

●● Be Different to Make a Difference ●●

You have been the pioneering man behind several management institutions in our country. How did you envisage the curriculum for GL, how different or what method did you apply, when you have already been part of other institutes earlier?

The world is constantly changing with new and improved variations of existing products taking centre stage. When we set up Great Lakes, our intention was to create a b-school where the working/professional could acquire world-class and state of the art Management education. As an Accountant by qualification, I've always been acutely aware of the 'Time Value of Money'. In the case of Great Lakes, I used what I like to call the 'Money Value of Time' principle. From this emerged the working model of the one-year, fast-track MBA program for working professionals who aspire to move into Management & Leadership roles but have limitations of time. It was a different and revolutionary formula but it was such a simple and practical one, that it was very well received by the working population and the corporate sector alike.

Being a faculty at Kellogg, what was the body of knowledge that helped you set up campus in India? How different and challenging was it? Do you think the process is easier nowadays?

The American b-schools are highly process-driven, provide a robust and rigorous curriculum, expect the highest degree of commitment from the student and reward merit. In the late 90s, there was a palpable shift towards India – Indian ethos, value systems and the general economic climate of the country riding the wave of liberalisation/globalization unleashed by Dr. Manmohan Singh, the then Finance Minister. Enterprises in the US were keen to develop working relationships with Indian entities and all these together allowed me to put together the concept of the one-year, fast-track MBA program. Setting up a campus is always challenging and each experience is different – the dynamics of the people, place and process will always present challenges and opportunities. Overall, I would say that the market perception for b-schools, the scope of their offering and their potential to provide mid-career changing opportunities has changed drastically over the last couple of decades for the better. The introduction of new financial products to help finance Educational Institutions as well as students as has also made it significantly easier to for up and coming b-schools to source capital and attract good quality students. It is a lot easier to set up a school now but not that easy to sustain it.

There are institutes in India with same AMBA accreditation. What sets GLIM apart from the rest?

AMBA is a standard against which we measure ourselves to ensure International compliance in terms of quality of education, infrastructure, corporate interface and other aspects of Management education. The AMBA accreditation process is rigorous and thorough and I have utmost respect for any school that has acquired it – it is an indication of quality and commitment. However, at Great Lakes, the AMBA accreditation is not the goal. While it has affirmed our conviction that we are on the right path, challenging ourselves to achieve more and offer more to the professional community is what sets us apart. Adapting ourselves to offer value to our students is key. Embracing the progress of technology and harnessing its power, we have introduced new niche management programs that cater to different sets of aspirants, upgrading their skills in areas of their interest which are critical to their professional success. We seek to differentiate ourselves by constantly innovating and adding new value propositions to our existing bouquet of offerings.



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Your thoughts on online learning space/ platforms and importance of class room learning for future managers.

It has become the need of the hour to keep constantly upskilling and upgrading oneself. The learning has to continue long after one has passed out of b-school or any post graduate education for that matter. The online learning space therefore occupies a very important place in this changed paradigm. So many courses that are current and relevant are being offered around the world by 'Gurus' in that field. The only way to access these materials is through online or blended program modules. MOOC is the way forward and to that end, Great Lakes has taken the leap in offering these blended modules in our own programs through our in-grown platform called CHOOCE which also includes an evaluation component. That is not to say that the online learning programs should replace the classroom sessions – they are both equally important in that they hone different types of skillsets but the online education segment is still nascent and we are at the cusp of witnessing a revolution in education harnessing the power of IT.

GL is among the first to start one year programme, and ranks among top 10. Your Business Analytics program also ranks among top 10 in country. Now, you have introduced AIMLA. How GL plans and works towards setting up such advancing programs? How has it been effective so far in terms of placements and student feedback?

When Great Lakes was originally conceived, the idea was to create a world-class school offering cutting-edge education to the professional population of the country at affordable costs. That we did not compromise on quality – be it the teaching faculty or the course content and delivery or the facilities or the student potential went a long way towards making us one of the strongest programs and schools in the country. We need to keep an eye on the trends and developments in the Industry which in turn keeps us tuned into the skillsets that will be required by the workforce. Great Lakes has always been able to manage 100 percent placement in our full time programs right from the very first batch – it has not been easy for us – we work very hard indeed to achieve these goals.

How do you motivate yourself to work and think ahead than the millennials at this age? What's your secret formula? Do you or have you ever felt demotivated? If so, what do you do?? Share some advice/ tips for readers.

I listen and I read. I would advise all to inculcate both practices. The Millennials are super-performers. They have goals and aspirations that are very different from when I was younger. I believe in reverse-mentoring. I feel much younger and energized in the presence of younger people – I see so much that I can learn from them – even young children. Everyone feels demotivated and dejected when things do not quite go the way you would like them to and I have had my fair share too. I am however, an eternal optimist. I truly believe that, 'winners never quit' and that 'there's always a way'. You just need to take a few moments to get your head in the right mind-space and think of what to do next. As for advise, family and health must always take priority. Achieve with humility. Mix passion with compassion. Make money, but don't make only money – also make friends and memories – they will stand by you long after the money is gone.