



## About Avant Garde

By: AG Team Pioneer Batch

With a history of 10 successful editions behind us and a growing subscriber base of a few thousands, MBA@IIT Kanpur can proudly testify that Avant Garde is what Avant Garde is.

Before I justify this statement I would like to take you through the story of Avant Garde, a story that is indivisibly entwined with the story of the evolution of MBA at IIT Kanpur.

And just like any other story it has characters, emotions of joy, frustration, struggle, endeavour, strife, climax and above all - a moral.

'*The Cattle Call-2004*' was the name of our Freshers' Night- an event that exhibited that rare mix of energy, precision and expertise by the batch of 2003. When the batch of 2004 was welcomed into the fold of the MBAs at IIT Kanpur the atmosphere was one of revolution- to be better, no wait: to be the best!

How were we going to do it?

From the expected cluttering of academic work, how does the budding manager at IIT Kanpur squeeze some time out for activities in the campus? With a mind-boggling array of clubs like Business Club, Literary Club, Photography Club, Dramatics Club, Gliding, Billiards, Skiing and Rock Climbing Camps to name a few, we were looking for the solution to an n-variable optimization problem, but our seniors had the heuristic. The voice of experience assured us that the mid semesters, quizzes and JIT presentations ensured that the MBA student@IIT Kanpur is living every minute and every second.

Life at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur is about choices!

So, thus prompted we embarked on a journey of self appraisal that paid many dividends in the long run. As with the pilgrims, now that we have arrived, the long trek to the top is just a fond memory- an inspirational tale whose fate is to be oft repeated.

Those sweltering summer nights when the batches of 2003 and 2004 huddled in Hall-4 TV room or when the weather would allow it: Hall-7 Terrace, when voices were raised and questions were flung,

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ideas emerged like the cutting edge of an axe under the raining blows of the smithy's sledge hammer- strong and bedazzling with its shine. Yes, this was the birth of Avant Garde.

The Avant Garde team was formed and taking a cue from managerial jargon there could not be a better Garbage can- there were more than a hundred solutions here in search for problems! The faculty of MBA@IIT Kanpur sensed the potential havoc loosely held set of goals with dynamite capabilities could wreck and the talks with Prof Mittal and Prof Bagchi gave this ship a rudder to navigate in choppy seas. There was a previous such attempt that had failed miserably and that was held up against the team- a place we never wanted to be at- failure was just not acceptable.

AG found its focus. AG - the voice of MBA@IIT Kanpur, a strong baritone that was going to resound in academia as well as in the corporate world. The choice of the e-medium was just synonymous with the name chosen- Avant Garde and MBA@IIT Kanpur are a step ahead of the times.

MBA@IITK was started with this very idea to equip the managers produced by the IITK system with tools, theory, and some needles and threads from the corporate crochet to unlearn and relearn to retain a competitive edge. Through Avant Garde too, we have experimented recklessly in terms of structure, design as well as content. Organizationally, with the coming of the batch of 2005, we have moved from functional, then divisional to the product team structure. The imbibing of new blood brought with it radical ideas and infectious enthusiasm. Our focus has evolved from an MBA@IIT Kanpur orientation to a holistic management orientation. The improved content in our Center Stage, Flights and Third eye has reflected these changes. Facing contingencies and realigning strategies to changing environments- this is the learning that no run of the mill course can offer. Creativity and freshness has been our cornerstone. The removal of the *Bizcap* and *Crossroads* section to make space for the more popular '*Case-a-Blanca*' has been widely appreciated by our readers, and no marketing project could have brought home the fact so strongly that the end-user has the final say. In a major step to showcase the involvement of our readers we have incorporated the invaluable feedback in '*Bouquets and Brickbats*'.

The AG-Team has had to strike a very careful balance in working out the modalities of these changes, between an all encompassing devotion to Avant Garde and the all-essential academics.

MBA@IITK helps students seek the same balance with a lot many industrial projects and corporate seminars exposing them to various business details while the simulation and computational facilities at IITK helps them to keep abreast with latest available in technology. Apart from MBA programme activities the management student at IITK has been a part of the numerous Hall and Gymkhana festivals; organizing as well as competing. Antaragni (The Inter College Cultural Festival) has around 40 events packed into three days accompanied by a daily dose of a three to five hour disco. The thrill and competition is seen to be believed. Megabucks (The Business Plan Contest) is a forum for entrepreneurs to not only evaluate their business plans but to understand how they can reorient their plans to make their ventures successful. In Umang (The Annual Film Fest), students don't watch films they actually make and screen films. Udgosh (The Inter College Sports Meet) challenges the students to test their sporting skills along with colleges from across the country. Techkriti (The Inter College Technical Fest) invigorates the creative and innovative talents of the students. A flavour of each of these activities has found its way into the past issues of Avant Garde, preserving the moments for posterity.

Avant Garde is a creation that has become a part of the very fibre of MBA@IIT Kanpur.

It was a gut-wrenching decision to discontinue Avant Garde for the two months- April and June when the MBAs went off to do their respective summer internships. Yet, the summer of 2003 was

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memorable. It was a unique opportunity to experiment with the concepts discussed in the classroom and then relearn from the environment in flux. Tracking gas cylinders or Pepsi bottles with delivery vans or door to door market research for telephone connections and newspaper habits during the scorching summers can only be termed so. The nuances of the sectors we worked in remained with us and featured largely in our class discussions, special studies as well as in the contributions to AG exhibiting an incisive understanding of business processes.

What keeps the flag of Avant Garde high is the motivational energy of MBA@IIT Kanpur. Pressure is what turns coal into diamonds- and so it has been with Avant Garde. The IIT Kanpur MBA programme is as demanding as it gets. Excellence is the guideline. The faculty members who are among the best in the field of management bring in their research and industry into the classroom making it all the more difficult for students to bunk classes. The class discussions often overflow and eat into the lunch hours of students. It is not that the faculty or students consciously look at setting records taking their classes into the wee hours. But it is the conscious effort to simulate a day from the world of corporate management.

It is in this cusp that Avant Garde strives-binding the MBA fraternity at IIT Kanpur with its glorious celebration of the written word and appreciation for the radical and ever changing face of management. This edition is a tribute to all the persons who have been closely involved with the conception and evolution of Avant Garde- the Online IIT Kanpur MBA Newsletter.

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