

ICB on wings



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 **Initiatives of Change**
for Business

Editorial

Discussions on meeting growth while remaining socially conscious and eco-friendly eventually boils down to the individual, as business leaders, to bring about change in one's personal and professional lives. This thought was evident when leaders of Small and Medium Enterprises deliberated on the topic, that related to the struggles each went through, in the third Round Table of the April CEO Conclave held between 12 and 14 April 2019. A brief report gives a glimpse of some of the things discussed.

Other updates such as what the ICB Pune Chapter has been doing; the upcoming events that ICB has planned; and our new addresses are included in this issue for you.

We hope you will find these updates interesting and useful.



Struggles as a Business Leader

In April 2019, Initiatives of Change for Business (ICB) hosted a CEO Conclave for leaders of business, primarily those from small and medium enterprises. The Conclave theme, 'Meeting Growth while remaining Socially Conscious and Eco-friendly', was broken up into three Round Table deliberations, each with a focused topic. While in the previous two issues, we have covered the first two Round Tables, we are now pleased to include you in the deliberations of the third Round Table.

The first Round Table was about the transformation in organizations. The second one was about partnerships with employees, suppliers, customers and society at large. However, during the course of all the discussions, it was realised that everything eventually boils down to the individual, as business leaders, to bring about changes in their personal and professional lives. Intellectually, each probably knew what had to be done and yet as business leaders they struggle at an individual level with various things. Therefore, the third Round Table focused on some of these struggles and was aptly titled, 'Struggles as a Business Leader'. The delegates began the session in silence to collect their thoughts before starting discussions.

One of the biggest take-away, said a participant, was that it was during this Conclave that he realised that he was being about 51% moralistic. However, the discussions at the Conclave steered his thought process to the direction of putting ethics before business. He committed to not compromise on values for the sake of business. Another challenge that he said he was facing was with older employees. Most of them have been doing the same job since they first started. But times have changed now and some of those roles require advanced knowledge or physical strength which they lack. Despite this, he is unable to let go of them. During discussions, he was struck with the idea that they could possibly

be shifted to other simpler initiatives which involve society.

A gentleman mentioned the helpless situation he was in 10 to 15 years ago when he first started his business. He was in desperate need of a loan to begin with but no bank was ready to help him. Today, banks are going to him to offer a loan but he doesn't need it anymore. 'This,' he says, 'is a big challenge for all start-ups in today's world.' He suggested that maybe a forum could be formed where new businesses can be financially helped.

The Chair of this Round Table, Vivek Asrani, who runs a successful business, added by saying that SMEs require help on many different fronts, not only from the government, but often require a good sounding board. This is something he himself struggles with in his line of business.

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For the past five years, a participant mentioned, that his business faced the challenge on how to grow or how to manage growth. He said, 'One can push to reach the top line, but how to sustain it, *in the right way*, is difficult.' In his company, sustainability was based on proper processes. Therefore, his company came up with an ERP system, an end-to-end mechanism. They realised over time that most SMEs need this in their organisations. Some bigger companies, like the Tata's, have also extended a helping hand in terms of supporting smaller companies with software packages.

Some key factors affecting SMEs are firstly, getting the right talent and secondly, retaining those talented people in the organization. The co-Chair of the Conclave said that he is being faced by similar challenges where his business has reached a certain level and he is struggling with how to attract the right talent to take the company to the next level.

On one hand he fears that managers from outside will disturb the work culture or what if the numbers don't play out. Should he just hope that some employees will shape up for the new challenges or should he bring in new people and take the risk of cost and disruption?



Another participant who is in the logistics business mentioned about his struggles of being a bank funded company, unlike other start-up companies which are Venture Capital funded. He says many of his employees were taken by the start-ups. For example, five of his delivery boys were taken by the famous food delivery company, *Swiggy* and 51 from the courier firm, *Blue Dart*. These were all in one night and were paid almost double, something he could not afford. The next day he was stuck with the delivery of two thousand shipments and a handful of people to do the job. Even though the new start-ups encounter losses, the banks are ready to fund them again. While on the other hand, the older companies have to beg for more funding from banks despite making profits.

