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September 2026, Volume VIII, Issue 9



THE STATE OF THE DGR MANAGEMENT COURSES

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MESSAGE from the EDITOR



Iqbal Singh

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the September 2026 issue of the ForceNet E-Zine.

Transitioning from military service to the corporate sector is a monumental pivot. For years, the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR) has played a central role in this journey, particularly through its 24-week management courses. By partnering with premier management institutions, the DGR has provided a structured bridge into the corporate world for countless veterans. It is a noble, highly valuable initiative that has fundamentally shaped the second careers of many retiring officers.

However, as the corporate landscape shifts and industry demands evolve at breakneck speed, academic curriculums must also continuously evolve. This month, our theme is "The State of the 24-Week DGR Management Courses."

We want to state transparently that the objective of this issue is not to pass judgment on the DGR program. Rather, it is to provide a grounded, reality-based look at how the course functions in today's highly competitive market. To achieve this, we recently conducted a community survey targeting officers who have completed the DGR management course.

The response was robust, with 181 officers participating—a highly significant sample size for our niche audience. In our survey analysis, we have merely presented the feedback exactly as it was submitted from the ground. While respondents highlighted the transitional benefits of the program, they also offered candid, constructive suggestions on how the curriculum could be modernized to better align with current corporate realities.

Furthermore, amongst the article published several contributors have explored viable alternative skilling options for officers whose career goals may require a different approach. Please note that the opinions expressed in the respective articles are strictly those of their authors.

Our primary aim with this survey and the accompanying articles is to create a reliable reference point. We want any officer stepping out of uniform to have a clear, objective understanding of what to expect from the DGR course, enabling them to make an informed decision about their transition strategy.

Happy reading.

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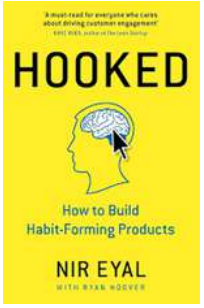
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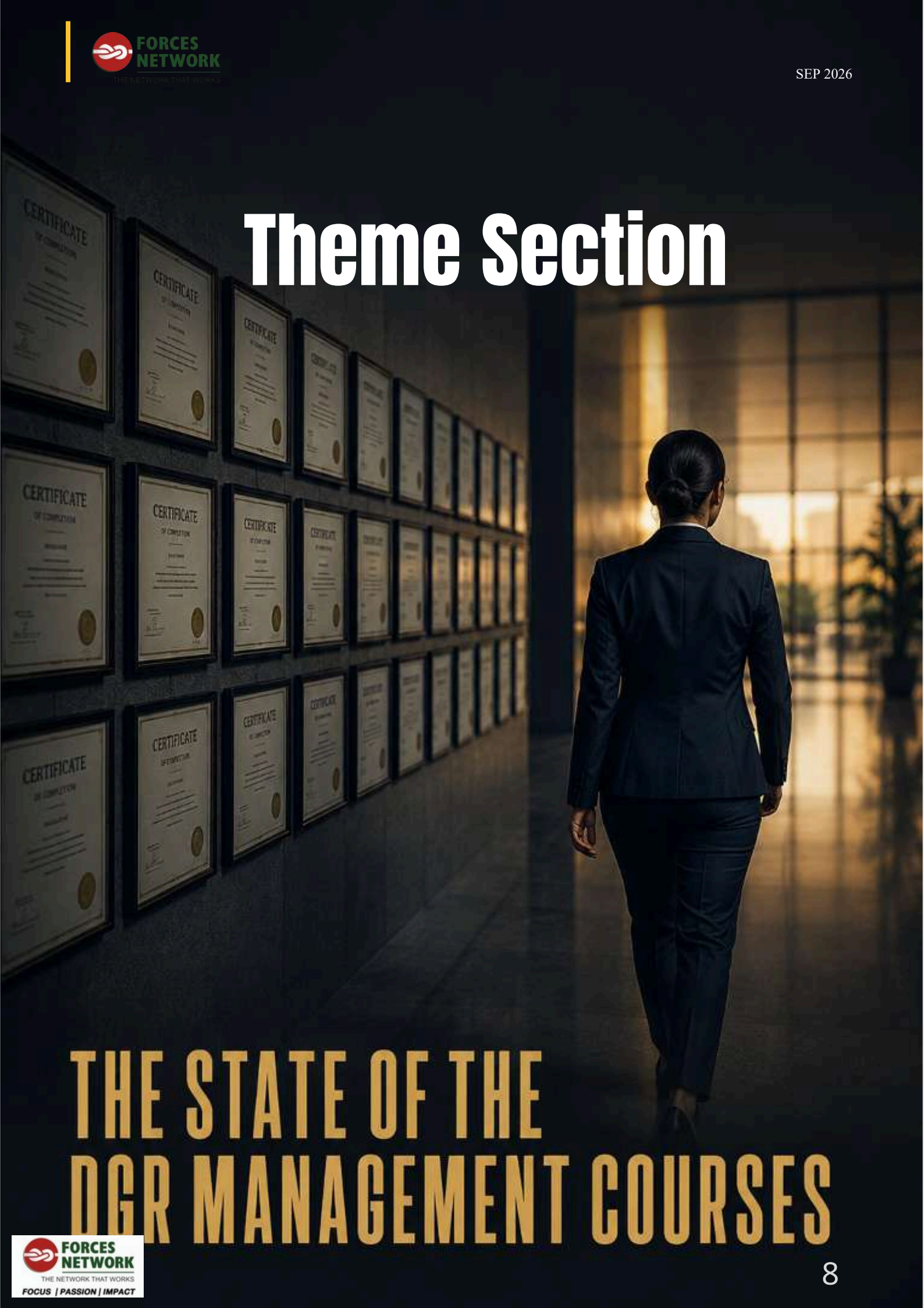


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Theme Section



THE STATE OF THE DGR MANAGEMENT COURSES

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The Decision Before DGR Programme

A Military Officer's Investigation into Transition

By
Col Rahul Tyagi

The tea had gone cold. It used to happen often!!!
It was well past midnight by the time I had just finished another GMAT mock paper. The dining table had become my study: MBA preparation books and rough calculation sheets scattered all over it, while the half-finished cup stood witness somewhere in between. While I thought that I was preparing for a GMAT score that would become gateway for my MBA abroad, my heart knew the reality.

I was preparing to leave the only profession I had known since I was 17.

Around this corner, another decision knocked my mental doors: Should I join a DGR programme?

For many officers who are about to 'Hang Their Uniforms', the answer appears obvious because 24 weeks DGR programme is seen as the natural bridge for M2C (Military to Corporate) transition. I chose not to attend. Not because I believed the programme lacked value, or that those joining it were making a mistake.

I simply felt it would not solve the problem I



Figure 1. The transition begins long before the uniform comes off—often with a question, not an answer.

was trying to solve- “What Rahul Tyagi is trying to build after army”. Ironically, I never knew what that problem was.

I would probably have spoken about an MBA, entrepreneurship, leadership, or purpose. I would have sounded certain. But certainty and clarity are not the same thing. As I look back, I spent too much time deciding HOW I should transition before understanding “WHAT” I was transitioning towards.

That became the starting point of a larger investigation - not into DGR, not the MBA, but into military transition itself.

The Assumption That Fell Apart

Like many officers, I started with one simple assumption: transition was one common problem. Leave the service, acquire new skills, network, find the right organization, and build a second career.

Then I started listening.

One Short Service Commission officer told me honestly, "Sir, frankly, I am looking for a decent job."

Another officer, taking a premature retirement after 22 yrs of service, paused before answering the same question: "I don't even know what I want to become."

Both were transitioning. Neither was trying to solve the same problem…

The first was seeking continuity. Without a pension, often with a young family, and immediate financial responsibilities, a job was not always the destination. He was probably trying to buy time - time to understand the civilian world, experiment, and eventually decide what he wanted to build.

The second stood somewhere else. Pension offered a degree of security, but children were approaching higher education, parents were ageing, and two decades of productive professional runway still lay ahead. His question had shifted from "Will I get a job?" to "What do I want the next twenty years of my life look like?"

A senior officer completing a full colour service faced a third reality. He was looking for meaningful engagement, continued contribution, dignity, routine, and financial continuity; not re-attiring.

One officer worried about next month's income. Another worried about the next twenty years. A third wondered how to remain relevant after a lifetime of responsibility.

Three officers. Three transitions. Three different problems…

Yet we often expect one intervention of DGR course or MBA to solve them all.

The Baggage We Do Not Name

Career stage changes more than financial need. The longer we serve, the more deeply our habits, beliefs, and decision models are shaped by the military ecosystem. These models have made us effective for years. That is precisely why adapting them can be difficult.

The qualities that make an officer exceptionally successful inside the military may equally steepen his learning curve outside it. A younger officer may be more willing to experiment, accept unfamiliar roles, and learn publicly. A senior officer often has a stronger professional identity, higher standards of

living, and greater reluctance to begin again in an environment whose rules he does not yet understand.

There is also an emotional reality we rarely discuss. Many officers in the 10 and 20+ yrs cohorts leave after being overlooked for promotion in a necessarily pyramidal structure. They do not always transition from a sense of completion. Some carry unfinished ambition, disappointment, or the quiet feeling that one early career setback became impossible to undo.

It does not reduce their capability. But it shapes the transition. Now a civilian role is expected to provide income, status, recognition, and sometimes emotional correction – often all at once. No course or employer has a magic wand to fulfill these expectations.

The Fog Nobody Talks About

There is another transition that receives far less attention: the psychological one.

The Armed Forces provide structure. Courses, appointments, command tenures, and promotions create a visible definition of progress. Whether one agrees with the system or not, success has a recognizable shape.

Civilian life quietly yet firmly removes that structure. For the first time, nobody tells us what success looks like.

The military trains us to succeed inside a system. Transition demands us to define success outside one.

That is where the real fog begins…

The fog is not merely uncertainty about interviews or jobs. It is the period when you are no longer only the officer you have always been yet have not become the person you will eventually be. The rank is still on your shoulders, but another conversation has already begun inside your head.

Looking back, I sometimes wonder what might have changed had someone asked me a different question two years before retirement. Not, "Which company are you targeting?" Not, "Should you pursue an MBA?" Not even, "Are you joining the DGR Management course?"

Just this: "What kind of life are you trying to build?"

I may not have had a brilliant answer. But I would have started thinking about the right problem. Good questions rarely provide immediate answers; they gradually produce better thinking.

Borrowed Maps

Whenever there is fog, we instinctively search for light. Almost every transition conversation eventually includes somebody else's success story: a subaltern who joined consulting, a coursemate who built a start-up, a ‘Jangu’ who



Figure 2. Service prepares us. Transition is where we design our next chapter.

pursued an MBA, and second CO, now Brigadier, who entered corporate leadership.

Learning from those who have walked ahead is invaluable. Borrowing their map is dangerous.

Not because their path is wrong, but because it leads to their destination.

Uncertainty makes borrowed maps feel reassuring. Someone else has already travelled that road; hence it must be safe. But transition demands something more uncomfortable: drawing our own map after first choosing our own destination.

Looking at DGR Differently

This brought me back to my decision of 2021. Gradually, I stopped asking, "Does DGR programme work?" and began asking, "What problem was DGR programme designed to solve?"

The answer came through conversations with officers who attended such programmes. They spoke about understanding the corporate environment, learning business language, translating military experience, building networks, gaining confidence, and accessing recruiters.

These are meaningful outcomes.

The DGR programme can bridge knowledge gaps, create exposure, improve employability, and signal corporate readiness. But, like other programmes, it never answered deeply personal questions such as, **"Who do I want to become beyond the uniform and rank?"** Nor should it be expected to.

Perhaps the mismatch lies less in the programme and more in the expectations we carry into it.

The question, therefore, is not simply whether DGR programme works. It is: **for whom does it solve the right problem?**



Figure 3. DGR creates signposts, not the destination.

The Military Transition Compass

In all these years, I keep returning to the same thought: I did not need more advice; I needed better questions.

Those questions eventually formed the Military Transition Compass. At its center is the question that comes before every course, degree, job, or business decision: What problem am I really trying to solve? I don't offer it as a framework to be followed. I offer it as the questions I wish someone had asked me.

A compass does not choose the destination. It prevents us from walking in the wrong direction confidently.

The Decision Before DGR Programme

Today, officers still ask me, "Sir, should I do DGR course?"
Now I don’t answer it directly.
Instead, I ask another question:
"Tell me, what problem are you trying to solve?"
The talk is usually very different after that.



Figure 4. The Military Transition Compass

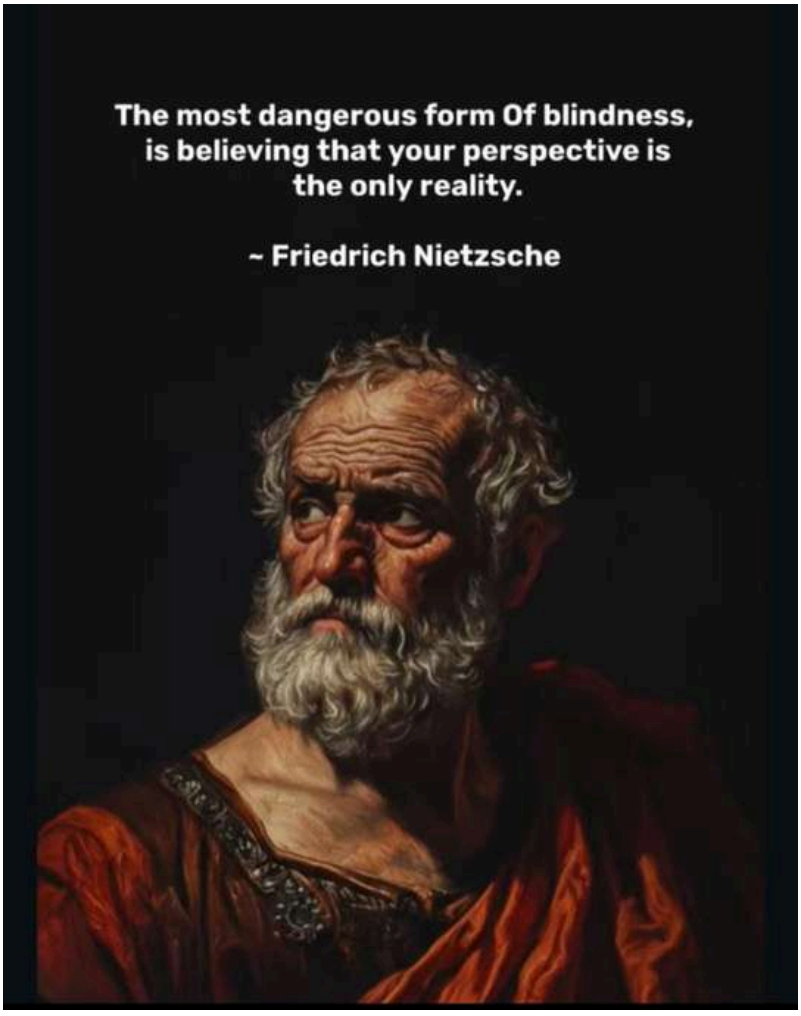
About the Author



Col Rahul Tyagi (Retd.)

Col Rahul Tyagi (Retd.) is a retired Infantry Officer and an operations and transformation leader with over two and a half decades of experience across the Indian Army and the corporate sector. He currently serves as General Manager – Operations & Administration for the Education Division of RJ Corp, overseeing multi-campus school operations across Gurgaon and Jaipur. Earlier, he held a senior operations leadership role at Amazon, where he led large teams, process transformations and strategic programmes. An MBA graduate and PMP®-certified professional, he brings together military precision, strategic thinking, operational excellence, and people-centric leadership.

He writes and speaks on leadership under uncertainty, military-to-corporate transition, organizational culture, and institutional transformation. He also mentors' veterans and young professionals navigating important career transitions. His work is rooted in helping people approach complex decisions with greater clarity, self-awareness and purpose.



The DGR 24-Week Question: Is It Really the Best Use of Your Final Six Months in Uniform?

By
Lt Col Iqbal Singh



Introduction

I know that this is a touchy and sensitive topic. However, I chose this topic because this is the question that I get asked by hundreds of transitioning officers. I have been mulling over the idea whether I should publicly pen down my thoughts on this topic or not for several years now. But, I feel that it is important that I share my learnings of having been in the corporate world for more than 18 years, running the community of Forces Network and guiding a couple of thousand officers in their transition journey. My views may not be sacrosanct but I feel that they will at least add to the body of knowledge and help at least some officers make an informed decision. The aim of Forces Network is also that we have a learning curve as a community we cannot afford to have transitioning officer continue to make the same mistakes for generations.

Let me be clear at the outset: this article is not a critique of the DGR 24-Week Management Course. The DGR Course is a well-intentioned, noble initiative, and thousands of officers have walked through it as their first structured bridge into civilian life. My aim here is to hold it up against three lenses that didn't exist, or existed differently, when the course was first designed around 2004 or so: the lens of my own corporate journey across Satyam, Nokia, and Google;

the lens of how the job market itself has fundamentally changed in the last decade; and the lens of what AI and automation are now doing to hiring itself.

The real question this article asks is not "is this course good or bad?" — that framing leads nowhere useful. The more honest question is: for whom does this course add value, and at what stage of career clarity does it actually help? An officer who has zero visibility into his post-service direction sits in a very different classroom than one who already knows exactly which industry, role, and skill he's targeting — yet both attend the same 24 weeks, in the same last six months before exit. And underneath this entire debate sits a fear that most officers carry quietly, rarely say aloud, and almost never raise in the classroom itself: what if I spend 24 of my last, most precious weeks in uniform, and walk out the other side still without a single job-ready skill I can put in front of a recruiter?

The Uncomfortable Question First

Before an officer signs up for the 24-week course — or, more realistically, before he simply flows into it because everyone in his batch does — there is one question almost nobody stops to ask out loud: why am I actually doing this? Ask around any Officers' Mess discussion or a WhatsApp group debate, and you'll hear the same five answers on repeat. "Everyone does it." "It's sanctioned, so why not." "It gives me something to do before I retire." "It'll help me get a job." "I need to prepare for civilian life somehow." Each of these sounds reasonable. But, none of them is an answer. They are all versions of doing something because it is available, not because it leads to somewhere specific. That distinction matters more than it sounds — because the officer who cannot name what he wants from these 24 weeks is, by definition, not steering his own transition. He is simply occupying a seat until the course ends and the uniform comes off.

This is where I want to challenge the assumption directly, respectfully, but firmly. The right question is not "should I do the DGR course." The right question is: what specific outcome do I expect to walk out with, at the end of these 24 weeks? Not a vague feeling of readiness. Not "I'll figure it out as I go." A specific, nameable outcome — a certification completed, a target industry identified, three informational interviews done, a resume that a recruiter in my target sector would actually shortlist. If an officer can answer that question in one sentence, the course has a job to do for him. If he cannot, that is the real warning sign — not that the course is bad, but that he is entering it without a compass.

This is precisely where the opportunity-cost argument becomes personal rather than abstract. Twenty-four weeks is not an abstract statistic — it is roughly the last six months of a working life spent in uniform, the very stretch when an officer has, for the first time in decades, full control of his own calendar. An officer with a vague answer risks spending that entire window on structured content that may or may not map to what the market actually wants from him. An officer with a specific answer can use the exact same 24 weeks — attend the same classes, sit in the same room — but walk out having deliberately extracted the one or two things he came for, and used the rest of his time on networking, applying, and interviewing in parallel. The course doesn't change. The



The Question May Sound Innocuous But Is Profound

officer's posture towards it does. And that posture is set entirely by how honestly he answers the uncomfortable question at the very start.

So before we go further into the FOR and AGAINST arguments, I'd ask every reader to pause here and actually answer it for himself: what outcome, specifically, am I expecting from my own 24 weeks? If the honest answer is "I'm not sure," that uncertainty is not a footnote to this article — it is the entire article.

The Biggest Issue: Timing

If I had to identify the single most structurally flawed assumption underlying the current DGR model, it isn't the syllabus, the faculty, or even the placement cell — it's the timing. The course sits in the last 24 weeks before an officer's exit from service. And somewhere along the way, this has quietly come to be treated as the moment transition preparation begins. That is the core problem, and it deserves to be stated plainly: career transition should not start 24 weeks before retirement. It should have started at least 2-5 years earlier and the course should be accelerating work already in motion — not initiating it from zero.

Consider everything a genuinely well-prepared transition actually requires: understanding how the civilian job market is structured and priced, identifying two or three target industries with intent, learning to translate military rank and responsibility into civilian equivalents, building a CV and LinkedIn profile that a corporate recruiter can actually parse, developing a real professional network outside the military ecosystem, acquiring the specific missing skills a target role demands, having informal conversations with recruiters and industry professionals to pressure-test assumptions, actually testing the market with a few live applications, preparing for the very different rhythm of a civilian interview and — for those inclined — exploring entrepreneurship or consulting as a serious option rather than a retirement afterthought.

None of this is 24-week work!

Each one of these, done properly, takes months of iteration, feedback, and course-correction. Compressing all of it into a single



The Question May Sound Innocuous But Is Profound

pre-retirement course isn't a training design — it's a triage exercise.

Training assumes there's still time to build something properly, layer by layer. Triage is what happens when that time has already run out, and all you can do is stabilise the most urgent gaps before the patient — in this case, the officer — is sent out of the door.

If an officer arrives at week one of DGR course having done none of that groundwork, the course can no longer train him properly in the full sense — there simply isn't time. Then the triage analogy kicks in: quickly assess where he stands, apply the fastest possible fix to the most urgent gaps, and get him "stable enough" to face the job market — even though a lot of the underlying work (real market understanding, a tested network, an actual sense of his target industry) never really got built.

This is why the timing question matters more than almost anything else in this debate. Ask honestly: does the 24-week course accelerate a transition process that was already underway — or does it, for most officers, become the starting point of that process? If it's the former, the course is doing exactly what it should: sharpening direction, filling specific gaps, giving a disciplined push to work already in progress.

If it's the latter — and for a large number of officers, it is — then the course is quietly absorbing the blame for a much earlier failure: the absence of any structured push toward transition-thinking in the years, not months, before exit. An officer who walks into the DGR course having never once researched a target industry is not behind because the course is too short. He is behind because nobody nudged him to start five years earlier, when he had the runway to experiment, fail quietly, and adjust.

This reframes the entire article's argument. The real fix isn't necessarily "extend the course" or "redesign the syllabus." It may

well be "start the process years before the course ever begins," so that by the time an officer sits in that classroom, the course is doing what it should always have been designed to do — accelerate a transition already underway, not attempt to manufacture one from a standing start in the last six months of service.

The Opportunity Cost Of 24 weeks

Let's do the arithmetic properly, because numbers change how an argument lands. Twenty-four weeks isn't just "six months" in the vague, forgiving way that phrase gets used in conversation. Twenty-four weeks, at five working days a week, is 120 working days. That is not an abstraction — it is 120 individual mornings an officer wakes up, gets dressed, and chooses where to direct his effort. The question this article keeps circling back to becomes very concrete once you frame it this way: what else could 120 working days have produced?

Look at what's realistically achievable in that window, if an officer chose to spend it differently. Over 120 working days, a disciplined officer could hold 100 or more meaningful networking conversations — not LinkedIn connection requests, but actual conversations with people who could open doors. He could send out 50 genuinely targeted applications, each one researched and tailored rather than mass-blasted. He could complete 20 substantive industry interactions — informational interviews, panel discussions, industry meetups. He could finish at least or even two one serious in demand industry relevant professional certifications with an internationally recognised body. He could complete a substantial AI upskilling programme, given how central that skill has become to every hiring conversation today. He could build out a consulting portfolio, or complete a genuine business feasibility study if entrepreneurship is the direction he's exploring. He could take on one or two short internships or project



assignments to actually test a target industry maybe with a startup before committing to it. He could run himself through structured interview practice until it stops feeling foreign. And he could build a LinkedIn presence serious enough that recruiters find him, rather than the other way around.

None of this is a hypothetical wish list — every item on it is something officers in our own Forces Network community have described doing, in isolation, in the years after they left service and had to build these skills the hard way, without anyone telling them to start earlier. The uncomfortable question the numbers force us to ask is simple: if all of this is achievable in 120 working days, what is the officer actually getting in exchange when those same 120 days are spent inside a classroom instead?

To be absolutely clear, because this is where the argument is easiest to misread: this is not a claim that the DGR course delivers zero value. That would be both false and unfair to an initiative many officers genuinely benefit from. The argument is narrower and, I think, more useful — every six-month investment of an officer's life, especially the last six months in uniform, deserves to be evaluated against what else those six months could have achieved. Not as a rejection of the course, but as the honest cost-benefit thinking every officer was trained to apply to far smaller decisions throughout his career. If the DGR course wins that comparison for a particular officer, he should do it with full conviction. If it doesn't, he owes it to himself to say so — and to spend those 120 days differently.

What Does The Course Actually Give You?

Having pushed hard on timing and opportunity cost, this section owes the course something more balanced — a genuine dimension-by-dimension audit, rather than a verdict. The fairest way to evaluate the DGR course isn't to ask "is it good," but to break the question into the specific things any serious professional development investment should be judged on, and let each officer score the course honestly against his own experience.

Knowledge. Does the course teach things employers actually value, or things that sound impressive in a classroom but don't survive contact with a hiring manager? Generic management theory — leadership models, organisational behaviour frameworks, basic finance — has real value for an officer with zero prior exposure to corporate vocabulary. But knowledge alone rarely gets anyone hired. The honest question isn't "did I learn something," but "is what I learnt the specific thing my target industry is currently paying for."

Skills. This is a sharper test than knowledge, because skills are demonstrable — you can show them, not just describe them. Did the course build something an officer can actually do differently at the end of 24 weeks — build a financial model, run a project plan in a civilian tool, structure a business case — or did it mostly build familiarity without building capability? An officer should ask himself plainly: if I were asked to demonstrate this skill in an interview tomorrow, could I?

Credentials. Does the certificate itself open doors, or is it a participation marker? This is worth being unsentimental about. A credential only carries weight if a recruiter or

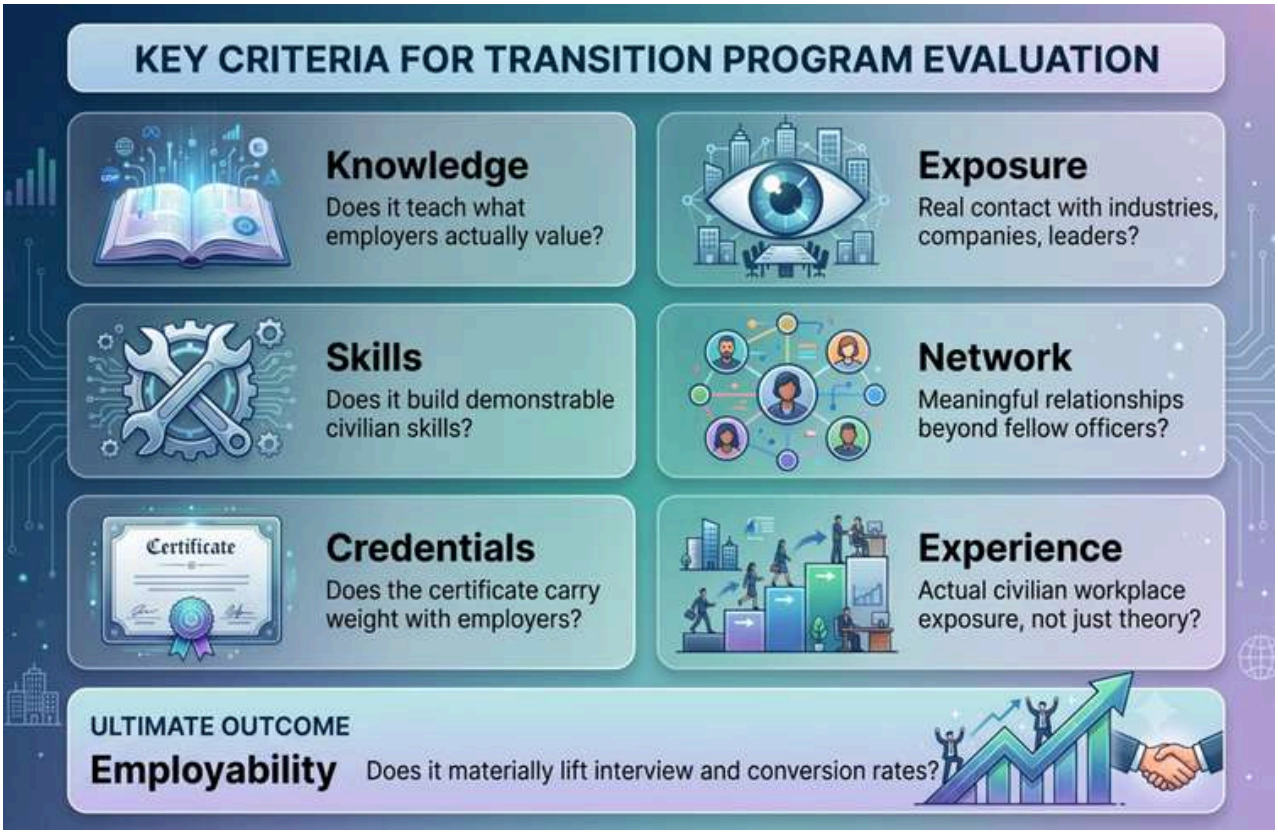
hiring panel recognises it and treats it as a genuine signal — the way a PMP, a Six Sigma Black Belt, or a Cloud or a Data Analytics certification does. If the DGR certificate doesn't carry that recognition outside the veteran ecosystem, it may still have value as internal record-keeping, but it isn't functioning as a credential in the way the word usually implies.

Exposure. Does the course put officers in front of real industries, real companies, and real business leaders — or does it mostly recyclefaculty teaching veteran audiences? Genuine exposure means guest sessions from working practitioners, site visits, live industry problems, direct contact with people currently hiring. This dimension often separates a course that feels comprehensive from one that actually is.

Network. Networking within the course is almost always strong among peers — a room full of transitioning officers, all at the same inflection point, naturally builds camaraderie. But the harder and more valuable question is whether the course builds external relationships — with people already working in civilian industry who can open doors later. A course that's excellent at officer-to-officer bonding but thin on officer-to-industry bridging is only solving half the network problem.

Experience. Does the course offer any actual taste of civilian workplace rhythm — a project assignment, a short attachment, a live case with a real company — or is everything simulated inside a classroom? Real workplace exposure, even brief, tends to correct assumptions faster than any lecture can. This is often the most underdeveloped dimension in resettlement courses generally, and worth an honest look.

Employability. This is the dimension that



Assess The Course Against These Parameters

ultimately matters most, because it's the one all the others are meant to serve. Does completing the course materially move the needle on interview calls and job conversions — or does an officer walk out with more confidence but the same conversion rate he'd have had anyway? This is also the hardest dimension to self-assess honestly, because it's tempting to credit the course for outcomes that would have happened regardless. The fairest test: did doors open that specifically would not have opened without this course?

Taken together, these seven dimensions form a far more useful lens than a simple yes-or-no verdict. An officer who scores the course honestly across all seven will likely find it strong on some (peer network, decompression, initial exposure to vocabulary) and weak on others (credential recognition, external network-building, employability lift) — and that mixed picture is closer to the truth than either the course's strongest defenders or its harshest critics tend to admit.

The Changing Dynamics Of Corporate Hiring

Any honest analysis of the DGR course has to reckon with a broader shift happening well outside the resettlement ecosystem — the corporate hiring landscape itself has changed underneath everyone's feet, and much of the officer community's instinct about what "counts" as a differentiating credential hasn't caught up.

On the MBA Question — Has It Lost its Sheen?

A large part of DGR-adjacent thinking, and honestly, many officers' own gut instinct, still treats "MBA-equivalent management education" as the credential that unlocks corporate respect. That instinct was earned — twenty years ago it was largely correct. An MBA, or an MBA-flavoured course like the DGR management course signalled something genuinely scarce: fluency in the vocabulary of business — P&L, stakeholder management, market positioning. Few people outside business school had that vocabulary, so possessing it differentiated you immediately.

Today the picture is more layered than a



Has MBA Lost Its Sheen?

simple "MBA is dead" headline would suggest, and the data backs that nuance. Employers in 2026 report valuing each skill more than they did the previous year across the board, and consulting continues to absorb roughly a quarter to a third of graduating classes at elite programs, with median consulting salaries rising steadily.

So the credential hasn't collapsed — but it has narrowed. When employers were asked what they actually value most in a candidate in 2026, AI fluency topped the list at 35%, followed by the ability to quantify business impact at 31% and a portfolio of applied work at 25%. Nearly one in four employers now say AI proficiency is simply a baseline expectation, not something that sets a candidate apart anymore.

That's the real shift worth naming plainly: generic management vocabulary is commoditised. Every LinkedIn post, every YouTube "MBA in a box" channel, every internal L&D program has flooded the market with the language of business. A general management diploma or a certificate no longer differentiates — especially against civilian candidates who bring 15 to 20 years of actual P&L ownership plus the degree. With so many part-time and digital MBA programmes now available and enrolment continuing to grow, the market for MBA-credentialled candidates has become genuinely oversaturated, which is precisely why the credential alone buys less than it used to.

What still carries sheen is narrower and more specific: a growing oversupply of MBA holders has diluted the degree's signalling value in general management and marketing roles specifically, while curricula in fast-moving fields like AI, product management, and digital strategy often lag behind, leaving graduates to self-teach the very skills that actually get noticed. A cloud certification, a PMP, a demonstrated project backed by real metrics — these are verifiable, current, and specific in a way a general management diploma no longer is. This is the uncomfortable mirror the DGR course needs to hold up to itself: does its structure still resemble the "MBA-lite" model of twenty years ago, unmodernised for what actually differentiates a candidate in 2026 — or has it



Tech Shifts and AI Have Profoundly Impacted Corporate Hiring

evolved with the market it claims to prepare officers for?

The Impact Of AI And Technology On Hiring

This deserves its own reckoning, because it changes the shape of the target roles themselves, not just the credentials pointing toward them. Hiring managers today screen far more for specific, current, tool-level competence — cloud platforms, data literacy, AI-augmented workflows — than for generic leadership frameworks. If the DGR course syllabus hasn't been actively rebuilt around this shift, it risks teaching yesterday's differentiators to officers walking into tomorrow's interviews.

There's a second, sharper effect. AI is compressing exactly the layer of the corporate pyramid officers have traditionally moved into — the mid-management coordination and reporting roles that translate naturally from a staff-officer background. These are among the first roles being thinned out or automated, which means the well-worn post-DGR course career path may simply be narrower than it was for the batch that retired ten years ago.

