

Connecting The Dots

Friends,

A couple of months ago, when we had launched the Tech Mahindra SMART programme, we took up a mammoth task – the task of initiating, establishing and running a module that will channelize India's youth into training for skills and employ them into jobs they like. SMART has a foundation module (which has sessions on English-speaking, personality development, basic computers and soft skills), which eventually shoot into specific trades (like Customer Relationships and Sales, Hospitality, Tally, ITES, BPO and so on).

Beginning the SMARTer innings

The programme was launched simultaneously in FY 12-13 in Hyderabad and Delhi-NCR and we established three SMART Centres with partner NGOs Yugantar, APSA and Agrasar within three months. The response was magical! In the first lot, the three SMART Centres together trained 400+ young people. 285+ of them secured reasonably well-paying jobs in known organisations – some of these included Aapka Bazaar, Aegis BPO, Allied Packaging, Cameu, CareTel InfoTech, DTDC Courier, Hudson News and Café, Mahindra Satyam BPO, Spencer Retail, SR Fine Chemicals and Yashoda Hospital. This year, TMF is going to train and place 3000+ young adults through 14 SMART Centres across India.

Conceiving a special baby

What eventually became a very special achievement, however, was our first SMART Centre for the Disabled. The Sarthak-Tech Mahindra SMART Centre came as a clear manifestation of our vision of inclusive development. Why can't children and young adults with disabilities – hearing, speech, sight, mental and physical impairment – learn a set of skills much like their able friends under the same roof? Why can't people with disabilities – special or different as some of you say – join the same jobs requiring of them the same set of skills, more or less?



This happened!

The Nayyars (Vineet & Reva), Anita Gurnani, the Mitras (Jagdish & Urmi) and teams from TMF and Sarthak came together for the formal inauguration of the Sarthak Centre on April 15, 2013. More than 50 children – each of them with a disability of its own, waiting to be converted into a solid strength, nourished for the next three months and unleashed into the mainstream job market – joined the celebrations. We ‘heard’ the deaf and mute as they staged a hilarious skit full of verve and joy, we dived deep into emotions as the blind sang out their hearts to narrate how they ‘see’ the world around them. It was indeed a special day. We were touched!



Relationships grew!

And in the little over six weeks since Sarthak (Hindi: to materialize) came to life, we came into a beautiful bond – not just TMF, but the larger family from Tech Mahindra, too. We had Dr Jitendra Agarwal, (sight-impaired but with an intact vision, and the promoter of Sarthak), come and deliver an inspiring talk at NSEZ. We also organized visits to the Centre and volunteers from various IDUs cheerfully joined – first to learn, and now, to share. Yesterday, a group of volunteers organized a few sessions on corporate etiquettes for our young friends. With support from team TMF, they shared with them the basics of non-verbal communication – including intricacies like dressing up for interviews, choice of words, styles of walking and sitting, dining mannerisms – and in the end, taught them how to tie a tie. We applaud our volunteers and hope they will continue to inspire our SMART scholars.

We have assembled two videos for you on our YouTube channel:

- ✓ [How to tie a tie?](#) – Among other photos and videos, this one caught our attention the most – a young associate from Tech Mahindra teaches a deaf and mute boy from Sarthak the basics of tying a tie. Quick learners they were! (Watch here - [youtube.com/watch?v=K1ob2kA7BVk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K1ob2kA7BVk))
- ✓ [GolGappe](#) – How a deaf and mute young couple enjoys free water balls for offering to pay by a credit card, as another couple comes forward to help. Don't miss the corrupt policeman as he demands his own share of money, and of course free snacks – a super hilarious skit by Sarthak!

Enjoy watching!

And it doesn't stop there!

An elated Dr Agarwal, who is here for a SMART partners' meet today, can't contain his happiness. He says, "This has been an amazing experience. It would be wonderful to have young associates from Tech Mahindra visit and share a skill or two with his children on a regular basis." He also inquired about possible employment opportunities for Sarthak graduates at Tech Mahindra (TMF has employed people with disabilities in various departments at Tech Mahindra earlier) We are totally in, so are the volunteers.

As for Tech Mahindra Foundation, Sarthak's success as the first SMART Centre for the Disabled paves a fantastic background for the upcoming Centres at other locations, about which we would keep you posted. With this, we were able to connect the many dots – in various sizes and shapes and colors – just like different abilities connect at Sarthak, just like you and I connect at Tech Mahindra!

Warm regards,
Tech Mahindra Foundation