

## *Panel Discussions: Key Takeaways*

### **Opportunities to Excel**

#### **Panelists:**

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All gaps around a person and all that is negative around a person is an opportunity—filling the gaps or turning something negative into positive is an opportunity—If garbage is lying in front of your home and the streets around, then just picking the garbage could be turned into a profitable venture—people have already turned garbage-picking into a multimillion-dollar industry. Similarly, if people do not have information about tourist attractions or educational facilities in a town, then designing tools to provide such information for a price is an opportunity. There are hundreds of problems to be solved, and every problem reflects an opportunity—focus on finding a solution to the problem, and you will get your entrepreneurial idea to pursue. The next stage is to put the idea to practice.

**Cook *khayali pulao*** (build a castle in the air): cooking *khayali pulao* i.e., day-dreaming, is very important. One should dream big and then give his/her best to put the dream into a reality—again being passionate about one's dreams is important—what one's mind can see is achievable—prerequisite of course is: access to appropriate skills.

**Sputnik moment.** The launch of the first artificial satellite in space by Russia led to a realisation in the United States that the Soviet Union was ahead of them in science and

technology, especially the knowledge related to outer space. This led the then President, Eisenhower to tell the American public to produce more scientists in 10 years and, for this to happen, scrutinise school curriculum and standards. Thus, the realisation that they were behind the Soviet Union, which could have far-reaching consequences, led the United States to strive hard to close the gap. This kind of realization makes individuals and nations identify opportunities, do what is required to access these opportunities, and excel with hard work and patience.

**Excellence** means reaching the zenith of something—this **does not come automatically**—one must work very hard to achieve excellence, and to work hard for something, one must be very passionate about it—it is the hard work fuelled by a passion that brings about excellence. Moreover, excellence is relative and would mean different things for different people depending on their current state and circumstances.

Excellence cannot come, and **opportunities cannot be easily availed without education**. However, education is not sufficient to achieve excellence or for that even avail opportunities – it must be supplemented with several things like vision, passion, and hard work. The base of excellence is information—for example, to excel, one needs to know what is required to achieve excellence—what international standards must be met, where are the facilities for training for excellence, and what prerequisites must be met to enter those training facilities—be these educational institutions or skill development ventures.

To achieve excellence, it is important that one should **set goals** for himself/herself and not just the goal but milestones right up to the highest goal. It is also important that goals should be challenging—without challenging goals achieving excellence is not possible. If a person consistently fails to achieve milestones, this means that he/she is not on the path to achieving the goal. However, failure is not something bad, what is important is that a person should be ready to learn from failures and should have the ability to rise after each fall—failing to achieve milestones should lead to either resetting goals or renewed strategy for achieving goals.

Degrees merely indicate that the holder possesses a certain minimum level of knowledge in a specific field; however, **degrees do not guarantee a job**—employers', prefer a certain level of skill and proficiency even in fresh graduates that they might be looking for. Though having a reference (*sifarish*) might serve in securing some jobs but the perception that a reference is always essential is certainly not true—a large majority manage to secure a job without a reference. Therefore, the fresh graduates, while looking for jobs should be ready to work as interns, even for free—this way, they would be getting the skills and experience the employers are looking for.

Therefore, the message for the youth of Pakistan is that to **identify, carve and seize an opportunity, one must prove** his/her mettle in the job market or an entrepreneurial venture. A person would have to do sort of the heavy lifting. To that end, atomic habits reflected in; hard work, discipline, and above all, a love for reading is required.