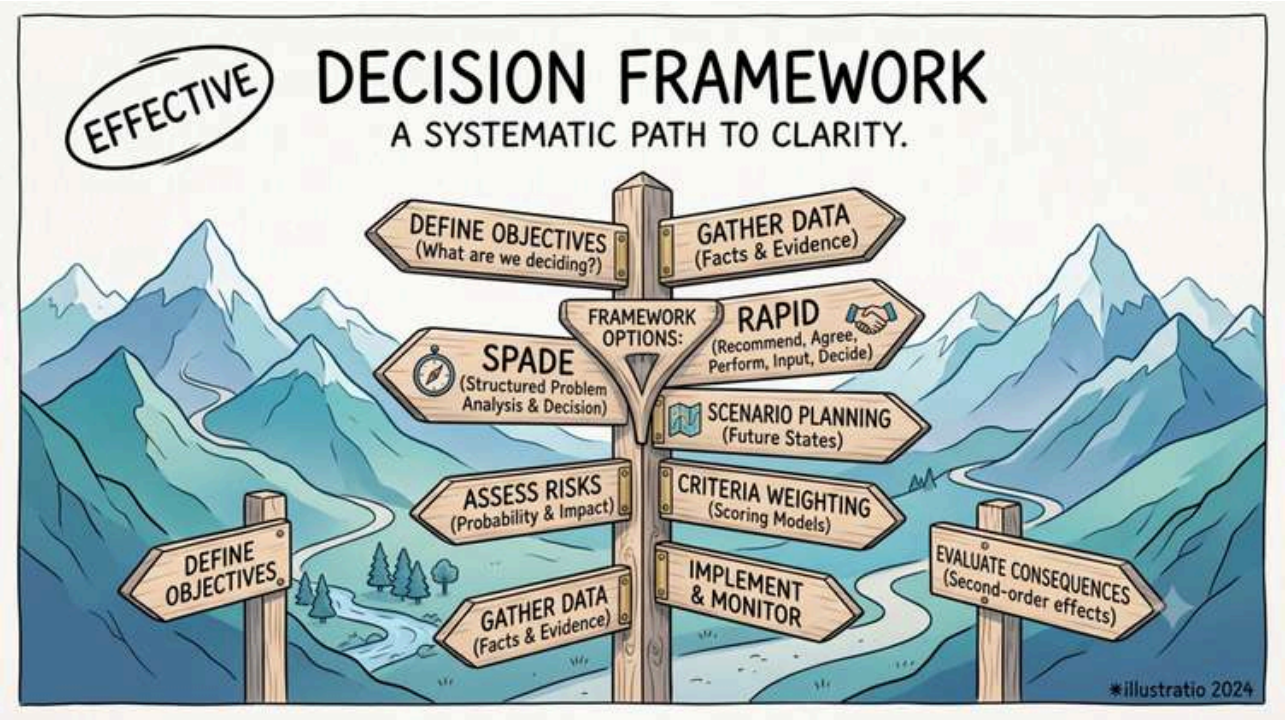
But this is not a discouraging story if told correctly. An officer's real differentiator was never generic management knowledge. It was always crisis leadership, decision-making under genuine uncertainty, integrity under scrutiny, and team-building under conditions no MBA case study can replicate. These are precisely the capabilities AI cannot touch. If anything, as the market strips away the routine coordination work, the proportion of any leadership role that depends on exactly this kind of human judgment goes up. The problem isn't that officers lack the right raw material — it's that DGR courses rarely teach officers how to articulate this uniquely human capital in language an AI-era hiring panel recognises and rewards.

So the real skill gap this section wants to name isn't "do I understand management theory?" It's a much more specific and answerable question: “do I know how to position twenty years of high-stakes, life-and-death leadership against a candidate pool that is increasingly AI-fluent, data-literate, and fluent in exactly the vocabulary the market now expects?” That is a translation problem, not a knowledge problem — and it is squarely the problem a genuinely modernised DGR course should be solving.

The Final Decision Framework

After walking through timing, opportunity cost, the seven-dimension audit, and the shifting hiring landscape, I should resist the temptation to end with a verdict. The honest conclusion isn't "do the course" or "skip the course" — it's a framework any officer can run for himself, in five minutes, that replaces a default decision with a deliberate one.

Start with the only question that actually matters: do I know what I want to do after retirement/ release? If the honest answer is no — if there's genuine uncertainty about direction, industry, or even broad shape of the next career — then structured transition education (not just the DGR course alone) has real value. This is precisely the officer for whom DGR course or something like it, earns its place. Decompression, exposure, and a forced pause to think are exactly what an undirected transition needs.



Decision Frameworks

But if the answer is yes — if there is real clarity on the target — the framework changes entirely. The question stops being "should I do the course?" and becomes far more precise: “what specific gap stands between me and that goal?” This single reframe is the difference between spending six months on a generic input and spending six months on a targeted fix.

If the gap is knowledge — genuine unfamiliarity with how a target industry or function actually operates — then the course, or a course like it, is a reasonable answer.

If the gap is skill — a demonstrable, specific capability the target role requires — the better answer is specialised upskilling: a certification, a bootcamp, a focussed programme in exactly that skill, not a broad management curriculum.

If the gap is experience — never having set foot inside a civilian workplace rhythm — the better use of six months is a project, an internship, or a short attachment that puts the officer inside the environment he's targeting.

If the gap is Network — no real relationships in the target industry — then the best six months is spent doing the unglamorous work of building them, deliberately, one conversation at a time.

If the gap is positioning — a strong candidate whose CV, LinkedIn, and interview narrative simply don't yet translate his military experience into language a recruiter recognises — then the sharpest investment is in exactly that: rewriting the narrative, not attending a course.

And if the gap is confidence — a capable officer who is simply unsure of himself in an unfamiliar corporate setting — coaching, mentoring, and repeated, low-stakes exposure to that environment will do more than any classroom.

This is the article's fundamental message, and it's worth stating as plainly as the opening paragraph promised: don't choose the course

because you are retiring. Choose it, or don't, because it does or doesn't solve the specific transition problem standing in front of you. The uniform comes off either way. What an officer does with his last 120 working days in it should be a decision, not a default.

Conclusion

Let me return, deliberately, to where this article began. This was never meant to be a case against the DGR 24-Week Management Course. It remains what it has always been — a noble, well-intentioned initiative, built by people who genuinely wanted to give retiring officers a better landing than the one many other veterans had to find for themselves, one hard lesson at a time. Nothing in this analysis changes that starting fact, and nothing in it should be read as an attack on the officers who administer it, the faculty who teach it, or officers who have walked through it and found it valuable.

But noble intent and structural fitness for 2026 are two different things, and an officer's last six months in uniform are too precious to be spent on assumption alone. The facts we've walked through in this article are not opinions — they are the ground truth an honest transition conversation has to start from. Twenty-four weeks is 120 working days, arriving in the final stretch of service rather than at the start of a multi-year runway. Corporate hiring has moved decisively toward skills-based evaluation, even as the gap between policy and practice remains real and worth navigating carefully. Management vocabulary, once scarce enough to differentiate, is now commoditised, while specific, verifiable, current skill signals are what actually open doors. AI is thinning exactly the coordination-heavy roles officers have traditionally moved into, even as it makes human judgment and crisis leadership — an officer's genuine core strength — more valuable, not less, for those who learn to position it correctly.

None of these facts say "don't do the course." They say something more useful: “know precisely why you're doing it”. An officer who walks in with a named, specific outcome — one certification, one industry contact, one skill made demonstrable — will get real value from these 24 weeks, whatever else is true about the syllabus or the timing. An officer who walks in because "everyone does it" is the one this article is written for, because he is the one most at risk of discovering, in week twenty-three, that he has spent his last and most valuable stretch of service on a ritual rather than a strategy.

So here is where I'll leave it, in the same spirit the article opened with. The DGR course is a tool, not a verdict. It works when it's chosen the way we choose any serious professional investment — with a clear problem it's meant to solve, and an honest sense of whether it's the right instrument for that specific job. It fails only when it's mistaken for the entire strategy rather than one possible piece of it. Every officer reading this owes himself that five minutes of honesty before he sits in that classroom — not because the course doesn't deserve his time, but because his own transition deserves his full intention behind how that time is spent.

About the Author



Lt Col Iqbal Singh

Lt Col Iqbal Singh was the third generation in his family to proudly serve in the Indian Army. Iqbal joined the National Defence Academy in the 71st course and was commissioned into 4 GARH RIF in Dec 1987. He is a PSC officer having attended DSSC-57 course. In addition Iqbal also holds two technology degrees of BTech and MTech. In 2008 Iqbal took premature retirement to join the technology industry. His first employer was Satyam Computers at Hyderabad. He later joined Nokia and Noida where he worked for 12 years in a Global role. He is currently working with Google Cloud based at Gurgaon. Col Iqbal is the Founder of Forces Network and is considered an expert on Military to Corporate transition. He has mentored and guided thousands of officers in their transition journeys. He has conducted more than 12 Military to Corporate Transition Workshops and over 15 seminars across India.

"Be the change that you wish to see in the world."
— Mahatma Gandhi

Reimagining the 24-Week DGR Management Course

Preparing Military Leaders for a Dynamic Corporate World

By
Col Pranav Kumar Shrivastava (Retd.)



Reimagining the 24-Week DGR Management Course — Six Recommendations for the Future | AI Generated Infographic — For Depiction Only

A PERSONAL PROLOGUE

In 2010, I did something most of my colleagues considered mildly unconventional: I flew to Brussels. Not for a posting. Not for a conference. I had just taken premature retirement from the Indian Army after 22 years as an EME officer, and I had made a deliberate strategic decision — instead of enrolling in the DGR 24-week management programme, I would pursue an International MBA with a specialisation in General Management from UBI Brussels.

The choice was not made out of any dissatisfaction with the DGR system. It was made out of a clear-eyed assessment of what I needed: global business exposure, a diverse civilian cohort, and an internationally recognised postgraduate credential that would open doors in the private sector at the

level I was targeting. I sat in European classrooms alongside bankers, entrepreneurs, and executives from a dozen countries. The perspective shift was profound — and irreplaceable.

What followed were three distinct careers: Vice President of a landmark real estate project, Divisional Head of Supply Chain Management at Apollo Tyres Ltd — where I led domestic and global SCM strategy and received national awards — and now an Independent Consultant and Wellness Coach working with transitioning veterans.

I write this article not to advocate for my path over the DGR course. I write it because, as someone who chose a different bridge and then spent fifteen years observing the outcomes of both — through my own careers, through colleagues, and through the veterans I now coach — I believe the DGR programme has the foundation of something exceptional. What it needs now is the courage to reimagine itself for the decade ahead.

The Indian Armed Forces produce some of the nation's finest leaders — professionals shaped by discipline, integrity, resilience, and an unwavering commitment to mission accomplishment. Every year, thousands of officers retire with decades of experience in managing people, technology, logistics, and complex operations. Yet, many encounter an unexpected challenge: adapting to an entirely different corporate ecosystem.

For decades, the 24-week Directorate General Resettlement (DGR) Management Course has played a vital role in easing this transition. It has introduced officers to management concepts, business terminology, and corporate thinking while providing an invaluable period to mentally prepare for a second career. It has undoubtedly served generations of veterans well.

However, the world has changed dramatically. Artificial Intelligence, automation, digital transformation, sustainability, data analytics, and Industry 4.0 are redefining how organisations recruit, operate, and compete. Leadership remains indispensable, but it is no longer sufficient on its own. Tomorrow's leaders must combine strategic thinking with specialised technical and digital competencies.

The time has come to reimagine the DGR Management Course — not because it has failed, but because the future demands more.

Preserve the Foundation, Modernise the Structure

The course already possesses several enduring strengths. It broadens perspectives beyond military service, introduces officers to core business disciplines such as finance, marketing, HR, operations, and strategy, and offers a valuable transition period before retirement. Equally important, it creates lifelong professional networks among officers and carries the credibility of reputed academic institutions.

These strengths should remain the foundation of the programme. The transformation should focus on making the course more relevant to the realities of today's employment market.

"I sat in Brussels classrooms alongside bankers, entrepreneurs, and executives from a dozen countries — a diversity of perspective that no military-only cohort can replicate. It is time the DGR builds that bridge too."

From Management Education to Career Transformation

The next-generation DGR course should aim not merely to educate but to prepare officers for immediate industry relevance. Instead of a common curriculum for all participants, officers should be able to choose specialised learning pathways aligned with their career aspirations:

SPECIALISED PATHWAYS	Supply Chain & Logistics • Manufacturing & Operations • Project Management • Human Resources • Finance • Defence Manufacturing • Cyber Security • Artificial Intelligence & Business Analytics • Digital Transformation

Role-specific learning will significantly improve employability and confidence. An officer who has commanded a base workshop for eight years does not need the same curriculum as one who ran a signals regiment. The DGR must stop treating all veterans as identical inputs and start treating them as the specialised professionals they are.

Stronger Industry Integration

Classroom learning alone cannot fully prepare officers for corporate life. The programme should establish structured partnerships with leading organisations across manufacturing, IT, consulting, logistics, infrastructure, healthcare, and financial services.

Industry experts should regularly conduct guest lectures, live case studies, plant visits, leadership interactions, and recruitment networking sessions. Exposure to real business challenges will help participants understand corporate expectations before entering the job market.

Having sat in a European business school classroom — where practitioners from industry walked in every week to present live challenges to our cohort — I experienced firsthand the difference between studying business and being immersed in it. The DGR can replicate this with India's own extraordinary corporate ecosystem.

Learn by Working — The Corporate Fellowship

One transformative addition could be a six-to-eight-week Corporate Fellowship during the course. Working with a participating organisation would allow officers to:

- Experience corporate culture firsthand, not as observers but as contributors
- Apply classroom learning to real business problems under professional accountability
- Build professional confidence — the single quality most veterans say was their biggest gap
- Develop industry contacts before retirement, not eighteen months after it

The **US DoD SkillBridge programme** has demonstrated the power of this model at national scale. India's DGR should adopt and adapt it — with MoD backing, industry partnerships, and a structured evaluation framework.

Digital Skills Are No Longer Optional

Every management programme today must recognise that AI and digital technologies are reshaping every business function. The DGR curriculum should therefore include practical, hands-on exposure to:

▸Artificial Intelligence applications and Prompt Engineering
▸Business Analytics and Data Visualisation
▸Power BI and Advanced Excel
▸ERP and SAP Awareness
▸Cyber Security Fundamentals
▸LinkedIn Professional Branding and Digital Identity

I use AI tools daily in my consulting and coaching practice — and the productivity gain is measurable and significant. These are not advanced technical skills. They are the new professional literacy. Every officer completing the DGR course in 2026 and beyond must leave with practical fluency in these tools. Without them, they are entering a digitally transformed corporate world with analogue tools.

Make Career Transition a Subject in Itself

Many officers possess exceptional capabilities but struggle because they are unfamiliar with corporate recruitment processes. Career transition should become a formal, assessed subject within the programme, covering:

▸Professional résumé writing — translating military achievements into quantifiable business outcomes
▸LinkedIn optimisation and personal branding
▸Networking strategies — building relationships before you need them
▸Interview preparation and executive communication
▸Salary negotiation — knowing your market value and how to articulate it
▸Corporate etiquette — the unwritten rules that military service never teaches

In my own transition, I discovered that the vocabulary of corporate recruitment was as foreign as a new language. The DGR course should make that language — and its fluency — a graduation requirement, not an afterthought.

Build a Veteran Mentoring Ecosystem

Thousands of former officers today occupy leadership positions across industry. Their collective experience is one of the DGR's greatest untapped assets. Every participant should be connected with experienced alumni mentors who can provide practical advice, industry insights, and professional guidance throughout the transition journey.

As a Wellness Coach working with transitioning veterans, I see the single most common gap at the moment of transition: not a skills gap, but a confidence and direction gap. A mentor who has crossed the bridge already and is willing to light the path behind them can compress years of trial and error into months of purposeful navigation.

"The DGR course has built a strong bridge between military and civilian careers. The next decade demands something even more ambitious — a launchpad."

The Responsibility Also Lies with the Officer

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"The DGR course has built a strong bridge between military and civilian careers. The next decade demands something even more ambitious — a launchpad."

The Responsibility Also Lies with the Officer

While institutional reforms are essential, no programme can guarantee success. Career transition begins long before retirement. Having made that transition myself — with deliberate planning two years before I submitted my papers — I can say with certainty that the officers who prepare early transition with greater confidence and less disruption.

The checklist is not complicated, but it requires discipline:
1.Start preparing two to three years before retirement — identify your target industry
2.Acquire relevant certifications that demonstrate role-specific competence
3.Strengthen digital skills — AI literacy is now table stakes, not a differentiator
4.Build professional networks before you need them — LinkedIn is not optional
5.Learn to translate military achievements into measurable business outcomes
6.Consider whether a generalist 24-week course or a targeted specialist qualification best closes your specific skill gap

Those who prepare early generally transition with greater confidence and success. Those who treat the DGR course as a plan rather than a bridge often find that the course ends before the real challenge begins.

The Road Ahead

India is entering an era of unprecedented economic growth driven by manufacturing, defence production, logistics, renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and advanced technologies. These sectors need exactly what military officers have consistently demonstrated — leadership, integrity, accountability, and execution excellence.

The real challenge is not whether veterans can lead. They already have. The challenge is ensuring they possess the contemporary skills that enable them to lead successfully in a rapidly changing corporate environment.

Having chosen a different path in 2010, I am not positioned to tell any officer which bridge to take. I am positioned to say with conviction: the bridge you choose matters less than the strategic clarity with which you choose it. The DGR course, reimagined for the next decade, can become a genuinely world-class transition instrument. It has the institutional foundation, the academic partnerships, and — most importantly — the community of extraordinary veterans who deserve nothing less.

Our officers have never hesitated to answer the nation's call. It is now our collective responsibility to ensure that, after retirement, they are equally prepared to lead, innovate, and contribute to India's economic growth.

About the Author



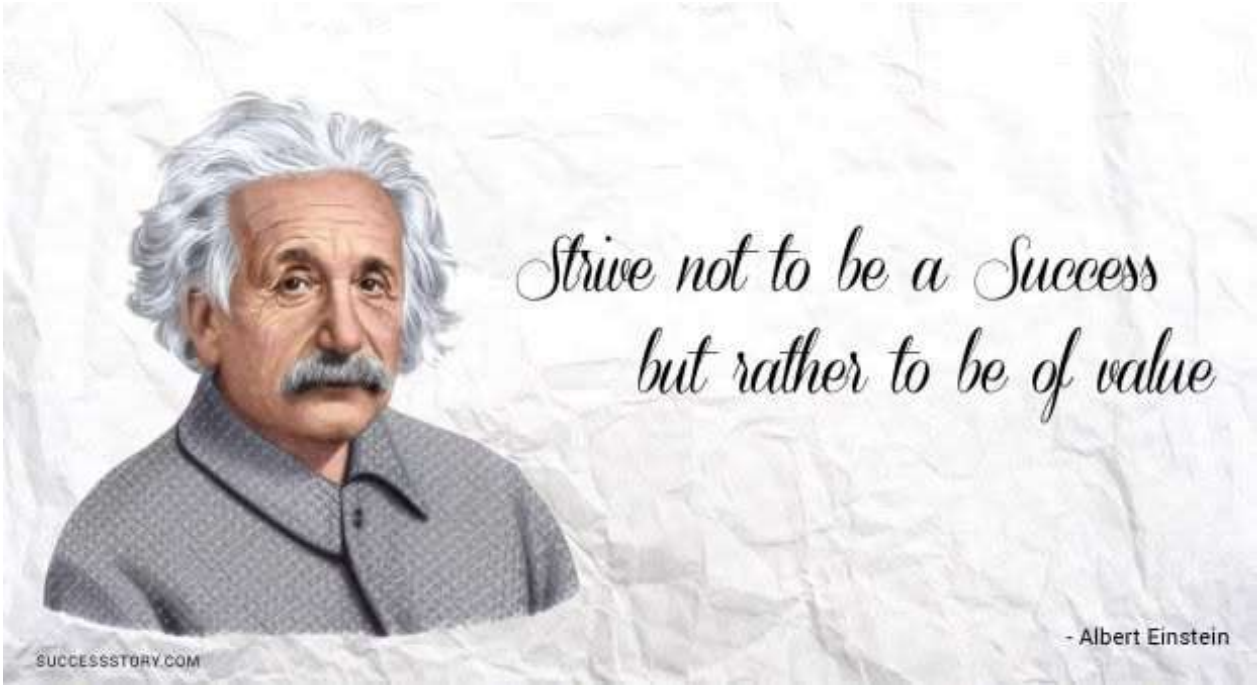
Col Pranav Kumar Shrivastava (Retd.)

Col Pranav Kumar Shrivastava (Retd.) is a former Indian Army EME officer from the 65 Technical Course, commissioned in June 1988. A gun-qualified officer, he earned his ME (Mechanical) from IAT Girinagar, standing first in order of merit at Pune University in October 1998.

On taking premature retirement in 2010, he pursued an International MBA with specialisation in General Management from UBI Brussels — a deliberate strategic choice to prepare himself for the corporate world at international level.

He subsequently served as Vice President of a multi-storied real estate project, then as Divisional Head of Supply Chain Management at Apollo Tyres Ltd — leading domestic and global SCM strategy and receiving national awards for excellence. He now works as an Independent Consultant and Wellness Coach.

He is an avid photographer and writes on defence, leadership, veteran transition, and the future of work.



The True Value Proposition: Making the Most of the 24-Week DGR Course

By
Cdr Ashim Mahajan

A six-month course cannot replace years of preparation. It should be the culmination of a carefully planned transition.

Leaving the Armed Forces after 20 or more years of service is not simply a change of employment. It is a transition from one way of life, one professional identity and one organisational culture into an entirely different world. Such a transition deserves preparation, thought and a realistic understanding of what lies ahead.

The 24-week DGR management courses conducted at institutions such as MDI, IIMs and other premier management institutes provide an exceptional opportunity to make that transition. However, their real value can only be realised when we understand what these programmes are—and equally importantly, what they are not.

They Are An Opportunity, Not A Job Guarantee



For an officer who has spent decades in uniform, six months in a premier management institute can be transformational. It provides exposure to business education, corporate thinking, industry interaction, peer learning and an entirely different professional environment. It also provides something that is often overlooked: time to mentally transition from military service to a second career.

For most serving or retiring officers, the opportunity to study at institutions of this stature for six months during service would otherwise be extremely difficult to obtain. The fact that the Directorate General Resettlement has established avenues for veterans to access them, and that these institutions have been willing to open their academic environment to the Armed Forces community, is itself a significant achievement.

Such an opportunity should not be taken lightly. But getting a seat in the classroom is only the beginning. The responsibility begins there.

Resettlement Should Begin Well Before the Course

In my view, an officer should begin preparing for resettlement one/two years before leaving service. The 24-week course should ideally be the culmination of that preparation, rather than its starting point. That preparation could include understanding different industries, identifying transferable skills, learning business fundamentals, improving communication and presentation skills, developing digital and analytical capabilities, building a professional LinkedIn presence and, most importantly, developing a meaningful professional network.

An officer should be asking well before retirement: What do I want to do after the Forces? Where does my military experience have relevance? What skills am I missing? Which industries and roles interest me? What level should I realistically enter at? How do I translate my military experience into language that a corporate recruiter understands?

These are not questions that can be answered during the final few weeks of service. The transition needs to begin while one is still wearing the uniform.

The Military Experience is Valuable - But it Must Be translated

Veterans bring enormous strengths to the corporate world: leadership, discipline, integrity, resilience, decision-making under pressure, people management, planning, logistics, risk management and the ability to operate in uncertain environments.

However, the corporate world does not automatically understand military terminology, appointments or rank structures. An officer may have led hundreds of people, managed significant resources, handled complex responsibilities and delivered results under difficult circumstances. Those experiences have considerable value. The challenge is to translate them into business relevance.

That is one of the most important roles the 24-week programme can play. It provides an officer with the environment to understand how existing capabilities can be repositioned for a new career and where additional skills

need to be developed.

The Six Months Should Be Treated As The Beginning Of The Second Career

There is a fundamental mindset that participants need to adopt. The course should not be viewed as six months between military service and finding a job. It should be viewed as the first six months of the second career.

The curriculum therefore deserves to be approached with seriousness and curiosity. Finance, marketing, operations, strategy, analytics, economics and organisational behaviour may initially seem far removed from military life, but they provide the vocabulary and frameworks of the corporate world.

And the classroom is only one part of the experience. Faculty, fellow participants, visiting executives, alumni and industry professionals can become an invaluable network. The six months provide an unusual opportunity to meet people one might otherwise never encounter.

There is also a danger of spending too much of those six months looking backwards—reminiscing about postings, appointments and service experiences—and too little time preparing for what comes next. The past should provide confidence for the future, not become a substitute for preparing for it.

A little nostalgia is healthy. Six months of it is probably not the best career strategy.



What Can the Institution Provide—and What Can't It?

An institution can provide knowledge, exposure, faculty, industry interaction, peer learning, networks and a prestigious learning environment. It can help an officer understand the corporate ecosystem and develop the confidence to enter it.

What it cannot do is guarantee employment. Employment ultimately depends on individual capability, preparation, networking, communication, adaptability, interview performance, market conditions, professional expectations and the value an individual can bring to an organisation.

Even students completing four-year engineering programmes or two-year MBA programmes are not entitled to employment simply because they possess a qualification. A six-month resettlement programme should be viewed in exactly the same way.

MDI or IIM can open the classroom door; they cannot walk into the interview room on your behalf.

The course provides the platform. **Building the second career is a personal commitment.**

The Opportunity Should Continuously Evolve

None of this means that DGR programmes should remain static. They should continuously evolve with the employment market. If the curriculum needs improvement, improve it. If greater industry interaction is required, create it. If participants need better career counselling, provide it. If employers increasingly demand specific technical, digital or analytical skills, incorporate them.

Constructive feedback is essential to ensure that these programmes remain relevant.

The institutional relationships that allow veterans to access premier management schools are valuable. They provide an opportunity that would otherwise be difficult for most officers to obtain: an extended period of structured learning, exposure to a new professional ecosystem and the space to prepare for a second career.

That opportunity should be used fully and intelligently.

The Real Measure Of Success

The success of a 24-week DGR programme should therefore not be measured only by what happens on the day the course ends.

Its real value lies in whether an officer leaves with greater knowledge, greater confidence, a better understanding of the corporate world, a stronger professional network, clearer career direction and the ability to compete effectively in a new environment.

The Armed Forces provide the foundation of leadership and experience. DGR provides the opportunity to reposition that experience. Premier institutions provide the academic environment and knowledge.

The officer has to connect all of these.

Prepare for one/two years. Learn intensely for six months. Build relationships continuously. Then step into the corporate world ready to earn the opportunity.

The 24-week course is not the end of a military career, nor is it a six-month waiting room for a job.

It is the bridge to the next chapter—and crossing it successfully is ultimately a personal commitment.

About the Author



Cdr Ashim Mahajan (Retd)

Cdr Ashim Mahajan (Retd) brings 23 years of distinguished service in the Indian Navy, followed by 7 years of corporate leadership experience across Defence, Institutional and Strategic sales. His corporate journey includes **William Grant & Sons, Bacardi India, Campus Activewear and Coca-Cola** India. His experience spans leadership, sales, strategy, stakeholder management and defence/institutional business. LinkedIn:



Why the 24-Week Resettlement Course Needs An Urgent Reinvention

By
Capt Rajesh Nair

When my wife and I began exploring the best path forward for our daughter's future, we sought the guidance of a highly experienced career-counselling veteran. Through a series of insightful psychometric assessments, he helped uncover our daughter's unique strengths, aptitudes and natural interests and then mapped out career possibilities aligned with her potential. It was a fascinating and eye-opening process—one remarkably similar to the rigorous evaluation that aspiring officers undergo before embarking on a career in the armed forces, but miss out the same when transitioning back to the civilian world as veterans.

The transition from uniformed service to the corporate world is not merely a change of employment but it is a profound shift in identity, language, pace and operating culture. For many veterans, the 24-week resettlement course sponsored through the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR) framework becomes the first structured bridge between decades of military leadership and the expectations of the corporate world. In principle, it should help experienced military professionals translate decades of leadership, operations, logistics, administration, technology and crisis-management experience into meaningful civilian careers. In the current scenario,



however, the course often falls short of this promise. To remain relevant, the course mustbe viewed through six core pillars that define both its value and its areas for improvement.

The central issue is not the lack of talent among veterans. The real problem is a combination of outdated course design, weak industry linkage, limited placement support and persistent stereotyping within corporate hiring. Too often, veterans are still viewed through a narrow lens of security and administration roles, while their broader capabilities in strategy, operations, supply chain, risk, compliance, technology, project execution and people leadership remain underutilised. I did my DGR management course in 2008 from one the premier institute, my learnings are mentioned against each of the pillars as below.

Pillar 1: The True Value Proposition and Enduring Benefits

The first and most important value of the 24-week course lies in its ability to create a structured pause before retirement. After years of command responsibility and operational tempo, veterans need a period of reflection to process the transition. Equally important is the acquisition of corporate language. These corporate terms may be routine in industry, but they require deliberate familiarisation for those coming from a military ecosystem.

The first weakness is the gap between intent and outcome. The course is designed to support transition, but the corporate market has changed faster than the resettlement model. Employers now hire for specific role fit, digital readiness, measurable business impact, domain knowledge and adaptability to commercial environments. The course is a generic management course, though well delivered it is no longer enough to make a veteran competitive in today's hiring landscape. The course may provide exposure to management concepts, but exposure is not employability. Veterans need role-based preparation, industry immersion, recruiter



The Aspiration Vs the Gap

interaction and practical transition tools, which these courses miss leading to the programme becoming a certificate-driven exercise rather than a career-enabling intervention.

Pillar 2: Structural Drawbacks and the Placement Reality

While the course provides academic exposure, veterans must enter it with realistic expectations. Executive education programmes at premier institutions are not the same as full-time campus recruitment programmes. In ours and most of the cases, placement support was limited and the responsibility for networking, role discovery, compensation alignment and interview preparation rested heavily on the Students Placement Cell. A stronger course design must include early career counselling, industry mapping, compensation benchmarking, mock interviews and exposure to mixed civilian cohorts.

The most damaging barrier is stereotyping. Many corporate recruiters still associate veterans primarily with security, vigilance and administration. These are respectable functions, but they represent only a narrow fraction of what military professionals actually manage during service. The armed forces are also large-scale ecosystems of logistics, engineering, healthcare, communications etc. When the course does not actively challenge this stereotype, it unintentionally reinforces it. The Institutes with the help of Veterans in the Corporate must educate companies as much as it educates veterans.

Pillar 3: The Skill Mismatch — From Generic Leadership to Role-Based Capability

Veterans bring exceptional strengths to corporate life, discipline, integrity, crisis management, team leadership, operational planning and resilience. Yet modern



The Keyhole Vs the Full Reality View for Recruiters



The Transition Conundrum

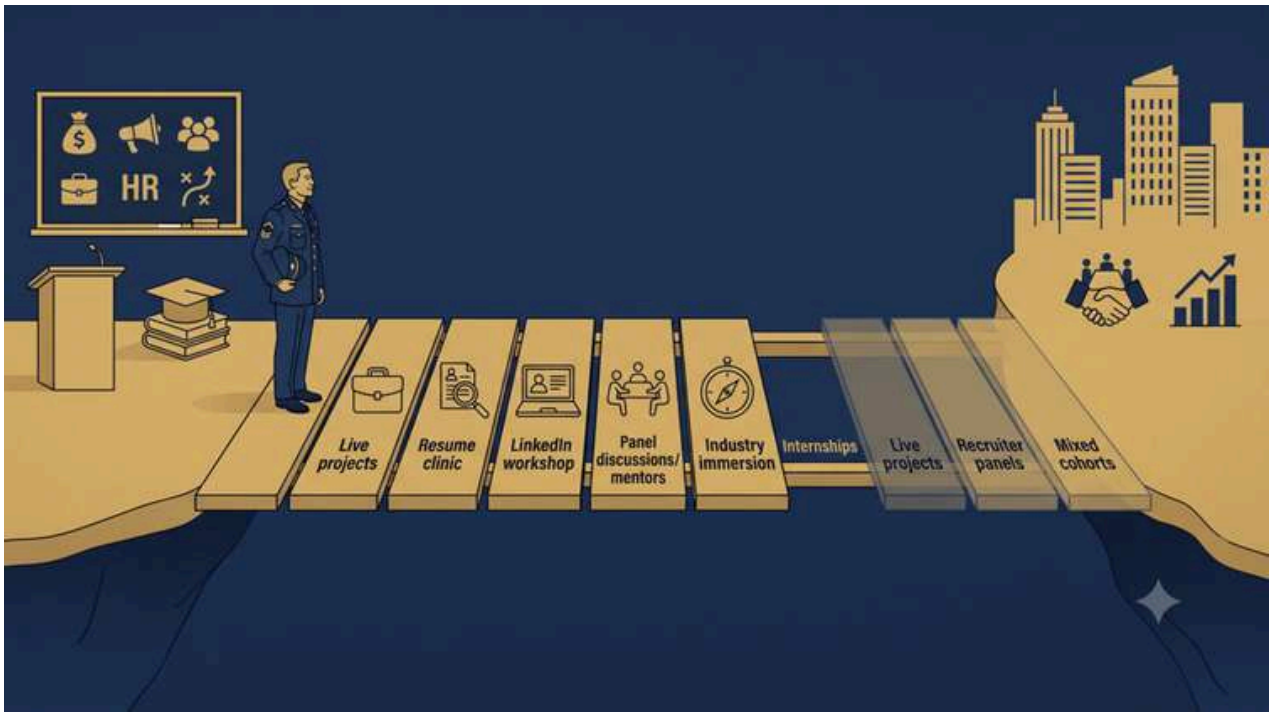
employers increasingly recruit for role-basedcapability rather than generic leadership potential. A veteran seeking a role in operations, project management, risk, data analytics, business development etc. must demonstrate relevant functional skills in language that employers understand.

The course must therefore help participants translate military achievements into measurable business outcomes. A veteran should be able to show experience in managing budgets, leading large teams, reducing operational risk, improving logistics efficiency, maintaining safety standards or delivering mission-critical projects under constraints. A veteran applying for operations or any other vertical must be able to demonstrate tools, metrics, systems and outcomes relevant to that domain, along with appropriate certifications for the domain. Without this translation, military experience remains impressive but commercially unclear. This is where the course often fails. It celebrates leadership but does not always convert leadership into role-specific capability.

