

# Start-ups in Human Resources: An Unleashed Potential

**Monali Basu\***

*GRIP Consulting is a HR Solutions Firm that works with the motto of “Building People to Build Organizations”. With a robust experience in HR services and thorough understanding of the nuances of job market, the leadership of GRIP consulting endeavours to lessen the much talked about but less worked out breach between industry and academia. The company is an end-to-end HR service provider whose HR activities span across recruitment solutions, learning solutions, embedded HR solutions and executive coaching. GRIP consulting is actively engaged in designing and providing certificate courses, entrepreneurial courses and other basic soft-skill enhancement courses for various age groups ranging from school goers to job-seekers.*

**IMI Konnect:** *What motivated you to go for a start-up in HR Consultancy?*

**MB:** There are two reasons which motivated us. First, Human Resource (HR) is the only thing that we knew and we considered if we need to do something, we should have enough knowledge on the subject. Second, which is more pertinent, as we had spent number of years in the HR field we have seen that there is lot of noise but hardly any action. We wanted to move beyond jargons and actually show revenue out of a so called support function. One of our visions is to establish HR as a revenue function so that all organizations should recognize the importance of strong people practices.

**IMI Konnect:** *How are the concept of HR start-ups distinguished from other start-ups in the service sector?*

**MB:** One of our clients once said about our business that, “there is a huge need but no demand”. The primary reason behind is that the sector we serve is not sure about the exact ROI (Return on Investment) which can be extracted out of the services provided. HR as a function is highly diluted and does not get equal status as other tech or social startup as it is more observed as professional services rather than an organized way of doing a business.

**IMI Konnect:** *Can you elaborate on the kinds of consulting activities you focus on?*

**MB:** We help organizations to solve people issues. We start from basic documentation, process and policies and then we cover services at every step of an employee from hiring to firing. The entire cycle of our services starts from

---

\* Co-founder, GRIP Consulting

manpower planning and manpower optimization in the first stage; to HR interviews, negotiations, employer branding in the second stage; to proposing HR policies, statutory compliance, HR documentation, on-boarding of new employees in the third stage; to performance management, explaining Job Description, Key Responsibility Area, Key Performance Indicator and taking care of other strategic process implementation in the fourth stage; to gauging employee engagement, retention, benefits, rewards and recognition in the fifth stage; to benchmarking salaries in the sixth stage; to compensation structure and structuring organization in the seventh stage; to assessing competency i.e. selecting right people for the right job in the eighth stage; to succession planning i.e. identifying high potential employees in the ninth stage; to organizing exit interviews and analyze the reason behind retention at the tenth and final stage. Then again starts the process of manpower planning and manpower optimization as the first step and the cycle continues.

**IMI Konnect:** *What are the major constraints you faced while establishing your start-up?*

**MB:** The major constraints we faced as a start-up were actually defining our target market and client acquisition. Other standard challenges like funds and capital are always there as you do not always have a rolling capital to infuse in the start-up to scale up as per your expectations. Another major constraint we faced was gaining the trust and faith of our customers, it took quite a while for us to convince customers that we will not run

away and we are not start-up just for the sake of it.

**IMI Konnect:** *Much is said about “demographic dividend” in India as India boasts one of the largest numbers of young population ready to join workforce. Do you think enough jobs are created in the job market to absorb the young educated Indians?*

**MB:** Yes, we strongly believe there are enough jobs. The challenge is the gap in expectations. At one side there is huge unemployment and on the other side there is huge need of good people with relevant skills. What is more worrisome is the fact that this gap is widening.

**IMI Konnect:** *How would you compare the scenario in Indian job market with job markets in other countries like China which also comprises of huge workers?*

**MB:** We feel that the Indian Job market is yet to mature to the level of China. Our training facilities are below par and the wages are still unbalanced. The workforce is still largely unorganized and politically powered. We feel with Government focusing on projects like “Skill India”, this scenario will change soon.

