

## Speaking on a different level

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**With the changing trends of India Inc. the face of the motivational speaker has also changed. Here's a look at how organizations are exploring this wave**

Imagine you are sitting for a motivational conference, expecting a CEO or a trainer to talk about what it takes to be successful, and to your surprise you see your favourite actor walk on the podium and talk about his experience in the field. While many may feel this could be once in a few years occurrence, experts of India Inc. say that with the changing times, the face of the motivational speaker has also changed from the corporate bigwigs to authors, Olympians, sportsmen etc.

Experts of India Inc. say that more than the management it's the employee that look forward to having such speakers. They say that employees now want inspiration and motivation that is no longer textbook based. "In this day and age of a constant information barrage via newspapers, magazines, TV, internet and books, the usual corporate-style motivational speakers may be considered a little "overexposed". So people seek a change, they seek something different," explains Dr. Manas Fuloria, Co founder & executive VP, Corporate Development and Strategy, Nagarro Software.

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"I think the focus is on getting speakers who have achieved great things in the face of adversity. This could be in any field of endeavor: A village boy who becomes an Olympic medalist or a child who overcomes physical challenges and gets to be an IAS officer. I think more than beyond India Inc, we are keen to how people have conquered adversity and it could be any area and not necessarily the corporate world," adds Rajiv Krishnan, MD, DDI.

### Speakers Galore

While most organizations have had many CEOs and HR heads as motivational speakers, many of them are moving beyond this realm and exploring newer avenues. "We at Symphony have invited David Wittenberg (CEO, The Innovation Workgroup) to spend two days and address the Symphony teams on Innovation. Given that Symphony has been involving over 80 per cent of its employees in its innovation program/process for the last two years; this session by Wittenberg was very well appreciated. Likewise, we invited Dr R A Mashelkar (President of Global Research Alliance and former Director General of CSIR) to share his perspectives on Innovation. We also invited Dr. Pradeep Khandwalla (Professor emeritus from IIM-A) to speak on Corporate Social Responsibility," says C Mahalingam, EVP and chief people officer, Symphony services, about the various speakers.

Other than these, he mentions that some of the popular speakers include author Robin Sharma, Swami Sukabhodananda and experienced and branded Corporate leaders like Subrato Bagchi/ Dileep Ranjekar, who give insight in everyday work life.

“At Nagarro, we sometimes have NGO workers come in and speak. The most recent were two speakers from Akshaya Patra. We also occasionally have an author speak, such as Neeraj Chhibba who wrote the novel, “Those 7 Hours”. And we have several entrepreneurs, such as Sandeep Manudhane of the PT Education group, Ajay Trehan of Authbridge, and Darshan Bhat of Creatnet Services. We are yet to invite a sportsperson or an artist, though we know of employees who go elsewhere to hear such speakers.” adds Fuloria about the kind of speakers that have been invited to their organization.

### **Setting an Example**

While many speakers can talk about inspiration and motivation, experts say that these speakers set an example for the employees. “It is very inspiring to hear the story of how somebody overcame huge disadvantages and even tragedies to ultimately triumph. When we hear these stories we are privy to the success formula or that magical thing that worked,” explains Krishnan.

Adding to this, Fuloria says, “A fresh way of conveying the same message sometimes has a better chance of success than repeating the same old phrases and exhortations. There is also less defensiveness when the speaker is not professing to be better than you at doing what you do for a living, but is instead just sharing his or her experiences and insights from a different field.”

“The example these sessions set is basically communicating certain key messages: (a) Build a Brand You!; (b) Make a difference through Innovative ideas; (c) Learn niche skills and competencies; (d) Break the Glass Ceilings (particularly for women employees) and (e) to enhance social responsibility and such other focused messages,” adds Mahalingam. He also says that employees get to learn a new lesson from their varied speakers as it gives them lessons in business and life as well.

In the end, experts say that a good speaker can help boost an employees' morale and also change the way s/he thinks. So next time you feel your employees need a change, get their favourite cricketer on board instead of a CEO!