

Tap into knowledge economy

INTERVIEW Quizmaster *Giri 'Pickbrain'*

Balasubramaniam says there's a lot of scope for the quizzing market



QUIZ ACE Giri Balasubramaniam

Quizzing has transcended from being just a game to a way of tapping into the vast knowledge economy of India and from being a metro-oriented sport to one that has now successfully permeated Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, says Giri 'Pickbrain' Balasubramaniam. Excerpts from an interview with the quizmaster, who's in the city for Tata Crucible Business Quiz 2012.

How different is quizzing as a genre in India than it is abroad?

In India, it is equivalent to any competitive sport. It starts as early as school level. Just like cricket teams and debate teams, you now have quiz teams. Overseas, it's seen as your ability to learn beyond what you're supposed to know, and in some places, it's more a networking forum with intellectual people. The changing paradigm in India is actually coming in because of the change in the education system. India is slowly moving to a non-examination mode. It's bringing in quizzing as a tool of evaluation.

Also, India is slowly realising that it's into the knowledge economy zone. There is a clear understanding even in B and C cities that if India has to make genuine progress, then the *aam aadmi* has to take knowledge seriously. The knowledge shift paradigm translates to every mode of life.

In 1782, the word quiz meant "an odd, eccentric person in character and spirit" and by 1807, its definition had changed to "a practical joke", and currently the Oxford Dictionary defines it as a test of knowledge, especially

as a competition between individuals or teams as a form of entertainment. Do you think the word will be redefined further?

Quizzing is a parameter to judge how in touch with the changing world you are. It's not a yardstick of what others don't know or what you know, it's about what we all ought to know. Quizzing's popularity is also due to the paradigm change in the availability of information going on in the last few years. I was at the TCS School IT Quiz in Kolkata, and kids in the auditorium were tweeting questions I was asking them! That's live coverage for you. So, as we move on to an increasingly real-time world, quizzing has become a fun alternative tool for learning.

What made you shift your focus to smaller cities from the obviously quiz-savvy metros?

To be fair, I don't think we as a quizzing company shifted focus, I credit that to Tata Crucible that foresaw India beyond its metros. But, we at Greycaps, are the first quizzing company to take that step forward as quizzing in regional languages. When it comes to the difference between the students, the smaller city kids are much more prepared and enthusiastic. The big-city kids nearly always have to make a choice from among a movie, a rock show, a party

and a quiz, while for the smaller city kids, this is a pretty major form of entertainment, so they give it their all.

With a lot of people entering the quizzing arena, just what puts you (and Greycaps) in a league of your own?

Quizzing has moved into the brand building arena as a clean form of entertainment. This is one mind sport with high engagement values where passion runs high. Being earlier than others, Greycaps has a natural advantage. Also my seniors in the industry (Siddhartha Basu, Derek O'Brien) have not been very active lately, we've been at the right place at the right time. There is room for a lot of entrepreneurial activity in the area.

Quizzing as a career choice?

Unfortunately, a lot of youngsters who get into quizzing only focus on the fame side of it. They get into it wanting to be instant celebrities on national television. I tell them it takes 10 years and they don't like hearing that. But youngsters nowadays want to shift focus from a regular 9-to-5 job to something they're passionate about, which is excellent. There is a lot of scope in the quizzing market.

ZARA KHAN

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