

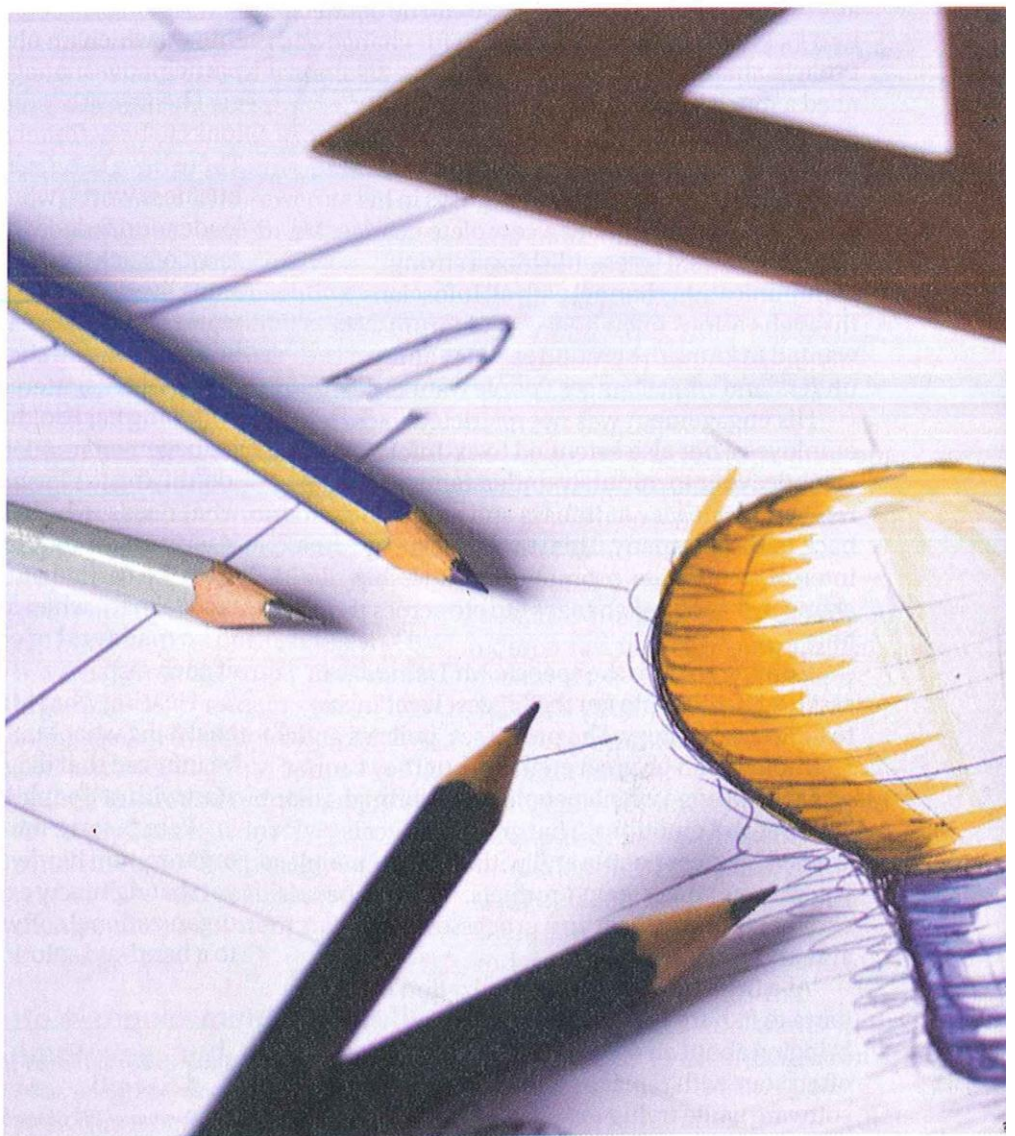
# Unlocking India's design potential

Organizations today have started using design as a strategic tool to drive business innovation and growth. Be it automotive, healthcare, retail, fashion, FMCG or consumer electronics, there are a plethora of sectors that are using design aggressively to stay ahead of the competitive curve.

BY NICK TALBOT

**D**esign is not just limited to aesthetic appeal; it is a discipline that links new ideas and technological advances with new products, services and processes. Organizations today have started using design as a strategic tool to drive business innovation and growth. Be it automotive, healthcare, retail, fashion, FMCG or consumer electronics, there are a plethora of sectors that are using design aggressively to stay ahead of the competitive curve. By incorporating design as part of its DNA, organizations are succeeding in bringing about a radical transformation. It is being used as a competitive weapon across industries to devise solutions and perform the fundamental function of a problem solver. Also every 1 per cent invested on good design today yields 3-5 per cent increase in revenue and organizational profit.

