

Alok Bharadwaj shares strategy with Noel D'cunha in the Sunday Column

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By [Noel D'Cunha](#),

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After spending close to 32 years with Canon, Tata, Motorola and the Shriram Group, Alok Bharadwaj's start-up CreoVate is set to rev up small and mid-size print businesses, giving more control over their businesses. CreoVate will act like the facilitator helping the SMEs in their agenda, just like the Sherpa you'd want when you are climbing the Everest.

“To grow, scale up and be a part of the next global success story, should be not be limited to large corporate houses, even small and mid-size set ups in India, can,” says Bharadwaj in the Sunday Column

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Bharadwaj's start-up aims at boosting the small and mid-size print businesses

Canon in Singapore was the last time we heard from you... Singapore is the business capital of South, South-east and East Asia – in fact, for the whole of Asia business except China and Japan.

That would mean quite a big number of countries to manage? There are 22 countries in this region with grossing GDP value of USD7.5 trillion. Other than

the five developed countries, it is the centre of emerging markets. Hence the region is full of energy and momentum in the growing market.

And the digital print market in those countries?

For the digital print industry, it is the centre of attraction for the global industry. Rapid urbanisation, a young millennial population pyramid, increasing income levels and fast adoption of technology is making digital print industry quite exciting and I loved it.

What was your favourite bit of being a part of the digital print industry?

My favourite part was the digital photo printing as it is becoming a fancy among young generation - and therefore the increase in installations.

You have started a new journey with CreoVate Transformations & Consulting. What was the genesis of this new start-up?

No creation is easy. They all are pieces of art, highly gratifying to the creator. The most inspiring creation is that of nature. Life is probably, the finest creation. All business organisations have life and indeed are magnificent creations. The only other act that comes close to creation is innovation. It is this combination of supreme forces that underpin progress, growth and prosperity.

You have said" "In today's business landscape, we see the enormous pace of creations and innovations are causing disruptions." What does this mean?

Simply put, we have entered into the era of discontinuity. The future is snapped from the past. Linearity is gone. This is what is re-writing the rules of business models, success and winning strategies. The only way to fight external disruptions is to ignite internal churns. We call it the first step of transformation. This is the genesis of our new watchword called CreoVate, meaning creating and innovating for a better tomorrow.

CreoVate aims to rev up small and mid-size print businesses?

Yes, after working in large enterprises like Canon, Motorola, Tata and Shriram Group for 32 years with several leadership roles spanning sales, business operations, strategy and transformations, including the last three years on international assignment, I decided to start a new journey of 'creovating impact' among small and mid-size set-ups in India and help this space to grow, scale up and be a part of the next global success story. That's how CreoVate Transformations & Consulting was born.

You mentioned three levers of growth. What are these?

From my experience of seeing success in organisations, I am convinced that at the core of any winning organisation, lie in these three elements. I call them 'three levers of growth'.

Please elaborate.

The first is the 'lever of directions'. The direction is always futuristic. Any change management starts with the right direction. The starting point is always our purpose and goal but the first vital lever is the strategy that sets directions. The second is the 'lever of organisational capabilities'. I call it a more powerful lever as major competitive advantage comes not from strategy but from capabilities. None of the capabilities are built without a plan. In fact, we have to create a short-term and mid-term capabilities building plan. My own focus is on customer centric capabilities and go-to-market capabilities as these are the direct bridge to business outcomes. The third is the 'lever of organisational mindsets and behaviours'. Usually learning

and development exercises are limited to knowledge and skills. I hate typical training programs as at best they impact the handful of people and at worst 90% is forgotten quickly as their focus is at the cognitive level. A real learning journey starts with the purpose of a change in behaviour and mindsets. That is what brings enduring change and transformation. This third lever is what differentiates experience at all customer and employee touch points.

I **see.**
Integrating all these levers in line with the vision of company's leadership is vital.

Do these three levers need to follow a sequence?
Yes, all the three in the given sequence, with necessary know-how about how to build impactful outcomes.

Does this entail more "learnings" among SMEs and MSMEs?
In the current business landscape, change management and business transformation (CMBT) is at the top of leadership agenda. As external triggers are in full swing, continual market led transformations are the new normal. It is interesting to observe two commonalities across all enterprises, big or small. They all want to grow (financial results) and they all have anxiety of future. As regards growth, it seems challenging, simply because the narrative has changed and like liquids, it is flowing or migrating to alternatives.

Is this the future?
As regards future, it is simply getting vigorous and more intelligent. Hence for leaders, it is a good idea to consider having a facilitator next to them to help in their agenda.

Like you often say, if you want to climb the Everest, you always carry a Sherpa. CreoVate will be the Sherpa?
Yes, small and mid-size enterprises have to keep daily operations running due to shorter cycles for every aspect. They can't afford a full time chief transformation office or chief strategy officer. Hence 'sachetising' consultancy is the pursuit I wish to take to make it more affordable and extend its reach.

How is this do-able / tenable?
I see most successful SME leaders quite strong in their domain. For best learning, a co-facilitator model works the best. Unfortunately, all consulting companies focus on large enterprises and charge by hours. This makes them untouchable for small and medium enterprises.

Is this suitable for India?
The time has come in India for progressive founders, promoters and leaders in small and medium enterprises to start seeing 'beyond the bend' and build future. Global successful economies have shown that companies from such economies start having high aspirations and to begin to profess global best practices.

Who will CreoVate tap?
I want to work in my familiar domain of technology industry, both business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) verticals in emerging countries, digital printing industry, photography industry etc.

Last question, what's the most important lesson you've learned in your career, thus far?
The most important trait for an individual is agility. This is what brings comfort out of comfort

zone. This is the single biggest differentiator among successful people. For them, it is not just the capacity to embrace change, but going beyond to become a leading change agent. This is addictive and like best wines, it matures with time enhancing intrinsic value of such leaders.

Hmm.

Interesting.

Every first of January, we must ask a question in front of a mirror “Mirror, mirror on the wall. How am I different now than I was a year ago. Our internal voice will do a reality check.

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