Pillar 4: The Bridge Experience — Learning, Reflection and Reorientation

The 24-week journey is also a bridge experience. Participants are exposed to modules such as finance, marketing, human resources, operations, information technology, strategy, entrepreneurship and business communication. They are great learning and are important, but their value depends on how closely they are connected to real corporate decision-making and problem statements.

A classroom-led programme cannot fully prepare veterans for the pace, ambiguity, hierarchy, incentives and language of corporate life. The best resettlement experience should combine classroom learning with industry immersion. Case studies, corporate visits, alumni interactions, live projects, Resume Clinics, LinkedIn profile workshops and panel discussions with veteran hiring leaders can make the course



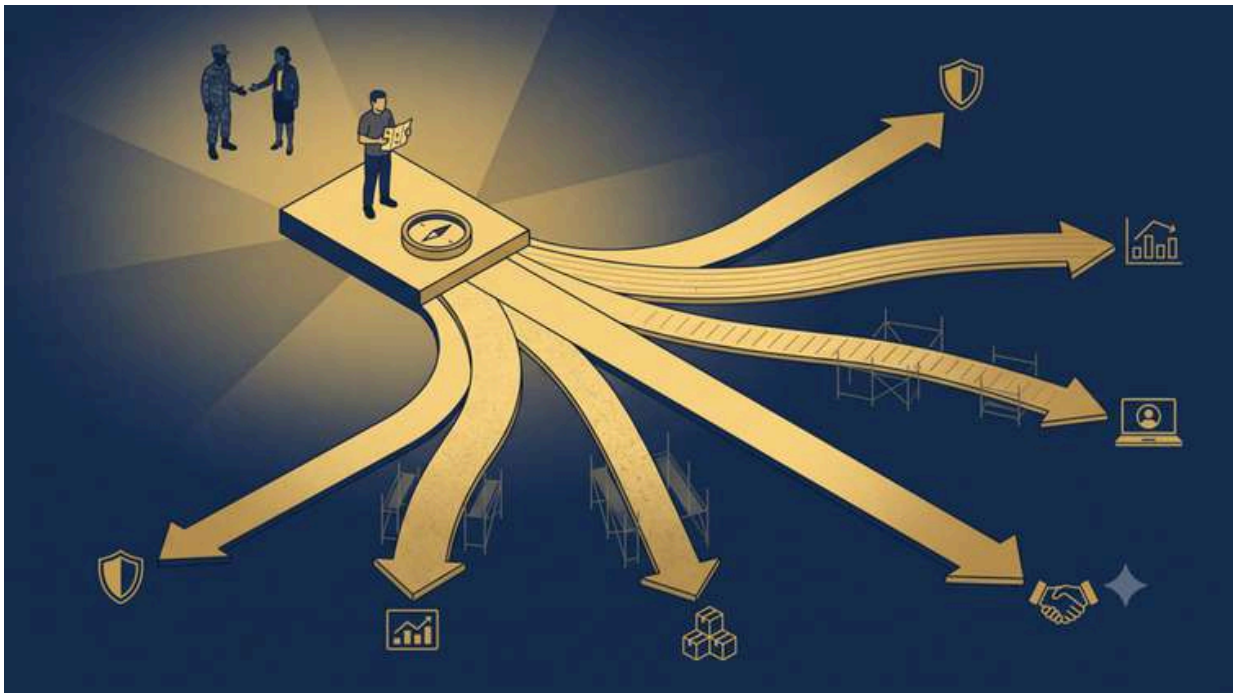
A Suggested Course Curriculum

more practical. Currently the course lacks live projects, internships, industry mentors, recruiter panels, functional simulations, alumni case studies and exposure to mixed civilian cohorts. Veterans need to experience how corporate decisions are made, how influence works without formal command, how performance is reviewed and how value is measured in business language.

Pillar 5: Corporate Readiness — The Outcome That Matters

The ultimate test of the course is not completion, certification or institutional prestige. The real test is corporate readiness and Job. A participant should graduate with a clear target role, a credible resume, a professional digital profile, an interview





Important to Build Strategic Alternatives While Transitioning From the Military

narrative, a realistic compensation expectation and a network of industry contacts. Without these outcomes, the course risks becoming academically satisfying but professionally incomplete.

For us the resettlement was not an academic milestone, it was a high-stakes career transition. In 2008 during the Subprime Mortgage Crisis / Global Financial Crisis we had limited placement support. Participants did receive a certificate, but most did not have a clear target role, strong resume, interview readiness, compensation clarity, industry access or employer pipeline, and I think this is where Forces Network was born, which has been instrumental in helping transitioning officers from 2008 till date. Officers now have PCK (Pre Course Knowledge) for transitioning thanks to Forces Network.

Pillar 6: Strategic Alternatives and the Path Forward

The future of veteran resettlement must move beyond a one-size-fits-all model. Before enrolling, every officer should conduct a structured self-assessment covering strengths, functional interests, financial expectations, location preferences, family considerations, risk appetite and long-term career goals. A pre-course SWOT analysis can help veterans choose the right path rather than simply joining the most prestigious available programme.

The path forward should include targeted certifications such as project management, supply chain, cybersecurity, data analytics, finance etc., depending on the individual's chosen domain. Digital branding must become a core module, because recruiters increasingly assess candidates through LinkedIn and professional portfolios. Industry fellowships, internships, mentorship programmes and train-to-hire models can further reduce the gap between classroom learning and corporate employment.

The solution is not to abandon resettlement training, but to redesign it around the realities

of the current market. The course must move from a generic management orientation to a true career transformation model. DGR, in partnership with Forces Network, can rework the module by leveraging the vast pool of experienced veterans within Forces Network. This collaboration can bring the right content, practical industry insights, structured internships, mentoring support and targeted training opportunities for transitioning officers.

Conclusion

The 24-week resettlement course was created with a noble objective and it has the potential to be a powerful launchpad for veterans entering the corporate world. But in its current form, it may be of limited use if it does not address the realities of modern corporate hiring and the persistent stereotyping of veterans. A certificate alone cannot overcome perception bias, role mismatch, weak placement support or lack of industry immersion.

Veterans do not lack leadership. What they need is translation, targeting, exposure, and alignment with industry demand. When the six pillars of value, realism, capability, bridge experience, corporate readiness and strategic alternatives are addressed together, the course can become more than a transition mechanism. It can become a national model for converting military excellence into corporate impact.

"We must do everything we can to help our service members and veterans transition into civilian life once they return home and that means preparing them for the tough Job market."
-Kirsten Gillibrand

About the Author

Capt Rajesh Nair prior to joining the Army has worked as a computer server administrator and as a computer faculty for nearly four years. He is from the 75th Course, OTA, and was commissioned into 14 Maratha Light Infantry. Post Army service, he has worked in the field of administration for close to two decades, having worked with companies like Wipro, Mahindra Automobile, Tata Communications, Credence Global Solutions and Prodair Air Products. He has done many a course including certification courses in Facility Management, POSH, ISO etc. He is a certified POSH Trainer



Capt Rajesh Nair

Skill Mismatch: Generic vs. Role-Based Skills

By
Aditi Tathagat Gosalia

Why Being 'Good at Everything' Is No Longer Enough



"I have good communication skills."
"I'm a quick learner."
"I'm a team player."

These are among the most common statements recruiters hear from graduates and job seekers. They are undoubtedly valuable qualities, but in today's workplace, they are no longer enough on their own.

Modern employers are increasingly looking for professionals who can contribute from the very first day. While strong interpersonal abilities remain essential, organisations now expect candidates to possess role-specific knowledge, technical proficiency, and the ability to apply their skills in real business situations.

This is where the concept of skill mismatch becomes increasingly relevant.

Understanding the Skill Mismatch

A skill mismatch occurs when the capabilities job seekers possess do not align with what employers actually need.

Ironically, unemployment and unfilled vacancies can exist simultaneously because available talent does not match workplace expectations.

Many graduates leave college believing they are employable because they possess generic workplace skills.

Employers, however, are searching for candidates who can immediately perform role-specific tasks with minimal training.

The gap is not always about intelligence or potential. More often, it is about relevance.

Generic Skills: The Foundation

Generic skills are transferable competencies that remain valuable across industries and throughout a professional career. They include:

Communication
Teamwork
Adaptability
Leadership
Emotional Intelligence
Critical Thinking
Problem Solving
Time Management

These skills help professionals build relationships, collaborate effectively, navigate change and eventually grow into leadership roles.

However, in today's competitive job market, they are considered the foundation rather than the differentiator.

Role-Based Skills: The Differentiator

Role-based skills are the technical, functional and practical competencies required to perform a specific job successfully.

For example:

Human Resources
Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS)
HR Analytics
Learning Management Systems (LMS)
Competency Mapping
AI-assisted Recruitment

Marketing
SEO
Google Analytics
Meta Ads
Content Strategy
Marketing Automation

Finance
Advanced Excel
Power BI
Financial Modelling
Business Valuation
Financial Analysis

Operations
ERP Systems
Lean Management
Six Sigma
Supply Chain Analytics
Process Improvement

Sales
CRM Platforms
Pipeline Management
Sales Forecasting
Negotiation Frameworks
Customer Relationship Management

These are the skills that allow professionals to deliver measurable value from Day One.

Why Does the Gap Exist?

Several factors contribute to this growing mismatch.

Academic curricula often evolve much more slowly than industry requirements. By the time universities revise their syllabi,

businesses may already be using new technologies and different ways of working.

Artificial Intelligence has accelerated this challenge. Job roles are changing faster than educational institutions can redesign programmes.

At the same time, many students continue to focus on examinations instead of practical application. Likewise, many professionals collect certificates without developing genuine competence through projects, internships or workplace experience.

Learning about a tool is not the same as using it to solve a business problem.

A Simple Example

Imagine two MBA graduates applying for the same HR position.

Candidate A highlights excellent communication skills, leadership positions in college and strong academic performance.

Candidate B presents an HR dashboard, a competency mapping project. experience using an Applicant Tracking System, and AI prompts designed for recruitment screening.

Both candidates are capable.

However, Candidate B demonstrates clear evidence of job readiness. The employer can confidently predict that this candidate will require less training and begin contributing much sooner.

In today's hiring landscape, evidence often matters more than intention.

It Is Not Either-Or

This discussion is not about choosing between generic and role-based skills.

A technically brilliant employee who cannot communicate, collaborate or influence stakeholders will eventually struggle.

Similarly, an outstanding communicator



A Tale of Two Candidates

without sufficient technical expertise may find it difficult to solve complex business problems or earn professional credibility.

Long-term career success comes from combining human skills with specialised expertise.

Competence opens the door. Character and communication sustain success.

The AI Advantage

Artificial Intelligence has fundamentally changed employer expectations.

Today, professionals across every function are expected to use AI responsibly to improve productivity, analyse information, generate reports, create presentations, write content, automate routine work and support better decision-making.

AI is no longer a niche technology reserved for specialists. It has become a productivity tool for professionals across HR, marketing, finance, operations, sales and many other domains.

The competitive advantage now lies not in replacing human capability with AI, but in combining the strengths of both.

How Professionals Can Bridge the Gap

Building employability requires deliberate and continuous effort.

Start by analysing job descriptions instead of relying only on course brochures. Notice the tools, software, competencies and certifications that employers repeatedly mention.

Focus on building practical projects rather than merely collecting certificates.

Take internships, freelance assignments, campus responsibilities or volunteer opportunities where you can apply your learning.

Use AI as a learning companion to practise interviews, improve resumes, understand concepts, generate ideas and receive constructive feedback.

Seek mentors who can guide your development and challenge your thinking.
Most importantly, build business understanding.

Every professional, regardless of function, should understand how their work contributes to organisational performance and customer value.

The Responsibility of Educational Institutions

Educational institutions also have an important role to play.
Classroom learning must increasingly be complemented with:
Live industry projects
Business simulations
Case studies
AI-enabled learning experiences
Industry certifications
Employer interactions
Internships and experiential learning

Assessment should move beyond memorisation and evaluate application, analytical thinking, creativity and problem-solving.



The Future Loves the Continuous Learners

The closer education mirrors the workplace, the stronger graduate employability becomes.

The Future Belongs to Continuous Learners

A degree may open the first door. Capability determines how far someone progresses.

The professionals who remain relevant will be those who continuously learn, unlearn and relearn as technology, industries and customer expectations evolve.

Instead of asking,
"What qualification do I have?"

Start asking,
"What value can I create from Day One?"
That single shift in mindset can transform an entire career.

Final Thoughts

The debate is not generic skills versus role-based skills.

Organisations need both.
Generic skills build trust, collaboration, leadership and influence.
Role-based skills create measurable business impact and immediate workplace value.

Together, they produce professionals who are confident, competent and future-ready.

In an increasingly competitive world of work, the greatest investment anyone can make is in continuous skill development that combines knowledge, application, adaptability and lifelong learning.

That is the formula for sustained career success.

Practical Insights From My Experience

Practical Insight 1: Build Evidence, Not Just Credentials
Employers increasingly reward evidence over


PRACTICAL INSIGHTS FROM MY EXPERIENCE
1
BUILD EVIDENCE, NOT JUST CREDENTIALS
2
READ JOB DESCRIPTIONS LIKE A ROADMAP
3
USE AI TO ACCELERATE LEARNING, NOT REPLACE THINKING
4
DEVELOP T-SHAPED SKILLS
5
MAKE LEARNING A WEEKLY HABIT

ntention. Develop a portfolio of projects, internships, case studies and practical assignments that demonstrate your ability to apply what you have learned. Your work should speak louder than your resume.

Practical Insight 2: Read Job Descriptions Like a Learning Roadmap
Instead of choosing courses based only on popularity, study multiple job descriptions for your target role. Identify recurring tools, certifications and competencies, then create a learning plan around them.

Practical Insight 3: Use AI to Accelerate Learning, Not Replace Thinking
Leverage AI to practise interviews, improve presentations, understand difficult concepts, brainstorm ideas and receive feedback. However, always validate information and develop your own judgement and problem-solving ability.

Practical Insight 4: Develop T-Shaped Skills
Aim to build broad business understanding alongside deep expertise in one functional area. Employers increasingly value professionals who can collaborate across teams while bringing specialised knowledge to the table.

Practical Insight 5: Make Learning a Weekly Habit
The most successful professionals do not wait for annual training programmes. Dedicate time every week to learning a new tool, reading industry insights, practising a technical skill or reflecting on workplace experiences.

Small, consistent improvements compound into significant career advantages over time.

About the Author

Aditi Gosalia brings over 15 years of experience across institutions such as Boston's, CMS, NIIT, MET, Eduvacancy, and Podar, and currently serves as Senior Manager – Training, Corporate Connect & Social Media at Kohinoor Management School. Her expertise lies employability skills, behavioural training, and corporate engagement and has trained 12,000+ students and professionals in her journey so far. She is an Award Winning Soft Skills and Employability Readiness Trainer and also the author of "Let's Walk Through" and a passionate advocate of life skills, self-awareness, and holistic growth.
Connect with Aditi:



Aditi Gosalia

Smooth Transition from Fauj to the Civvy Street: "The 24 Weeks DGR Management Course Needs a Paradigm Shift"

By
Lt Cdr Varun Dhand




RESETTLEMENT COURSE FOR INDIAN MILITARY OFFICERS
OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLE
BUSINESS
1
CONNECT
MILITARY & INDUSTRY
Build Bridges for a New Career:
Foster dialogue and collaboration. Align skills with industry standards.
2
DESIGN
COURSE FOR NEEDS
Create Targeted Curriculum:
Identify skill gaps for both officers and companies. Develop personalized, practical learning paths.
Business Canvas
CV
3
IIM
CASE STUDY
TRAIN OFFICERS PER PROGRAM
Acquire New Expertise:
Rigorous training in business, leadership, and finance. Use real-world corporate pedagogies.
4
ABSORB
CORPORATE PLACEMENT
Embrace a Second Career:
Translate military values. Gain job placement and secure corporate roles.
tcs
TATA
Mahindra
Reliance
OFFER LETTER
SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE CAREER
IIM AHMEDABAD
IIM BANGALORE
IIM LUCKNOW
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Anything 'Experienced and Skilled' in today's world is considered as 'Niche'. But from the Armed Forces (Fauj) in India, every year roughly 700 commissioned officers leave or retire from military service and 60,000 vacancies arise annually in tri - services as per data given by Ministry of Defence in the Parliament. Presently, a majority of the officers undergo the "24 Weeks DGR (Directorate General Resettlement) Management Course" . It is the gateway to the civil world. But not every officer gets an opportunity to attend the resettlement course.

In my opinion the 24 Week DGR Courses needs a paradigm shift. Through this course, an officer gets ample amount of time to plan the transition for their future needs. I have attended DGR resettlement course in IIM Indore in 2017. I will discuss various aspects in which this course can be improved.

Defence personnel trained manpower with specific kinds of skillsets in their own field. Apart from skillsets, they are honest, punctual, adaptable & flexible and ethical in nature. So, we have to make them ready to work in a different environment, which is more flexible, from non-profit armed forces to profit- oriented services approach of the corporate sector. Thus, an officer should learn and unlearn different attributes as per his changing profile in different work environments.

- The 24 Week DGR Course must focus on the **CDTA(CONNECT>DESIGN>TRAIN >ABSORB)** model. This suggests that for this model, the utmost time has to be reserved for designing of the course.

(a) Step 1- Connect: Currently, there is no or limited connection between the DGR (Ministry of Defence) and the Industry Leaders. This has to be immediately transformed. When I was doing my resettlement course our placement team had



conducted industry outreach during our midterm vacation. This activity had yielded fruitful results, but I feel DGR should start this process and placement team can take it over. Following steps can be taken to improve the connect scenario:

·**DGR- Industry Connect:** Armed Forces must reach out to Industry Leaders to discuss the profiles of officers retiring every year. .

(i) Mutual Inputs can be shared about the existing profiles of retiring officers.
(ii) Existing officer's profile must be matched with industry needs in the current scenario.
(iii) Professional Consultancy Services like 'Forces Network Veteran Community' can be hired by DGR. These Veterans are already working in the industry and ultimately will become the connecting link between them.

(b) Step 2- Design: After initial discussion of Industry Leaders with the DGR premier Institutes of the country must be roped in to discuss requirements to design the course.

The resettlement course must be designed as per needs of military officer and latest trends in the industry so that officers' services can be better utilised. For e.g. Armed forces people are the best in understanding the security operations so the course can be designed for thinking future needs developing as per threat perception. Rather than offering business development course in premier institutes, updated Cybersecurity courses must be offered. It will create a skilled workforce for the industry which can absorb officers immediately.

Following steps can be taken to design the resettlement course:

(i) Rigorous Course: All ingredients w.r.t course curriculum must be frozen on the table discussions. For e.g. If there is a Business Development (BD) Role in defence industry and an officer is equipped with technical expertise but requires other skills for BD role like good negotiation skills, presentation skills, competitor competition analysis these then must be part of the course.



Designing Resettlement Course



Stretching Limits

(ii) MOU must be signed between Armed Forces, Premier Institutes and Industry for resettlement courses. It must also include duration of internship with public and private players becoming part of this deal.

(iii) Administrative Support like in-house accommodation and canteen facilities must be provided by the institutes for comfortable stay of the officers.

(iv) Course Fees Revision: At present, course fee is distributed 60: 40 ratio between DGR and the applicant. Courses are sadly run half-heartedly by the Institutes and their completion serves no tangible purpose. Institute is also not providing trained and experienced faculty for resettlement courses. I think if we are designing the courses as per requirement and institute is offering best faculty to teach so the fee structure can be reviewed. It will be a 'morale booster dose' for the candidate getting better trained from the best faculty and also the faculty is getting good hike for teaching.

(c) Step 3- Train: After "Connect and Design", it's time for execution to train officers both in institutes and in the field.

(i) Formation of Placement Committee: Student officers must form placement committee which includes Placement secretary, Course Senior and other placement members. Placement Committee will become the bridge between DGR, institute and industry. Presently, the placement committees are formed but working on their own with limited support from institute.

(ii) Intensive Training: Extensive learning along with strenuous coursework must be imparted to sharpen skills. Grades must decide stack ranking for interview calls as per tiering (grouping companies into top, middle and bottom levels)

(iii) Motivational Talks: Eminent personalities from the industry can be called to deliver motivational speeches to inspire student officers and also to get a sense of the corporate world.

(d) Step 4 - Absorb: Everyone learns, gets trained to earn their living. Getting an 'Offer Letter' is the final destination of every

student officer after getting enrolled in DGR Course.

(i) CV Writing: CV Writing is the pen picture of the candidate. Officers must put in their hard work themselves by writing about their strengths, experiences and achievements in concise, correct, simple to understand and in chronological order.

(ii) Interview Preparation: Interview Preparation reminds me of the Services Selection Board (SSB) Interview days. The only difference is that SSB lasted for 5 days and corporate interview for a few hours depending upon levels/rounds of interview as per the profile. A candidate must be trained during the course to prepare for interview as per job profile and experience held in the field.

(iii) Negotiation Skills: Interview Preparation and Negotiation skills are very important aspects after professional training. If a candidate does not know his/her worth, he/she may land up in a role with getting paid less. It must include training sessions to teach new jargon like fixed and variable components of the CTC (Cost to Company), joining bonus, Paid Leaves, KPI (Key Performance Indicators), Notice period and Reporting manager.

(iv) Defence Industry Recruitment: Placement Committee must specifically target defence industry as the technical expertise is already available with the officers and they can get readily absorbed in the corporate. Presently in India, Defence Industry is on a boom with addition fillip coming from vocal for local tag, it must be tapped to the fullest. It will bring jobs for officers, fame and good reputation for institute and great work force for the corporate.

(v) Certifications: Certifications are there for visibility and it is not a guarantor of job. It is nice to have the certification as it will put some weight to the CV. In today's war broken scenario, corporates are cutting on everything as they want experienced candidates to start



Going through the Process

from Day 1. I am not discouraging not to go for certifications but don't want people to stay in delusion that certifications can change everything.

- Startup Vision: DGR must seriously start the startup courses which motivates officers to take up entrepreneurship. Courses must include a complete roadmap of defining problems of industry, how officers can pitch in solve these problems, tie-ups and guidance from leading business tycoons who have evolved from startups ecosystem and provide seed funding as per various govt initiatives to switch sides of the desk (from job seeker to job provider).

I know that what I have suggested to improve the visibility and reliability of the DGR 24 weeks management courses would require nothing less than a revolution. However, it is imperative that the armed forces act today so that when tomorrow when officers will retire, they also will reap the benefits, superannuate and live a life with dignity.

About The Author

Lt Cdr Varun Kumar Dhand retd from Indian Navy with 11 years of service in Executive cadre. He had left Indian Navy in 2018. Presently, he is working as Deputy Manager (Security) in State Bank of India, Mumbai. He is passionate of reading books, running marathons, writing book reviews, write and debate on different topics of national importance. Readers can share their feedback of this article at dhand1984@gmail.com



Lt Cdr Varun Dhand

"In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity."
– Albert Einstein

From Uniform to a Second Career

A Practical 10-Step Personal Transition Frameworknal Transition Framework

By
Capt. Shikha Saxena (Veteran)



Your experience is the foundation; clarity helps you choose the right direction.

When I left the Indian Army after five years of service in March 2000, there was no structured transition pathway available for women officers. At the same time, India was changing rapidly: privatisation was gaining momentum, multinational companies were entering the country, and new industries were opening their doors to professionals from diverse backgrounds.

There were opportunities, but there was no roadmap. I therefore had to create one for myself.

The most useful part of my transition was not applying for jobs immediately. It was taking time to understand three things:

- What I brought to the table,
- What the corporate world needed,
- What I needed to learn before I could fit into it.

This process gave me direction. It also helped me move from a general belief that "Army officers can adapt anywhere" to a more specific understanding of where my experience could create value.

The following 10-step framework is drawn from that experience. It is designed to be practical, personal and usable by any officer preparing for a second career.

Do not begin with applications. Begin with clarity.

Step 1: Reconstruct Your Service Journey

Begin by listing the actual work you performed, not only your rank, arm, service or appointment. Include training, administration, logistics, team leadership, inspections, resource management, crisis handling, coordination and process improvement.
Do not restrict the exercise to major appointments. Responsibilities that felt routine in uniform may carry significant value in a civilian organisation. It is therefore important to go beyond formal titles and list the actual work performed.

Ask yourself:

- What appointments did I hold?
- What responsibilities did I handle?
- What projects did I complete?
- What teams did I lead?
- What crises or difficult situations did I manage?
- What processes did I improve?
- What training, administration, logistics, operations, or coordination roles did I perform?

Some of the strongest transferable capabilities may come from responsibilities that appeared routine during service.

Practical action: Create a year-wise table with five columns: assignment, responsibility, challenge, action and result. Use appraisal reports, citations, course reports and conversations with former colleagues to refresh your memory and fill this table

Why it helps: It reveals the full range of your experience and gives you material for your résumé, interviews and career research.

Step 2: Convert Responsibilities into Evidence

Once the assignments are listed, the next step is to examine what was actually achieved through them.
For each important assignment, record four things:

- **Situation:** What was happening?
- **Responsibility:** What were you expected to do?
- **Action:** What steps did you take?
- **Outcome:** What changed because of your contribution?

For example, instead of writing:
“Handled administration”
You could explain:
“Managed personnel coordination, documentation, resource allocation, grievance handling, and day-to-day operational continuity for a large team.”

The first three questions in the transition process are therefore deeply personal:

- ·What assignments have I performed?
- ·What problems have I solved?
- ·What outcomes have I delivered?

***No external expert can answer these accurately on your behalf. They require honest reflection and detailed documentation.**

Practical action: Write three to five strong examples using the Situation-Responsibility-Action-Outcome format. Add scale or numbers wherever possible.

Why it helps: This exercise helps convert military responsibilities into visible evidence of planning, execution, people management, decision-making, coordination, and problem-

solving. Civilian employers understand problems solved and outcomes delivered more easily than military designations.

Step 3: Identify Transferable Capabilities and Conduct a SWOT Analysis

After documenting your assignments and outcomes, look for recurring patterns.
You may find that across different appointments, you repeatedly demonstrated certain capabilities such as:

- Leading people
- Planning under pressure
- Coordinating multiple stakeholders
- Managing resources
- Training teams
- Resolving conflict
- Handling uncertainty
- Making decisions with limited information
- Maintaining discipline and compliance
- Meeting timelines
- Managing crises
- Improving processes

These are transferable capabilities, but they need to be expressed in language that civilian organisations understand.

Now conduct a personal SWOT analysis. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It is a simple but powerful tool that helps you understand your present position before deciding your future direction.

Strengths and weaknesses are internal. They relate to what you already bring and what you still need to develop. Opportunities and threats are external. They relate to the market, industry trends, competition and changing role requirements.

Record each area honestly:

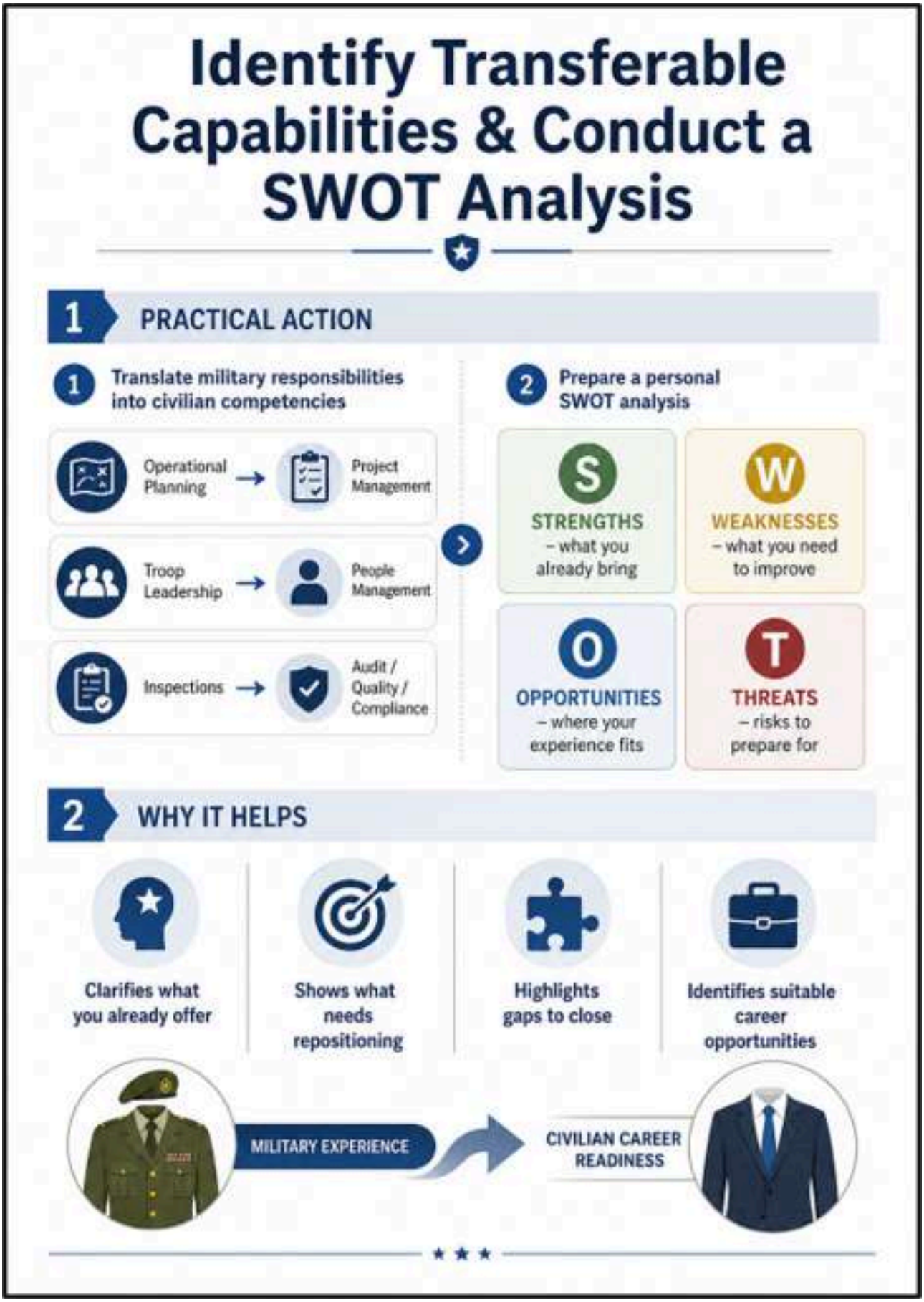
- **Strengths:** Capabilities you already possess and can demonstrate through examples, such as leading teams, managing crises, training people or delivering under pressure.
- **Weaknesses:** Specific gaps that may limit your readiness, such as limited digital exposure, unfamiliarity with corporate terminology or lack of industry knowledge.
- **Opportunities:** Sectors, roles or market trends where your experience may be valued.
- **Threats:** Factors that may reduce your chances, such as an unfocused profile, unrealistic salary expectations, strong competition or outdated skills.

A strength should always be supported by evidence. Instead of writing “leadership,” write, “Led a diverse team in a high-pressure environment and delivered the assigned task within a strict timeline.”

Similarly, a weakness should be specific enough to act upon. Instead of writing “poor technology skills,” write, “Need practical proficiency in Excel, PowerPoint and digital reporting tools.”

The purpose of a SWOT analysis is not merely to create four lists. It is to help you decide what to build on, what to improve, where to look for opportunities and what risks to prepare for.

Practical Action:
First, translate your military responsibilities into civilian competencies—for example, operational planning into project management or troop leadership into people management. Then prepare a personal SWOT


Identify Transferable Capabilities & Conduct a SWOT Analysis
1 PRACTICAL ACTION
1 Translate military responsibilities into civilian competencies
Operational Planning → Project Management
Troop Leadership → People Management
Inspections → Audit / Quality / Compliance
2 Prepare a personal SWOT analysis
S STRENGTHS – what you already bring
W WEAKNESSES – what you need to improve
O OPPORTUNITIES – where your experience fits
T THREATS – risks to prepare for
2 WHY IT HELPS
Clarifies what you already offer
Shows what needs repositioning
Highlights gaps to close
Identifies suitable career opportunities
MILITARY EXPERIENCE
CIVILIAN CAREER READINESS

analysis covering your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Why It Helps:
It clarifies what you already offer, what needs repositioning, which gaps must be closed and where suitable career opportunities may exist.

Step 4: Research Roles and Validate Them Against the Market

The next three questions require external research:

- Which of my capabilities are relevant to civilian organisations?
- Which industries value these capabilities?
- What technical, digital, functional, or commercial skills am I missing?

This is where many transitioning officers struggle. They understand what they have done, but do not know how that experience connects with specific sectors or job roles.

Use AI engines such as ChatGPT, job portals, LinkedIn, company career pages and industry reports to identify roles where your capabilities may be valued. AI can suggest possible sectors, translate military experience into civilian language and highlight likely skill gaps.

An officer can enter details of past assignments and ask an AI tool to:

- Identify transferable civilian competencies;
- Suggest suitable job roles;
- Recommend industries where those capabilities may be valued;
- Translate military terminology into corporate language;
- Compare experience with job descriptions;
- Identify possible skill gaps; and
- Suggest relevant certifications or tools.

AI can help widen the field of exploration, especially when the officer is unfamiliar with corporate designations.