While discussions were on these various issues were taking place, the

owner of a SME, enlightened the group on how it is also very important to keep oneself updated with the ever changing circumstances and the world. He said that his father, who has been running his own business for the past 40 years, has not updated himself much. On the urging of his son the former is now going to various institutes like Harvard and other places to update himself. The son felt that his father, by updating himself, would bring a breath of fresh air to his 40-year-old business. The young businessman, himself, prefers to be constantly updated in his own line of business. This was something quite new and interesting for the rest of the Conclave delegates, who also obviously want the best for their companies. He also said that in his own company he has stopped the blanket policy of 10% increment every year for his employees. He had a direct conversation with his employees asking them if they thought they really deserved the increment as they had not really upgraded themselves much. As a result, he would tell them, the company had not made much progress. He is also setting up a system where if an employee takes initiatives to upgrade himself and others around him he gets plus points and similarly gets his points deducted if he doesn't make much effort. Therefore, by the end of the year, an employee knows exactly how much increment he might be getting. This process has helped in keeping a track of the overall upgradation of the organisation.

One of the lady delegates narrated how she is usually not taken seriously because of her gender. As the years have gone by, she has come to terms with it and works her way around it.

ICB Chairman, Sarosh Ghandy, mentioned an incident that took place when he was the MD of Tata Motors. He was faced with a problem

and contemplated on how to deal with it when it struck him that if the employees were directly told about the problem they could come up with a solution too. Much to his surprise, the employees did come up with a way out and the company eventually benefited.

A common dilemma that most business owners' face is what he or she does with people who are older and do not add much value anymore.

One of the lady delegates narrated how she is usually not taken seriously, the reason being her gender. As the years have gone by, she has come to terms with it and works her way around it. She sometimes even requests her husband to go along with her for meetings so that she may be taken seriously. In her experience, even after 28 years of working, situations have not improved much.

The CEOs were now at ease and connected with each other as the discussions went forward.

One Managing Director shared that despite having a large friend circle and a reasonably big social circle, as the owner of his company, he still feels lonely at times. He mentioned that his team works very efficiently; still he feels the same. This was a situation to which many of the delegates could relate to. Discussions went further on this topic where many mentioned similar dilemmas. One leader from business provided his way of dealing with this problem. He chose to have around him, people who were smarter than him. He said that one feels lonely as an owner because he feels he is the best. Unless one realises that taking a step back is equally important, it is difficult to move forward.

Another very important aspect of running a business is the relationship

that the head shares with his employees. A common dilemma that most business owners' face is what he or she does with people who are older and do not add much value anymore. A suggestion that resulted from the discussions was that maybe these people can be made use of elsewhere in the company. The CEO also discussed how it is very important for the owner to push his employees to enhance their own talents, learn new ones if necessary in order to upgrade themselves and in the process benefit the organisation. This would be a win-win situation for the employee and the employer. Many such examples were given where the company owner urged his staff to learn another aspect of the business and as a result could replace the predecessor who also got promoted to another job profile in the organisation. This gave the owner the benefit of having a backup person in case the other is unavailable. A common belief among the participants from the Conclave was that unless the employer and the employees upgrade themselves with the changing times, the company would not move towards a brighter future.

Vivek Asrani, who was resplendent while chairing the session, summed up and highlighted all the key points that were discussed during this Round Table. At the end of the summation, Sarosh Ghandy added that he was once told by his boss that one must be very careful with one's expenses during good times because that thought out decision could pull one through in bad times.

The Round Table concluded with a beautiful Tagore song, *Ekla Cholo Re*. The song illustrated how one should be prepared to walk ahead alone in life when no one else heeds to one's call. CEOs, many a times, have to take tough decisions, for the greater benefit of the company and the employees, which may not be supported by others. In such situations one should have the courage and belief to move forward.

Cluster Meetings in Pune

The ICB Pune Chapter, in their last meeting on 2 July 2019, had planned to conduct four cluster meetings of Medium and Small Enterprises, each focused on a geographical section of the city.