Samsung as a case in point attributes its' brand value and market cap increase (\$100Bn +) to investment in user research and bold design. In the UK FTSE listed companies that use design, out-perform peers by X3 over two years. Companies such as Apple, Ikea, Virgin Atlantic, Jaguar, M & S have incorporated design in the



management of the business and have succeeded.

### **Nurturing young talent is an investment for our future**

Design as a discipline is still at a nascent stage in India. Though fields such as medicine, engineering and finance are still the most popular career options amongst Indian students, in the recent years design as a career has witnessed a significant growth. Also design as a subject should be introduced in school curriculum to spread more awareness about the discipline and the gamut of opportunities it has in store.

As far as the practicality of the field of design in today's job market is concerned, it wouldn't affect the aspiring students. Mainly because the

number of quality designers are less vis-à-vis the industry demand. Also with the diverse industries laying emphasis on design to differentiate their offerings from competition, there are ample of opportunities in store for all creative minds. In fact there is a dearth of industry ready designers. Thus if you have a creative bent along with problem solving ability and technical skills, design is an apt career for you.

A creative workforce talent is a rare and specialised resource. Creativity usually involves right brain thinking and people blessed with creativity are often different in personality and habits, with different motivators to their performance and have to be nurtured in a very special way than the workforce of say accountants or computer

programmers.

Creativity is the key to innovation and innovation is a critical factor in competing in the globalised market place. Harnessing creativity means not just developing ways to allow students to be innovative, but to also encourage them so that the creative momentum can build over time and not be disrupted by the constant need to recruit new personnel. In order to sustain an atmosphere of creativity and imagination, institutions and organisations must nurture free thinking.

Fostering a culture that inspires creativity is essential to motivate students and employees to offer more ideas. This diversity improves the idea pool and increases organisational success. Instigating creativity and vision among the young talent would also drive the whole entrepreneurial spirit.

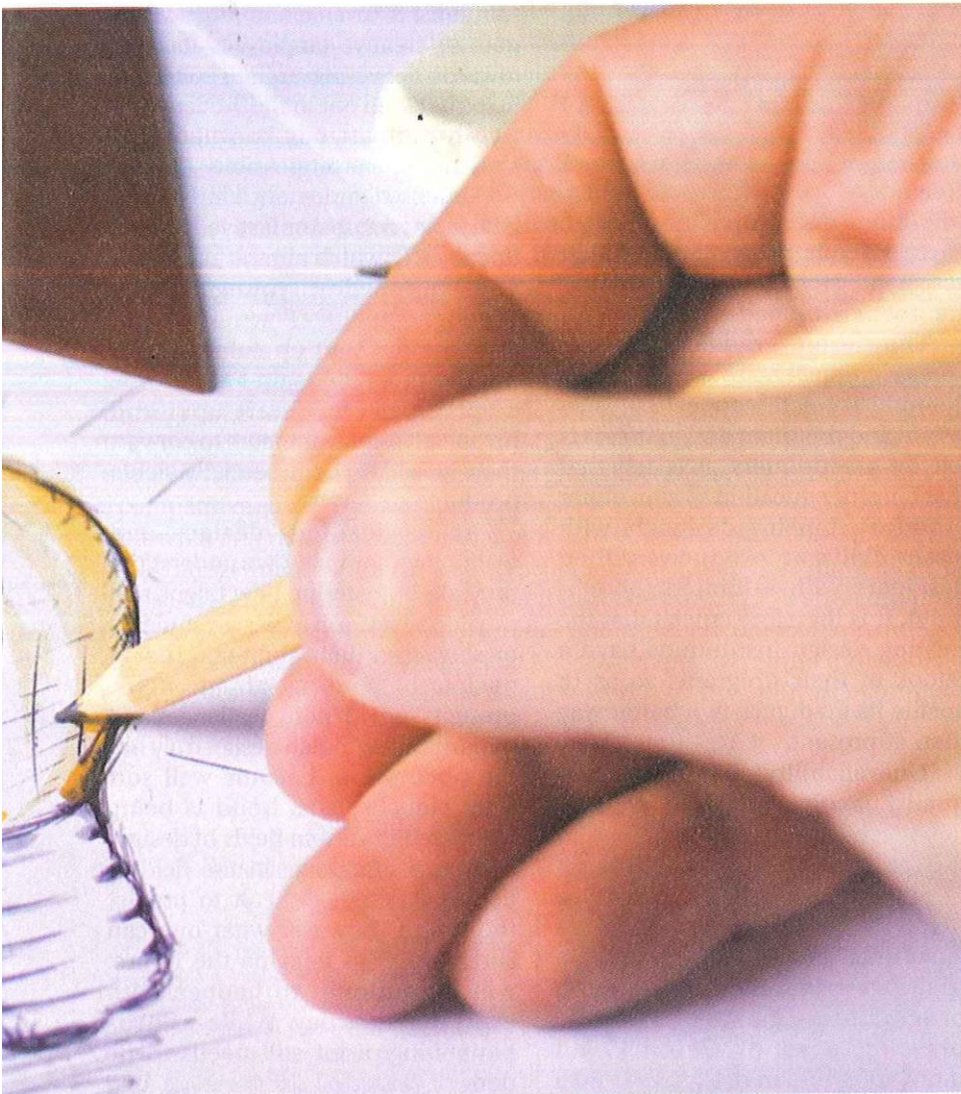
Also promoting design thinking across organizations will help in the development of new products and services, driven by a deep understanding of consumers, technology and a practical approach to business.