However, AI should be treated as a research assistant, not the final decision-maker. Its suggestions must be validated through actual market research

Once a few possible roles have been identified, collect actual job descriptions. Review at least 15 to 20 job descriptions for each role being considered and study repeated responsibilities, qualifications, digital tools, certifications, industry knowledge and expected outcomes. The actual job description reveals the real capability requirement. This research helps answer a critical question:

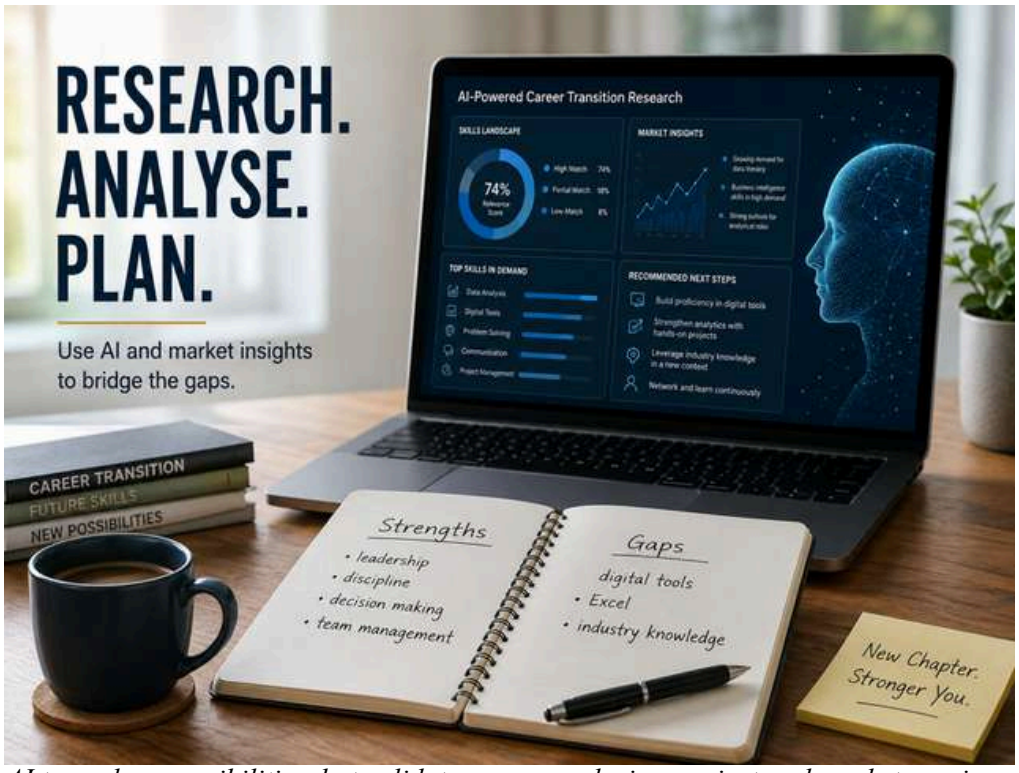
Do I genuinely fit this role, or am I only attracted to the designation?

Practical action: Ask an AI tool to compare your experience with a set of job descriptions. Then validate the output by speaking to at least two professionals working in that sector or checking out job description in detail on job portals of LinkedIn.

Why it helps: It prevents decisions based on assumptions and shows what employers are actually seeking.

Step 5: Build a Competency Matrix

Compare the requirements of your target roles with your current capabilities. Separate them into three categories:



Use AI to explore possibilities, but validate every conclusion against real market requirements.

- I already have this capability;
- I have related experience but need to reposition it;
- I need to learn or develop it.

This gives a realistic picture of readiness. It also prevents two common mistakes:

- Assuming that military leadership automatically qualifies an officer for every management role; and
- Undervaluing relevant experience simply because it was gained in uniform.

Practical action: Create a matrix with four columns: role requirement, current position, evidence available and action needed. Keep it to one page and update it as your research improves.

Why it helps: It converts broad reflection into a focused and realistic development plan.

Role Requirement	Current Position	Evidence	Action Needed
Team leadership	Strong	Led multi-level teams	Use measurable examples
Project planning	Related experience	Operational/training plans	Learn corporate tools and terminology
Digital reporting	Gap	Limited	Build Excel and dashboard skills
Industry knowledge	Gap	Limited	Complete focused sector research

Step 6: Select Two or Three Target Roles

Avoid positioning yourself for every available role. A profile that simultaneously targets HR, administration, operations, sales, security, logistics and training becomes difficult for recruiters to understand.

Choose two primary roles and, at most, one secondary option based on your strengths, interest, market demand, location, financial expectations, learning effort and long-term growth.

Practical action: Score each possible role from 1 to 5 on fit, interest, demand and gap-closure effort. Select the roles with the strongest overall alignment.

Why it helps: Focus makes résumé writing, networking, learning and interview preparation far more effective.

Step 7: Close Gaps, Demonstrate Learning and Build Evidence

Once the target roles are clear, choose only the learning that closes a specific gap. Do not collect qualifications without purpose. A course should improve your ability to perform or demonstrate readiness for the chosen role.

Be honest about gaps. One of my own weaknesses was limited exposure to computers. I acknowledged it in interviews, while also explaining that the Army had trained me to learn quickly, seek clarity in difficult situations and adapt to unfamiliar environments.

Support new learning with practical evidence such as a project plan, training module, dashboard, risk register, process-improvement proposal, business presentation or standard operating procedure.

Practical action: For every gap, write: what I lack, how I will learn it, by when, and what work sample will prove application.

Why it helps: Employers may accept a gap when they see self-awareness, visible effort and evidence of learning agility.

Step 8: Build a Civilian Professional Identity

A military résumé cannot be converted into a civilian résumé simply by changing a few words. Your profile must clearly communicate what experience you have, what outcomes you delivered, which business problems you can solve and which roles you are targeting.

The same positioning should appear across your résumé, LinkedIn profile, professional introduction, cover letters and interviews.

Practical action: Prepare a 60-second introduction that connects your military experience with the specific civilian role you are seeking. Compare your résumé with relevant job descriptions and remove vague or generic statements.

Why it helps: Recruiters need to understand your relevance quickly and consistently.

Step 9: Network with Purpose and Apply Strategically

Networking should begin with a request for understanding, not a request for a job. Speak to veterans, recruiters, industry professionals,

, alumni, mentors and hiring managers to test your assumptions.

Ask focused questions: What does this role involve? Which skills matter most? Which gaps do veterans commonly face? What kind of entry role is realistic? Apply only where there is a reasonable match, and use each interaction as market feedback.

Practical action: Set a weekly target: two informational conversations, five focused applications and one review of feedback received.

Why it helps: Purposeful networking provides insights, improves positioning and can create access to opportunities.

Step 10: Treat the First Role as a Bridge, Then Review and Adapt

The first civilian role may not match military seniority, authority or compensation. That does not necessarily make it the wrong role.

It may provide industry exposure, corporate credibility, digital experience, functional knowledge, customer understanding and a professional network.

Evaluate the role not only by title and salary, but also by what it can enable over the next three to five years. Continue reviewing applications, interviews and feedback, and refine your direction as the market teaches you more.

Practical action: Maintain a simple tracker of applications, outcomes, interview questions, feedback, gaps identified and next actions.

Why it helps: A well-chosen bridge role can become the foundation of a strong and sustainable second career.

The Officer Must Remain the Architect

No single programme, qualification, mentor or placement agency can design the right



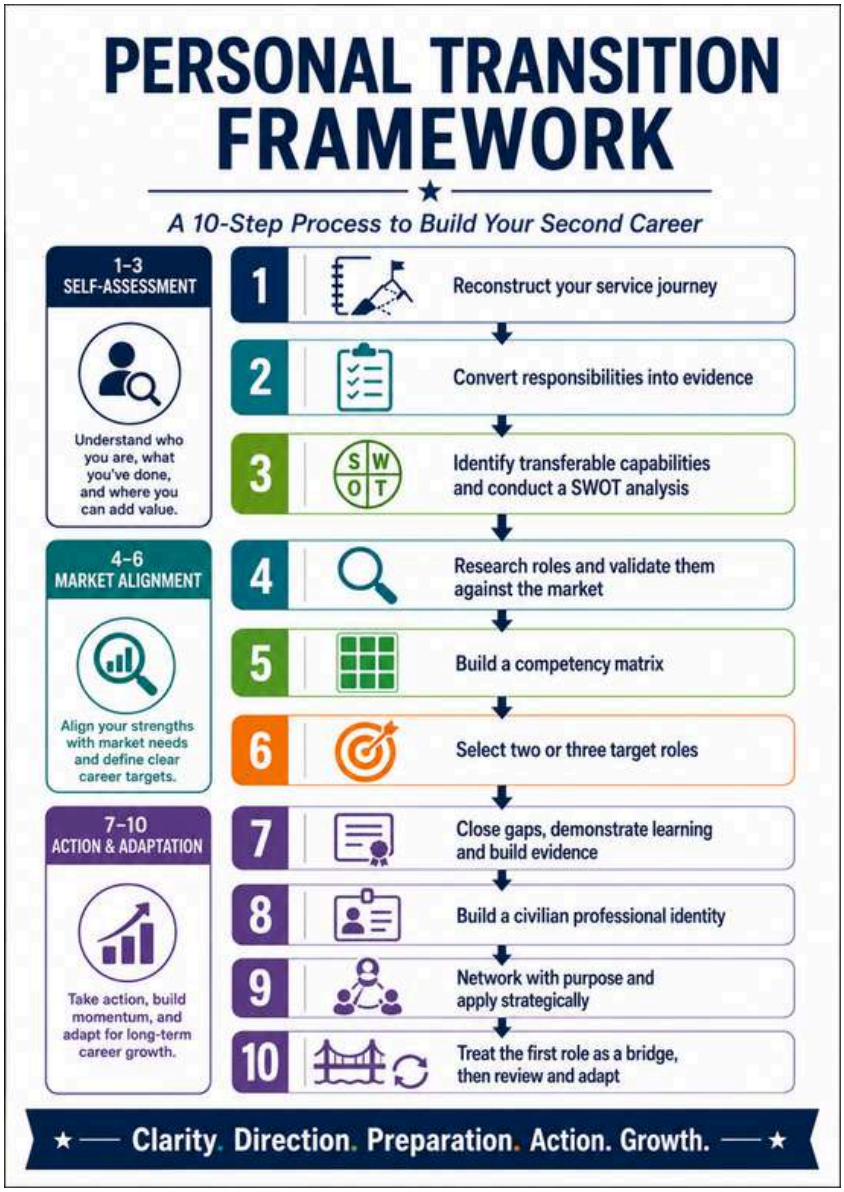
second career for every officer. Each person has a different service background, family situation, financial requirement, location preference, level of digital exposure and professional aspiration.

External support can provide information, tools, networks and opportunities. AI can support research. Job descriptions can reveal demand. Mentors can provide perspective. Certifications can close specific gaps. But the individual must remain the Architect of The Transition.

My own journey began by examining my experience honestly, researching the changing market, acknowledging my limitations and communicating my ability to learn. The Army had taught me how to function in uncertainty; I had to apply the same capability to my own career.

Understand your experience. Translate its value. Study the market. Close the gaps. Build evidence. Then move forward with humility and confidence.

The 10-Step Process at a Glance



A successful second career is not discovered by chance. It is researched, planned and built step by step.

About the Author



Capt. Shikha Saxena

Capt. Shikha Saxena is a Madras Sapper and was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers in March 1995. After a 5-year stint with the Army, she transitioned into the corporate world in March 2000. She began her civilian career as a soft-skills trainer and subsequently moved into the BFSI sector, where she spent nearly 15 years in training, leadership development, knowledge management and content. Her last corporate assignment was as Knowledge and Content Head at Aviva Life Insurance. She is now the Founder of Aarambh Resource Management Solutions (ARMS), through which she designs and delivers customised learning solutions and provides end-to-end learning and development services to organisations. A TEDx speaker, Fellow of the Insurance Institute of India, LIMRA-certified Master Trainer and certified professional coach, she has delivered more than 300 training programmes and contributed to over 1.3 lakh learning man-hours. Beyond her professional work, she is also an accomplished mountaineer, rafter and skier.



Rethinking Officer Transition For The Next Decade

A discussion paper drawing on veteran experience, official data and international practice

By
Lt Col Ajaydeep Singh (Retd)

Author's Note

The views set out here are my own. They draw on my own time in service, on conversations with serving and retired officers, on publicly available government material and open-source reading, and on a look at how a handful of comparable countries handle this same problem. My aim is to get a properly informed conversation going, not to hand down a verdict. Nothing in what follows should be read as the official position of the Indian Armed Forces, the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR), or any other government organisation.



Executive Summary

Roughly 3,500 Armed Forces officers retire or are released every year, and official figures show most of them are still in their thirties and forties, with anywhere from fifteen to twenty-five working years still ahead. Several hundred of that cohort go through the flagship 24-week management programme that DGR organizes at institutions such as the IIMs, MDI and IIFT, with the Government covering 60 per cent of the course fee and the officer paying the rest.

This paper is built on candid accounts from officers who attended the course, officers who chose not to, and veterans who have since built second careers across very different sectors. It doesn't try to settle whether the course is good or bad, that's not a very useful question. Instead it sets out specific, workable changes at every level of the chain, from the individual officer through the unit and formation to the institute and DGR itself, aimed at keeping transition relevant over the next five to seven years.

Key takeaways

- Mindset Shift: The course reliably does one thing well: it shifts an officer's mindset from military to civilian life. That psychological and cultural transition shouldn't be confused with placement effectiveness, which nobody currently measures or publishes.

- Outcomes differ sharply by branch, length of service and age at retirement, yet every officer sits through the same generic curriculum regardless.

- Career-track curricula sound like an obvious fix but can't simply be imposed, because most officers don't actually know their best-fit track when they enrol. A two-stage design, an early psychometric assessment followed by a short exploratory phase before the officer commits to a track, gets around this.

- Transition preparedness is currently treated as the officer's own private concern. It needs a proper place in unit and formation routine, not just a slot in DGR's calendar.

- A DGR-built CV and appointment-benchmarking tool, one that scores every appointment against manpower, budget, assets and responsibility in much the same spirit as existing promotion-quantification systems, would fix the single most common complaint in this paper: officers who simply can't translate military achievement into language a business recruiter trusts.

- The financial model (a flat 60:40 fee split and blanket institute funding) needs to work harder. It should be tied to demand-critical specialisations and to institutes that can actually show results.

- Transition isn't only an individual benefit. Done well, it strengthens retention decisions inside the Services, builds informal industry relationships that are useful to defence in their own right, and turns a publicly funded talent pool into real economic output.

- A one-year terminal attachment, matched to an officer's chosen civil specialisation and open to inter-arm or inter-service postings, could double up as a live jointness exercise for the Services while giving officers direct industry exposure

before they actually leave.

- AWPO and its Navy and Air Force equivalents, INPA and AFPC, already have a reach that DGR itself doesn't, but today they mostly function as vacancy boards. Widening their brief to genuine career advisory, curating vacancies, pushing for fair compensation, sorting opportunities by career stage and supplying real market intelligence, would probably do more for placement quality than any change to the course itself.

1. Why This Discussion Matters

This isn't really a debate about one course. It's a debate about how India converts one of its most dependable sources of trained leadership, its retiring military officers, into productive civilian careers, at exactly the moment the corporate world is being reshaped by automation, specialisation and flatter hierarchies.

The scale involved is considerable. DGR's own guidelines put the number of service personnel retiring or released every year at roughly 60,000, most of them between 35 and 45, released deliberately at that age to keep the Armed Forces' profile young. Officers are a smaller slice of that cohort (approx. 3,500), but a strategically important one. DGR's officer training is open to serving officers in their last two years of service, and to retired or released officers within three years of release (or up to age 60, whichever comes first), and runs under the standing MoUs with premier institutes such as the IIMs, MDI and IIFT.

The money involved tells its own story. Government covers 60 per cent of the course fee and the officer the remaining 40 per cent, which is a genuine public investment rather than a token gesture. An outlay of that size deserves the same tracking, benchmarking and periodic overhaul that any organisation would apply to a comparable spend on leadership development.

2. The Present Reality: What the Evidence Actually Shows

2.1 What consistently works

Across every account gathered, from a 2017 IIM Indore cohort right through to an April 2025 IIM Bangalore batch, one thing comes up again and again: the course's real value lies in the psychological and cultural shift it produces, not in any promise of a job at the end of it.

2.2 What Is Inconsistent

How relevant the curriculum is, and how well it lines up with industry, varies a great deal from institute to institute and year to year. Some officers describe fairly current corporate content and a genuinely useful SWOT-based self-assessment. Others describe a syllabus built around generic business management rather than the specific, in-demand skills that would actually translate into a job. Both are probably true, just at different institutes in different years, and that inconsistency is itself the real problem, because there's no institute-wise, year-wise published record a serving officer could use to choose with any confidence.

2.3 What Is Simply Missing

The starkest gap is the total absence of official, published outcome data. One estimate doing the rounds, shared informally in conversation with DGR leadership rather than drawn from any published source, suggests about 10 per cent of officers are placed within two months of finishing the



WHERE THE PRESENT MODEL FALLS SHORT

01 PLANNING STARTS TOO LATE.

Preparation typically only begins once PMR is under a year away, and in some cases only once retirement orders are already being issued.

02 THE CURRICULUM LAGS BEHIND DEMAND.

It hasn't kept pace with current corporate needs, particularly in cybersecurity, BFSI risk, compliance and digital transformation.

03 PLACEMENT SUPPORT IS WEAK.

Campus placement support is consistently described as thin, with outcomes coming down to personal networks rather than anything the institute does for you.

04 ONE CURRICULUM IS ASKED TO FIT EVERYONE.

Officers leaving after a full career face a materially harder transition than those leaving with ten to fifteen years of service, yet both sit through an identical course.

05 CORRELATION GETS MISTAKEN FOR CAUSATION.

Branch and functional background shape outcomes as much as the course itself, arguably more, and the current model doesn't account for that at all.

06 THERE'S NO TRANSPARENCY ON OUTCOMES.

No annual, publicly available data exists on enrolment, sector-wise placement, salary bands or career progression.

07 ACHIEVEMENT DOESN'T TRANSLATE.

Officers routinely struggle to put command, staff and logistics appointments into language a civilian recruiter recognises or trusts.

A proven transition deserves a modern, data-driven, and outcomes-focused model.

course, a further 60 per cent by six months, another 15 per cent by nine months, and the rest within a year. Even taking that at face value, it tells us nothing about seniority of role, salary uplift against service pay, sector fit, or whether the officer is still in that job two years on, which are really the questions that decide whether a transition has actually worked.

3. Where the Present Model Falls Short

- Planning Starts Too Late. Preparation typically only begins once PMR is under a year away, and in some cases only once retirement orders are already being issued.
- The Curriculum Lags Behind Demand. It hasn't kept pace with current corporate needs, particularly in cybersecurity, BFSI risk, compliance and digital transformation.
- Placement Support Is Weak. Campus placement support is consistently described as thin, with outcomes coming down to personal networks rather than anything the institute does for you.
- One Curriculum Is Asked To Fit Everyone. Officers leaving after a full career face a materially harder transition than those leaving with ten to fifteenyears of service, yet both sit through an identical course.
- Correlation Gets Mistaken For Causation. Branch and functional background shape outcomes as much as the course itself, arguably more, and the current model doesn't account for that at all.
- There's no transparency on outcomes. No annual, publicly available data exists on enrolment, sector-wise placement, salary bands or career progression.
- Achievement Doesn't Translate. Officers routinely struggle to put command, staffand logistics appointments into language a civilian recruiter recognises or trusts.

4. Learning from Comparable Systems Abroad

India doesn't need to design a transition system from scratch. The principle running through every allied system studied here is the same: transition works best when it happens inside industry, not just inside a classroom, and when it starts well before the uniform actually comes off.

Country	Mechanism	Design principle applicable to India
United States	DoD SkillBridge	Permits service members to spend up to 180 days in civilian internships or apprenticeships while still in service and still drawing military pay, directly linking military experience to a civilian employer before separation.

United Kingdom	Career Transition Partnership (CTP)	A standing partnership between the Ministry of Defence and a resettlement provider, offering graduated support beginning up to two years before discharge and continuing for two years after.
Australia	ADF Transition Program	Mandates a formal transition seminar and individualised transition plan for every separating member, with case-managed support rather than a single training event.
Canada	Military Employment Transition (MET) Program	Built around a structured, industry-facing employer network that actively matches transitioning members to vacancies, rather than relying on job fairs alone.

Table 1: Selected international officer/service-member transition mechanisms

5. Actions at Individual, Unit and Formation Level

At present, transition preparedness is treated almost entirely as the officer's own problem, and one that only really starts once DGR paperwork begins. That's too late in the chain. Responsibility needs to sit explicitly at three levels below DGR itself.

5.1 Individual level

1. Open a personal transition file 36 to 24 months before your intended release, covering target industries, transferable skills, a realistic compensation band, and a list of serving or retired officers already working in areas you're interested in.

2. Complete the DGR psychometric and aptitude assessment no later than 18 months before release, so its findings can actually shape your last operational tenure, elective choice and certification, rather than arriving too late to act on.

3. Build and maintain a LinkedIn profile alongside physical networking, not instead of it: unit alumni meets, regimental or arm reunions, DGR conclaves. The two do different jobs; LinkedIn gets you in front of recruiters who'll never attend an in-person event, while in-person networks build the trust that turns a connection into an actual introduction.

4.Use the DGR CV and appointment-benchmarking tool (Section 6.1) as soon as it exists, rather than trying to draft a CV from memory in your last few months.

5.Complete one industry-recognised 'must-have' certification relevant to your target sector, chosen deliberately over an easier 'could-have' alternative.

5.2 Unit level

The unit is where transition preparedness either gets taken seriously or quietly forgotten amid operational demands.

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES FOR MILITARY-TO-CIVILIAN TRANSITION



EARLY EXPOSURE | STRUCTURED SUPPORT | EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS | MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

COUNTRY	MECHANISM	DESIGN PRINCIPLE APPLICABLE TO INDIA
UNITED STATES	DoD SkillBridge	**Hands-on experience before separation.** Allows service members to spend up to **180 days** in civilian internships or apprenticeships while still in service and receiving military pay.
UNITED KINGDOM	Career Transition Partnership (CTP)	**Partnership & long-term support.** A standing partnership with a resettlement provider, offering graduated support beginning **up to two years before** discharge and continuing for **two years after.**
AUSTRALIA	ADF Transition Program	**Individualised & case-managed.** Mandates a formal transition seminar and an **individual transition plan** for every member, with ongoing, case-managed support.
CANADA	Military Employment Transition (MET) Program	**Employer-connected network.** Built around a structured, industry-facing employer network that **actively matches transitioning members** to vacancies—not just job fairs.

Key Takeaway: Start early. Partner deeply. Personalise support. Connect with employers. Measure what matters.

A small, specific set of unit-level actions would close that gap without adding administrative burden out of proportion to its value.

1. Nominate a Unit Resettlement Point of Contact, ideally an existing appointment such as the Adjutant or a nominated JCO clerk rather than a new post, responsible for tracking which officers fall within 36 months of release and flagging the 18-month psychometric deadline against each name.

2. Facilitate duty leave or its equivalent, without administrative friction, for officers attending DGR conclaves, psychometric assessments, certification exams or networking events, treating these as legitimate service requirements rather than personal errands.

3. Where the unit's location allows it, proximity to an industrial cluster, a corporate office, a PSU or an engineering project, organise at least one informal interaction a year between transitioning officers and local industry or veteran contacts, building the physical-networking half of the picture described in Section 5.1.

4. Add transition readiness as a standing, non-punitive item in periodic unit administrative reviews for officers in their terminal tenure, simply checking whether the psychometric test, CV tool and target certification are on track, not a judgement on performance.

5.3 Formation level

Formation headquarters (Corps or equivalent Command/Service formations or better still Sub Area and Area Headquarters) sit at the right level to aggregate transition planning, resource it and connect it to the wider ecosystem, since they're above individual units but still close enough to geography and manpower data to act on it.

1. Maintain a consolidated, formation-wide list of officers due for release within the next three years, drawn from unit-level trackers, and share it with DGR's regional zone so officers can be properly batched for conclaves and courses rather than nominated ad hoc.

2. Build standing local partnerships with industry and institutes within the formation's geographical footprint. Formations near Bengaluru, Pune, Chennai or the NCR, for instance, are naturally placed to connect officers with the technology, manufacturing or corporate clusters in those regions, well ahead of DGR's own national-level events.

3. Where it's functionally feasible and doesn't compromise operational readiness, factor an officer's declared transition track into terminal postings during the last two to three years of service, posting an officer aiming at a civilian logistics career into a supply or movement-heavy appointment, for example, or one targeting cybersecurity into a relevant technical establishment. This is the formation-level enabler for the terminal attachment concept discussed in Section 9.

4. Host, jointly with DGR, at least one half-yearly formation-level Transition Interaction bringing together local industry, alumni and officers in their terminal tenure, smaller and more frequent than DGR's national conclaves, and so easier for serving officers to actually get to.

6. Recommendations, by Stakeholder

6.1 DGR

1. Introduce a four-week Career Discovery Framework at the start of the existing 24-week programme, psychometric assessment (to be done 18-12 months earlier), aptitude mapping based on certifications and skills achieved, and structured exposure to multiple sectors, before officers commit to an elective or specialisation.

2. Build an in-house CV and appointment-benchmarking tool. Every military appointment, command of a unit, a staff appointment, project or works charge, instructor, logistics or administrative role, would be pre-benchmarked against objective measures: manpower led, budget or funds administered, assets or equipment value handled, geographical spread, and operating environment, in much the same spirit as the quantification systems already used for promotion boards. An officer would simply select the appointments they've held from this structured list, and the tool would auto-generate civilian-equivalent, quantified achievement statements, turning something like 'Commanding Officer, unit of 850 personnel, annual budget ₹X crore, four locations' into 'Led a multi-site organisation of 850 personnel with full budgetary and operational accountability across four locations.' This one tool would go a long way towards fixing the single most repeated complaint in this paper: officers who can't translate service achievement into language a recruiter trusts.

3. Publish an Annual Officer Transition Report, covering enrolment, completion, sector-wise placement, median time to employment, indicative salary bands and career progression at three and five years, in anonymised form.

4. Run quarterly Transition Conclaves, rotating across regional commands, bringing transitioning officers together with veteran mentors, recruiters, HR leaders and institute faculty in one recurring setting rather than a single placement fair.

5. Build a National Veteran Mentor Registry, a simple, searchable directory of transitioned officers willing to mentor, organised by industry and location.

6. Restructure course financing so it works harder than the current flat 60:40 split applied uniformly across every specialisation and institute. In practice that means weighting government fee support more heavily towards specialisations of clear public and security interest (cybersecurity, critical infrastructure, defence-adjacent manufacturing); tying an institute's funding for the following year to its published placement outcomes rather than a blanket allocation regardless of performance; and letting officers redirect part of their fee entitlement towards short, targeted certifications or the mentor and CV-tool ecosystem, instead of locking the whole entitlement into the residential course alone.

7. Negotiate standing MoUs with industry bodies (CII, FICCI, NASSCOM, ASSOCHAM) for structured, year-round engagement rather than seasonal placement drives.

8. Track outcomes for five years after transition, not just at course completion, so the programme is judged on careers actually built rather than courses conducted.

6.2 IIMs and Partner Institutes

6.2 IIMs and Partner Institutes

1. Rebalance delivery towards roughly 40 per cent classroom instruction and 60 per cent applied exposure, live consulting assignments, company immersions and boardroom simulations.

2. Deliver the last twenty weeks as track-specific modules once an officer has picked a specialisation through the Career Discovery Framework (see Section 8), rather than running a single generic syllabus for the whole batch.

3. Attach every participant to an industry mentor and a recruiter point of contact for the duration of the course.

4. Publish institute-specific, batch-specific placement outcomes, the way any executive education programme would.

5. Involve veteran alumni directly in the annual curriculum review, so the syllabus reflects what actually helped recent graduates rather than what looked good on paper.

6.3 Transitioning Officers — A Practical Timeline

Timeframe	Action
36 months before release	Open a personal transition file; start exploring industries and roles; build a LinkedIn profile alongside physical networking through unit and regimental circles.
18 months before release	Complete the DGR psychometric and career-aptitude assessment (unit-facilitated) in time for its findings to shape the terminal tenure, elective choice and certification, not after those decisions have already been made.
12–18 months	Complete one industry-recognised, 'must-have' certification relevant to the target sector; identify a mentor already working in that sector; start using the DGR CV-benchmarking tool.
12 months	Rewrite the CV in business language using the benchmarking tool's output; start engaging recruiters and executive search contacts directly.
During the DGR course	Use the Career Discovery phase honestly rather than defaulting to a familiar-sounding specialisation; network deliberately, both online and in person.
First 12 months after transition	Stay connected to a mentor; expect the market to test skills and fit rather than rank.

Table 2: A practical preparation timeline for transitioning officers

6.4 Transitioned Veterans

1. Commit roughly three hours a month to mentoring two transitioning officers a year. At scale, 1,000 veterans doing just this would reach nearly the entire annual officer transition cohort, at zero cost to the exchequer.

2. Offer CV review and mock interviews as a standing, low-friction commitment rather than an occasional favour.

3. Make introductions deliberately rather than gatekeeping opportunities. Several contributors specifically mentioned fellow veterans undervaluing others' transitions to push down compensation. That deserves to be named as a problem inside the veteran community, not just outside it.

6.5 Corporate India

1. Move from ad hoc, individual veteran hiring to structured programmes, veteran internships, leadership fellowships, defined veteran hiring targets, along the lines of what organisations such as Amazon, Microsoft, Deloitte, BAE Systems and Lockheed Martin already do.

2. Take part in curriculum design and live-project sponsorship at partner institutes, rather than only showing up at placement events.

3. Recruit for role fit and demonstrated capability, explicitly, in job descriptions and interview panels, rather than treating military service as a stand-in for a specific corporate skill.

6.6 International Collaboration

1. Set up annual India–UK, India–US and India–Australia Military Transition Dialogues, bringing DGR, industry and veteran networks from each country together.

2. Study, and selectively borrow from, the SkillBridge model of pre-separation industry attachment as a pilot within the existing 24-week window.

7. AWPO, INPA and AFPC: From Vacancy Boards to Career Advisory Organisations

The Army Welfare Placement Organisation (AWPO), set up in 1999, and its counterparts in the other two Services, the Indian Navy Placement Agency (INPA) and the Air Force Placement Cell (AFPC), already have something DGR itself doesn't: standing, decentralised, nationwide networks that stay in touch with veterans for years after release. AWPO alone reports over 1.5 lakh registered personnel across regional offices and placement nodes around the country. That reach is a genuine institutional asset. Right now, though, it's mostly used as a vacancy dissemination channel, registering veterans, circulating job openings by email and SMS, and connecting employers to a database of candidates.

That role is useful, but it isn't enough on its own any more. These organisations should evolve from vacancy boards into trusted career advisory bodies, with a mandate and a measure of success considerably wider than the current one.

7.1 What This Evolution Should Look Like In Practice

- Curating Vacancies. Rather than forwarding every vacancy an employer submits, these organisations should

actively vet and curate opportunities, verifying employer credentials, screening out the fraudulent job offers and fee-demanding placement scams that AWPO already warns veterans about, and filtering out roles that misrepresent pay or responsibility.

- Pushing For Fair Compensation. Rather than passing on whatever an employer offers, AWPO, INPA and AFPC should engage employers directly on pay benchmarks for the role and seniority in question, using their collective scale to negotiate on veterans' behalf, which addresses head-on the recurring complaint of veterans undervaluing each other's worth, or employers assuming a service pension justifies a below-market offer.
- Sorting By Career Stage And Growth Potential. Opportunities should be tagged and presented by career stage and growth potential rather than listed as one undifferentiated feed, distinguishing an entry-level facility or security management role from a genuine mid-management or leadership position, so an officer or JCO can see at a glance where an opportunity sits relative to their experience, and where it might lead over five years, rather than finding out only after taking the job.
- Providing Real Market Intelligence. Officers and veterans should have access to realistic market intelligence, indicative salary bands by sector, region and seniority, which industries are actually hiring and at what pace, and which skills are genuinely in demand, rather than having to piece all this together informally from other veterans.

7.2 Redefining Success

These organisations currently report their success mostly in terms of placement volume, how many veterans found some job or other. That measure should be replaced, or at least supplemented, by one focused on the quality and sustainability of second careers: whether the role matched the veteran's seniority and skill, whether compensation was fair relative to the market, and whether the veteran was still in that role, or had moved on from it, one and two years later. Maximising the number of placements and maximising the quality of second careers are not the same goal, and the current model is optimised for the former.

7.3 Integration With The Wider Ecosystem

AWPO, INPA and AFPC are the natural operational home for several of the functions proposed elsewhere in this paper, since they already hold the registration data, the regional reach and the standing employer relationships that DGR and the institutes simply don't have. Specifically:

- They should feed placement, compensation and retention data directly into DGR's proposed Annual Officer Transition Report, rather than each Service reporting in isolation, or not reporting at all.
- They should be the channel through which the CV and appointment-benchmarking tool (Section 6.1) actually reaches veterans after release, and through which the National Veteran Mentor Registry (Section 6.1) gets populated and kept up to date.
- A Joint Placement Advisory Council, bringing AWPO, INPA and AFPC together rather than three Services separately approaching the same employers, would let a company looking for veteran talent deal with one

coordinated body instead of three, and would let market intelligence and employer vetting be pooled rather than duplicated three times over.

None of this needs new legislation or a new organisation. It just needs an explicit change of mandate, from disseminating vacancies to advising careers, for institutions that already have the reach to do it.

8. Career Tracks: A Practical, Two-Stage Design

Replacing today's generic syllabus with career tracks is the right instinct, but imposing a track at the point of application isn't practical. Most officers, by their own account, don't yet know which track suits them, and plenty gravitate towards whatever feels familiar from service life rather than what they'd actually do best at in a second career. A workable design needs two stages, not one.

Stage 1 — Assessment (18 months before release, at unit/formation level)

The DGR psychometric and aptitude assessment described in Section 5 is administered well before the course begins, alongside a structured review of the officer's appointment history using the same benchmarking data proposed for the CV tool. The output isn't a single forced track, but a shortlist of two or three tracks best supported by the officer's aptitude and experience, Supply Chain, Project Management and Operations for a Logistics officer, say, or Cybersecurity, IT Infrastructure and Risk for a Signals officer.

Stage 2 — Exploration and choice (first four weeks of the DGR course)

Within the existing Career Discovery Framework, the officer explores the shortlisted tracks through structured exposure, industry interaction and elective taster sessions, and only then commits to one track for the remaining twenty weeks of specialised curriculum. This keeps the choice genuine, officers aren't locked in eighteen months ahead of time, while still letting institutes design and deliver proper track-specific syllabi for most of the course, rather than one generic programme stretched across a very mixed batch.

This design answers both concerns raised earlier in this paper: that tracks can't simply replace generic courses because officers don't yet know their fit, and that a syllabus trying to serve every officer equally ends up serving none of them particularly well.

9. The Return on Investment: How the Services and the Nation Gain

Transition tends to be discussed purely as something the individual officer benefits from. That undersells it. A well-designed transition ecosystem pays back the Services and the nation directly, too.

9.1 How the Services benefit

- **Retention Signalling.** A credible, visible transition pathway strengthens retention decisions right at the point Short Service Commission officers are weighing whether to stay on or leave, since uncertainty about a second career is one of the quieter reasons officers hesitate to commit longer.
- **Recruitment And Reputation**. Officers who transition well become the Services' most credible recruitment advertisement; corporate success stories reach potential

entrants far more persuasively than any formal campaign ever could.