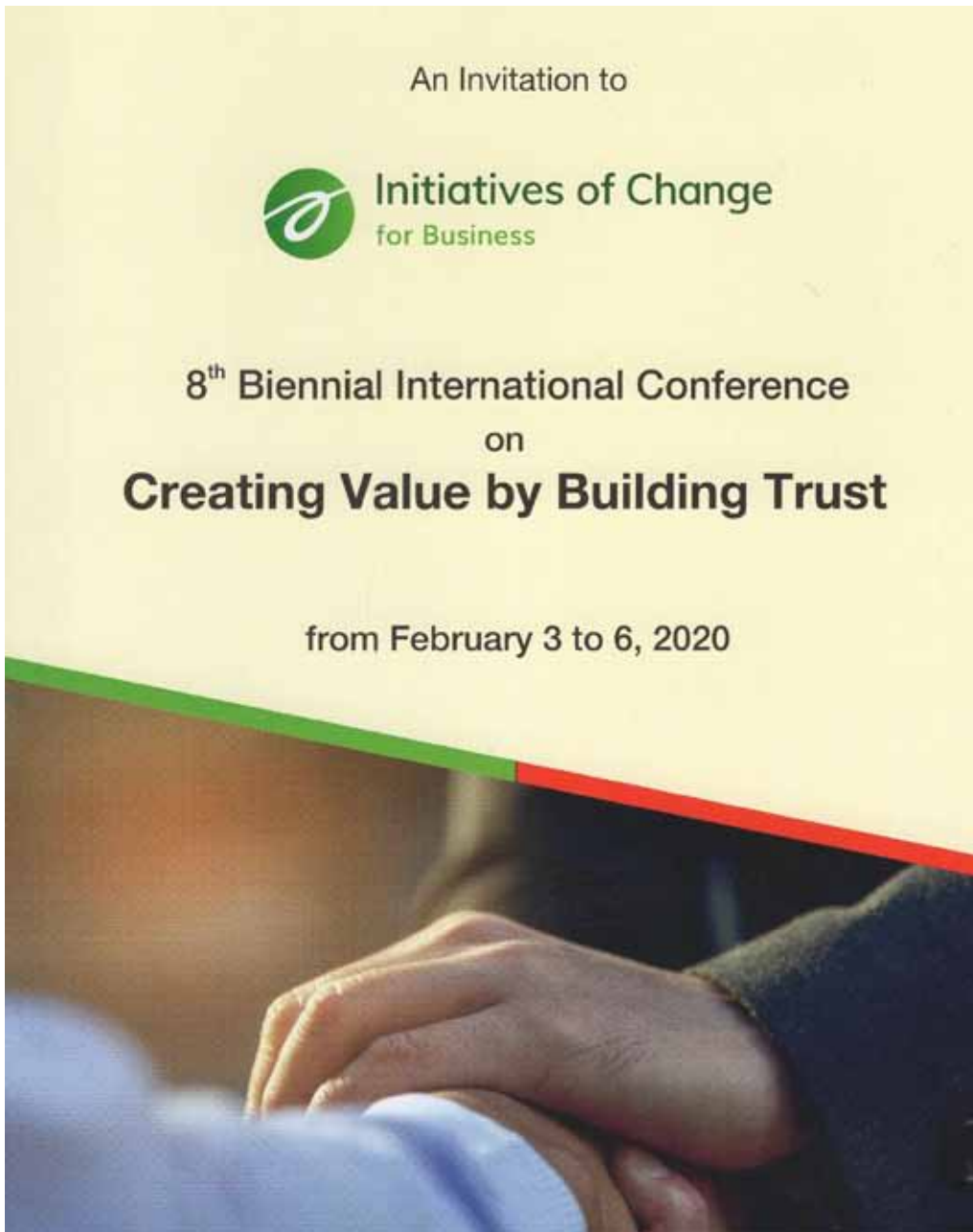
Soon thereafter, Mohan Nair, the Convenor of the Pune

Chapter wrote, 'We had a very successful 1st cluster meet of MSME owners and CEOs at Jayshree Polymers Ltd. Eighteen delegates attended the meeting.



The second of the four cluster meetings was held on 9 August 2019. Mohan Nair's update stated: 'We completed the 2nd Pune Cluster meeting of ICB at the A Raymond plant at Chakan, Pune. The program was attended by 20 participants. Very fruitful discussions ensued and bright future prospects for Asia Plateau programs appear on the horizon.'

Upcoming Event



Initiatives of Change for Business (ICB) is holding its 8th Biennial International Conference at Panchgani, India from Monday, 3 February to Thursday, 6 February 2020.

The theme of the conference is, 'Creating Value by Building Trust'.

Plenary sessions with eminent speakers from several countries

on the panel and Round Table deliberations on creating value and building trust with suppliers, customers and employees, make up the broad design of the event.

