

Small Enterprise India Information Desk



Is India really a leader in entrepreneurship? Shaili Chopra, Senior Editor of ET Now aired this question in a panel discussions at the recently concluded TIE Entrepreneurial Summit in Delhi. Mr. Raman Roy, Chairman and MD of Quattro, and pioneer of the Indian BPO industry, answered that it really depends on how you define entrepreneurship. “If entrepreneurship means building great companies, then we are still taking baby steps. If you mean it to be about bringing up new things, new ways just for survival, India is phenomenal. But when it comes to scalability, India does not lead,” Mr Roy said.

Mr. D Shivakumar of Nokia, the man who has brought an FMCG perspective to the mobile phone space said, “India is a huge market in itself. If you can get your act right in urban India alone, you would have achieved global scale.”

Second generation entrepreneur Mr. Shivinder Singh, who is the MD of Fortis Healthcare said, “As a country we don’t like processes. This does not allow us to scale. We also don’t have global aspirations. After a point, people want to diversify rather than go deeper into their area.”

To a question on how can we achieve global scale, Mr Roy answered that there was a mindset issue to scale. “You need a team to scale, to be global, it cannot be done by a 2-3 member team. You need to have a core alliance, the ability to delegate, trust, and to allow mistakes. That’s where we hit the glass ceiling, when it comes to delegating and having trust.”

Mr Singh agreed that giving up control was indeed a huge issue for an entrepreneur. “In India, most entrepreneurs work in the operations mode. But we need to be more in the design mode, put in structures to ensure that the company is sustained” he opined. Mr Shivakumar agreed and said that it was important to get the right people for the vision you have. To this Mr. Roy added, “The finish line has to keep changing.”

To a question on the lack of skill sets in the talent pool, Mr Singh said that every company now has to do everything in the value chain, from being the realtor to the architect, from trainer of people to being the infrastructure provider. The panel agreed that this is not how it should be, and by collaborating with government a lot of these issues could start being addressed. However, law and order was one area that the government could not be absolved from, said Mr Roy.

Mr. Roy also put the idea of change that has to happen in our top educational institutions; from making job seekers by the hundreds, to developing job creators. "If each IIT or IIM graduate can create five jobs, imagine the revolution we can bring in the country," he said passionately.

The panel also discussed how the entrepreneurship ecosystem had come a long way. The panelists also pointed out that instead of the successes of established entrepreneurs, it was more important to celebrate those entrepreneurs who had transformed an idea into a company; celebrate their successes, failures and more importantly talk of those people who had succeeded after failing.

Each of the panelists was asked what each of them would do, personally, to encourage entrepreneurship. Mr. Shivakumar said he is easily accessible for any sort of advice any entrepreneur might need. Mr. Singh said he wanted to create an ecosystem of partnerships so that Fortis could focus on its core area. Mr. Roy, who celebrates the Indian concept of 'jugaad', said "I invite entrepreneurs who have a jugaad idea to come up, and let's show what it is capable of."