

‘Ensure that you don’t perish’

On the to-do list for companies right now should be to focus on what needs immediate attention and ensure that they survive when they come out on the other side of the tunnel, says **Deep Kalra**, Founder and Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip.

 Hazel Jain

“Our earnings call for April-May-June 2020 showed that we went down 95 per cent. So, to all our investors I said, this is not an earnings call, it is the lack of earnings call!” said **Deep Kalra**, Founder and Group Executive Chairman, MakeMyTrip, during his address at ITB Asia.

“You’ve cut a lot of variable costs since the pandemic hit and all you have are all the fixed costs. You have fundamentally made your P&L much lighter on the cost side, which is more in line with a lack of revenue. At a time like this, it’s important to keep your team motivated. And secondly, how do you



Deep Kalra
Founder and Group Executive
Chairman, MakeMyTrip

keep them gainfully employed? The two are in fact very closely connected,” Kalra said.

Sharing his own experience in doing that, he added that the company used the lockdown opportunity to address all the technology projects. “We focused on all those

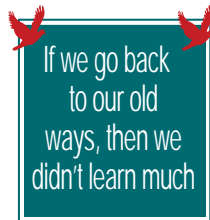
projects that we call ‘big, hairy, audacious projects’ which were typically always pushed back because work came in the way – they kept getting pushed month on month and quarter on quarter. So everyone was now re-engineered and re-purposed towards those projects. Our tech unification – the complete unification post the Goibibo transaction – had not been unified at the backend. This usually takes years, but we managed to complete that in a quarter and a half during the lockdown,” he claimed.

Stay alive

Kalra advised all entrepreneurs, “You’ve got to learn very quickly how this is go-

ing to impact your business and how it is going to impact your people and your customers. You then need to figure out a plan which needs immediate action like cost cuts, what you need to do mid-term, where you will be in the long term, and

this is like any other crisis – the first thing you have to do is stay alive when you come out on the other side. As a company, you have to ensure that you don’t perish.” This, he said, could be the biggest gift if we learn from the crisis. “The non-obvious one is how quickly you can get things done. How much can you focus on the very essential? I have to confess, it’s been eye-opening for me to be able to focus on the most important things. It doesn’t matter where your people are, just focus on getting the big stuff done, because that is what will make the real difference. If we go back to our old ways, then we didn’t learn much,” Kalra said. 🐦



therefore what you need to do for that. So, priority number one is, irrespective of knowing how long this crisis will last – because

Insurance for destination appeal

In COVID times, a travel insurance can be the hero when it comes to a destination’s appeal. It is widely believed that it’s a good idea for countries to offer insurance to travellers visiting them, and India should also take note of similar strategies when starting promotions in the international market.



Jyoti Mayal
President, TAAI

“Insurance should be mandatory for international and domestic travel. I would recommend governments to have free insurance built in to promote tourism to their countries, inculcating confidence in the traveller and increasing footfalls. Travel consultants should guide their clients to take into consideration insurance cost when planning a trip. TAAI has been in dialogue with MoCA and MOT to make insurance compulsory, and let MOT be the primary policyholder.”

“Many destinations have tied up with insurance companies to offer travel insurance to their visitors. However, the first challenge is to alleviate the fears in the minds of people and put them at ease with regard to hygiene measures being followed. That said, an insurance offered by the destination could be an added attraction, though that alone may not suffice. If India has to offer it, it has to assess cost incurred and possible income.”



EM Najeeb
Senior VP, IATO



Mahendra Vakharia
MD, Pathfinders Holidays

“I am sure it will be a practical and critical service to offer by any destination, but only if the insurance cover is covering any expenditure incurred by the client at the destination if he/she has to quarantine, visit a doctor, undergo a COVID test, etc. Many insurance companies are still not clear on how and what will be covered in the existing policy for a client if affected by COVID. So, having a blanket cover will be a big inducer and influencer to consider the destination.”

“A few destinations are offering insurance, and that’s a good gesture. At the same time, it’s a confidence-building exercise, sending across the message that the country is safe from COVID. This would give travellers the confidence that there is nothing wrong in the country and so these countries are coming forward and offering this. Hence, I think quite a few countries can do this. Passengers also have to be careful.”



Sandeep Dwivedi
COO, ITO

“A travel insurance could explicitly add a level of security and comfort to the journey, even more when it comes from the destination of travel. Knowing that the destination you are travelling to is covering most of these uncertainties for a small premium should boost travellers’ confidence. The insurance can cover travellers from any unexpected changes in policy or for any contingency. Such an insurance will be widely accepted.”



Riaz Munshi
MD, N Chirag Travels

Inputs by Nisha Verma

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Intrepid is India rep for BTEA

The Bahrain Tourism and Exhibition Authority (BTEA) has assigned Intrepid Marketing & Communications to undertake all its trade, marketing, and communication initiatives across the country to establish Bahrain as Indian travellers’ go-to short-haul destination.

Sunil Mathapati, Director, Intrepid Marketing and Communications, said, “The team is elated to work with BTEA and explore the ‘new normal’ of international travel. As travel restrictions are changed and lessened, we are working on expanding Bahrain’s presence, stirring conversations around experiential travel and ‘dream itineraries’ around Bahrain. The Indian travel market remains promising as always; we want to position Bahrain as one of the most hype-worthy travel destinations.”