- **Inter-service jointness.** A one-year terminal attachment aligned to an officer's chosen specialisation, where it's genuinely inter-arm or inter-service, doubles as a live jointness exercise. An Army logistics officer attached to a Naval dockyard project, or a Signals officer working alongside an Air Force technical establishment, builds exactly the cross-service familiarity that tri-service integration efforts are otherwise trying to manufacture separately.
- **An Industry-Defence Bridge.** Veterans embedded in industry through mentoring and terminal attachments build informal, trusted channels back into the Services, useful when procurement, indigenous manufacturing or dual-use technology absorption benefits from someone who understands both worlds.
- **Less Burden On Units.** A functioning mentor network is a force-multiplier the Services don't have to fund directly; officers who've already gone through the process absorb much of the burden that would otherwise fall on unit and formation resources.

9.2 How The Nation Benefits

- **Economic Return On Public Investment.** A publicly co-funded, highly trained talent pool gets converted into productive economic output rather than prolonged underemployment, the direct return on the 60 per cent government share of course fees.
- **A stronger civil-military interface.** Veterans in corporate, industrial and policy roles improve civilian understanding of security and defence matters over time.
- **Support For Indigenisation.** Veterans entering defence-adjacent manufacturing and technology roles speed up indigenisation goals, bringing operational understanding of requirements into private-sector execution.
- **A Lighter Welfare Burden.** Well-supported transition reduces downstream dependence on welfare schemes, grievance redressal and litigation, a quieter but real saving to the exchequer over a veteran's lifetime.
- **Institutional Credibility.** A transparent, well-measured transition system, benchmarked openly against comparable systems abroad, is itself a mark of institutional maturity.

10. Six Ideas Worth Debating

- Every transitioning officer is assigned three named contacts on joining the course, one mentor, one recruiter and one career coach, not a general helpline, but three specific people accountable for that officer's outcome.
- A four-week, ungraded Career Discovery phase precedes track selection, replacing the assumption that officers already know their target specialisation (Section 8).
- A one-year terminal attachment, taken in the last posting before release, places the officer in an appointment aligned to their chosen civil specialisation, including inter-arm or inter-service postings where it makes functional sense, giving direct applied exposure while also strengthening tri-service familiarity (Section 9.1).
- A DGR-built CV and appointment-benchmarking tool scores every military appointment against manpower, budget,

assets and responsibility, generating quantified, recruiter-legible achievement statements automatically (Section 6.1).

- An Annual Officer Transition Report becomes a standing, published document, reviewed at Services level the way any comparable public investment would be audited.
- Success gets redefined and measured as careers built and sustained over five years, not courses conducted or certificates issued.

11. A Five-Year Roadmap

Year	Focus	Milestone
Year 1	Transparency and assessment	First Annual Officer Transition Report published; 18-month psychometric assessment mandated and unit-tracked; Career Discovery Framework piloted at two institutes.
Year 2	Tools and mentorship	CV and appointment-benchmarking tool launched; National Veteran Mentor Registry live; first cohort formally paired with mentors before course commencement; AWPO, INPA and AFPC mandates formally widened from vacancy dissemination to career advisory, including a Joint Placement Advisory Council.
Year 3	Structural and financial reform	Two-stage career-track design rolled out across all participating institutes; fee-support restructuring for demand-critical specialisations implemented; formation-level transition trackers operational tri-service.
Year 4	Industry and inter-service integration	Pilot terminal attachments (including inter-arm/inter-service postings) introduced for a limited cohort; first India–UK / India–US Military Transition Dialogue convened.
Year 5	Institutionalisation	Five-year outcome tracking operational; Transition Report benchmarked against comparable international systems; terminal attachment model reviewed for wider rollout.

Table 3: Proposed five-year implementation roadmap

12. The Ecosystem, Illustrated

The recommendations above are best understood not as a list, but as a single, self-reinforcing loop, resourced at every level from the individual officer up through the unit and formation, into DGR, the institutes and industry, and back again through mentoring.

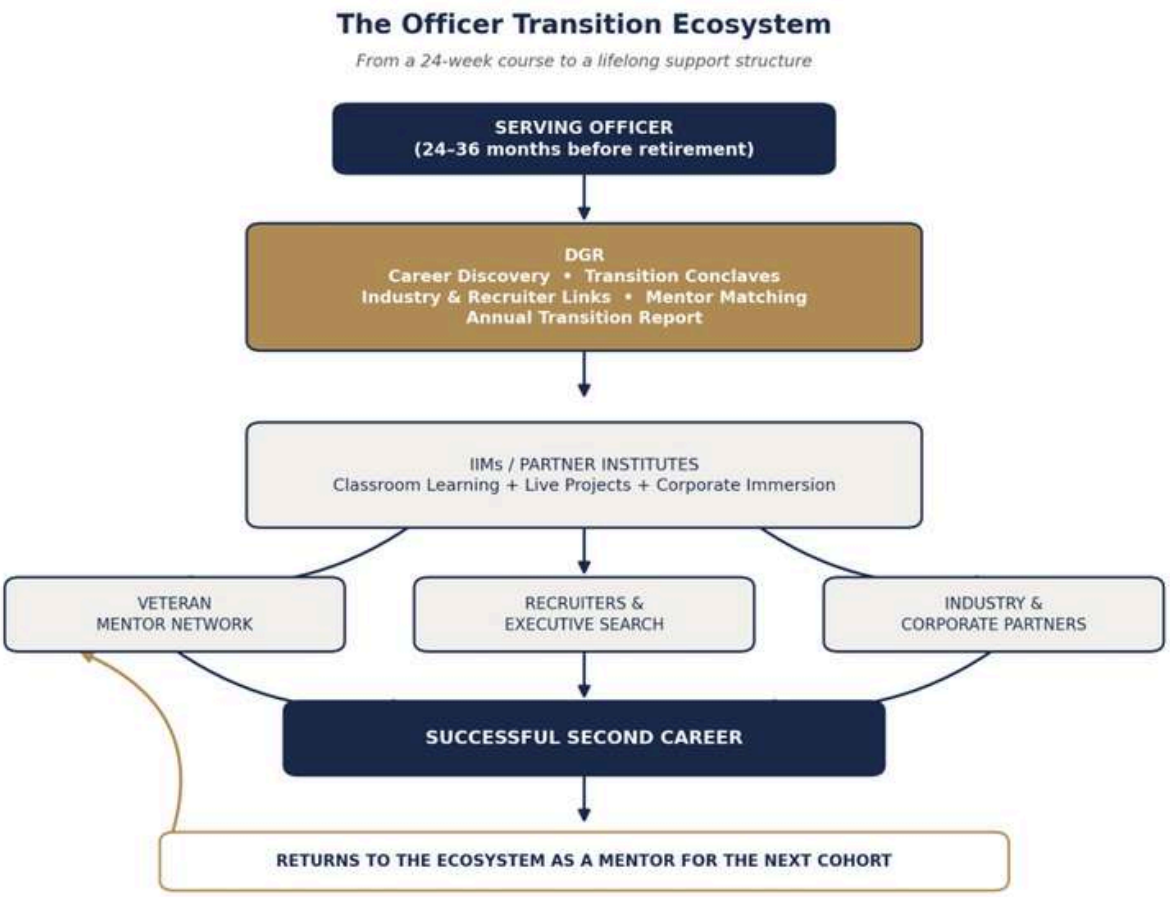


Figure 1: The officer transition ecosystem — from a 24-week course to a lifelong support structure

13. Conclusion

The question this paper started with, whether the course hits the Bull's eye or not, turns out to be the wrong one to ask. The 24-week DGR course does neither. It's a genuinely useful, publicly co-funded bridge that reliably helps officers make a psychological and cultural transition, but its employment outcomes remain unmeasured, its curriculum relevance varies by institute and year, and its placement support is, by every account gathered here, weak.

Nothing in the evidence gathered points towards scrapping the programme. What it does point towards is building a wider, better-measured ecosystem around it, one where preparation is tracked from the unit upward, where an 18-month psychometric assessment gives officers time to actually act on its findings, where achievement is objectified rather than left to memory, where financing rewards genuine outcomes, and where the Services and the nation are understood to gain as much from this investment as the individual officer does.

The Armed Forces have spent decades building exceptional leaders. The task now is to build a transition system just as deliberate, and just as well-measured, as the leadership development that came before it.

About the Author



Lt Col Ajaydeep Singh

Lt Col Ajaydeep Singh is a former Indian Army Gunner/ Aviator and a senior corporate security leader with a leading French multinational in India, bringing over 25 years of military and corporate leadership experience. A TEDx speaker and sought-after corporate keynote speaker, he speaks on leadership, transition, resilience and succeeding in high-performance organisations. He has personally supported and mentored multiple batches of transitioning military officers at IIMs, helping veterans translate their military experience into corporate value and navigate the critical journey from uniform to boardroom. Through his keynotes and mentoring, Col Ajaydeep helps veterans approach their second career with clarity, confidence and a winning strategy. Website - colajaydep.com

"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."
– Steve Jobs

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FORCES NETWORK
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COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT:
THE STATE OF THE 24 WEEKS DGR MANAGEMENT COURSE



A survey of the community's own placement outcomes, curriculum experience and perceived value of the Directorate General Resettlement (DGR) 24-Week Management Course — reported directly by veteran officers who attended it.

181 Officers Surveyed	3 Services Represented	20+ Institutes Covered	2006–26 Course Years Spanned

Survey conducted 26 July –28 August 2026 | Anonymous, self-reported responses | Forces Network Community Survey



About this Report Network Community Survey · 2026

Why this Survey was run

Gauging the Real-World Return of the DGR Course

The 24-Week Directorate General Resettlement (DGR) Management Course, delivered through institutes such as the IIMs, MDI, FMS and IIFT, is one of the most widely used bridges between military service and a civilian second career. For many transitioning officers it is presented as a pivotal step — yet little independent, community-sourced data exists on what it actually delivers in terms of placement, curriculum relevance, and value for time invested.

Forces Network — a community of over 7,000 retired Indian commissioned officers, now in its 19th year — ran an anonymous survey between **26 July and 28 August 2026** to gather first-hand, peer-reported experience from officers who have completed the course. The survey was distributed through the Forces Network community, LinkedIn and WhatsApp networks, and drew **181 responses** from officers who attended the course across
institutes and years between 2006 and 2026.

This report presents the aggregated, anonymised findings exactly as reported by respondents. It does not represent the views of any single institute, the DGR, or Forces Network itself, and it does not attempt to adjudicate whether the course is "worth it" — that judgement is left to the reader, informed by what the community itself has said.

What the Survey Asked

Respondents were asked about their service background, the institute and dates of their course, their primary purpose in attending, whether they secured a campus placement and whether the resulting compensation met expectations, the level of institute support they received, whether they felt the curriculum was aligned to industry needs, and — in hindsight — whether the six months were the best use of their time and whether they would recommend the course to another officer.

How to Read This Report

- **All figures are self-reported and anonymous.** Forces Network has not independently verified individual placement outcomes or CTC figures against institute records.
- **This is a self-selected sample,** not a random or census survey of all officers who have attended the course. Findings describe this respondent group and should not be read as a definitive, nationally representative statistic.
- **"n"** denotes the number of respondents behind a given figure. Where a sub-group is small, this is called out explicitly so the reader can weigh the finding accordingly.
- A full note on sample composition and limitations is provided at the end of this report.

Executive Summary Network Community Survey · 2026

The Headline Number

What 181 Officers Told Us

29% of all respondents personally secured a campus placement at the end of the course	**43% → 20%** personal placement rate, courses completed up to 2015 vs. 2022– 2026	**71%** said the six months were the best use of their time — including 66% of those NOT placed	**71%** would still recommend the course to a fellow officer approaching transition

Placement Outcomes Have Declined Sharply Since 2021

Personal campus placement rates have fallen steadily across the three periods this report tracks: from **43% for officers who completed the course up to 2015** (n=63), to **27% for 2016–2021** (n=33), to **20% for 2022–2026** (n=85). The decline is most pronounced in the most recent, largest, and best-represented block of the sample: among the 65 respondents whose courses ended between 2024 and 2026, only **15%** reported a personal campus placement.

Institute Support Is the Strongest Correlate of Placement

Officers who said their institute "fully supported" the placement process were placed at **48%,** compared with **39%** for "some support" and just **16%** for "no support at all." The share of respondents reporting "no support at all" has itself risen — from around **42%** for pre-2022 courses to **55%** for 2022–2026 courses.

Perceived Value Persists Even Where Placement Does Not

Despite the placement decline, sentiment on the course's broader value has not collapsed in step. The share who would recommend the course actually rose from 60% (2006–15 cohorts) to 75% (2022–26 cohorts), and "best use of time" has stayed roughly flat at ~70% across all three periods. Respondent comments suggest this value is now attributed less to placement itself and more to dedicated transition time, networking, and the opportunity to pursue independent certifications alongside the course.

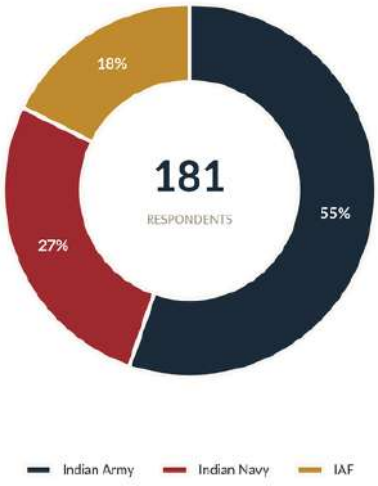
Curriculum Relevance Is Softening

The share of officers who feel the curriculum is aligned to industry needs has slipped from 59–61% for courses up to 2021 to **51%** for 2022–2026 courses — consistent with recurring respondent comments describing the syllabus as generic, compressed, or dated relative to current hiring themes such as AI, cybersecurity and specialised certifications.

Respondents Profile

Who answered this survey

Sample Composition



The 181 respondents skew toward the Indian Army (55%, n=100), followed by the Indian Navy (27%, n=49) and the Indian Air Force (18%, n=32) — broadly reflective of the relative size of the three services and of Forces Network's own membership base.

Type of exit: Premature Retirement — PMR — accounts for the largest share of respondents (50%, n=90), followed by Short Service exit (40%, n=73) and Superannuation (10%, n=18).

Years of military service at exit ranged from 5 to 36 years, with a mean of 18.4 years and a median of 21 years — spanning both young Short Service officers and officers who served a full career.

Respondents' courses were completed across a wide span — fromm2006 to 2026 — though the sample is naturally weighted toward more recent cohorts: 28% of all responses (51 of 181) relate to courses completed in 2024 or 2025 alone, a pattern consistent with how the survey was distributed through current community channels.

Institutes Represented

Respondents self-reported over 20 distinct institute names, which have been standardised below for institutes with at least 6 respondents. IIM Indore is the single most-represented institute in the sample.

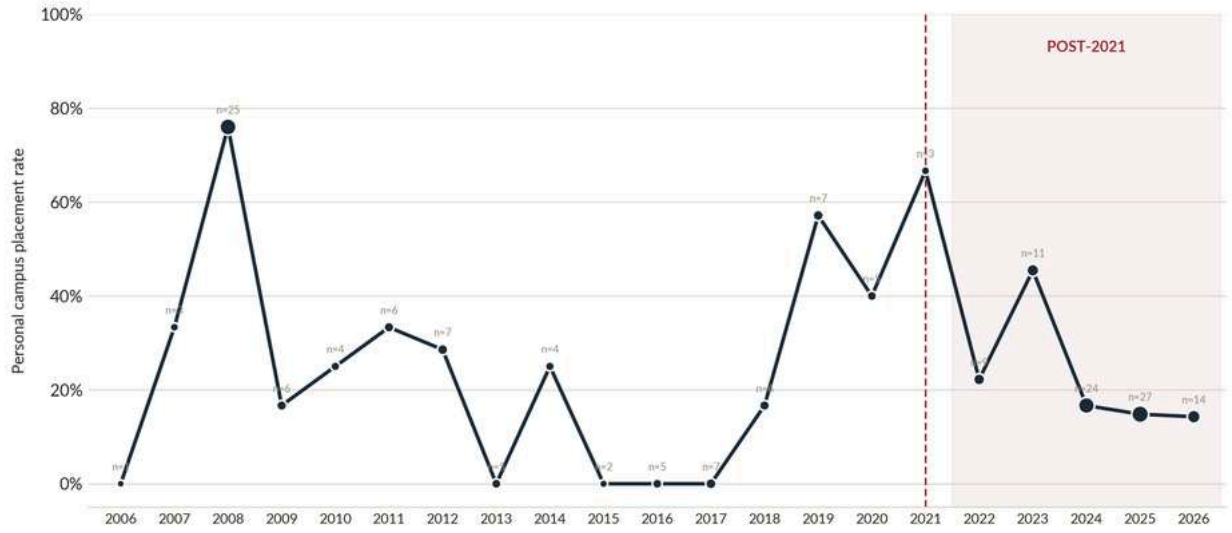
INSTITUTE	RESPONDENTS	SHARE OF SAMPLE
IIM Indore	33	18%
IIM Ahmedabad	20	11%
IIM (institute not further specified)	18	10%
IIM Lucknow	17	9%
MDI Gurgaon	16	9%
IIM Mumbai	15	8%
IIM Bangalore	12	7%
IIFT	11	6%
FMS Delhi	7	4%
XLRI Jamshedpur	4	2%
All other institutes (<4 respondents each)	~28	~16%

Section 1 : Placement Support

Section 1: Part A

Is the Course Still Delivering Placements?

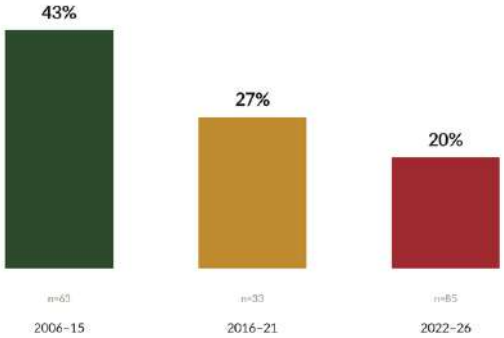
Across all 181 respondents, **29% report having personally secured a campus placement** at the end of the course; 71% did not. Tracked by the year the course ended, the placement rate shows a clear downward trajectory over the past two decades — and a pronounced, sustained decline from 2022 onward.



Personal campus placement rate by year the course ended. Bubble size reflects the number of respondents for that year (n shown above each point). Years with n=1 are shown but should be read with caution.

Does the data show a "drastic dip" after 2021? Yes — the decline is real, and it steepens the closer the sample gets to the present. Personal placement rates were 53% for 2019–2021 courses (n=15), fell to 35% for 2022–2023 (n=20), and dropped further to **15% for 2024–2026** (n=65 — the largest single block in the whole sample). Rather than a single-year cliff, the data points to a sustained, worsening decline that began around 2022 and has continued through the most recent cohorts.

A note on 2008: the one earlier spike in the trend line (76% placement, n=25) is concentrated almost entirely in a single institute-year — 19 of those 25 respondents attended IIM Indore's 2008 course. It should be read as a strong single cohort's result rather than an industrywide peak, and is treated separately from the broader multi-year trend below.

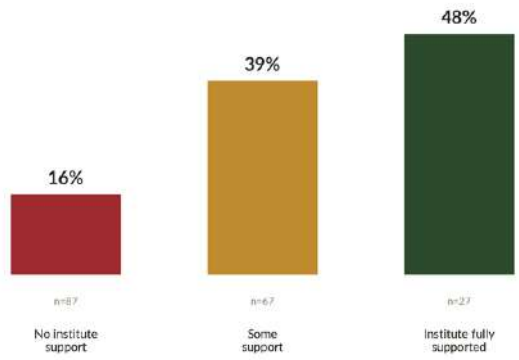


Personal campus placement rate by broad period.

Section 1 : Part B

What Separates Officers Who Get Placed From Those Who Don't

Institute Support Is the Clearest Correlate



Placement outcomes track closely with how much support respondents say their institute provided. Officers reporting a fully-supportive placement cell were placed at **48%**; this falls to **39%** for "some support" and **16%** for "no support at all."

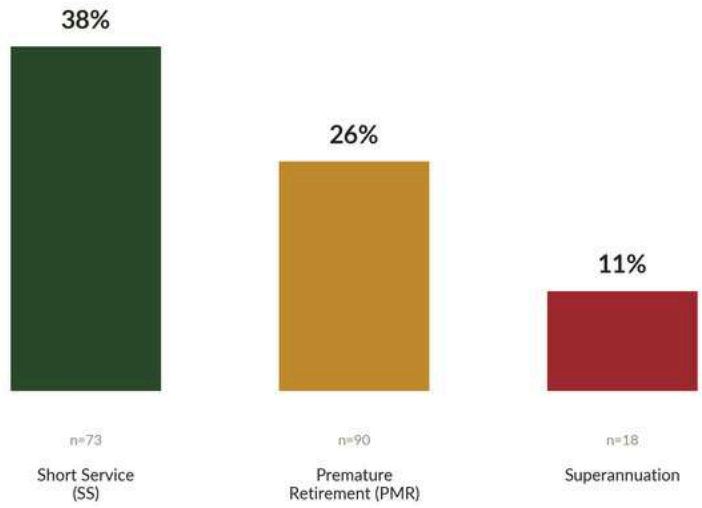
Notably, "no support at all" is also the most reported category overall (48% of all respondents, n=87) — and its share has risen among more recent cohorts (55% for 2022–2026 vs. ~42% for courses up to 2021).

Placement Is Not Explained by Individual Intent or Prior Certification

Of the 85 respondents (47% of the sample) who said their primary purpose for attending was specifically campus placement, **28%** were placed — almost identical to the **30%** rate among the 96 respondents who cited other purposes (knowledge-building, networking, time for transition, etc.). Likewise, holding an industry-recognised certification (PMP, CPP, CISSP, Az-900 etc.) before placement made almost no difference: 28% of certified officers were placed versus 30% of those without a certification. Placement, as reported here, appears to be shaped more by institutional and the efforts of the student placement cells rather than by an individual officer's stated goal or prior credentialling.

Note: There being no correlation between industry certifications and placements need to be looked at greater detail before any lasting conclusions are drawn.

Seniority and Exit Profile Matter



Placement rates differ noticeably by type of exit: Short Service officers — typically younger and more junior — were placed at **38%**, compared with **26%** for those exiting on Premature Retirement and just **11%** for officers exiting on Superannuation.

Consistent with this, respondents who secured a placement had served an average of 14.8 years, versus 19.8 years for those who did not — suggesting campus placement mechanisms in their current form favour younger, more junior profiles.

actively vet and curate opportunities, verifying employer credentials, screening out the fraudulent job offers and fee-demanding placement scams that AWPO already warns veterans about, and filtering out roles that misrepresent pay or responsibility.

- Pushing For Fair Compensation. Rather than passing on whatever an employer offers, AWPO, INPA and AFPC should engage employers directly on pay benchmarks for the role and seniority in question, using their collective scale to negotiate on veterans' behalf, which addresses head-on the recurring complaint of veterans undervaluing each other's worth, or employers assuming a service pension justifies a below-market offer.
- Sorting By Career Stage And Growth Potential. Opportunities should be tagged and presented by career stage and growth potential rather than listed as one undifferentiated feed, distinguishing an entry-level facility or security management role from a genuine mid-management or leadership position, so an officer or JCO can see at a glance where an opportunity sits relative to their experience, and where it might lead over five years, rather than finding out only after taking the job.
- Providing Real Market Intelligence. Officers and veterans should have access to realistic market intelligence, indicative salary bands by sector, region and seniority, which industries are actually hiring and at what pace, and which skills are genuinely in demand, rather than having to piece all this together informally from other veterans.

7.2 Redefining Success

These organisations currently report their success mostly in terms of placement volume, how many veterans found some job or other. That measure should be replaced, or at least supplemented, by one focused on the quality and sustainability of second careers: whether the role matched the veteran's seniority and skill, whether compensation was fair relative to the market, and whether the veteran was still in that role, or had moved on from it, one and two years later. Maximising the number of placements and maximising the quality of second careers are not the same goal, and the current model is optimised for the former.

7.3 Integration With The Wider Ecosystem

AWPO, INPA and AFPC are the natural operational home for several of the functions proposed elsewhere in this paper, since they already hold the registration data, the regional reach and the standing employer relationships that DGR and the institutes simply don't have. Specifically:

- They should feed placement, compensation and retention data directly into DGR's proposed Annual Officer Transition Report, rather than each Service reporting in isolation, or not reporting at all.
- They should be the channel through which the CV and appointment-benchmarking tool (Section 6.1) actually reaches veterans after release, and through which the National Veteran Mentor Registry (Section 6.1) gets populated and kept up to date.
- A Joint Placement Advisory Council, bringing AWPO, INPA and AFPC together rather than three Services separately approaching the same employers, would let a company looking for veteran talent deal with one

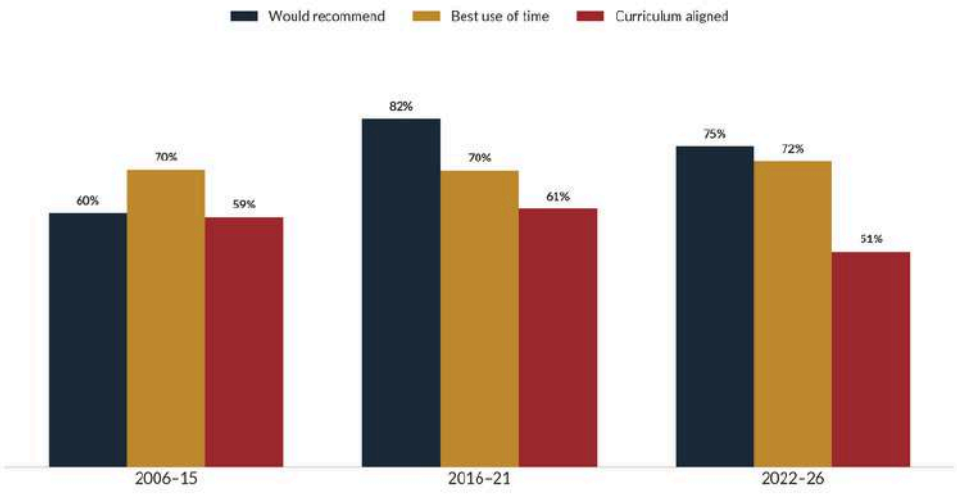
Reading this chart responsibly: Sample sizes per institute are modest (6–33 respondents) and span different year ranges — IIM Indore's result, for instance, is influenced by the concentrated 2008 cohort discussed on the previous page. These figures describe this survey's respondent at each institute, not a certified or audited institutional placement statistic and should be read as directional rather than definitive. **Disclaimer:** These finding cannot be said to be conclusive as the sample size across the institutes skewed. Also this chart is no measure of an Institute's standing or capability.

No institute among those with sufficient respondents both provided consistently full placement support and eliminated the downward multi-year trend seen in Part A — the decline in placement outcomes after 2021 appears across institutes rather than being concentrated in any single one, based on the respondents available for this survey.

Section 2 : Curriculam Relevance

Is the Curriculum Keeping Pace With the Industry?

Overall, **55%** of respondents feel the course curriculum is aligned with industry needs, based on their subsequent experience working in the civilian sector. This share has softened over time: **59%** for 2006–2015 courses, **61%** for 2016–2021 courses, and down to **51%** for 2022–2026 courses.



Recommend / best-use-of-time / curriculum-alignment rates by period.

What Respondents Said About the Curriculum

"These are certificate programmes; however these should be degrees or equivalent courses which are recognised at par [with] top courses... guidance was required in terms of profile, responsibilities, packages... rather than theory."

OFFICER, 2022–2026 COHORT

"The course has been curated well with basics of corporate know-how, but it does not directly prepare a transitioning officer to enter into the corporate world."

OFFICER, 2022–2026 COHORT

"The curriculum is extremely compressed, cramming entire semesters into a month, and often relies on textbooks written by in-house faculty, which feels self-serving and outdated rather than industry-aligned."

OFFICER, 2022–2026 COHORT

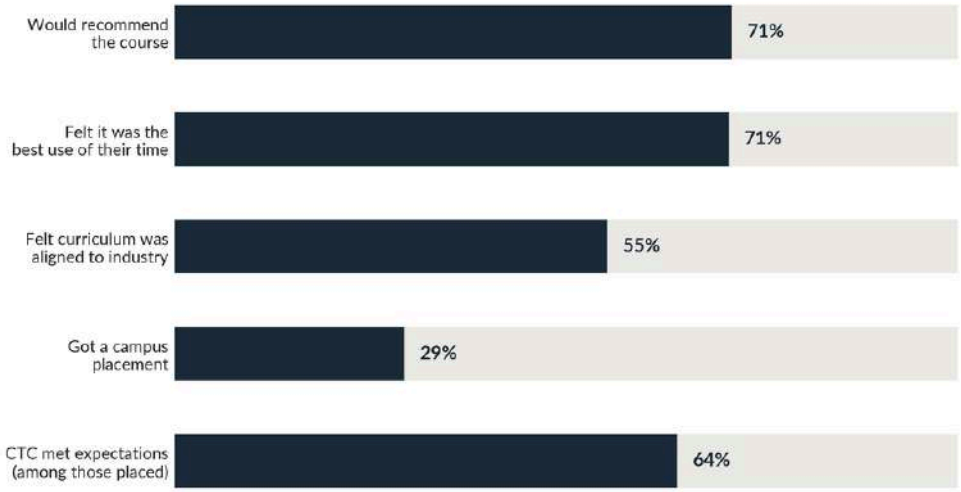
"Officers don't need a generic DGR course. It needs to be redesigned as per an officer's likely placement, knowledge base and future job choice... this should also orient them to industry-specific certification like PMP, CPP, etc."

OFFICER, 2022–2026 COHORT

A recurring theme across comments — both from officers who would and would not recommend the course — is a preference for the curriculum to be more specialised (aligned to a target function or industry) and supplemented with, or replaced by, recognised professional certifications (e.g. PMP, CPP, cloud and AI-related certifications) rather than a generalist management syllabus.

Section 3 : Value & Timing

Was It Worth the Six Months?



Overall sentiment metrics across all 181 respondents.

Value Judgements Do Not Move in Lockstep With the Placements

One of the more counter-intuitive findings in this survey is that, even as placement rates have fallen, respondents' willingness to recommend the course has not fallen with them — it has risen, from **60%** among 2006–2015 respondents to **75%** among 2022–2026 respondents. "Best use of time" has stayed essentially flat, at 70%, 70% and 72% respectively across the same three periods.

This pattern also holds at the individual level: **66% of respondents who did NOT get a campus placement** still said the course was the best use of their time, and **65%** of that same non-placed group said they would still recommend it to another officer. Respondent comments suggest this value is attributed to factors other than placement itself — among them, dedicated time to mentally and practically prepare for transition, exposure to corporate language and culture, networking, and the opportunity to pursue independent certifications alongside the coursework.

"Time away from work is critical for an individual to figure out what that individual wants to do next… the course curriculum needs improvement."

OFFICER, 2024–2026 COHORT · DID NOT RECOMMEND ON PLACEMENT GROUNDS, BUT VALUED THE TIME

"I feel that the resettlement course functions more as a revenue stream than a genuine transition support system. There's no meaningful placement assistance… the certs that really matter are ones pursued independently, like PMP or cloud certifications, not the course itself."

OFFICER, 2022–2026 COHORT

Timing and Compensation

Among the minority who were placed, satisfaction with compensation (CTC) was moderate and stable over time: 64% of the 53 placed respondents said the CTC met their expectations, a figure that has not shifted meaningfully across the three periods (63%, 67%, 65%).



In their own words

Ideas and Concerns Officers Raised Unprompted

The additional-comments field was optional; 140 of 181 respondents (77%) used it. The themes below are those that recurred most often across those comments. They are presented as a record of what respondents raised — not as recommendations from Forces Network.

1 · Replace or supplement the generalist syllabus with targeted certifications
Several respondents suggested the course would deliver more value if it were restructured around an officer's intended function or industry (HR, finance, cybersecurity, admin/security, education management) and paired with recognised certifications, rather than a single generic management curriculum for all attendees.

2 · Structured industry internships or OJT in place of, or alongside, classroom time
A number of comments proposed that part of the six months be spent on live projects, internships, or on-the-job training with partner companies, arguing this would give officers practical exposure that classroom-only instruction does not.

3 · Stronger, more accountable institutional placement support
Given that "no support at all" is the most common support level reported (48% of respondents) and the strongest correlate of not being placed, several respondents called for greater institutional accountability on placement outcomes, including named placement officers, shared recruiter/company contact lists, and closer institute – industry tie-ups specifically for transitioning officers.

4 · Value the time even where placement does not materialise
A recurring counterpoint in the comments — including from respondents who were not placed — was that the six months away from unit life is, in itself, a valuable and often rare opportunity to mentally and practically prepare for a second career, regardless of whether the institute delivers a job at the end of it.

Reading Data Responsibly

Methodology, Data Notes & Limitations

Methodology

- Anonymous, self-administered online survey (Google Forms), distributed via Forces Network's community channels, LinkedIn and WhatsApp, open 26 July–28 August 2026.
- 181 valid responses from officers who had attended the 24-week DGR Management Course, across the Army, Navyand Air Force, spanning courses completed between 2006 and 2026.
- All questions other than the closing comments field were single-select or short-answer; percentages in this report are calculated on the number of respondents who answered that specific question, which is occasionally fewer than 181 (noted as "n" throughout).
- Institute names were free-text and have been manually standardised for reporting (for example, "IIM,I" / "IIM I" have been mapped to IIM Indore, consistent with the abbreviation format given as an example in the original survey question).

Limitations

- **Self-selection bias.** Respondents opted in via community and social channels; officers with a strongly positive or strongly negative experience may be more inclined to respond than those with a neutral view. This is not a random or independently audited sample of all officers who have attended the course.
- **Recency Concentration.** 28% of all responses relate to courses completed in 2024 or 2025 alone, giving recent cohorts more statistical weight and more granular sub-analysis than older ones.
- **Uneven distribution across years and institutes.** Some individual years (e.g. 2021, n=3) and institutes (several with n<6) have very few respondents; period-level and institute-level figures should be read with the accompanying sample sizes in mind.
- **A single-cohort concentration in 2008.** Nineteen of the twenty-five respondents whose courses ended in 2008 attended IIM Indore, which is treated as a distinct data note in Section 1 rather than folded uncritically into the broader trend.
- **Unverified, self-reported outcomes.** Placement status, CTC satisfaction and curriculum views reflect each respondent's own account and were not corroborated against institute placement records.
- **Free-text fields excluded from quantitative analysis.** The question asking what percentage of an officer's batch was placed drew a mix of numeric, fractional and descriptive text answers and was too inconsistent to convert into a reliable quantitative trend; it is therefore referenced only qualitatively in this report.

