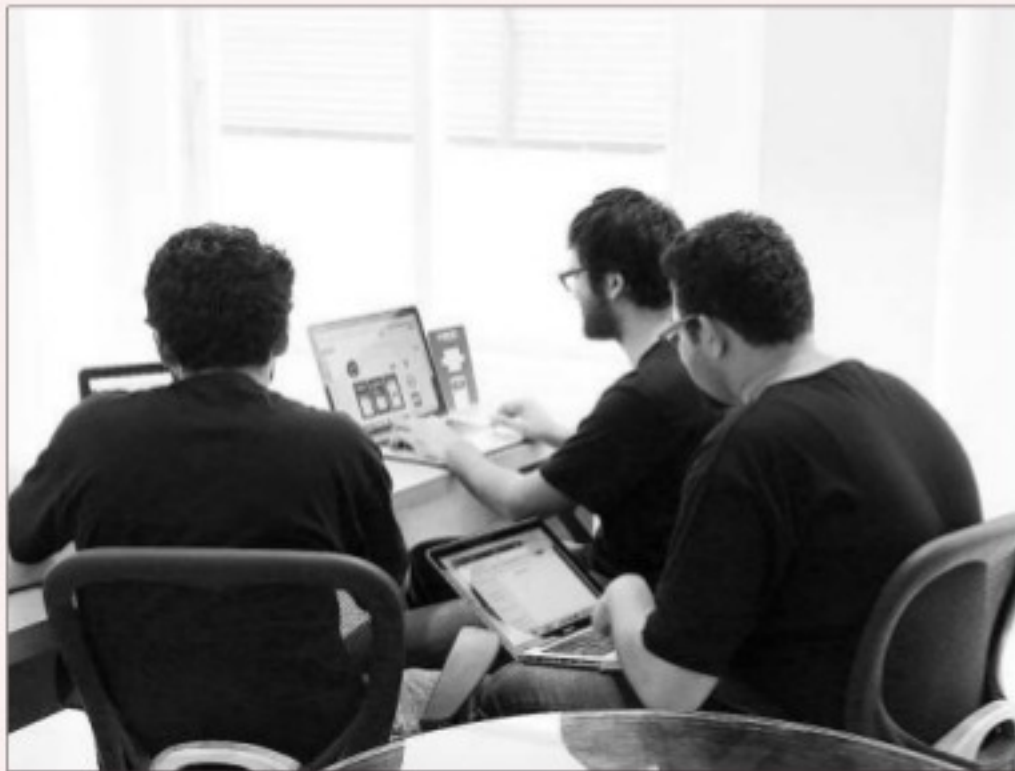
What is needed are entrepreneurs willing and able to take on big challenges, apply design thinking and come up with disruptive innovations that create true transformation

**M**EET Aditi, a 24-year-old digital native working in the marketing department of one of India's large insurance companies. It has been only six months since she has joined the company but she is already beginning to feel restless. Her boss Niel is conferring with Nilofer, the HR head, to address Aditi's flagging interest in her job and the larger issue that most organisations in the services sector face—early stage attrition!

Enter Skills Alpha, one of the newest start-ups in our entrepreneurial ecosystem which appears to have found the perfect solution to the problem at hand. Promising to motivate Aditi and millions like her in India who are disengaged from their current vocation and dissatisfied with the opportunities they have—in corporations, society and the world, Skills Alpha is a platform that uses the best of engagement tools to provide a truly adaptive learning environment. Aditi is engaged by a “bot” from the minute she gets on to the platform, which enables her to assess her own aspirations and goals, look at alternative learning and career paths and get thoroughly engaged on a journey of content discovery, opportunity exploration and learning throughout her tenure in the organisation.

The advantage of platforms such as Skills Alpha are three-fold. First, they are able to move the learning and development discussion from training and content consumption to motivated learning and context creation. The platform leads Aditi to a self-discovered and self-paced path that enables her to realise her own aspirations and link them to the organisational plans.

Second, the use of new tech-



nologies like interactive video, augmented and virtual reality and the ability of platforms to adapt the content that is served up to Aditi's personal learning style (extensive videos rather than presentations, for example) make the whole process pleasant and experiential. And finally the application of cognitive tools, starting with the “bot” and embracing a host of new technologies that market leaders

such as IBM have unleashed for the corporate sector, makes the efficacy of learning and organisational development go up while substantially reducing the cost of training that is often the first item to get slashed when budgets come under pressure.

The argument exists for a new generation of start-ups focused on business-to-business solutions or, as in the case of Skills Alpha, on business-to-business-to-consumer ideas. Across a variety

of functions such as learning, sales productivity improvement, financial skills and vertical domain areas such as loan management, actuarial services and digital community development and deployment in organisations, the discussion has moved from custom-built or packages software to multi-tenant platforms and micro-services that can be incorporated in the business and technology architecture of future organisations.

The fact that this will spell a period of revenue and profit growth slowing for traditional IT and business process management service providers is unarguable. Except for a few like ePAM, Globant and some of the early movers in the new space of digital platform engineering, incumbent vendors will find it difficult to sing the same tune for very long and will have to look for new innovative platform solutions to take

to market while continuing to incrementally change every internal and external business process in the organisation.

Some of the technology innovations in the B2B solutions space are also beginning to find their way into the consumer and citizen environment. In the city of Pune, for instance, the municipal corporation in collaboration with the corporate sector has embarked on an ambitious programme to build skills lighthouses in every ward, which will be available to every citizen including slum dwellers and the most underserved strata of society. Here you will see video walls, virtual reality headsets and augmented reality workstations, enabling learners to embark on an experiential path to becoming nursing assistants or home chefs or one of 30 or more vocations, all of which have more job and entrepreneurial attractiveness than Java programming skills may have in these times. And while the lighthouses introduce the best of technology into skills development, the process of “agency building” or aspiration development leading to counselling and then skills development, before a candidate embarks on a vocation search, is what makes this approach successful.

What our country and the world needs is entrepreneurs willing and able to take on large challenges, apply design thinking and come up with disruptive innovations that will create true transformation! Your ideas and examples are welcome as this column takes you on a voyage of discovery.

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