

"Employability-skills are as important as academic-skills for college grads": Interview with Mr. A.M Thimmiya, COO, 24x7 Learning



24x7 Learning is a talent lifecycle management company providing end-to-end learning solutions. From inception in 2001, it has evolved with changing market needs. 24x7 Learning's products and services are used by corporates, government, banking and finance and pharmaceutical organizations as well as educational institutions to rapidly deploy learning initiatives, manage human capital development, accelerate critical business processes, enhance employability and drive organizational performance. One of its products is SkillBridge, which is focused at helping students improve their employability quotient.

EmployabilityUniverse.com, India's first portal on employability development for graduates, conducted an interview with Mr. A.M Thimmiya, COO, 24x7 Learning for more information on the programmes. Before joining 24x7 Learning, Mr. Thimmiya served as the Senior Vice President & Global Head for Channel Operations & Distance Education at Manipal Education. Mr. Thimmiya brings with him over 25 years of experience in senior management capacity, heading various strategic business units in the Education and Training Businesses.

Excerpts from the interview:

Q: According to experts, employability of graduates is a big issue. What is the extent of this problem?

A: Unemployability is today a greater issue than unemployment. As APJ Abdul Kalam, Former President of India said, "It is not unemployment that is the major problem; it is the question of unemployability that is the major crisis in this competitive arena..."

According to a NASSCOM-McKinsey report, The Indian Industry will face its biggest challenge ever: a talent shortage of 3.1 million knowledge workers, across Industry, by 2010 compounded by the fact that only 25 per cent of fresh engineers; and a mere 10% of fresh graduates are actually employable!

The situation is grave, but it can be addressed through a solution that empowers the youth. Empower these youngsters with the requisite skills they will need to get employment and to grow in a corporate environment. And this skill development must start early: even while the student is pursuing his graduation.

Q: How can you train graduates to become employable? What is your recommendation?

A: Graduates come out of college, polished in academic skills. But as we all know working for a Corporate is a different ball game altogether. While their academic skills definitely count, various other skills such as spoken and written English, interpersonal skills, the art of communication, situational behavior, and so on play a pivotal role in helping the student or candidate fit into the workplace. Lack of these skills may hamper the candidate's prospects at the interview stage itself.

So a powerful program that aims to impart these skills in a candidate, implemented while the student is pursuing his graduation should make him/her completely employable by the time he is out of college and into the job hunt.

Q: What are the focus areas and domains in which 24x7 Learning operates?

A: 24x7 Learning is India's premier Talent Life cycle Management Company. We deliver end-to-end learning solutions to corporates, government organizations, institutions and individuals.

We have an in-house developed Learning Management System (LMS) called LearnTrak, which forms the backbone of the learning solution. We have partnered with global content leaders for world-class, content that are domain-specific as well as specific to various phases in the talent lifecycle. This forms our enterprise offerings.

Our other business lines: AVAGMAH and SkillBridge, have learning offerings for specific phases of the talent lifecycle. AVAGMAH is a continuing education initiative. AVAGMAH partners with leading educational institutions like IMT, Ghaziabad and Thapar University and offers recognized degree and post-graduate programs to the working professional.

SkillBridge addresses the pre-hire phase of the talent lifecycle, it is an employability enhancement program targeted at students, to make them 'job ready' for India Inc.

Q: What are various programmes you are offering for Indian youth to become employable and get a career path?

A: SkillBridge is a program that aims at making Indian youth employable. The skills imparted through SkillBridge will make them confident, and help them face the corporate with more than just an academic degree.

The SkillBridge curriculum covers written and spoken English, business communication, resume writing and interview skills, pronunciation, etiquette, leadership skills and more, making it a comprehensive training on employable skills.

Q: How are job prospects for trained manpower in the sectors that you are offering the programmes?

A: There is definitely a demand for freshers with good soft skills across corporates across Industry are looking at freshers who come with enhanced skill sets, beyond an academic degree. The learning curve and transitioning into the corporate is much easier if the candidate has had prior soft skill training.

We are also looking at offering domain-specific skill training through SkillBridge, which will help sectors recruit freshers who will come with both soft skills as well as domain-specific skill sets. This will be an exciting launch and I am sure will be a significant step towards enhancing employability of youth for different verticals.

<http://employabilityuniverse.com/Soft-Skills/72/Employability-skills-are-as-important-as-academic-skills-for-college-grads-Interview-with-Mr.-A.M-Thimmiya-COO-24x7-Learning>