

KEYNOTE SPEECH

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Managing in a Turbulent World

Speaker: Irfan Ahmed

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The dawn of the 21st century and the new millennium were greeted with cautious optimism not too long ago. In the ensuing period, forces have taken shape that apparently presage the need for more caution and less optimism. The winds of turbulence have and continue to be a fixture of the world we live in; however, in the present times, they threaten to transform into stormy gales that could be unpredictably destructive.

It has been a hallmark of the profession of management and allied disciplines that its practitioners study and anticipate the winds of change and develop appropriate responses for themselves and their organizations. In the current period of enhanced turbulence, this responsibility of the profession is redoubled, and likewise the responsibility of management educators to equip future managers with the necessary skills, perspectives and thought processes necessary to navigate through the storms of change.

The challenges that management practitioners, scholars and educators must confront are numerous. Among these, some stand out: the resurgence of nationalism and protectionist impulses, the rise of fundamentalism in thought and action, the erosion of individual privacy, the threats of runaway artificial intelligence and other technologies, and threats to the health and sustainability of our species and our planet.

As managers, and as management scholars and educators, it is imperative that we confront these challenges boldly and marshal our resources to find solutions. Solutions must be found – solutions that are inclusive and equitable, imaginative and cost effective, and within the bounds of faith and ethics. Such solutions will come with the development and utilization of appropriate technologies and the management of both material and thought processes. This is not a time for pessimism or despair. Indeed, the times call for ever greater leaps of imagination and vision, the summoning of boundless courage, and the imbuing of our thoughts and efforts with wisdom, compassion and grace.

Irfan Ahmed is Associate Professor of Marketing at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas. Prior to this, he has been on the faculty at Texas A&M University and the University of Alaska Anchorage. His research focuses on issues relating to services marketing, advertising and competitive strategy. He received a Ph.D. in Marketing from Texas A&M University, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Management (MBA) from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Dr. Irfan Ahmed has several years' experience in the advertising industry. He has been a consultant to large corporations, small businesses and government and non-profit organizations with a focus on the areas of market research, service quality and customer satisfaction, and strategic planning. He has also been an Instructor in several executive education programs. Dr. Ahmed currently serves as President of the Association of Collegiate Marketing Educators, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Federation of Business Disciplines, and is a Past President of the Southwest Case Research Association, U.S.A. He is currently the Editor of Journal of Applied Case Research, and has also served as a reviewer for several academic journals in Marketing and Management. Irfan Ahmed has received the McGraw Hill Outstanding Educator Award from the Federation of Business Educators, and the Distinguished Educator Award from the Association of Indian Management Scholars.