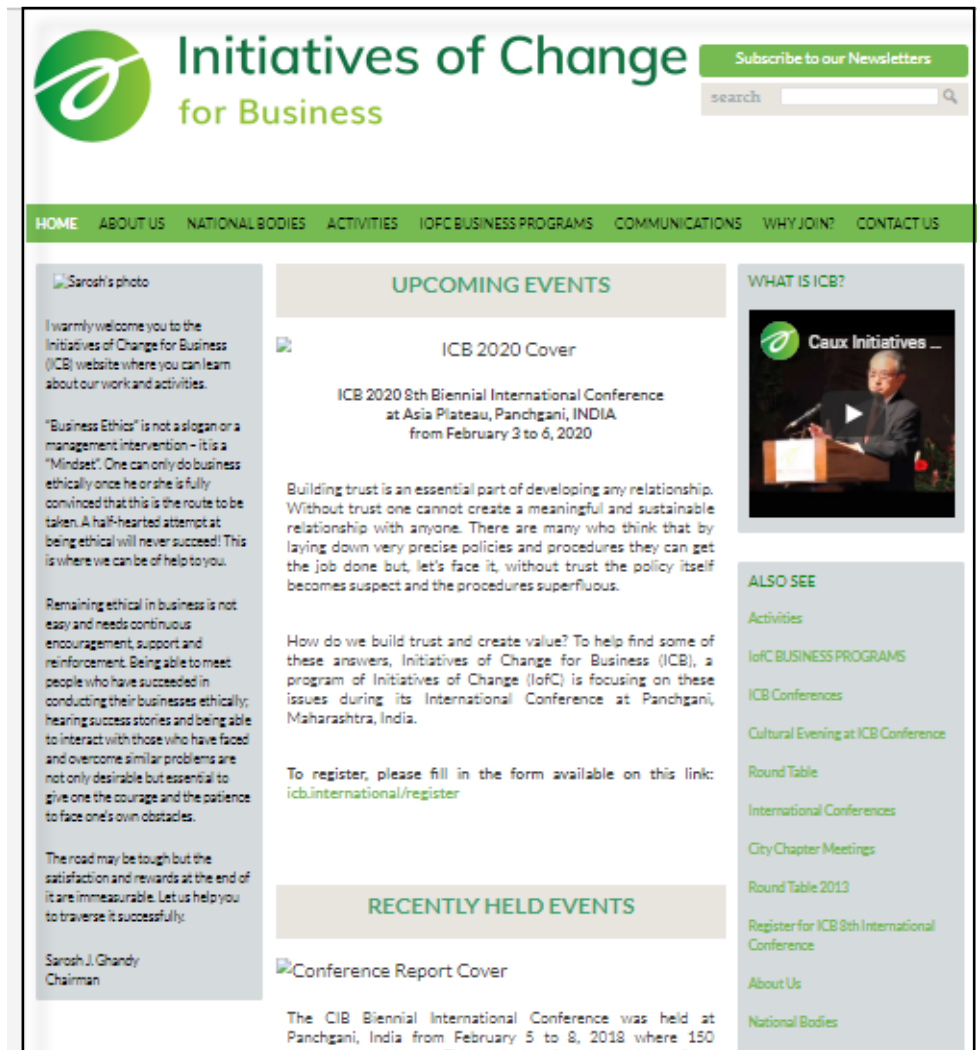
Details on the conference is available on our website: www.icb.international.

You could fill in your online registration form on: www.icb.international/register.

Our New Address

Following the decision in August 2018 to revise the name from Caux Initiatives for Business (CIB) to Initiatives of Change for Business (ICB), it naturally required making a few changes, especially with our website, email addresses and other stationery. That step was taken last month.

We are therefore happy to share with you our new addresses, both website and Email, and would be grateful if you could update your address book to incorporate the same.



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Initiatives of Change for Business website. The header features the organization's logo and name, a search bar, and a newsletter subscription link. The navigation menu includes links for Home, About Us, National Bodies, Activities, IOFC Business Programs, Communications, Why Join?, and Contact Us. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column features a welcome message from Sarosh J. Ghandy, Chairman, discussing business ethics and trust. The middle column highlights an upcoming event: the ICB 2020 Cover, which is the 8th Biennial International Conference at Asia Plateau, Panchgani, India, from February 3 to 6, 2020. The right column provides information about the organization and lists other resources under 'ALSO SEE', including activities, IOFC Business Programs, ICB Conferences, and National Bodies.

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