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THE VALIDITY OF WHAT HAS BEEN TAUGHT IN THE VIRTUAL CLASSROOM MUST BE TESTED

growth opportunities with open arms, he also points out that it is the individual's responsibility to create an environment of constant and sustainable personal development. He credits the efforts of Mrs. Vinita Singhania (MD, JK Lakshmi Cement) for encouraging their employees to undergo distance education.

Further, he feels that the growth in online education being witnessed today has facilitated greater accessibility to education than ever before. While popular perception may still value a regular degree over a distance one, Mr. Gupta feels that the greatest advantage of the latter is in its convenience; the student of an online course need not commute or live on campus just to access education. Adds he, "One can access the information whenever possible, at the click of the button. However, the effectiveness of what has been learned in the virtual classroom remains debatable till one is tested in the field."

Distance education, he affirms, can be a boon "especially when the organisation one is working for supports the idea of higher learning, and partially bears the cost of the course undertaken." He feels this is especially true for certain kinds of courses which fulfil the individual's urge to learn constantly. "Once the course has been taken up, it must be completed with sincerity; else it reflects laxity on the candidate's part," says he.

Mr. Gupta also explains that acquiring specialised degrees is directly related to better jobs; thus, the need to continuously de-learn, learn, and re-learn through one's professional life. As jobs become more insecure and mid-life career changes more frequent, "the need for online education is increasing and the trend of collaborating with premier institutes for quality education is here to stay!"

Shipra Sharma

HIGHER LEARNING, SET IN STONE

R. K. GUPTA, HEAD – HR, JK LAKSHMI CEMENT LTD.

Constant learning is important for personal as well as professional growth, feels Mr. R. K. Gupta. He believes that one should not let factors such as age or profession become a barrier in an individual's learning and growth.

He values the relevance of distance learning, as he has himself benefitted from it, having completed an AIMA degree course in HR in 2005, in the midst of his career. "There is no dearth of information around us. We are living in a world where knowing more, and then some more, are important to grow.

Thus, individuals who are looking for avenues to broaden their horizons and achieve desired career heights, can do so by means of specialisation in a particular field or by continuing to acquire new knowledge," says he.

Mr. Gupta is confident that the conventionally considered gap between distance learning and regular classroom learning is reducing, while the absorption rate in the industry of individuals with the former type of education has been on the rise. Although it is important for working professionals to hone the right kind of skills, and receive