**IMI Konnect:** *What is your view on employability of fresh graduates joining the workforce every year?*

**MB:** There has been a lot spoken on this and our thoughts are no different. There lies a huge gap in the industry requirements and what skill levels come out of the colleges. We feel the blame should not entirely be given on the education system or the colleges; problem lies also in the way our current generation is brought up. The

socio economic conditions, peer pressure and instant gratification from childhood is creating a different level of expectation in the minds of students. They are in a make wish world of how they should be treated in the work places which entirely change when they get into the jobs. It is also somewhat related to the marketing of various educational institutions where they market more about placements than about research papers submitted and patents acquired. Thus each educational institution is treated as factories where the parents feel the moment the child gets admitted, he/she will come out with well-paid job worth the investment-irrespective of skill and capability. We at GRIP Consulting are working with number of colleges and schools helping them bridge this gap.

**IMI Konnect:** *Where does the major gap lie between industry requirements and academic curriculum, according to you?*

**MB:** We feel there should be more courses with practical applications not only in the software but also in every field. If the student is studying HR, the student should actually sit and do payroll processing and performance management rather than just read from books. Educational institutes should also develop courses for corporate readiness which will prepare them for the future with a vision of not only just landing up with a job but to succeed and grow.

**IMI Konnect:** *How does your organization work to bridge the gap?*

**MB:** We have our signature programme which is

called Bench+, which is for the undergraduate students and Bench Pro+ which is for Post Graduate students. It starts from goal setting, we develop a generative success model and then groom them to be true professionals. We also conduct entrepreneurial courses to help students who are interested to establish start-ups with guidance and right ingredient of how to start a business, writing a business plan etc. We also prepare them for campus interviews which are specific industry trainings depending on which campus the students will be appearing for. Thus we provide a full customized programme to help them get the exact grooming as per his/her expertise.

**IMI Konnect:** *How are the courses of Grip Consulting modelled to enhance the soft skills of school-going children which is a unique feature of your organization?*

**MB:** We believe that most of us are stuck to time zones and we don't get to learn the things which we should learn when the time is there. Life Skills is a very important part for a child who is growing up and the way he/she is modelled will result in how he/she will face the world. We have a very strong GRIP Bench programme for class 9-12 where we help these great minds to nurture them to think, explore, improve and apply the skills that they will need the most to grow in life.

**IMI Konnect:** *What are the major advantages and disadvantages of working as a start-up in India according to you?*

**MB:** We feel the greatest advantage of working as a startup is the learning phase and the

opportunity to do something you love and create a difference. The disadvantage is to manage peer expectations as well as managing an addiction called the “salary”!

**IMI Konnect:** *How is India Inc going to be affected by the latest technological trends like AI, Digitalization, machine learning, etc. Is the role of HR going to change in this context? Please share your views.*

**MB:** We feel with the socio economic condition of India, latest technologies will take a considerable time to make an impact. 60 per cent of India Inc falls under MSME who are still struggling to create enough process and systems. We still have numerous organizations who have an attendance log book in spite of having biometric systems. The role of HR will definitely change in the context and it will evolve many folds. If we observe, most organizations do not suffer from business problems, they suffer from people problems and the HR function has to give strategic inputs to business to get rid of this. With time the HR function will become more business centric and over time we believe the built in Return on Investment (ROI) that is made for people development will be so much efficient that not a single penny spent on an employee would be a bad investment.

**IMI Konnect:** *What are your learnings from your start-up experience?*

**MB:** We have three distinctive learnings:

a) The problem of an organization that we perceive and try to address as an HR is not always what the customer perceives as his organization's

problem; b) Patience is the key, you have to keep going; c) Direction is more important than speed.

**IMI Konnect:** *One of the areas most start-ups ignore is the HRM function- how important is the role of HRM in a start-up?*

**MB:** People build organizations and most start-up owners feel they are the best people managers. As an owner if you are spending more than 30 per cent time in managing people issues then you are wasting your time and then you need to think of building a strong HRM function. As the saying goes “Building People to Build Organization”, we feel every start-up however big or small it is, should and must invest in good and strong people practices, as people are the ones who will build your organization.

**IMI Konnect:** *What will be your suggestions to the policy makers to induce a more conducive business environment for start-ups in India?*

**MB:** We feel there should be more flexibility in disbursement of funds for the service sector. There are lot of schemes for manufacturing sector, but for a business like ours there are not much scope. There should be specific schemes for people intensive services like ours.