

Elephant's Gentle nudge

Organisations, leaders, professionals, teams and students who receive training and mentoring, like a baby elephant gets from a battery of female relatives, have a distinct advantage over those with limited exposure and worldview



Manjiri Gokhale

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From journalism to information technology, a BPO (business process outsourcing) firm, marriage and moving to the UK, working with an insurance company... Manjiri Gokhale-Joshi has a varied background that gave her experience in many different fields. Manjiri, who is now a final semester executive participant of the M.Sc course in Major Programme Management degree course in Said Business School at Oxford University, has studied the Delhi Metro railway and Mumbai's new Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport to highlight Indian successes in her chosen area of research.

Meanwhile, her husband Abhay took up tuition – “because he finds it fun”, she explains – and got

into mentoring students to instil a love of mathematics and scientific method. Between the two of them, they realised that there is a great potential in this field. As Manjiri explains: “Students migrate to the UK in large numbers to go to University. Once they reach there, they find a vast difference in the educational systems, in terms of writing, documentation, the way of thinking and so on. We decided to launch crossover programmes for them to be able to adapt – including life skills training, to learn public speaking and presentation skills.”

This became Ajay's baby, Elephant Connect Education. With eight years' experience in training school and University students in science, maths and engineering subjects, this was right up his alley. An accomplished educationist, Abhay has been a Lecturer in

Engineering, Maharashtra Institute of Technology, Pune, and a School Governor at Radcliffe School, Milton Keynes, UK. His mentoring has transformed struggling students into confident achievers performing to the best of their abilities.

Realising that corporate and other entities, especially back home in India, need training in leadership, they also launched Elephant Connect Professional, which Manjiri heads. A training and management specialist, she has led functions across human resources, corporate communication and programme management in various industries, where she designed and delivered management training and development programmes, and blended learning courses for global teams. Among her past assignments are: Learning & Development Specialist and



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nurturing and training its employees even after they have been with it for 25 years, because they need to be the best.

While Manjiri herself comes with a background spanning various industry sectors, Abhay too adds value to the professional side, besides being in charge of Elephant Connect Education. With over 25 years of corporate managerial experience behind him, including stints as Head, Customer Delivery at Tech Mahindra, UK; Head, Professional Services for NSC Global, UK, he provides consultancy for start-ups as well as established businesses in the areas of pre-sales, planning, service management, service assurance, contract management, customer management and delivery management of complex projects and solutions.

The Elephant Connect website quotes the opinion of Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Chairman of the Bangalore-based Biocon Ltd, on Bosses of the Wild: “If each person could identify which animal type they are faced with, predict responses and tailor their own response, imagine the person hours saved in managing professional angst and focusing on achieving results!” Elephants, for example, can’t survive in the corporate world because they learn so much, the author herself explains: “There is no RoI (return on investment) from

someone with so much knowledge!” The book also offers an easy-to-recall personality typing tool based on animal behaviour research, which helps participants understand the motivations of teams, customers and audiences, and leverage this knowledge effectively to deliver business outcome. Her first book, *Inspired! How to create a formula for success - in life and work*, brings out interesting points, like the assertion by Anu Aga, whom it describes as a corporate leader and caring citizen, that women themselves have put up glass ceilings, and Raman Roy, “the father of business process outsourcing”, explaining how “it takes 30 years of hard work to become an overnight success”.

Manjiri points out that 70 per cent of all projects worldwide fail, and says this is because of a variety of reasons: political, aesthetic, technology, economy and so on. They therefore need a driver; and she has come up with a programme on ‘project management for non-project managers’. A client in the US wanted her to conduct it there, but she couldn’t keep travelling from the UK and back, so she created an e-learning module.

On another level, Elephant Connect Education’s subscription-based online revision aides including quizzes and flash cards are effective, interactive and fun tools for students to prepare for exams. “Recognising that exams are just the first step towards University education, we offer holistic preparatory training courses in interview skills, writing applications, communication and public speaking,” the site says. “We also offer a blend of practical and theoretical project-based training for students seeking work experience.”

Apart from Elephant Connect, Abhay is Chief Patron of Maya CARE, a charity working with senior citizens across 10 Indian cities that he co-founded with Manjiri. He is a certified private pilot, too: “When he said he wanted to learn, I encouraged him to go for it!” she says. Whether it is seeking inspiration to aspire for the seemingly impossible or unravelling the knotty confines of our perceived capabilities, a gentle nudge in the right direction could truly be the catalyst to achievement.

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