

The air in the 2nd floor hall of Quest Informatics was boisterous. Cheerful faces of 1st batch Quest Fellows gleamed in light of achievement and happiness. With heads held high and gait oozing in confidence these youngsters were smiling widely. They represented the hard work, dedication, and commitment that had gone to make the 3 year Quest Fellowship program a stupendous success. Management of the Quest Informatics, and especially Mrs Subhamangala Rudresh felt a sense of contentment and happiness. Right from conceptualizing, initial roll out, first quarter training and transfer to development floor, fellowship program has been a roller coaster ride. To see the outcome at its best as envisaged was a huge sense of relief and also a moment of pride.

Mrs Subhamangala, head of Fellowship Program, welcomed the crowd and set the mood for the event with an emotion choked introduction. In a brief speech she shared that Quest fellowship program did not happen by serendipity. Quest Fellowship was ignited by employability challenges fresh graduates were facing and a concerned management that took its social responsibilities as serious as business. She was happy to share four students have successfully completed fellowship. The crowd roared when she mentioned three of the fellowship students have decided to join the company as full time employees. She also shared that the one of the fellowship protégés has accepted job at a prestigious MNC. She attributed the success of the program to the commitment of the students, active involvement of the trainers, HR department and others. Mrs Subhamangala mentioned that the program has been so successful that from one batch per year, Quest is moving to 3 batches per year. She was very happy to share that from the early days where efforts were required to market the program to students, the acceptance is so high that many colleges and students have started participating actively in the program.

Following Mrs Subhamangala's speech, Dr Madan Mohan, independent director recalled that management meeting of April 2013 set the backdrop for Quest Fellowship. While reviewing HR activities the management realised challenges on attracting and retaining talent. Being a product company, it was difficult to hire from market people with strong fundamentals and ability to survive the rigour of enterprise class development. College graduates who were appearing to open position in the company lacked required depth of software development. That was when fellowship took shape. He shared that major products and mobile interfaces were independently developed by the fellowship students proving the high quality and rigour of the program.

Following him was Mr Satheesh Srinivasa who said there were apprehensions of how this program would emerge and the stupendous outcome would silence all critics. He was very happy to see the growth of the program and its contribution to software development. He profusely thanked Mrs Subhamangala for her commitment and leadership in guiding the program.

The podium was then open for graduating fellowship program students to share their views of the programs. First to come on the podium was Mr Anand S K who recalled his days of despair and hopelessness after graduating in Computer Science. He recalled the disenchantment he felt when he was called for a job interview and it turned out to be a placement agency. It was his brother Mr. Chidanand who encouraged him to apply to fellowship. Anand mentioned that Quest Fellowship Program “adds sugar to coffee” and shapes the individual to fit into the IT world. He said he liked the fellowship program for its teaching method. Focus on fundamentals and encouragement for problem solving skills is what distinguishes the program he said. His highly emotional acknowledgement of his brother contribution, Mrs Subhamangala, and Mr Rudresh Basavarajappa support and encouragement wet many an eyes in the audiences. In his closing remarks, Anand said along with the technical skills, Quest fellowship has honed his non-technical skills including interpersonal skills.

Next to come on stage was Mr Shiva who received a thunderous applause for his nuanced greetings in Kannada. He regaled the crowd with his prior experience of teaching, how he ended up in the program, difficulties in conversing in Kannada and how Mrs Subhamangala was there like a rock of Gibraltar to support and guide him whenever he was struck. Shiva thanked his team members, Quest associates and Mr Rudresh Basavarajappa for their support and encouragement.

Prakash, representing the junior batches followed with a brief speech mentioning that training was deeper and more focused on the products. Unlike other institutes all trainers are with IT background and bring solid industry experience into the classroom which makes the learning truly world class. He mentioned that fellowship students get a great opportunity to develop and design concepts and work on real time projects. Investments in non-technical training including personality development have helped boosting confidence, he shared.

Mr Rudresh Basavarajappa followed this with a very emotionally touching journey of Fellowship program. He was happy to appreciate the deep sense of ownership of Mrs Subhamangala. He also mentioned Geethanjali for her contribution in participating in fellowship drives and the HR support. He was happy to share that Quest fellowship programs have not only shaped the dreams of the students but also their family members. He was happy to share that the Quest Fellowship program had produced efficient and skilled IT professionals. He appreciated the fellowship students who have wished to continue their employment with Quest and assured them the journey of innovation has just begun and a great journey awaits them.

Next each fellowship student received Fellowship completion certificates from the management teams. Crowd cheered enthusiastically when each student collected their certificates and the decibels hit the roof with joy.

Finally, Mrs Subhamangala thanked Geethanjali, management, trainers and others for their support and encouragement for successful completion of the 1st batch of Quest Fellowship. She was moved by the love and respect received by each student. She signed off the event on a happy note saying she has really enjoyed mentoring and shepherding the nascent program.

With successful completion of the event, the curtains came down and the thunderous crowd happily moved to enjoy snacks and tea.

About Quest Fellowship Program

Industry bodies like NASSCOM and others argued that employability of fresh graduates was poor because:

1. Lack of in-depth knowledge. Very few colleges had qualified faculty to teach an expose students to the right concepts and applications. Many colleges promoted rote learning, with limited application engineering.
2. Limited industry exposure: With limited internship opportunities and project led courses, many engineering students only had theoretical knowledge of the concepts. End term projects were not rigorous, some were rehashed, many were poor coding attempts without actual application in mind.
3. Limited Professional skills: While rural area students possessed good understanding of the engineering concepts, their ability to communicate and present engineering solutions was limited.

Quest management recognized a need to invest in program that can bridge the gap between industry prepared resources. The management also wanted to use this platform as a prop to uplift rural and less endowed students and provide them equal opportunities in professional arena. Over multiple meetings with various internal stakeholders the seeds for the programs were sown. The program took shape as a practice heavy 3 year program where the students from Tier 2 and Tier 3 colleges would be offered the fellowship program after series of interviews and tests. The curriculum was designed to provide core subject knowledge in first year of the program. Quest would hire trainers, both internal and external, to sharpen technical and professional skills. In the first year, students would be exposed to HTML, CSS and javaScript, SQL Server, .Net Framework and Visual C#, Win Forms, ASP.net, ADO.net & XML, JQUERY and JSON, MVC, EF and jqGrid, Web Service & WCF, VSS, Testing methodologies and Software Engineering. As a part of the program the students would do multiple case studies, development projects, presentations and undergo continuous assessment. To ensure high quality, management decided to limit the number of students to 5-7 per batch. Management decided that financially less endowed students would be supported through fee waiver. Management also decided to offer an internship amount for all students to earn while they learn and meet their monthly requirement.

In their second year, the fellowship students would be moved into the development floor to gain practical coding knowledge and emerge as software developers. They would be involved in complete SDLC cycle of a real life project. The students had to dirty their hands in development, learn how to adhere to CMM level software process, gain skills in designing templates, UI/UX and dash boards. In the second year, the students are paid industry compatible salaries and enjoy all benefits similar to a full time employee of Quest Informatics. In the 3rd year, the students can choose to specialize on particular products and platforms to gain deep after-market domain expertise and develop solution development skills.