> *This report presents what respondents told Forces Network, aggregated and anonymised. It is offered as a factual account of the community's own experience, for officers weighing this course as part of their transition, and as structured feedback that may be of interest to institutional stakeholders.*
>
> *Note: This survey does NOT*

Even Among the "Successfully" Placed, Compensation Often Disappoints

Of the 53 respondents who did secure a campus placement, only 64% said the resulting CTC met their expectations — a figure that has stayed roughly flat across all three time periods studied. More than a third of placements, even where they materialised, did not meet the officer's own compensation expectations.

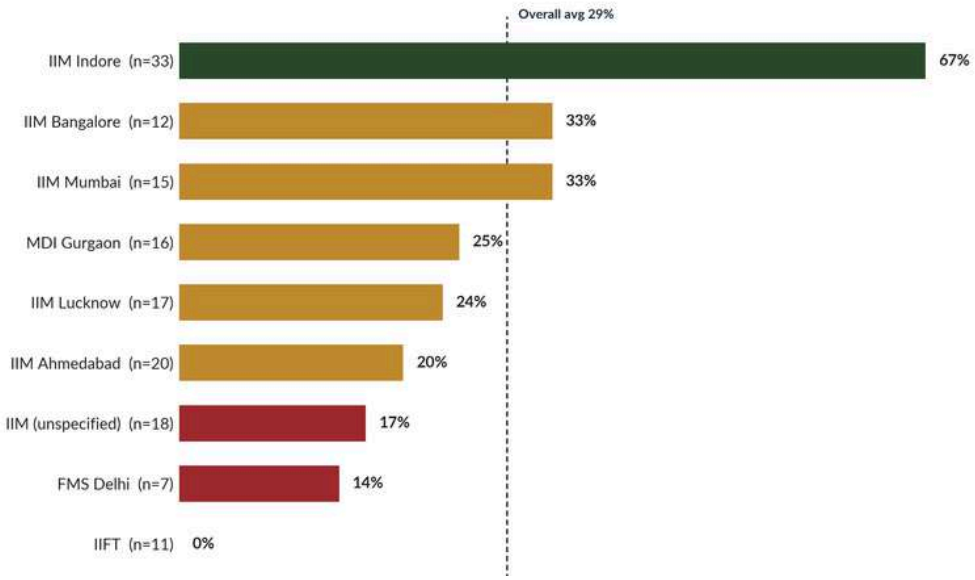


Personal campus placement rate by year the course ended. Bubble size reflects the number of respondents for that year (n shown above each point). Years with n=1 are shown but should be read with caution.

Section 1 : Part C

Placement Outcomes Vary Widely by Institute

Among institutes with at least 6 respondents in the sample, reported placement rates range from 0% to 67% — a substantial spread that suggests the institute attended is one of the more consequential factors in whether an officer secures a campus placement.



Personal campus placement rate by institute (institutes with n≥6 respondents shown). Dashed line marks the overall sample average of 29%.

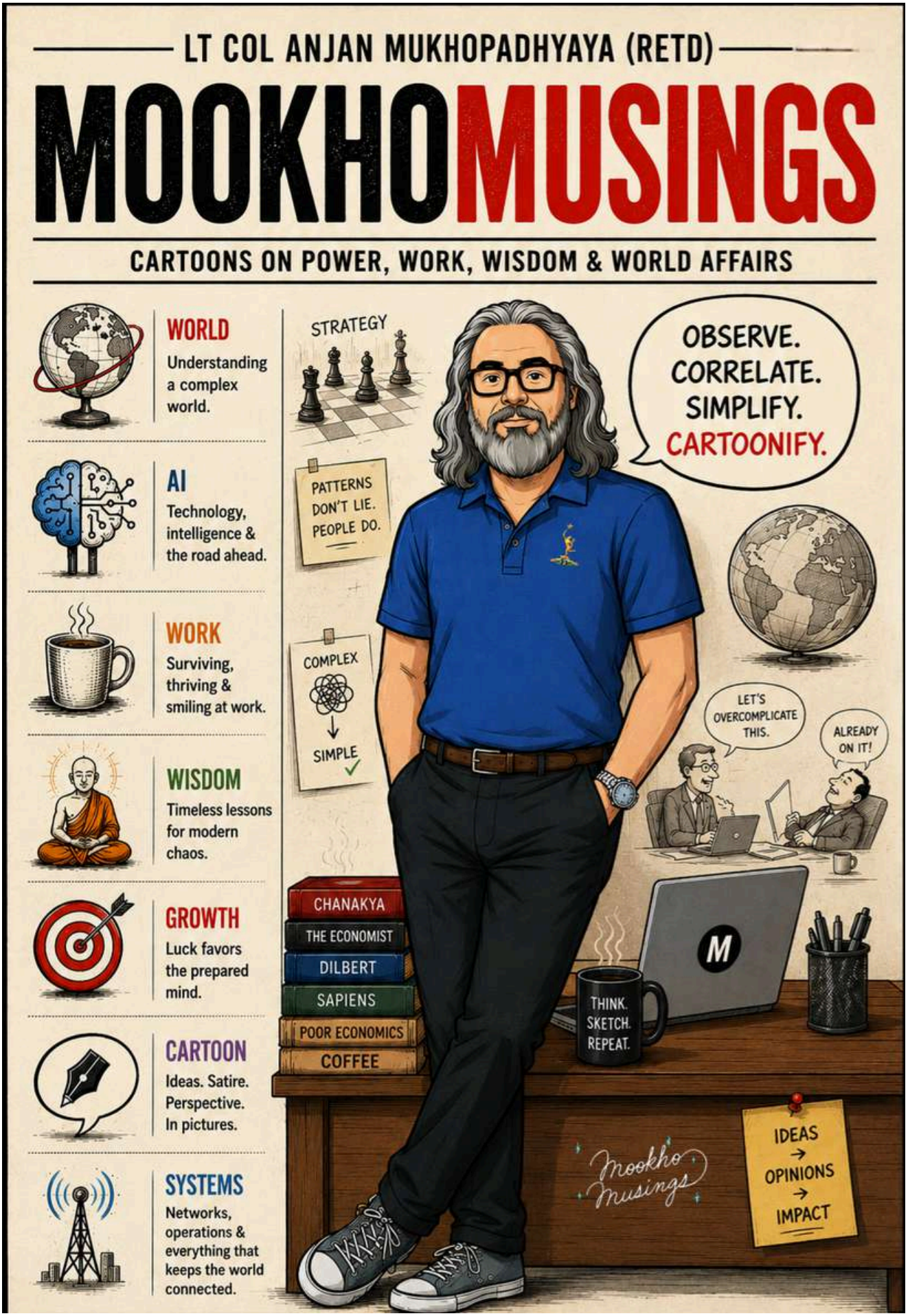
Forces Network is a 7,000+ member community of retired Indian commissioned officers, now in its 19th year, and publisher of the monthly ForceNet E-Zine.

This report is based on anonymous, respondent-submitted data collected via a community survey in July–August 2026. It is intended to inform officers approaching transition and to provide the community's own structured feedback to the transitioning officers.

Disclaimer

This is not an institutional evaluation. This report is a survey of respondent experience, not an audit or assessment of any institute. It does not reflect, in any manner, the academic standing, quality of education, faculty competence, or accreditation of any institute named in this report. Where institute-level figures are presented, they describe the placement and satisfaction outcomes reported by this survey's respondents from that institute — they are not a certified statistic issued by, verified with, or endorsed by the institute, and should not be used to draw conclusions about the institute's overall quality or standing. This Report does not intend to rate, rank, or evaluate any institute, and this report should not be construed as doing so.


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MALTA
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TUNISIA
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AUSTRALIA
Vibrant Cities, Iconic Landscapes & Extraordinary Experiences.
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SIMPLE
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ALREADY ON IT!
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DILBERT
SAPIENS
POOR ECONOMICS
COFFEE
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mookho musings
IDEAS → OPINIONS → IMPACT


MookhoMusings:
HR Interview Cheat-sheet
You're Being Evaluated on Very Different Things Than You Think
What interview panels look for in senior leaders—and how to prepare for it.
Interviews aren't just about your experience. They're about how you think, lead and create impact.
Here's your cheat-sheet to excel!
INTERVIEW
1 How You Think, Not What You Did
Panels assess the quality of your thinking. They're listening for:
• How you make sense of complex business realities
• The logic behind your decisions
• Your ability to connect market, strategy, and execution
• Prepare a clear point of view—not a CV walk-through.
2 The Pattern of Impact You Create
Roles change. Context changes. Impact doesn't.
They look for:
• What improved because you were in the role
• Shifts you drove in performance, people, systems
• How you diagnose → decide → deliver
• Bring 2–3 crisp "before → after → how" stories.
3 How You Lead Leaders
At this level, it's about influence, judgment, and trust, not task management. They're evaluating:
• Whether strong leaders follow you
• How you handle conflict, alignment and escalations
• How you build capability—not dependence
• Have examples of raising the bar, not just running the function.
4 How You Handle Pressure, Ambiguity, and Change
Senior roles are defined by uncertainty, not clarity. Panels watch for:
• Calm thinking under pressure
• Ability to recalibrate without losing momentum
• How you recover from failures and setbacks
• Share one tough situation—show your thinking, not just the outcome.
5 How You Build and Shape Culture
Your leadership will ripple across the organisation. They look for:
• How you set standards
• What behaviours you reinforce
• What you refuse to tolerate
• Come prepared with examples of the culture you created—in real terms.
6 Your Self-Awareness and Ownership
This is one of the biggest differentiators at CXO level. They assess:
• How honestly you talk about mistakes
• What you've learned—and changed—over time
• Whether your ego gets in the way of growth
• Bring one "hard lesson" story with clear behavioural shifts.
7 Your Ability to Grow With the Business
They aren't hiring you for what the business is today. They want to know if you scale ahead of it.
They evaluate:
• How your scope has expanded across roles
• How you reinvent yourself as the business evolves
• Your learning habits and blind-spot
• Show ambition and adaptability.
8 The Quality of the Conversation You Create
Panels don't choose the person with the best answers. They choose the person who creates the best conversation. They observe:
• Your curiosity about their context
• How you listen and respond
• The questions you ask
• Come with thoughtful questions on strategy, stakeholders, success and stretch.
From the battlefield to the boardroom—your leadership experience is your superpower. Now, tell the story that shows how you'll create impact in your next mission.
Be prepared.
Lead the conversation.
Win the role.

MookhoMusings:

CAREER TRANSITION ACCELERATOR FOR RETIRING OFFICERS

Why Smart Officers Choose Smarter Paths Today



1 The World Has Changed.

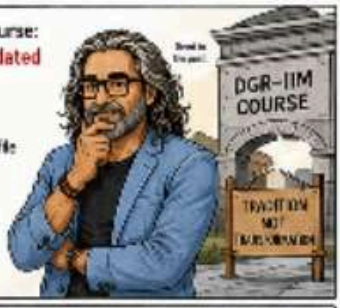
Technology, AI and business models are evolving at breakneck speed.

Careers are no longer linear. Adaptability is your new superpower.



2 The DGR–IIM 6-Month Course: Well-Intentioned, But Outdated in Today's Context.

- No placement support
- Doesn't add real weight to your profile
- Generic curriculum, not aligned to industry needs
- Classroom learning you can access everywhere now
- Consumes 6 precious months



3 The Real Cost: 6 Months You Can't Get Back.



- Market moves on.
- Opportunities don't wait.
- Your network cools down.
- Your momentum slows.

Those 6 months could be used for job hunting, networking and building real-world relevance.



4 Knowledge Is No Longer Scarce. Access Is Everywhere.

World-class learning is available online – often FREE or low cost.

- ✓ Coursera
- ✓ edX
- ✓ NPTEL
- ✓ Udemy
- ✓ YouTube
- ✓ MIT OCW and more...



5 The Real Scarcity Has Shifted.



- Knowing which skills employers actually value
- Building a credible portfolio that demonstrates those skills
- Learning how to translate military achievements into business outcomes
- Networking and preparing for interviews
- Finding the right opportunities

These are what truly move the needle.

6 Today's Smart Approach: Learn What Matters. Prove What You Know. Get Noticed. Get Hired.

Learn Strategically (Online + Affordable) → Build Real-World Portfolio → Network Intentionally (Online & Offline) → Position Yourself for Opportunities → Get The Right Opportunities

7 Design Your Own Learning Path Aligned to Your Goals & Experience.



- Finance for Non-Finance
- Business Strategy
- Marketing & Sales
- Operations & Supply Chain
- Data Analytics & AI
- Leadership & People Management
- Digital Transformation
- Industry Specialisations

...and much more



8 What Employers Want Today.



- ✓ Relevant skills
- ✓ Problem-solving ability
- ✓ Leadership with business impact
- ✓ Adaptability & learning agility
- ✓ Digital & AI awareness
- ✓ Communication & stakeholder management
- ✓ Results, not rank

9 Translate Your Military Leadership into Business Language.

Military Strength	Business Impact
Mission Focus	Goal Orientation
Leading Under Uncertainty	Risk Management
Team Building	People Leadership
Discipline & Integrity	Governance & Compliance
Operational Excellence	Process Improvement
Strategic Thinking	Business Strategy



10 Build Proof. Not Just Certificates.

- ✓ Real projects
- ✓ Case competitions
- ✓ Industry simulations
- ✓ Freelance / consulting gigs
- ✓ Thought leadership (LinkedIn)
- ✓ Create content. Share insights.



11 Network Your Way Into Opportunities.

- Reconnect with peers
- Engage with industry groups
- Attend webinars & events
- Use LinkedIn strategically
- Seek mentors
- Give value. Build trust. Stay visible.





12 The Smart Officer's Transition Formula

Learn Smart + Build Proof + Network Intentional + Position Well = Right Opportunities

"The best investment after retirement is in yourself. Your second innings can be your most impactful."
– Mookho





Don't spend 6 months in a classroom. Spend 6 months building your future.

BE RELEVANT. BE READY. BE IN DEMAND.

You've led missions. Now lead your transition.

Observe. Correlate. Simplify. Cartoonify.


MookhoMusings: Why LinkedIn Is Your New Officers' Mess
The networking rules haven't changed. Only the venue has.
1 The Familiar World
For decades, this was where friendships were forged, mentors found, opportunities discussed and reputations built.
2 What Really Happened in the Mess?
Learning
Mentoring
Recommendations
Information
Reputation
Introductions
It was never just about the drinks.
3 Retirement Changes the Venue
The conversations didn't disappear. They simply moved online.
LinkedIn
4 Welcome to LinkedIn
Your new professional community.
CEOs
Recruiters
Veterans
CXOs
Entrepreneurs
HR Heads
Founders
Professors
5 Most Officers Use LinkedIn Wrong
Officer A
Officer B
37
12
18
6 LinkedIn Isn't Facebook
What Not to Post
What to Share
Good Morning!
7 Reputation at Scale
Earlier your reputation traveled one cantonment at a time.
Today it travels worldwide.
8 The New Networking Formula
Learn
Share
Connect
Help Others
Become Visible
Get Opportunities
Give Value. Build Trust. Opportunities Follow.
9 The Modern Officers' Mess
This Mess never closes.
Great insight!
Can we connect?
That's valuable experience!
Let's collaborate.
10 Final Takeaway
"Don't wait to be discovered. Become impossible to ignore."
The Officers' Mess built your first career. LinkedIn can help build your second.
THE SILENT PORTFOLIO
Every thoughtful post is an interview before the interview.
Mookho Musings
Follow
Start Early. Be Consistent. Stay Visible.
Your Second Innings Deserves a Strong Start.
BE RELEVANT. BE READY. BE IN DEMAND.
Lead with Experience. Deliver with Impact.
Observe. Correlate.
Simplify. Cartoonify.

SHADI KA SANJOG

Turning Meetings into Marriages

Find Your Perfect Match For a Joyful Union

Connecting Qualified Individuals Ready for Marriage and Happiness



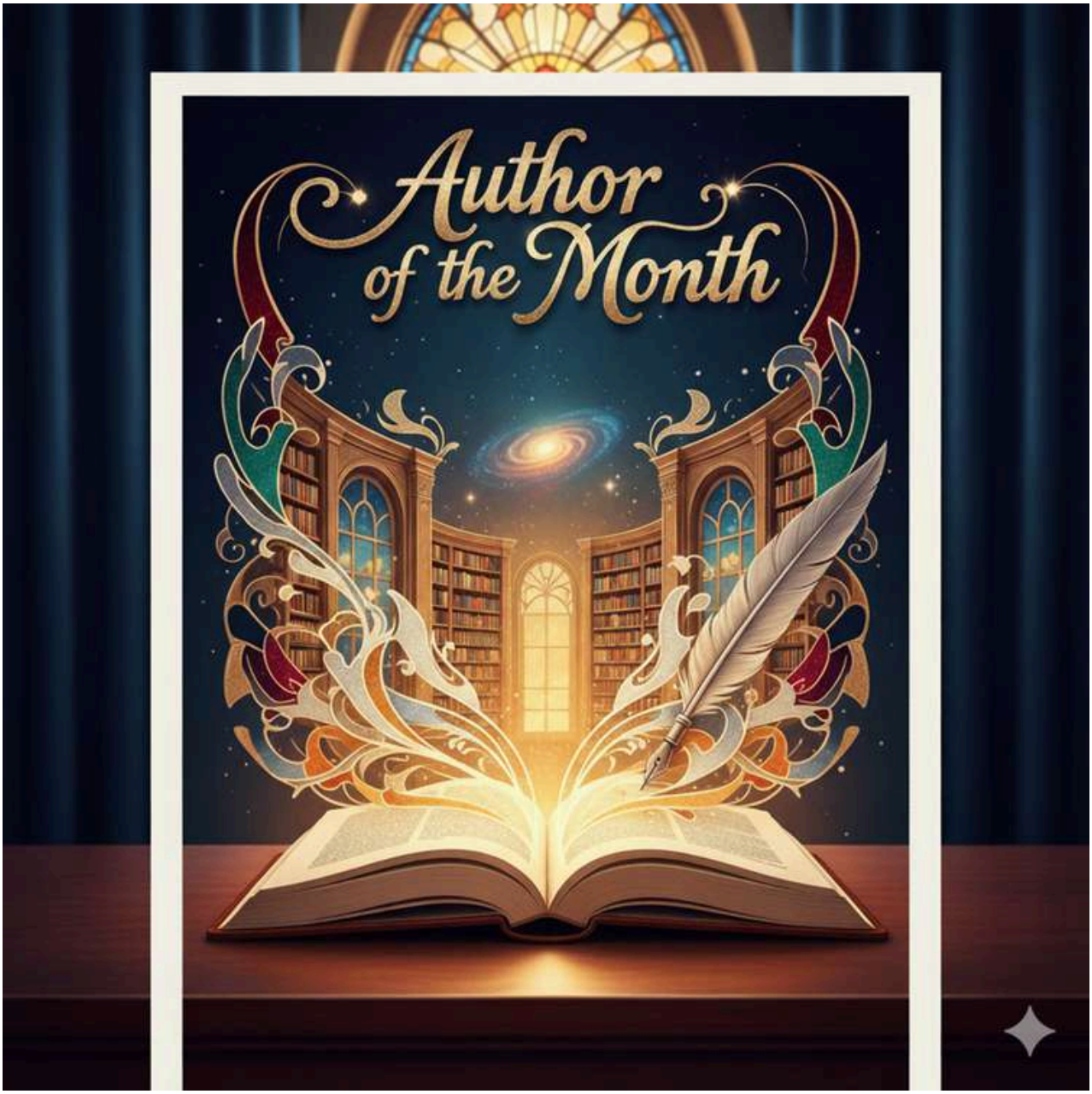
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Author of the Month

Cdr Srivatsan V



Welcome to this month's featured segment for our veteran community. Shifting from the tactical world to the creative one is a profound transition, and capturing the sheer depth of military experience, history, and human vulnerability requires a distinct kind of courage

About the Author

Commander V. Srivatsan was born and raised in Delhi in a Tamizh family. A Math honours graduate from Delhi University, he served 20 years in the Indian Navy, sailing all oceans, visiting 90+ countries, and immersing himself in diverse cultures. During the course of his life, he earned two Master's degrees - one in Telecom & the other in Information Systems Management, and an MBA. In the Pvt sector, he thrived in software sales across Europe, Middle East, and Africa. Subsequently, he was founded a Data Analytics AI startup. Now, he is a full-time mentor faculty at a business school.



Cdr V Srivatsan

A lifelong poet, his debut collection: Echoes, Edges & Epiphanies (April 2025), blends wit, wisdom and raw human insight. In this interview we feature him for his latest book Arthashastra in the Age of AI.

Q You are already a published author. What was the catalyst for this book? What inspired you to bridge 2,300-year-old Kauṭilyan statecraft with 21st-century Artificial Intelligence and digital sovereignty?

The honest answer is that I didn't have much choice in the matter – I say as much in the book's Author's Note: I set out to make sense of my life, not to write a doctrine. My father gave me discipline and the belief that intellect carries responsibility; the Navy taught me that hesitation kills and alliances determine survival; a decade of global software sales across fifty-odd countries taught me the harder lesson – that nations which don't control their own technological infrastructure eventually lose their economic and political agency, however proud their history. Then I built an AI and data-analytics startup, well before ChatGPT made the word 'AI' fashionable and watched that lesson play out at ground level.

Chanakya has been a lifelong preoccupation, not a research subject I picked-up for this book. The Arthashastra never read like nostalgia to me – it reads like an operating manual written by someone who understood that power flows from capability, not sentiment. When I looked at where India stands in the AI race – importing 90% of its semiconductors, renting its compute, outsourcing its cognition – I couldn't unsee the parallel to everything Chanakya warned against. So I could not NOT write this book. It was less inspiration, more insubordination against my own excuses – the same instinct that finally got Echoes, Edges & Epiphanies out of a drawer and into print.

Q Modern AI systems evolve exponentially, whereas classical statecraft was written for agrarian and empire-building eras. What makes the Arthashastra timeless enough to serve as a blueprint for contemporary technology policy?



At the Book Launch

Chanakya wasn't writing a technology manual – he was writing nīti-shastra, a science of how power actually behaves, regardless of what carries it. Elephants, gunpowder, steam, silicon: the vehicle changes, the physics of power doesn't. His seven limbs of the state (saptanga), his theory of concentric alliances (Rajamandala), his insistence that treasury, deterrence and administration reinforce each other – none of it depends on the technology of his era. It depends on human nature and the mechanics of statecraft, which have been remarkably stable for 2,300 years.

What makes the Arthashastra transferable to the AI age specifically is that Chanakya thought in chokepoints, not artefacts. He fortified the Malabar coast because whoever controlled the spice routes controlled the wealth of half the world. Swap spice for semiconductors, rare earths, undersea cables and datasets, and the doctrine doesn't need translating – it needs relabelling. The one genuinely new variable is speed: an agrarian empire could out-manoeuvre a rival over a generation; in the AI age that same manoeuvre has to happen inside an eighteen-month technology cycle. That's the real challenge the book wrestles with – not whether Chanakya is relevant, but whether India can execute at Chanakyan clarity and startup speed simultaneously.

Q In your book, how do you define "Technological Sovereignty" in the context of multipolar global power dynamics and digital warfare?

In the book I define sovereignty, in the Chanakyan sense, as svatantrata – sovereignty earned through capability, not claimed through slogans. Applied to technology, that means the freedom to decide your own future without external coercion: training your own frontier models without needing anyone's permission, keeping grids, clouds and data pipelines running through economic pressure or algorithmic sabotage, and not having defence simulations, banking core or identity infrastructure sitting – directly or indirectly –

on systems someone else controls.

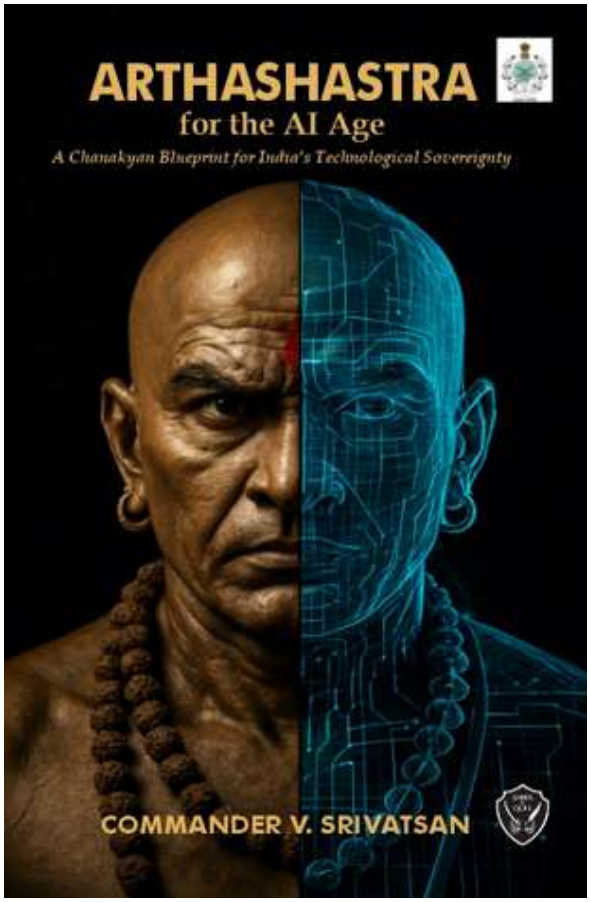
Today India imports roughly 90% of its semiconductors and almost all of its advanced GPU compute. That isn't a supply-chain inconvenience. In a multipolar, digitally-contested world it's the 21st-century equivalent of a foreign fleet blockading your ports without firing a shot – what Chanakya would have called parabhava, soft subjugation. Technological Sovereignty, as I use it, is the antidote: enough indigenous capability across compute, cloud, models and standards that the choice of alignment stays with New Delhi, not Washington or Beijing. It's also why the book argues for a tripolar order rather than India picking a side in a Western-Sino duopoly – sovereignty in a multipolar world means having enough gravitational pull of your own.

Q Who did you primarily write this book for – military strategists, tech leaders, policymakers, or the general public – and what is the single biggest mindset shift you hope they gain?

Five overlapping audiences, and I say so explicitly in the book: policymakers who have to architect institutions, technologists and researchers who have to build the actual engines of sovereignty, entrepreneurs and industrialists who have to turn capability into scale, citizens who ultimately decide whether India authors its future or inherits it, and global readers looking for a perspective beyond the usual Washington-Beijing binary.
If I had to compress it to one mindset shift: stop treating AI policy as something India reacts to and start treating it as something India authors. Most of the conversation in this country – and honestly in most middle powers – is still framed as 'how do we adapt to what the US and China build.' Chanakya never accepted the board as he found it; he moved the pieces until the game was played on his terms. That's the shift I want a reader to leave with – the difference between adapting to someone else's operating system and building your own.

Q Chanakya framed state strength around seven pillars (Swami, Amatya, Janapada, Durg, Kosa, Danda, Mitra). How do semiconductor fabs, data centres, and AI infrastructure fit into this framework today?

Chapter 1 maps all seven limbs directly. In brief: Swami (the ruler) becomes a National AI Command Council chaired by the Prime Minister, treating indigenous AI capability as a strategic asset on par with nuclear deterrence. Amatya (administration)



The Latest Book by the Author

becomes an AI Infrastructure Resilience Act and a Public Data Commons, so Indian data trains Indian models rather than monetising foreign ones. Janapada (territory and people) becomes a hundred thousand Digital Panchayats running on sovereign edge compute, so rural India stops being a consumer and starts contributing upward. Durga (the fortress) becomes a National Cyber Resilience Grid on indigenous post-quantum cryptography – in 2025 a weak grid invites deletion the way a weak fort once invited invasion.

Kosa (treasury) is the ₹15,000 crore first-decade investment the book argues for – the cost of sovereignty, always cheaper than the price of permanent rent. Danda (the army) becomes AIRO's Defence Division: autonomous systems, cognitive electronic warfare, predictive logistics. And Mitra (allies) becomes sovereignty-first partnerships – Japan for mature-node fabs, Israel for defence AI, the Global South as market and coalition. The point of Saptanga is that these are not seven separate projects – they're one organism. Weaken any limb and the others compensate for a while, then fail together.

Q The Arthashastra places heavy emphasis on espionage, psychological operations, and covert action. How does Chanakyan strategy map onto modern cyber warfare, deepfakes, and algorithmic cognitive manipulation?

This is Chapter 4 – Danda-Nīti in the Age of Algorithms. Chanakya's doctrine of the rod (danda) was never brute force; it was



Launching the Book at the USI, New Delhi

calibrated restraint, order with purpose. I argue the same discipline has to apply to the algorithmic battlefield, where the weapons are deepfakes, synthetic narratives and algorithmic cognitive manipulation rather than spies and poisoned wells.

Concretely, the book proposes a National Deepfake Detection Grid built on cryptographic provenance markers and treats the deliberate manufacture of falsehood as close to sedition – because in the digital age the two are functionally indistinguishable crimes. It also insists on mandatory explainability for any high-stakes algorithm touching Indian lives – credit, justice, healthcare, policing. No black box gets to decide an Indian citizen's fate. Chanakya's own warning translates almost word for word: opaque decision-making is the first refuge of tyranny – in 2026, opacity simply wears the mask of a neural network. The difference from classical espionage is scale and speed: one well-timed deepfake can do in an afternoon what a network of spies once took years to achieve, so deterrence has to be pre-emptive, not retrospective.

Q Kautilya assumed an international system driven by self-interest and raw power. How can medium or emerging tech powers avoid being "swallowed by bigger fish" in the global AI race dominated by tech monopolies and superpowers?

Chapter 2 rebuilds Chanakya's Rajamandala – his theory of concentric circles of allies and adversaries – as a digital framework. His insight was that a ruler doesn't accept the geometry of power as given; he bends it until he stands at its centre. Right now India sits in the outer rings of the global AI order: a valued talent supplier, a lucrative market, an occasional swing vote – never the nucleus.

The way out for a medium power isn't to out-spend the US or out-scale China. It's to become what Chanakya called the madhyama raja – the pivotal middle power that reorders the geometry around itself. The book proposes an 'AI Non-Aligned Movement 2.0' – a coalition with Japan, Israel, South Korea, France, the UAE, Vietnam, Indonesia, Nigeria and Brazil, built on three shared traits: a fierce commitment to data sovereignty, refusal to become a client state of Washington or Beijing, and enough demographic or cultural heft to matter. Individually, most of these nations would get swallowed. Pooled around a gravitational centre, they turn a Western-Sino duopoly into a tripolar reality the bigger fish can't ignore. Alliance geometry, not raw power, is how medium powers survive a great-power contest.

Q How does the concept of kinetic force (Danda) translate to sovereign AI models, autonomous systems, and cyber defence?

In the book this becomes Project Vajra – Indra's thunderbolt reborn as sovereign code – detailed mainly in Chapters 15 and 17. It's the integrated architecture fusing offence, defence, perception and deception under Indian command: autonomous loitering defence systems, robotic infantry platforms that absorb risk instead of the soldier, and an AI Battlefield Orchestrator that fuses land, sea, air, space and cyber into one picture so Indian commanders see first, understand first, decide first.

But it's worth being precise about what Danda meant to Chanakya – never aggression, always deterrence, force with purpose. So the book pairs every capability with a restraint. No autonomous weapon is authorised in this doctrine unless three officers, in three separate locations, can independently read

and understand the reasoning behind every targeting decision, logged in an immutable audit trail. Firepower without ethics is just fear with better hardware. Firepower with ethics becomes legitimacy – and legitimacy, not raw force, is what actually deters a rational adversary.

Q Defence forces worldwide are integrating AI into battle management, ISR, and autonomous hardware. Where does Chanakyan realism caution against over-reliance on automated or algorithmic decision-making in high-stakes conflict?

This is the 'Dharma – The Final Restraint' section of Chapter 15, and it's probably the most important caveat in the entire military chapter. Chanakyan realism doesn't trust any system – human or algorithmic – that can't explain itself. The doctrine explicitly bars India from fielding black-box weapons: no autonomous system is authorised for lethal decisions unless three officers, in three different locations, can independently understand why the algorithm reached that conclusion. That isn't bureaucratic caution for its own sake – it's Chanakya's own warning, transposed: opaque decision-making is the first refuge of tyranny, and a targeting decision no human can audit is opacity wearing a uniform.

The deeper caution is this: Chanakya prepared for the war the enemy intended to fight, not the one he preferred. An over-automated force optimised for the adversary's last war, with no human able to override a confident but wrong model at the decisive moment, is exactly the brittle certainty Chanakya would have distrusted. Speed of decision matters enormously in the AI age – but speed without an auditable, accountable human in the loop is how a nation loses a war it didn't realise it had started.

Q From rare earths to advanced GPU clusters, modern AI relies heavily on physical supply chains. How would Chanakya approach hardware dependencies and tech-chokepoint vulnerabilities?

Chapter 3 is built entirely around this – I call it the Chokepoint Doctrine. Chanakya's insight was that power flows not from owning territory but from controlling the arteries that feed it – trade routes, granaries, mints. In the AI era those arteries are semiconductors, rare-earth refining, undersea cables, energy grids and the datasets that train frontier models. Taiwan alone manufactures roughly 92% of the world's advanced chips, and the United States can effectively halt exports with a memorandum. India imports around 90% of its semiconductors and almost all of its advanced GPU compute – in the book's language, that's not dependency, that's vassalage.

Chanakya's answer to a chokepoint was never to protest it – it was to build an alternative chokepoint of your own. The book proposes a National Semiconductor Mission 2.0 – roughly ₹2 lakh crore of patient capital, three Silicon Corridors capable of 3nm production this decade – alongside rare-earth agreements in Africa and Australia to break China's near-monopoly on the permanent magnets that power every motor, actuator and drone on the planet, plus fifty gigawatts of dedicated green power so Indian researchers stop queueing for foreign GPU cycles. The principle: you don't out-argue a chokepoint, you out-build it.

Q In Kautilya's era, land, grain, and gold

were the core assets of the state treasury (Kosa). How should modern nation-states guard, regulate, and leverage national data assets under a Chanakyan lens?

Chanakya had a line I use in the book almost verbatim: Kośāḥ mūlaṁ svarājyasya – the treasury is the root of sovereignty. In his era that treasury was land, grain and gold. Today it's data, and I think most nations – India included – have been remarkably careless about recognising it as sovereign wealth rather than exhaust.

The book applies Asteya – non-stealing – directly to this: India's data is a national treasure, and no foreign corporation should get to train trillion-dollar models on the behavioural residue of well over a billion Indians without paying a price proportionate to what it's extracting. Practically, this means a Public Data Commons – a fortified, tiered national data reservoir that lets Indian startups, researchers and village entrepreneurs draw on Indian data to build Indian models, instead of that data being harvested once and monetised abroad indefinitely. Guard it the way Chanakya guarded the granary – not by hoarding it uselessly, but by making sure whoever draws on it pays into the same treasury they're drawing from.

