

How does an MBA help an entrepreneur?



Mayura Balasubramanian

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This is a rather favorite topic of discussion in the business world. In conversation with **Mayura Balasubramanian**, Co-founder of Craftizen & ISB Alumnus (Class of 2004), Riddhi Kapoor, a PGP student at Indian School of Business seeks to find an answer to the age-old question.

Tell us about your life post business school

- I've been a risk taker professionally, which stems from never really planning for more than two years at a time, and also being a self-admitted drifter! I've moored across vastly different sectors – from a real estate consulting firm to working with a nationally renowned artist to being with an international donor organization (UNDP) to the higher education sector (ISB) and finally dropping anchor in social entrepreneurship.

Is an entrepreneurial journey really as glamorous as it's made out to be?

- Well, the notion of being independent and your own boss does sound very appealing, but it's only when you take that deep dive into entrepreneurship that you realize, that life as you know it undergoes a complete change. The flexibility of working for yourself really means you're working all the time, and there have been days I have found myself frustrated and lost. But as you start figuring things out and slowing piecing it all together, you experience the joy and exhilaration of building an enterprise from scratch, and above all the unparalleled satisfaction of chasing your passion and dreams.

Tell us about your start-up

'Craftizen' is a social venture which facilitates CSR for companies in the handicraft sector through structured 'Patron' programs that are designed to address critical issues artisan groups face including capacity building, design development and marketing linkages, with the ultimate aim of enhancing incomes and livelihoods of rural craft-persons. I have two pilots currently underway. I was fortunate to be awarded the innovative 'Salaried Social Entrepreneur' (SSE) program of NABARD as part of their rural innovations fund for the year 2013-2014, which provided an ideal launch platform for my venture.

How did your curriculum at B-school shape your life post graduation?

I was 23 when I graduated, and at a very early stage in my career. My ISB year really gave me the confidence to go out there and tackle my professional life head-on! Learning from and interacting with so many diverse faculty and peers from varied backgrounds, broadened my perspective on the numerous possibilities out there, and helped me evolve my goals and aspirations in a rapidly changing marketplace.

What about the network you formed? In what ways did it help.

ISB is one of those rare places where you appreciate the fact that being different is actually the new norm. Our alumni body is truly diverse and in every industry I've worked in - corporate, development and education, I've had the chance to interact with many like-minded alumni in similar or related fields. Be it business collaborations, guidance and inputs, contacts and referrals, the alumni have been a treasure trove of support. Beyond just the alumni, the faculty and school can provide you with sage advice and support on every step in the entrepreneurial journey.

It's been ten years since you graduated from business school. Are there still opportunities to network with the school and alumni?

Absolutely! This reunion is not just about catching up with classmates and reminiscing about our days as students, but also about appreciating the individual journeys we've all been through this past decade. When we studied at the ISB, the school was still in its budding days, and since then we have seen it blossom and thrive and to me, Solstice is not only a celebration of our year as students, but also a shining testimony to the growth and advancement of the alumni body as a whole. I'm really looking forward to many new and old conversations on life, living and lifelong friendships!