

THINK GLOBAL BY- I. Chaney

For the past ten years, we have been hearing the phrase “THINK GLOBAL – ACT LOCAL”. It never sounded right, but since it came from industry giants, we assumed it was. Well it wasn't. It should be: “**THINK GLOBAL – ACT GLOBAL**”

The last decade has seen the transition in various sectors besides software. Fiat and Ambassadors have been replaced with Ford, Honda, Hyundai and Toyota. Baristas, Macdonald's and Pizza huts have taken the place of our corner tea stalls. Insurance sector is booming with a dozen companies that entered the market with global partners.

China and India are heading towards becoming developed countries. Our open doors will provide the world with the much-needed markets, particularly in the field of construction. Thus, the question arises - how will this affect our profession?

For architecture, globalization in the short term is going to mean transfer of building technologies, import of world class materials and fixtures and an influx of multi-national professionals and developers, and the consequent competition thus generated. This will rapidly change the way we think and operate. In the long term, globalization will give us the opportunities to practice worldwide, partner professionals or be lead consultants anywhere. To this end we need to prepare ourselves in the art of global delivery. Global architectural practice is the way to the future. To embark upon it, we must look within ourselves and upgrade our mode of operation. To partner global professionals, it won't be enough to be as good as the multinationals. We will need to be better than them, much better.

Our three year experience at Amby Valley, where we worked alongside such global organizations, showed that it is not at all difficult. One must become a follower of what I call “**Zen and the Art of Global Delivery**”. It is accomplished in three steps.

First, make our practice **value based**. This is very important. It must be **responsible, accountable, committed and honest**. There are no shortcuts to this and no free lunches. Our value system must take precedence over the bottom line. Every person in our organization must share our values. Any person, however good his or her work is, but does not share our values, must be shown the door. Value our time and that of others. Missing deadlines is unacceptable. Our value system will act as the springboard for all other changes. It will also, indirectly, influence changes in the bureaucracy and clients. It will make them aware of the cost of time.

Next, **streamline our procedures and right size our practice**. Most practices are hopelessly under-staffed and unable to offer world class delivery. Incorporate **proper documentation**, from the Letter of Appointment to records and billing.

Manage our resources to improve productivity. Cut costs. Nothing is more expensive than re-work. This is the key to good health.

Third and most important, **make quality a passion**. Then make it an obsession. Let people think we are a little crazy about the quality of our delivery. What is common in global brands is quality. Quality assurance must become the norm in the workplace. Strive towards **six sigma quality**. It may sound impossible to attain, but the attempt will produce unimaginable benefits.

Six sigma level allows 3.74 errors per million operations. Four sigma, which is considered good, allows 15000 errors per million operations. If we perform worse than that, we should not be in business. If the Mumbai dabawalas can do it, so can we.

All what I have said here, when elaborated and documented will give us a quality management system. If we are to survive and flourish in the global climate, we need to upgrade our delivery very, very quickly.

In the words of Jack Welch, **“Get Better or Get Beaten”**.