Q Kautilya advocated state-backed control of critical strategic industries. How should defence leadership and private tech innovators collaborate to ensure indigenous technological readiness?

Chapter 13 sets this up as 'Two Tracks, One Leash.' Track One is the behemoths – your Reliances, Tatas, Infosys, HCLs – offered real incentives: twenty-year tax holidays for strategic AI infrastructure, guaranteed government anchor tenancy for half of every sovereign cloud region, golden-share protections so India never becomes a minority owner of its own critical AI assets. In return, they build the fabs, the hyperscale sovereign data centres, the national compute grid, the cables immune to foreign kill-switches. Track Two is the swarm – ten thousand AI startups getting seed capital from an AI Sovereign Wealth Fund and priority GPU access, on one non-negotiable condition: the weights, training logs and architectures stay in India, auditable by the state.

Between the two sits what the book calls the AI Public-Private Partnership Command – not a committee, a war-room, where AIRO's people sit beside CEOs and decisions happen in days, not decades. Chanakya never distrusted merchants; he harnessed them. The doctrine here is exactly that: profit is welcome, but primacy – India's strategic control of the assets it's subsidising – is mandatory.

Q Chanakya is often mischaracterised as purely cold or amoral. How does Kautilya's concept of Yogakshema (the security and welfare of the people) guide ethical considerations in AI governance, surveillance, and privacy?

Chanakya is routinely flattened into 'the Indian Machiavelli,' which I think does him a real disservice. Yogakshema – the security and welfare of the people together, neither at the expense of the other – is arguably the more important half of his philosophy, and it runs through Chapter 6 of the book even on pages where I don't use the word explicitly.

Concretely, the book operationalises this through seven dharmic principles applied to

AI. Karuṇā, compassion, means AI is deployed first where suffering is greatest – rural diagnostics, personalised learning for underserved children, drought early-warning for farmers – not first where the margins are highest. Upekṣā, equanimity, bars any algorithm from perpetuating caste, gender or regional bias – when AI judges an Indian, the book insists it judge with the detachment of the rishis, not the prejudice of inherited datasets. Asteya, non-stealing, underwrites the privacy and consent architecture. The larger point: Danda and Durga – deterrence and fortification – only earn legitimacy if they serve Yogakshema. Security without welfare is just control with better branding.

Q With critical infrastructure increasingly hosted on commercial and international cloud networks, how can a country retain true strategic autonomy without cutting itself off from global innovation?

The book calls this the Globalisation Clause, and I was careful to make it explicit because 'sovereignty' too easily gets misread as 'isolation.' The line I use is: this is not a call to erect walls, it is a call to remove the gates that others control. India welcomes foreign investment, cloud partnerships and joint ventures – the condition is that when the company wins, India wins too. If a foreign hyperscaler's success in India doesn't translate into Indian control of the models, the data and the value being generated, the state shouldn't be clearing the path for it.

Practically, this plays out as sovereign cloud regions with guaranteed anchor tenancy, data-localisation requirements, and an export strategy – offering AI-Infrastructure-as-a-Service to the Global South at a discount to the American hyperscalers, with iron-clad localisation guarantees – so dependency runs toward India rather than away from it. Chanakya never argued for a closed kingdom; he argued for alliances of value rather than alliances of pleading. Strategic autonomy, in this book, is participation on your own terms, not absence from the table.

Q Many readers of ForceNet E-Zine navigate transitions between military command, corporate governance, and technology leadership. What core Chanakyan principle should guide strategic leadership across both domains?

If there's one principle from the book I've actually lived rather than just written about, it's rajadharma from the Swami chapter – Chanakya's line that leadership is the ability to 'turn intention into inevitability.' I've sat in a wardroom, a corporate boardroom in Amsterdam and Dubai, and a startup founder's chair, and the one constant across every one of those transitions was that clarity of intent travels; the specific playbook never does.

The second principle I'd flag, from Chapter 13, is Chanakya's observation that self-interest is the root of all human action – so the discipline of a leader isn't to suppress people's self-interest, it's to align it with the larger mission. That's true commanding a bridge watch, running a P&L, or pitching investors. ForceNet readers navigating the uniform-to-corporate-to-tech pivot will recognise this instinctively: the tools change completely, the doctrine of leadership – clarity, alignment, and owning outcomes rather than explaining them away – doesn't change at all.

Q How can business leaders and technology officers apply the strategic foresight outlined in your book to build organisational resilience against digital disruption?

The most transferable idea from the book, outside the geopolitics, is the distinction I draw in Chapter 13 between isolation from global value chains and insulation from strategic dependence. Most organisations conflate the two – they think resilience means either full outsourcing (cheaper, faster, but you own nothing structural) or full self-reliance (expensive, slow, often impossible). Chanakya's actual model was neither: harness the market but never let anyone else hold your chokepoints.

For a CTO, that translates fairly directly: know precisely which three or four dependencies – a vendor, a licence, a single cloud region – would stop your business cold if withdrawn tomorrow, and build sovereignty around exactly those, while happily outsourcing everything else. Treat your data and core models the way the book tells the state to treat Kosa – the treasury that funds everything else, never pledged away for short-term convenience. Digital disruption doesn't punish companies for depending on others; it punishes companies that don't know which dependencies are load-bearing.

Q If Chanakya were advising strategic leadership today, what would his top priority be for India's positioning in the global AI landscape over the next decade?

The Executive Summary lays out three pillars, and if forced to rank them for the next decade specifically, I'd put compute and infrastructure sovereignty first – simply because it's the pillar everything else rests on. You can have the most elegant alliance strategy and the most ethical model on paper, but if 90% of your semiconductors and nearly all your advanced GPU compute are imported, none of the rest is enforceable. Chanakya built his empire on artha – economic and material capability – before he built anything else; the alliances and the ethics came after the base was secure.

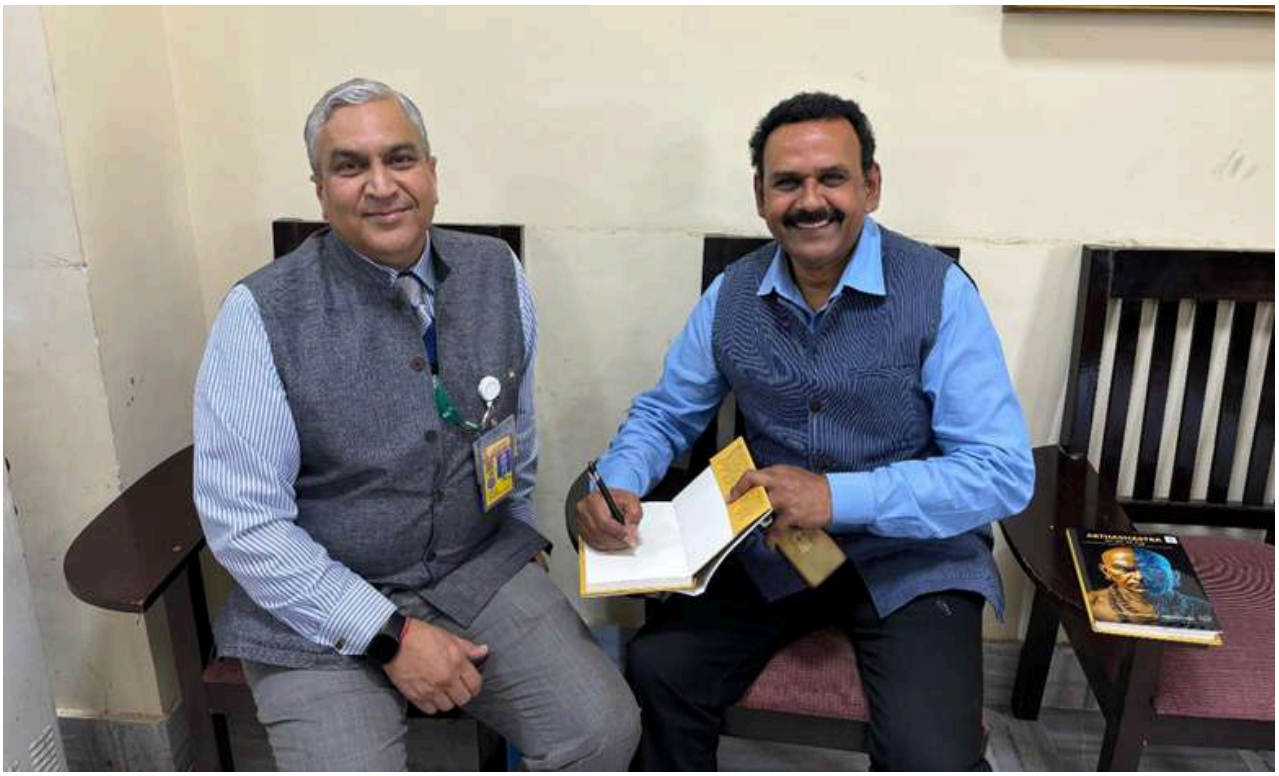
So: fabs, sovereign cloud, and the Public Data Commons, on an aggressive clock, would be Chanakya's first order today. Not because Rajamandala coalition-building or the Dharmic AI export strategy don't matter – they matter enormously, and the book spends most of its pages on them – but because none of it carries any real leverage until India stops renting the physical layer of its own technological future.

Q How can our readers keen to pick up a copy of your book do so?

The book is available on Amazon India and Amazon.com in Hardcover [https://l1nq.com/wjwj9zx], and directly through Sabre & Quill [https://l1nq.com/wxrj5gl}.

Q Is there an area in the intersection of AI, strategy, and sovereignty that didn't fit into this volume, which you plan to explore in future work?

Honestly, I've been waiting to see the interest and offtake of this first edition before committing to the contours of a second. But the conversations it has already generated point fairly clearly in one direction: the distinction between AI Sovereignty and Sovereign AI – they are not the same



A proud moment to sign the book for the former C-in-C SFC (VAdm Suraj Berry) - a dear friend & shipmate

doctrine, and I don't think that distinction has been argued sharply enough anywhere yet; the case for why AI cannot be allowed to develop and govern itself the way the IT sector did – build first, regulate decades later, apologise in between; and the battlefield dimension, where I introduced a concept I call Algorithmic Doctrinal Reinforcement (ADR), which has had a far stronger response than I expected.

And frankly, reality keeps handing me evidence faster than I can write it down. As I answer this, today's Times of India (New Delhi edition) is reporting that Mark Zuckerberg has personally apologised to the Indian government for Meta wrongly restricting the Prime Minister's video, alongside admitted lapses on CSAM and deepfake content – and, more tellingly, Meta has told the government it cannot automatically claim safe-harbour protection as a neutral intermediary if it actively selected who received content through algorithmic amplification or paid promotion. That is precisely the Danda-Nīti problem this book raises – opaque algorithmic curation masquerading as neutral infrastructure – playing out in real time, in this country, days after publication.

Trying to hold AI Sovereignty, the IT-sector cautionary tale, battlefield doctrine and platform accountability together under one coherent Chanakyan lens is, frankly, daunting. But write it I will. Just don't know when, as yet.

Q What call to action do you leave for the readers of ForceNet E-Zine as we enter an era increasingly shaped by synthetic intelligence and technological statecraft?

I'll close with something close to how the book itself closes, because I don't think I can improve on it. The Digital Mandala it

describes – sovereign compute, sovereign data, sovereign alliances – is architecturally complete on paper. What's missing is what was always missing at the end of every doctrine, including Chanakya's own: someone willing to stand at the centre of the circle.

For ForceNet readers specifically – people who've already made one hard transition, out of uniform and into command of something else – my call to action isn't abstract. Pick one dependency in your own professional world that you'd currently have no answer for if it vanished tomorrow, and start building the alternative this year, not eventually. Sovereignty, whether it belongs to a nation or a career, isn't declared. It's built one uncomfortable decision at a time – and history, as the book's last line reminds us, records inaction as a choice too.

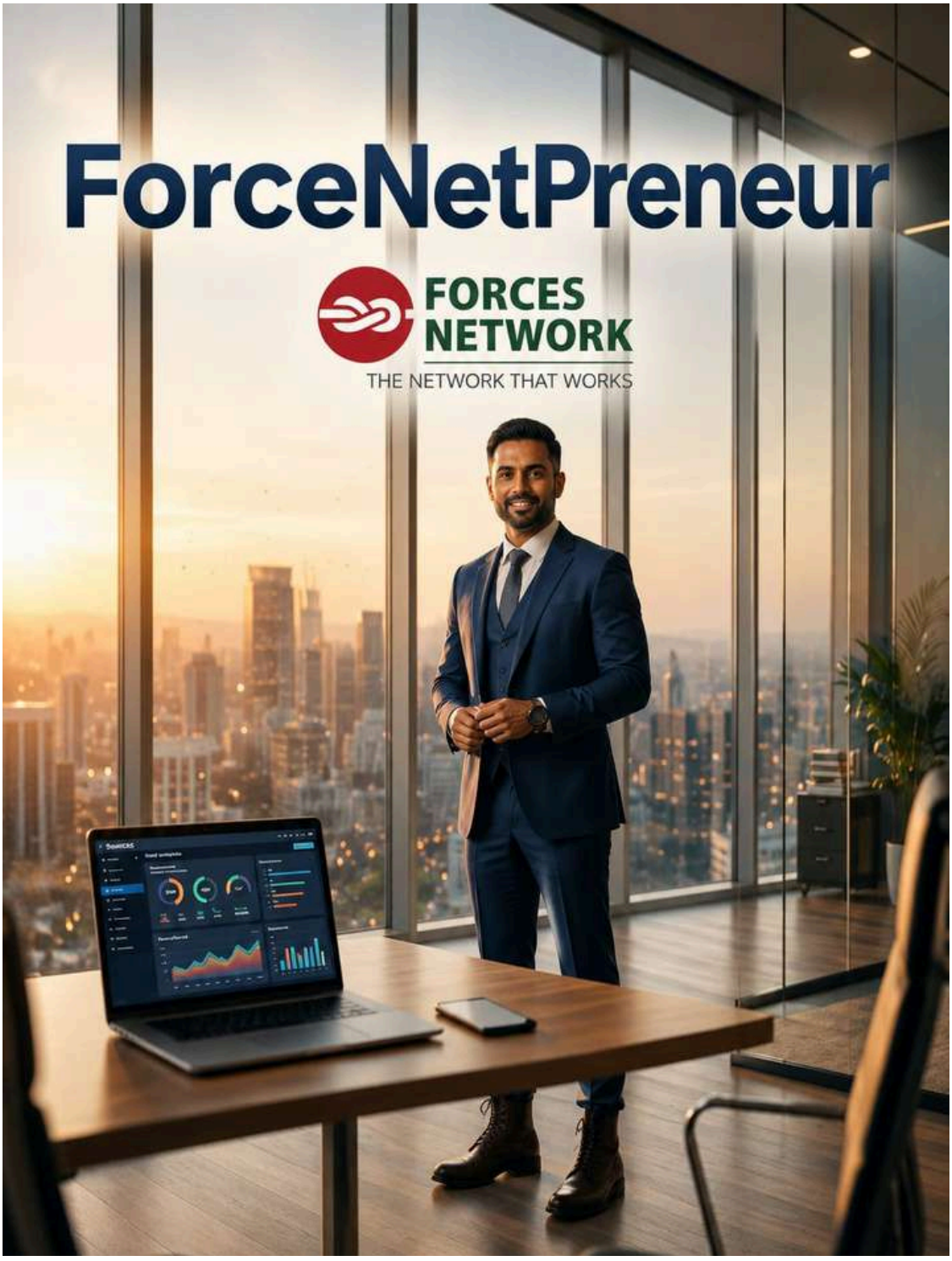
"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: It is the courage to continue that counts."
— Winston Churchill


YOUR CHILD IS INTELLIGENT...
THEN WHY DO TEACHERS KEEP COMPLAINING?
CLASS VIII - B
FOCUS DISCIPLINE SUCCESS
CLASS TEACHER REMARKS
Poor Concentration
Incomplete Work
Distracts Others
"Disturbs class."
"Never focuses."
"Always distracted."
UNDERSTAND HIDDEN ADHD SIGNS SCHOOLS OFTEN MISUNDERSTAND AS BAD BEHAVIOR.
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TO REGISTER FOR
5 PHASE ADHD BLUEPRINT
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BETTER SCHOOL EXPERIENCE
ABKIDS LIFECOACH
Preparing kids for life, Not just exams

ForceNetPreneur

Lt Commander Amiya Patra

Very few veterans take up entrepreneurship in their post military careers. We at the Forces Network wish to change that by showcasing veteran entrepreneurs who have gone to achieve success in their ventures. The aim of this series in not just to celebrate our successes from the veteran community, which unfortunately we do not do enough, but also to inspire others. The ultimate goal is to set up a virtuous self-sustaining cycle of inspiration leading to more veterans taking up entrepreneurship and become job givers rather than job seekers.



About the Author



Lt Commander Amiya Patra

Lt Commander Amiya Patra is veteran of Indian Navy from the 62 NAVAC course commissioned in Aug 2002. He is a filmmaker by passion and a soldier by emotion; hence he calls himself a creative soldier. After 10 years of service, he hung his uniform to pursue a career in filmmaking. He initially joined the corporate world and pioneered the Navtex Transmitter installation across India's coastline during his 2 year tenure and created multiple video streaming apps before taking an exit from a tech venture. He has worked as a creative Consultant for global organisations like GIZ, UN Women and UNESCO and created hundreds of content for Government of India. For last 5 years, he isthe cofounder of an education and circular economy-based startup A4Conserv. His own venture Marching Reels Productions has been launched this year to revolutionise the stories related to men and women in uniform.

Q Please tell us something about your background prior to joining the Naval Academy ?

I come from a small town in Odisha and had a humble beginning. From my school days, I was actively involved with the NCC, which helped shape my sense of discipline and service. I was also drawn to dramatics throughout school and college, giving me an early connection with performance and storytelling.

Education and Journey to the Naval Academy: I completed my engineering in Bhubaneswar. After graduation, I was preparing for CAT with the aim of pursuing higher studies. Around that time, the SSB opportunity came my way, and that became the turning point that led me to join the Naval Academy at Goa.

Q Share with us your career in the Indian Navy. The tenures, the highs and the lows. What is it that you learnt from the Navy that helped you in your civilian career?

I began my naval career in the Technical Branch of the Indian Navy. My early professional grounding came onboard INS Rajput, where I completed my competency and had the rare opportunity to witness the firing of the BrahMos missile during my tenure. That experience gave me an early appreciation of the Navy's operational standards, technical rigour, and the scale at which maritime capability is built and sustained.

I was later selected for the Aviation Branch and pursued my M.Tech in Avionics from CUSAT while undergoing professional training at Kochi. During my master's programme, I received the Best Project Award. I subsequently trained on the Sea King and Advanced Light Helicopter platforms. After completing a conversion course with the Indian Air Force, I joined the commissioning crew of the ALH, where our team played a pioneering role in its induction into the Indian Navy by contributing to modifications, trials, and seaworthiness validation.

A few milestones from this phase remain especially meaningful. During Exercise Malabar 2006, I received a letter of appreciation from the U.S. Navy for providing technical support to the P-8I squadron. I also led the acceptance team for the induction of seven ALH aircraft into the Indian Navy at HAL, Bangalore. These assignments strengthened my ability to work across teams, manage complex technical responsibilities, and deliver under demanding timelines.

My love for flying kept me on the frontline for four and a half years, followed by two years in second-line aviation support. If there was one professional gap I felt, it was not getting wider exposure to third-line maintenance. Even so, the Navy gave me a foundation that has continued to serve me well in civilian life.

1. **Preparation Saves Lives:** The more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war. This mindset taught me the value of rigorous preparation before execution.
2. Precision and Documentation Matter: Aviation leaves no room for ambiguity. I learnt not to depend on memory alone—document everything and follow SOPs.
3. T**eams Succeed Together:** The Navy reinforced the importance of collaboration, trust, and pulling together toward a common mission.

Q While serving in the Indian Navy in 2007, you directed your first short film—which reached IFFI Goa—and produced a flight safety documentary that became a staple for naval aviation. How did you manage to create acclaimed films before the digital boom while serving on active duty?

The first credit must go to my squadron commander, the pilots, and my fellow technical officers and sailors whose unconditional support made this journey possible. Exploring something as demanding as filmmaking while serving on active duty was never easy, but their encouragement gave me the space and confidence to attempt it.

The making of my first film was almost a film script in itself. I took 30 days of leave, dipped into my DSOP savings, spent close to a lakh of rupees, and shot the film on videotape without any formal training or prior experience in filmmaking. There was no digital convenience, no easy access to equipment, and no shortcut to learning. Every frame came from instinct, effort, and sheer passion.

When the film eventually made its way to IFFI Goa in 2008, all those risks suddenly felt worthwhile. The same spirit also shaped the flight safety documentary, which became part of the naval aviation conversation because it was rooted in real experience and made with sincerity.



Amiya Behind the Camera

Importantly, I was always clear about one thing: my passion could never come at the cost of my duty. Whatever films I made were created during my leave and with my own savings. The Navy taught me discipline, and

filmmaking gave me expression; I simply tried to honour both with equal honesty.

Q You describe yourself as a "creative soldier—a filmmaker by passion and a soldier by emotion." How did your 10 years in Naval Marine & Aviation shape your narrative perspective and storytelling voice?

My years in Naval Marine and Aviation shaped me in ways that are difficult to separate from who I am today. In uniform, you see people at their honest best under pressure, away from home, carrying responsibility quietly, and still showing up every day. Those experiences changed the way I look at stories. I became more interested in what lies beneath the action: the fear, courage, humour, loneliness, loyalty, and silent sacrifices that rarely get spoken about.

That is also why I have been very selective about the projects I choose. After taking off the uniform, I realised I could not simply do work for the sake of being busy or making money. Whenever a project comes to me, I ask myself a very personal question: “Did I hang up my uniform for this?” If the story does not move me, if it does not carry dignity, purpose, or truth, I find it difficult to commit to it.

Whenever a project comes to me, I ask myself a very personal question: “Did I hang up my uniform for this?”

For me, being a creative soldier is not a slogan. It is a personal way of living with both sides of myself. The filmmaker in me wants to tell stories with emotion and imagination, but the soldier in me keeps asking for honesty, responsibility, and respect. The uniform taught me that every mission must be worth the commitment. I try to bring the same belief to my films. Every story I choose must feel worth the life, time, and heart I put into it.

Q Hanging up the uniform to pursue filmmaking is a rare path for a military officer. What was the pivotal moment that signalled it was time to step away from active service and follow your creative calling?

Stepping away from the uniform was not an easy decision. Since 2007, I had been making one short film every year, and several of them travelled to the International Film Festival of India in Goa and other festivals. While posted in Kochi, I also had the opportunity to work with Major Ravi, which gave me a closer view of professional filmmaking. By 2012, I could clearly sense the digital shift in cinema. New tools, new platforms, and new audiences were opening up opportunities for storytellers who were willing to take risks. I knew I would be giving up the certainty and privileges that come with a naval career, especially after putting my sweat and blood into the junior-most years of service. But the challenge of the unknown creative world excited me more than the comfort of a predictable future. I trusted my instinct and chose to step away from active service. They say that once you are bitten by the creative bug, you can never really escape it; in my case, it became impossible to ignore.



Q Filmmaking is notoriously chaotic and unpredictable. How do naval precision, crisis management, and operational structure influence your sets and production pipelines today?

Filmmaking is far more chaotic than it appears from the outside, but at its core it is also a project that demands precise planning and disciplined execution. During my corporate tenure, I was part of the implementation team for a ₹100-crore Navtex transmitter installation project along India's coastline. That experience gave me the confidence to approach film production with the same professionalism: clear documentation, risk assessment, contingency planning, and respect for every team member's role. For me, a less chaotic set begins with meticulous pre-production, a crew that believes in the vision, and a culture of mutual respect. People who have worked with me often mention the "no abuse" atmosphere on my sets, and that matters deeply to me. I believe art thrives best when people feel secure enough to do their finest work. The uncertainty of creation will always remain, but perhaps those imperfections make art human and beautiful.

Q In 2015, long before Instagram Reels and video-first platforms dominated India, you partnered with an American firm to build a UGC streaming platform. What were the key technical and infrastructural hurdles that stopped it from scaling at that time?

In 2015, we launched a mobile app called Zinema that streamed micro videos from users. The app was ahead of its time. I faced challenges in terms of availability of Wi-Fi, data plans, and insufficient storage space in mobile devices for streaming videos. Despite those challenges, we had 500 test users onboard creating content on our platform. Scaling up couldn't happen due to lack of infrastructure for video streaming and the dearth of active users in India at that point of time. The next version of the Staze app was released, and we could crack a huge deal to promote the Hollywood animation movie SING for Universal Pictures in India. Subsequently, we have shifted our focus to revenue generation by creating an app for musicians in India to teach music students abroad and earn in USD per hour.

That's where I parted ways from my partner in the USA to focus on filmmaking.

Q Exiting your early streaming tech venture redirected you toward feature film writing and development. What key business lessons from that tech exit did you carry into the media industry?

The exit itself did not redirect me towards feature film writing; what it gave me was a sharper understanding of business, audience, and timing. With Zinema, we were ahead of the market. Creating video was becoming easier, but finding and retaining an audience was still the real challenge. That lesson stayed with me when I moved deeper into media: a good idea is not enough unless the ecosystem, distribution, and audience behaviour are ready for it. The biggest business lesson I carried forward was that relationships outlast transactions. Some of the early creators on Zinema are successful digital voices today, and a few are still connected with my journey.

The venture taught me to respect first movers, understand consumption patterns, build trust, and never chase scale without a sustainable



With Raj Kumar Hirani of Munna Bhai MBBS Fame

model. In the media industry, those lessons matter as much as creativity.

Q Your short film Susu Donor was recognized by the NFDC and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting for the Clean India Campaign. How do you balance social commentary with commercial entertainment?

I strongly believe that a subtle message delivered through humour can often be more powerful than heavy drama or preaching. Susu Donor worked for the Clean India Campaign because it used comedy to make people notice an important social issue without making them feel lectured. The film was also covered in Mint magazine by Hindustan Times, where Priya Ramani wrote a full-page article suggesting that the government could take inspiration from Susu Donor and even appoint a "Kachra Minister." That response showed me that humour can often be more powerful than heavy drama or preaching. Susu Donor worked for the Clean India Campaign because it used comedy to make people notice an important social issue without making them feel lectured. The film was also covered in Mint magazine by Hindustan Times, where Priya Ramani wrote a full-page article suggesting that the government could take inspiration from Susu Donor and even appoint a "Kachra Minister." That response showed me that humour can open doors for serious conversations.

After that, I worked as an associate director on Deal Done 1 and Deal Done 2, short films on dowry and related abuses affecting both genders, which together received more than five million views on YouTube. These

projects reinforced my belief that audiences are willing to engage with difficult subjects when the story, characters, and entertainment value come first. My approach is simple: I do not preach. I try to make the audience laugh, feel, and think at the same time. For me, the balance lies in designing every film as entertainment first, with social commentary woven naturally into the story so that the message stays with people after the film ends.

Q You spent years producing shorts, commercial ads, and corporate films through various agencies to sustain your journey. How did those survival years prepare you to establish your own independent banner?

Filmmaking is a not just a career. It's a process of exploring your voice through the work you do as writer or director. Every format – short, documentary, feature, commercials, corporates or even reels teach you something unique. All these content forms have their share of audience. While working for tons of them without getting the deserving credit or renumeration, made me think of building my own venture with a voice that's unique to mine. I won't call them survival years but a learning curve that shaped my craft as a visual storyteller. Failures are bigger teachers of learning and life is the ultimate treasure for earning.

Q You recently launched Marching Reels Productions to tell authentic stories of men and women in uniform. What is the ethos behind the name, and what gap in current military cinema does your production house fill?

Marching represents personnel in uniform and Reels represent visual content. I am creating a space where military discipline meets disorder of imagination. It's more of a calling for me. I want to tell the untold, unheard stories of men and women in uniform with authenticity that will challenge the stereotyping of military characters on screen. We are going to change the way our stories are written and portrayed. We are creating an IP that's authentic, engaging and global at the same time.

Q Just as K-Dramas have built a global empire around Korean culture, you are introducing "U-Drama" (Uniform Drama) for international audiences. What defines an authentic U-Drama, and how will it differ from traditional Bollywood defence stories?

Since we are dreaming big, we want to build something that can travel globally while remaining rooted in the truth of uniformed life. For me, U-Drama means stories about men and women in uniform that are fresh, thought-provoking, entertaining, and educative without becoming preachy. I do not want to compare our work with everything that has been made so far, but I do want our stories to move beyond familiar stereotypes. An authentic U-Drama should make serving personnel and veterans feel seen, respected, and proud, while also allowing civilian audiences across the world to understand the human side of life in uniform.

Q With your first series pilot currently in pre-production in Mumbai for a planned 2027 streaming release, what can you share about the story focus and the scale of this maiden project?

I can't disclose much about the storyline, but all I can say is that the audience will see

something fresh and experience the real-life battles of soldiers. We want to reach viewers across the globe with this series. You can expect the unexpected when it comes to the genre and treatment of stories. Most of the stories are inspired by real-life stories of soldiers. The scale is as big as the originals on global OTT platforms like Netflix or Amazon Prime.

Q Military veterans often express frustration with inaccurate tactical depictions in mainstream films. How does your experience of "having been there and done that" change the way tactical realism is brought to the screen?

That's true. I couldn't digest the inaccurate tactical depictions shown in Bollywood hits like Raazi, Ghazi Attack and many more. I don't blame the makers but there's absolutely no reason to show anything wrong in the name of creative liberty. Being there and done that, it is my responsibility to reflect the realism that comes from decades of association with the force's community. Once the audience gets to watch our authentic characters, they will start questioning the depictions shown in Bollywood so far.

Q What is your core advice for military personnel sitting in a wardroom or mess today who dream of breaking into unconventional fields like media, film, or the arts?

I would tell anyone sitting in a wardroom or mess with a creative dream that the uniform has already given them a strong foundation. Media, film, and the arts may look



Radiate in White and Absorb in Black

unconventional, but they also demand discipline, planning, crisis management, teamwork, and execution—qualities that military personnel practise every day. Of course, one must learn the craft, whether it is writing, shooting, editing, acting, or production. But many parts of filmmaking, especially production, vendor management, logistics, resource planning, and team coordination, are natural extensions of what soldiers already do well. My advice is simple: do not dismiss your creative instinct just because the path looks unfamiliar. Prepare seriously, learn humbly, and then take the leap with courage. If you are thinking of entering the world of cinema, Marching Reels Productions wants to become a gateway for such creative soldiers.

Q Looking forward, where do you see Marching Reels Productions in five to ten years, and what legacy do you hope to leave as a veteran filmmaker?

In the next ten years, I want Marching Reels Productions to become one of the world's leading creators and distributors of authentic military content. But for me, the larger dream goes beyond scale. . I want our stories to make citizens look at service in uniform with respect, curiosity, and pride. If my films can inspire even a few people to serve the country by choice, not by compulsion, that would be my greatest achievement. I hope my work is remembered as the voice of a veteran filmmaker who carried the spirit of the uniform into cinema and left behind stories



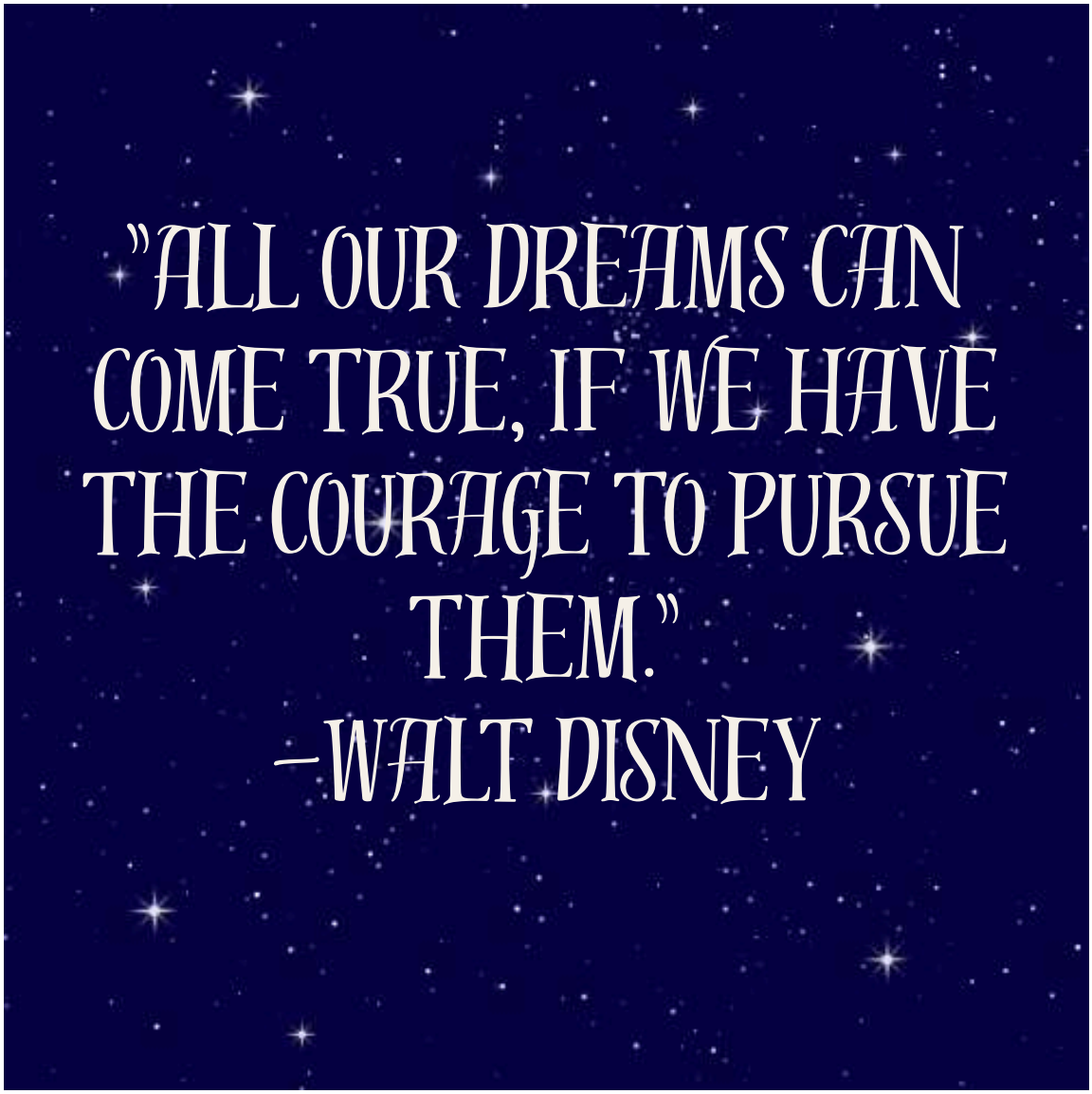
With the Family

that continued to march long after him.

