



• Posted: Tue, Feb 24 2009. 12:47 AM IST

# Interaction brings new perspectives

Malhotra coached his team on management concepts and was a visiting practising manager at ISB

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New Delhi: Men at the top are always lonely. Haven't you heard of this before?" asks Ashok Malhotra, the 47-year-old managing director at Mettler-Toledo India Pvt. Ltd, or MTIPL, a unit of Mettler-Toledo International Inc., the global maker of precision instruments such as weighing scales.

Malhotra clung to that belief until he stepped into a classroom bustling with chief executive officers from companies across sectors. The year was 2004 and he was at the Indian School of Business, or ISB, Hyderabad, for a five-day management development programme on strategic marketing.



Long-term plan: Mettler-Toledo India's Ashok Malhotra. Ashesh Shah / Mint

"In your own company, you might not be open to discussing ideas and problems, but when you meet top-level executives from various companies dealing in diverse businesses, the interaction brings about new and different perspectives to the problems you might be dealing with," he says.

"The programme enhanced my ability to open up. My interaction with senior industry managers also improved," adds Malhotra, who later became president of the Mumbai chapter of ISB's executive

education alumni.

Then followed five more such programmes at ISB, a few at the Indian Institutes of Management, or IIMs, in Kolkata and Ahmedabad and at Harvard Business School last year in areas as diverse as executive coaching, mergers and acquisitions, and global advanced management programmes. His company paid a minimum of Rs1.5 lakh for each programme, with the fees going up to Rs12 lakh for some that involved visits to B-schools in the West.

**Also See** Ashok Malhotra's profile ([PDF](#))

"I got really excited by all this. The moment I would return from such programmes, some of my colleagues would say, 'hey, something is coming up and we need to sit together and work it out,'" he recalls.

Malhotra coached his team members on management concepts and even visited ISB as a visiting practising manager to share his experiences.

After a series of internal meetings, Malhotra evolved a strategic and long-term marketing plan for Mettler-Toledo India which until then had adopted a day-to-day approach towards marketing. "We put together a plan for the next five years which helped us look at (an) anticipated shortfall in sales and painting various sale scenarios," he says.



By the time the economic slowdown began last year, his company was ready with a plan to boost sales.

Malhotra still remembers lectures from Deepak Jain, a professor at the Kellogg Business School with which ISB collaborates, who used math for solving complex marketing problems. "We at MTIPL often say we are the Mercedes-Benz of the weighing world. With the lectures from Jain, we adopted mathematical tools to solve certain management riddles that no one thought could be simplified like that," he says.

The executive education modules he attended after taking over as managing director of Mettler-Toledo India led him to acquire skills which he says had a direct impact on his dealing with the company's human resources and marketing strategies. "With generous help from the executive education programmes, the attrition rate at my company has come down from 25% to 15%."

Despite the economic downturn, his company is still sending executives for training. An engineering graduate from Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh and MBA from Faculty of Management Studies, or FMS, in New Delhi, Malhotra says it is important for senior executives to train.

"CEOs can't outsource human resource management to anyone, so one needs to treasure staff by directly involving themselves with them," he says.

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