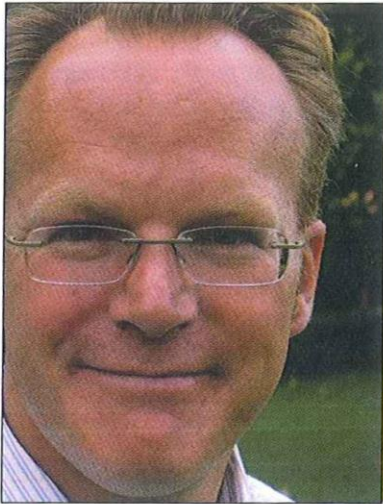
We at Tata Elxsi encourage creativity and innovation in each of our employees; this is coupled with fair and transparent processes and systems which ensure each employee is provided with the right opportunities and options for career growth. We also encourage people to experiment with their new ideas and thoughts as a primary means for learning in order to advance ideas to the next level.

### **Paving way for design in India**

Design is one of the integral elements of a brand to succeed in any market. Also, design has been proven to boost the competitiveness of businesses, it can and does unlock the commercial potential by synthesising and translating between bodies of knowledge, communicating emerging ideas, and finding marketable uses for them.

Indian's are highly talented and are at par with their international peers, across the creative industries





**Nick Talbot**

Global Design Head, Tata Elxsi

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domain. The only development that's needed is the requirement for more matured processes to be incorporated into the way that they work. The big advantage is a deep understanding of the way people in developing markets respond and reacts to products and services. The key disadvantage is probably a lack of exposure to the rest of the globe. The most able designers we see are those that have travelled studied for some time outside of India and thus have a more global perspective.

A number of institutes in India have started providing design programs and design in general, is rising. Industry bodies like CII are promoting design by organising events like CII - NID Design Summit. The summit is said to feature some of the stalwarts from the national as well as global design industry. The event aims at bringing discerning audiences and eminent speakers on a single platform and discusses the emerging trends in the design market. Such events create curiosity and thus lead to awareness about design amongst the general public. Still, more institutions are needed. There is a common sentiment within design industry that design graduates are not well trained / educated.

The design graduates do not possess competencies as required by the industry. A disconnect between syllabi and prevalent design trends is felt by practitioners. It is felt that that current education system either produces thinking designers with lesser skills or produces skilled designers with a limited thought input. It is therefore crucial that the existing design institutions have a relook at their programs so as to enable its graduates in a better way than at present.

Unavailability of qualified and quality faculty is indeed another factor that is causing hindrance in the path of well-trained design graduates as well as for more institutions to come up. Some faculty development programs are in existence. But more such programs are needed. There is pressing need of training and motivating Indian designers to take

up design education as an alternate profession.

### **Mentoring - crucial for design during its infancy stage**

Developing a mentor program is one way of formalizing the relationship between individuals in the profession and students in academic institutions. Mentor programs offer a structured setting in which to develop beneficial one-on-one relationships between students and professionals. Acting as a friend, a teacher, and a guide to the real world, mentors have the opportunity to encourage and advise students by sharing their own experiences and knowledge of the design profession.

We believe by blending of technology, creativity and engineering will help customers transform ideas into world-class products and solutions. A diverse and large talent pool of creative employees focused towards delivering unique solutions helps us stand out in the industry. We try and impart our knowledge to students whenever possible.

Tata Elxsi for instance has set-up a business incubator last year called 'Incub@TE' which aims at nurturing and supporting young talent. Through Incub@TE we intend to promote the start-up culture.

The program aspires to provide a platform for start-ups and prospective entrepreneurs to convert their ideas into commercially viable products or services.

As a leading design and technology company, we understand our role in fostering new talent and provide a platform to design students to showcase their abilities. Indian design is coming of age. This presents us with both challenges and opportunities. Indian design truly has the potential to become well sort after globally. This trend is being witnessed in certain fields of design. The pace of change in the field of design makes it difficult to predict the future. However what one can surely do is to imagine the future, which continues to happen with every passing day. While a lot is happening, a lot still needs to be done.

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