Q Tell us about your family including your parents. How did they shape your value system. Also share the role played by your family including spouse in your successful Transition?

I feel blessed to have been born to teacher parents, who gave me the strongest foundation of values. My father, a writer, unknowingly passed on to me the love for words, and I began writing when I was just twelve. My parents, younger brother, and sister stood firmly by me when I chose to hang up the uniform and follow an uncertain path.

During my toughest transition years, my wife became my quiet strength. She gave up a lucrative corporate career and chose stability so that I could take my leap of faith. My daughter, in her own innocent ways, keeps reminding me to move forward. Whatever I am today, and whatever I may become tomorrow, rests on the love and sacrifices of my family.



Moment In Time

We have started with a Photography section " **Moment in Time**" to provide an outlet for creative side of our esteemed members. The rules for submission are as under:-

1. Forces Network members, spouses and their wards can submit images for publication.
2. No Nudity or Porn.
3. No mention of Mil establishments or unit identity or tac numbers or tail numbers.
4. It's a photography section so no images of various get togethers and social functions will be published.
5. The longer side of image should be 2048 pixels.
6. Maximum 5 images will be published every month. The images must be submitted by 20th of every month.
7. Mention your Instagram ID.
8. **While submitting the following details be submitted along with the suitable Title:-**

a. Aperture
b. Shutter speed
c. ISO
d. Camera used
e. Lens
f. Focal length.
g. In case of a mobile click, the same may please be mentioned.

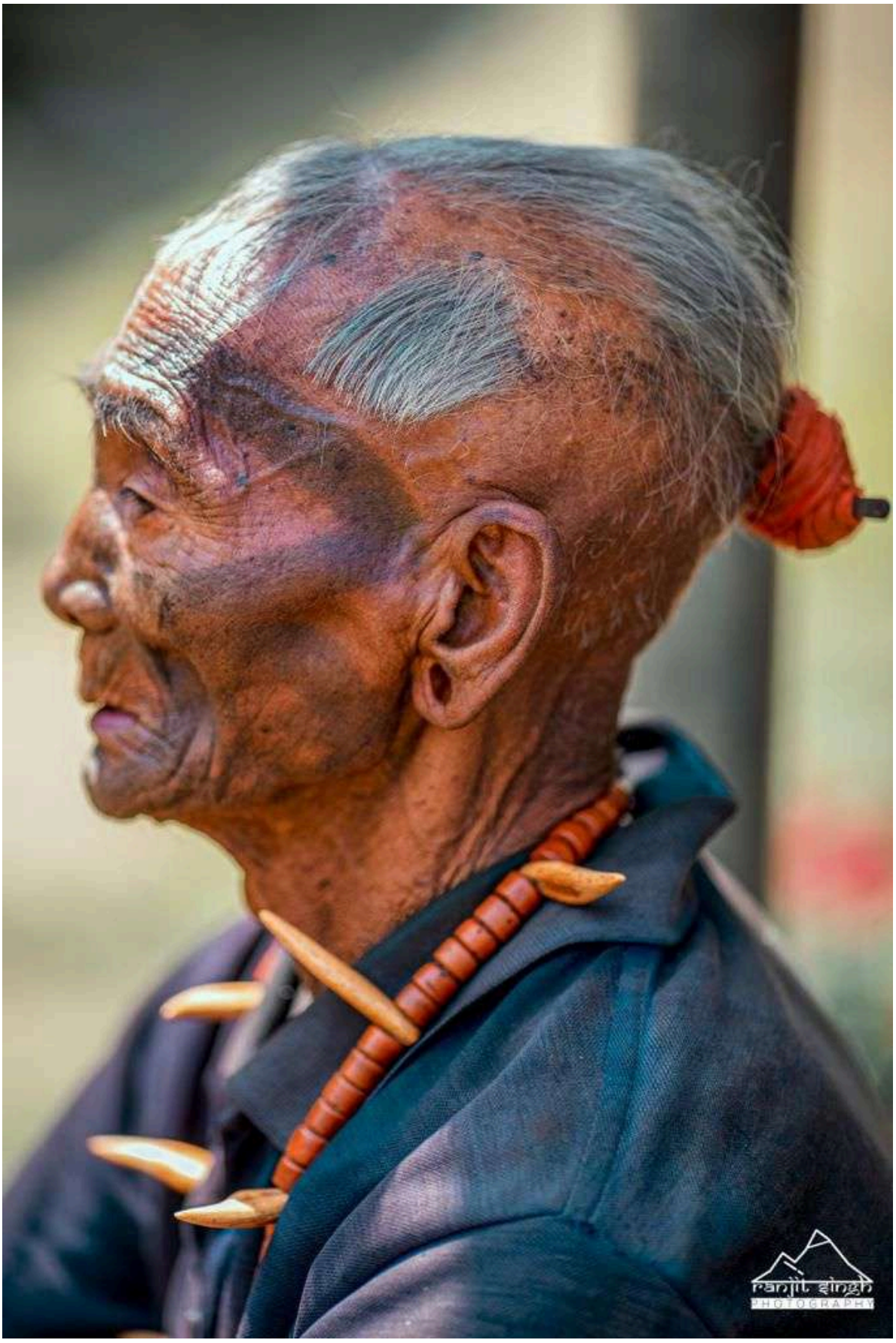
All Photos may please be sent to forcesnetworkz@gmail.com by 20th of every month.



The next generation of warriors being initiated during the Aoleang Festival By Col Ranjit Singh



By Col Ranjit Singh



By Col Ranjit Singh



By Col Ranjit Singh

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Dedicated Section for the Star Author of Forces Network

LT COL



NOEL ELLIS

We welcome Col Noel to the folds of the Forces Network .
We have decided to devote a Section to his writing every month in the ForceNet E-Zine .

Farewell Hercules-1

By Lt Col Noel Ellis



Noel Ellis Reflection

"Years may separate course mates, but the bonds forged in the fauj know no distance, no time and no farewell. Some comrades leave us, yet remain forever in a language only we understand."

It was in 2018 that we, as 66 Course, got together at our Alma Mater, NDA, Khadakwasla. It was the first time after passing out on 02 June 1984 that we were going to meet each other.

A few of us had become grandparents by now. Some had risen to the ranks of Major General and equivalent ranks in the Navy and Air Force. Our Naval course mate, Dinesh Tripathi, who went on to become the Navy Chief, was there too.

It was during lunch at the NDA stadium that we first broke the ice, meeting course mates, most of whom were still in service, while some, like us, were serving in the corporate sector. Some had been decorated for gallantry, but it was sad to learn that so many of our course mates had faded away, leaving behind their names engraved in the Hut of Remembrance.

Japphies and pappies, of course amongst course mates and not with their better halves, continued unabated. It was as if we had returned to our training days as teenagers.

That was when I met Alka, wife of Sqn Ldr Ajay Ahuja, Vir Chakra. A calm, quiet and serene lady, without an iota of grief showing on her face, notwithstanding all that she had gone through. She had taken it in her stride and given her beloved husband to the nation. She stood tall amongst the ladies that day.

Her son, Junior Ahuja, Ankur to be precise, was there too. I walked up to her to share my deepest condolences, though belated. My heart was also with my course mate, whose call sign was "Hercules 1."

I broke down and cried in front of her. My lips wanted to speak, but they simply refused to utter a word. I gave a hug to the young man and moved away, unable to control my emotions.

She may not remember it, but I can recall every second spent in her august company that day. Having met such a brave and courageous lady was not only a privilege but also a matter of honour for me.

Then came the "tipsy pudding" and we all became second termers again and attacked. That grief was temporarily pushed aside, but the emotion stayed.

Fast forward to yesterday, when I finished watching the serial Operation Safed Sagar.

It brought back memories of Operation Vijay, conducted by the Indian Army in Kargil, Batalik, Dras, Mushkoh and other sectors of Ladakh in 1999.

During Op Vijay, I was posted in the Gharsana Mandi sector. Fresh from Staff College, trained to do staff work and now waiting for orders to go to war with the company I was commanding. The sector was new to me, and one had to know it by heart at the earliest. That is a story for another day.

We would be glued to the radio and hear about the Army casualties. The news of Ajay's capture, and later of his torture and death in custody, just broke my heart. That day, I did not go out for my usual reconnaissance but confined myself to my tent.

The next day, during my usual interaction with my company, I broke the news to them about the incident. Our blood was boiling. We wanted to take revenge, but we did not have the political clearance. We kept waiting. The orders never came.

I remembered Ajay very fondly. Though we were not from the same squadron at NDA, whenever we met, it was great fun interacting with this lively and jovial person.

While posted at Jaisalmer, I had become a "Barsati Captain", and our 2IC invited a MiG-21 squadron of the Air Force to the mess for a glass of beer, as it was being commanded by his course mate. The course spirit, you all know.

As luck would have it, Ajay Ahuja, who was still a Flying Officer at the time, walked in.

It was balle-balle thereafter.

It is very rare that you get to meet your course mates from other services after leaving NDA. We gave them a ride of their life on the BMP. The next day, they reciprocated with a low-level pass over the unit, breaking the sound barrier, which shattered every window pane. It took the MES ages to replace them.

Those were the days when we had no mobiles or even STD facilities, and we gradually lost touch.

Then came the heartbreaking news of his martyrdom, and all those memories came

flooding back.

Thanks to this serial, we came to know and understand what the Air Force went through during the Kargil conflict. Half of us probably did not even know that the IAF operation was called Operation Safed Sagar.

I only hope someone makes one on Op Talwar, the naval equivalent.

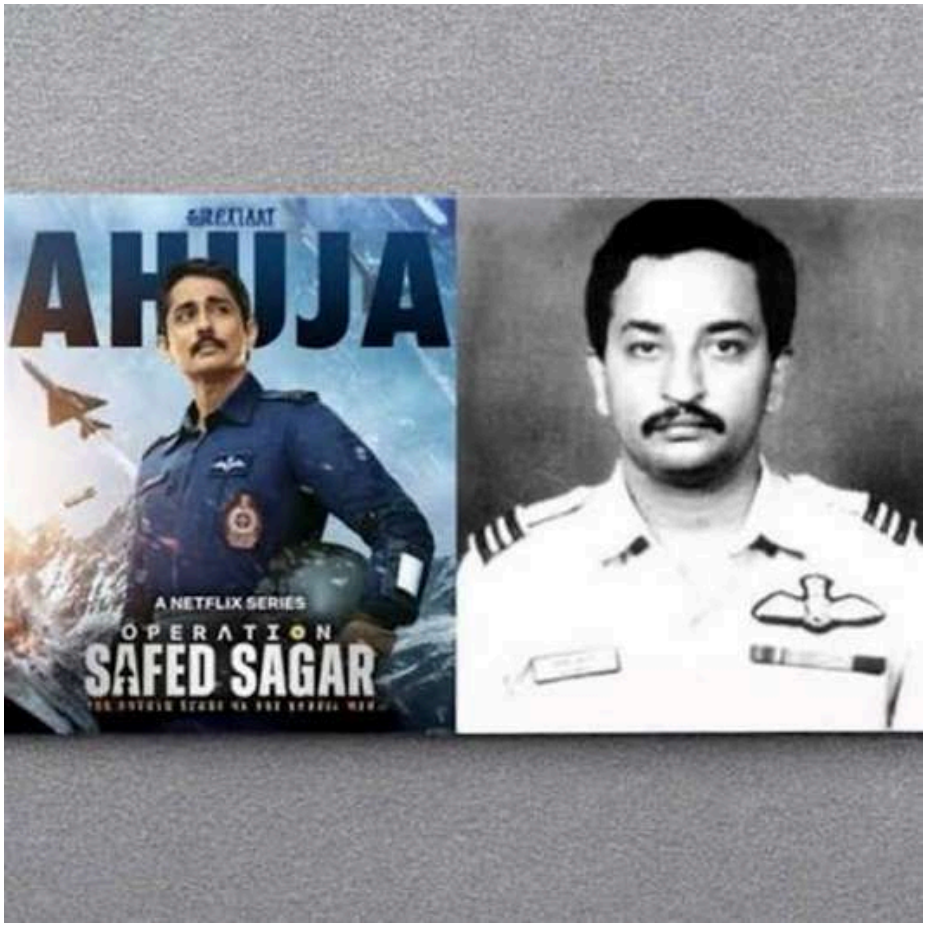
The serial is worth a watch for every Indian.

People must know that though we may fly fighter jets, deep inside every air warrior is a normal human being, a loving father, a caring husband, a loyal colleague, a disciplined subordinate, a devoted co-worker and a trustworthy team-mate, who has to take a split-second decision to annihilate the enemy and also be prepared for the worst, as Ajay Ahuja was.

People must also know that when a warrior leaves his home, the better halves and children have an important role to play. Simple things like smiling when the husband leaves for a sortie, keeping a fight for another day, or waiting anxiously for his return from a flying mission are things that no one realises. Their sacrifice is equally important.

Ajay, your memories are forever etched in my mind. It is from one course mate to another.

Alka and Ankur, God bless you always. You have faced the toughest pain of losing someone you loved dearly, but his sacrifice made way for India to win the battle. You



stood like a rock.

Thank you, air warriors, for your role. Not just the fighter aircraft, but every aircraft that took part, including the transport and helicopter fleets, the ground technicians and every man in blue who planned and executed each sortie.

Thank you to all the families who kept waiting for the safe return of their husbands, sons and daughters.

My salute to each one of you.

God bless the Indian Armed Forces always. Each one of you will always do your best when the time comes.

Farewell, Hercules 1 from November Echo 1, over and out.

We shall always be in communication; in a language no one will understand.

JAI HIND

JAI HIND KI THAL, NABH AUR VAYU SENA
NOEL ELLIS

About the Author



Lt Col Noel Ellis (retd)

Lt Col Noel Ellis (retd) is an ex-NDA officer from 66th NDA course. He was commissioned in June 1985 into the Mechanised Infantry. Col Noel is a very vibrant writer. His articles relate to his deep experiences which he had as an Army officer. During his service he has interacted with numerous types of people, be it his colleagues, his seniors or his subordinates and each of his articles portrays that how vivid human nature is and how different their reactions to situations are. He is heavily into reading and leaves no opportunities to pen down his opinion about what is going on in the country.
You can read his Blog here: Blog

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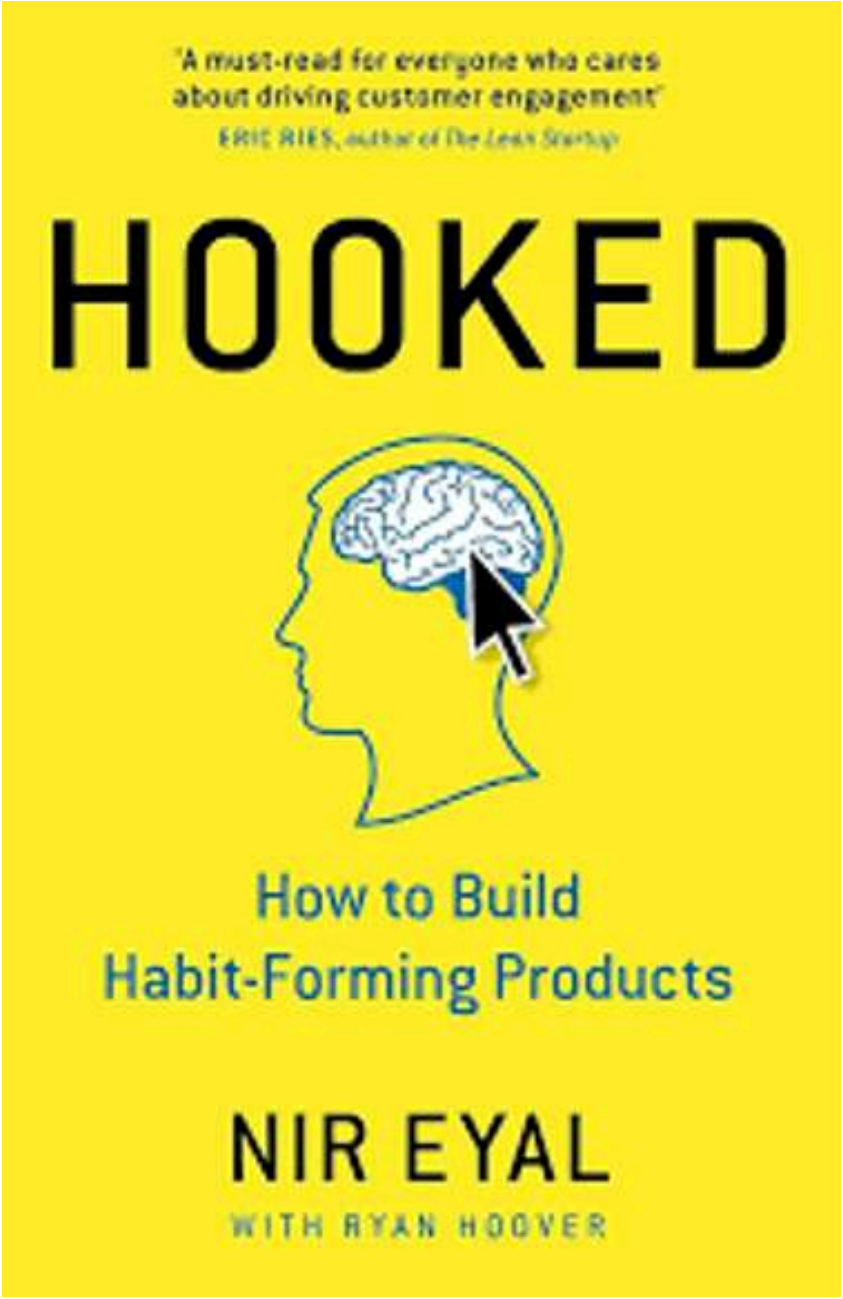
Book Review

Book Review: Winning the War for Attention in a Shifting Economy

By
The ForceNet E-Zine Editorial Team

Book Name: Deep Work: Hooked

Author: Nir Eyal with Ryan Hoover



About the Author- Nir Eyal



Nir Eyal

Nir Eyal is an Israeli-born American author, lecturer, and investor who specializes in behavioural design—a field exploring the intersection of psychology, technology, and business. After earning a Master of Business Administration from Stanford University, he co-founded a digital advertising company and subsequently became a consultant in product design. Drawing from his industry experience, he later taught courses on applied consumer psychology at the Stanford Graduate School of Business and the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design.

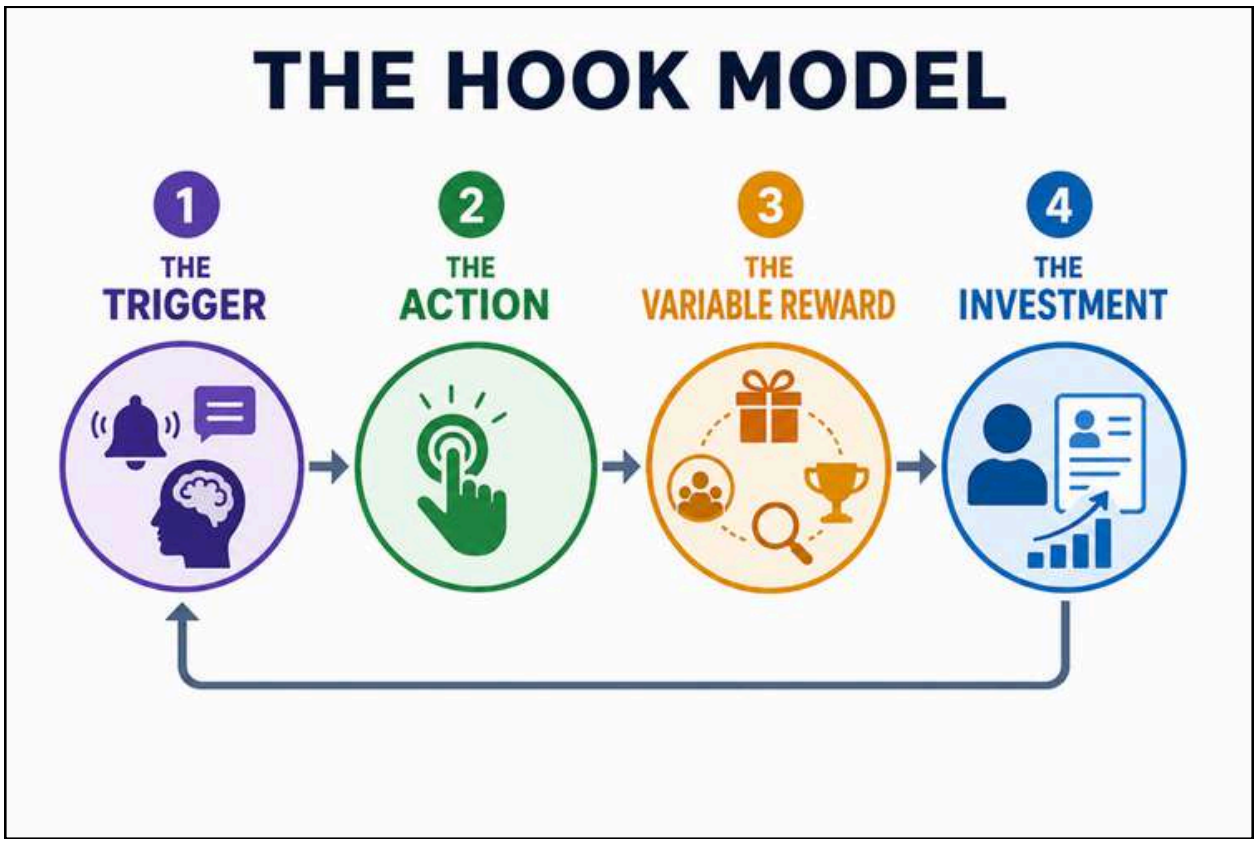
Eyal first gained widespread recognition with his 2014 Wall Street Journal bestseller, Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products. The book introduced his signature "Hook Model," a four-step psychological cycle—trigger, action, variable reward, and investment—that explains why certain digital products and services are so successful at capturing and sustaining user engagement. Recognizing the distracting nature of modern technologies, he followed up in 2019 with Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life. This award-winning book provides readers with a four-step framework to combat digital distractions by managing internal triggers, making time for meaningful actions, eliminating unhelpful external cues, and utilizing precommitments to stay on track.

His most recent publication, Beyond Belief: The Science-Backed Way to Stop Limiting Yourself and Achieve Extraordinary Results, debuted on the New York Times bestseller list upon its release in March 2026. In this work, Eyal shifts his focus from attention management to the psychology of self-limiting beliefs. He explores a "motivation triangle" consisting of benefits, behaviour, and belief, arguing that even when individuals know what steps to take to improve their lives, they often fail because they lack the core conviction that their efforts will succeed.

The Architecture of Attention: A Review of Nir Eyal's Hooked

We like to believe our choices are strictly our own, especially those who have spent careers mastering operational discipline and rigid focus. Yet, the persistent urge to check a smartphone, refresh a feed, or click a notification is rarely a conscious decision; it is a meticulously engineered response. In Hooked: How to Build Habit-Forming Products, Nir Eyal, writing with Ryan Hoover, lays bare the psychological blueprints behind this modern compulsion, revealing a landscape where human attention is the ultimate commodity.

For mid-career professionals and those stepping out of uniform after a decade or



The Four Stage Hook Model

more of service, Hooked acts as a vital translation matrix. The military operates on standard operating procedures, predictability, and intrinsic mission value. The modern corporate sector—particularly in product development, digital community management, and corporate instruction—often relies on behavioural engineering to sustain engagement. Eyal's text strips away the illusion of pure consumer choice, delivering a pragmatic, unsettlingly effective manual on how digital environments are weaponized for retention.

The Anatomy of a Habit

Eyal's core objective is to decode how companies create products that users turn to out of pure habit, effectively eliminating the need for costly external advertising. He argues that successful technologies are not necessarily the objectively superior ones, but rather those that manage to monopolize the user's mind. To explain this phenomenon, he introduces the "Hook Model," a four-phase cyclical process that seamlessly transitions a user from an external cue to a deeply ingrained routine.

The model is broken down into four sequential stages:

- **The Trigger:** Every habit begins with a cue. Eyal divides these into external triggers—such as a notification, an email, or an app icon—which explicitly tell the user what to do next. More insidious, however, are internal triggers. These are cognitive associations stored in the user's memory, typically tied to negative emotional states like boredom, uncertainty, or loneliness.

- **The Action:** A trigger is useless without a resulting action. Drawing on Dr. B.J. Fogg's Behaviour Model, Eyal posits that behaviour occurs only when Motivation, Ability, and a Trigger converge simultaneously. A crucial insight here is that to drive a behaviour, designers should prioritize increasing a user's ability (making the action as simple and frictionless as possible) over attempting to increase their motivation.

- **The Variable Reward:** This is the psychological engine of the Hook Model. Borrowing from B.F. Skinner's operant conditioning experiments, Eyal explains that predictability leads to boredom. Unpredictability, however, triggers a dopamine response that keeps the brain engaged. Eyal categorizes these rewards into three types: the Tribe (social validation and connectedness), the Hunt (the search for material resources or novel information), and the Self (personal gratification, mastery, and completion).

- **The Investment:** The cycle concludes by asking the user to do a bit of work. Leveraging the "IKEA effect"—the psychological principle that people overvalue things they have put effort into creating—Eyal explains that when users invest data, build a follower base, or establish a reputation on a platform, they are more likely to return. This investment simultaneously improves the service and "loads" the next trigger, perpetuating the cycle.

A Tactical Appraisal for the Corporate Transition

Written in the analytical yet accessible style characteristic of top-tier business journalism, Hooked avoids academic density without sacrificing intellectual rigour. Eyal proves his thesis through a series of sharp, contemporary case studies. He dissects the rapid ascent of platforms like Pinterest, Twitter, and the Bible App, illustrating how these tools map perfectly onto human psychological needs. The Bible App, for example, achieved hundreds of millions of downloads by breaking down the text into easily digestible reading plans (Action) and leveraging an active community for social validation (Rewards of the Tribe).

For professionals navigating the "Great White-Collar Vanishing Act" and transitioning into new corporate leadership roles, these insights are profoundly applicable. When structuring professional curriculum, designing coursework, or establishing digital platforms for adult learners, the principles of behavioural design can be the difference between robust engagement and rapid attrition. Eyal demonstrates that creating a successful curriculum isn't just about the quality of the information; it is about minimizing the friction of the learning action and offering variable rewards—such as unpredictable positive feedback or progressive mastery badges.

However, a critical reading of Hooked reveals a distinct moral tension. Eyal is, fundamentally, providing a playbook for psychological manipulation. To his credit, he directly addresses this reality in a chapter dedicated to the ethics of manipulation. He offers a "Manipulation Matrix" to help creators self-assess, challenging them to ask two questions: Does this product materially improve the user's life, and would the creator

use it themselves?.

If the answer to both is yes, the creator is operating as a "Facilitator". If the creator would not use the product and it does not improve lives, they veer into the ethically bankrupt territory of a "Dealer". While this ethical framework is a necessary inclusion, it occasionally feels like a lightweight bandage applied to a profound moral vulnerability. The line between facilitating a healthy habit and engineering a digital addiction remains uncomfortably thin, relying heavily on the subjective conscience of the product designer.

Practical Takeaways

Whether your focus lies in corporate governance, managing independent publishing ecosystems, or simply defending your own cognitive bandwidth against the digital onslaught, Hooked offers several actionable insights:

- **Audit Your Friction:** In any operational shift—such as migrating a community to a new web platform or implementing new corporate protocols—success depends on the Action phase. You must ruthlessly eliminate friction. If a process requires too much cognitive load, users will abandon it.

- **Leverage the Reward of the Self:** When designing professional training or managing complex projects (like the end-to-end execution of a major residential build), integrate clear milestones. Humans possess a deep-seated drive to conquer obstacles and achieve mastery. Structuring workflows to satisfy this intrinsic desire keeps momentum high.

- **Identify Internal Triggers:** To build lasting engagement with a readership or a corporate team, you must understand the underlying emotional cues driving their behaviour. Are they seeking professional validation? Are they looking to alleviate the anxiety of a career transition? Addressing the precise internal trigger is the key to creating indispensable value.

- **Guard Your Attention:** On a personal level, understanding the Hook Model is the first step in dismantling its hold over you. By recognizing when a tool is employing a variable reward to hijack your focus, you can reclaim the deep, sustained concentration required to master complex systems.

Hooked is an indispensable, piercing examination of modern behavioural design. It serves as both a strategic manual for those looking to build compelling products and a defensive primer for those seeking to protect their intellectual autonomy in an economy built on distraction.

autonomy.

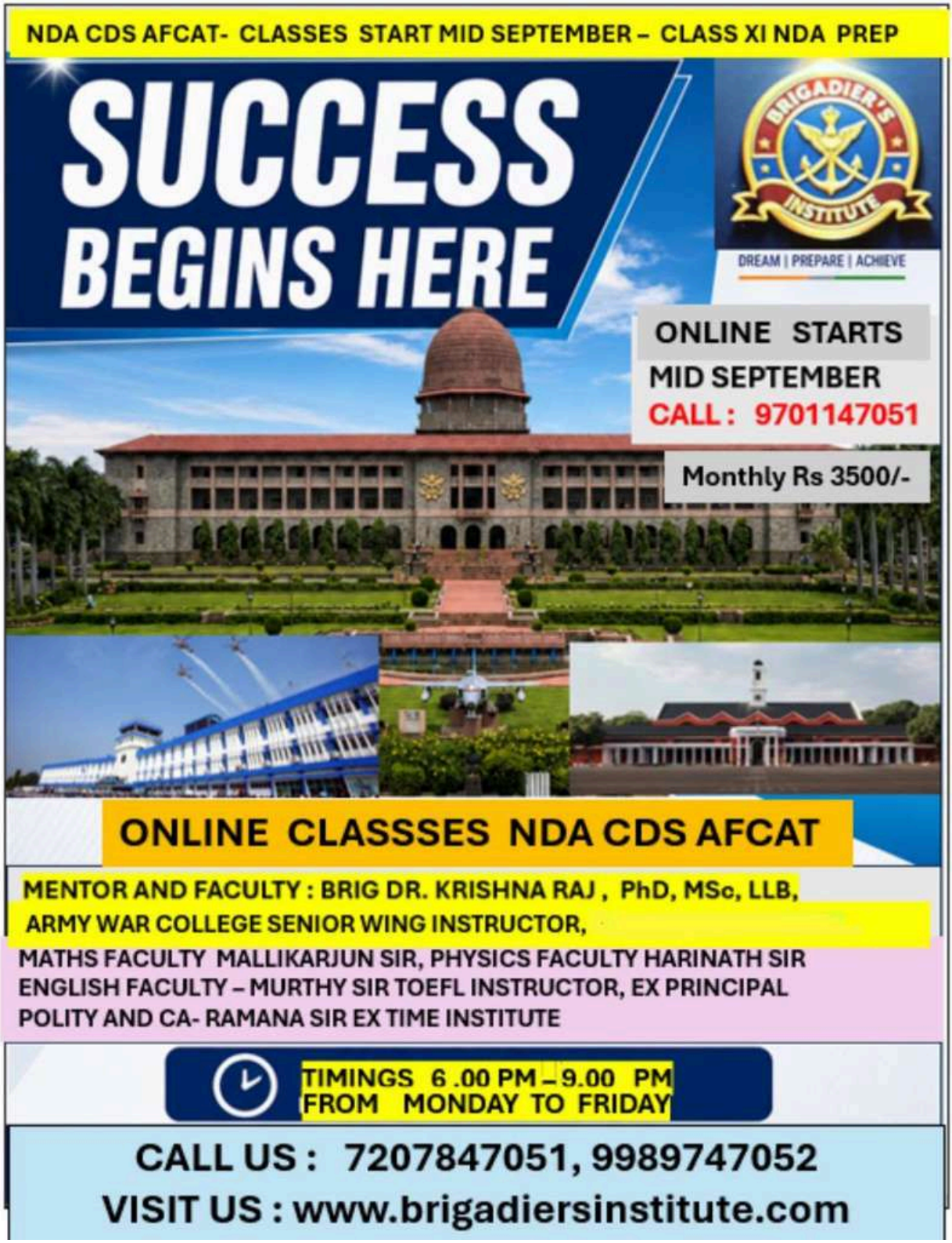
Fortunately, Newport mitigates this by offering the "Journalistic" and "Bimodal" philosophies of deep work, which allow professionals to squeeze intense focus into the margins of a demanding schedule. Furthermore, he does not dismiss collaboration. By advocating for a "hub-and-spoke" model, he recognizes that serendipitous encounters and collaborative whiteboard sessions are vital for sparking innovation, provided workers can retreat to an isolated "spoke" to actually execute the heavy cognitive lifting required to bring those ideas to fruition.

The Verdict

Cal Newport's Deep Work is an essential read for anyone navigating a mid-career pivot or seeking to elevate their professional output in a noise-filled world. It challenges the conventional wisdom that ubiquitous connectivity is a virtue, reframing it instead as a cognitive liability.

By treating our attention as our most valuable professional resource, Newport offers a paradigm shift: we must train our minds for depth with the same rigour and discipline we would use to train our bodies for physical combat. For those willing to embrace the discomfort of boredom and the friction of disconnecting, the rewards are immense. Deep Work delivers a powerful reminder that in the knowledge economy, the spoils do not go to the busiest; they go to the most focussed.

"A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies . . . The man who never reads lives only one."


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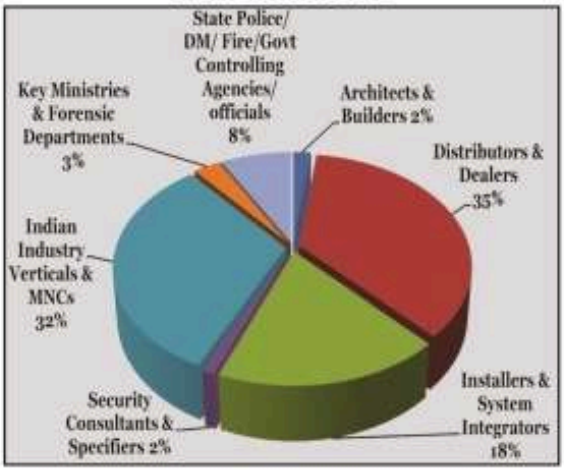
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