



INTERVIEW

'Artificial Intelligence is the future and we are already using it'

Ravi Narayanan, Country Head, Branch Banking & Retail Trade, Foreign Exchange Business, HDFC Bank sees huge opportunity to improve customer service through Information technology. In a free-wheeling chat with M Rajendran, he talks of the strengths he sees in youth who wants to be a banker...

What was the naughtiest thing you did once you joined HDFC in 1999?

I joined HDFC from a Multi National Corporation Bank, where I was primarily the relationship/sales manager. The first, cheeky thing I did was to stand at the tea stall in front of that MNC bank and solicit business from my old and some new customers. I would tell them to visit my new office.

How do you assess potential of a young prospective banker?

Clarity of intention is the critical element that I look for.

Is that long term or short term vision?

No, it is about what the youth will do in the next 10 days—the intention to learn, engage, get that foot in the door of his or her career. Today's youth have their own in-built intentions and have clarity about it, unlike our generation where clarity of intention was given by our parents, because of easy accessibility and availability of information due to the growth in IT and communication.

How do you assess use of IT in HDFC to reach the masses?

I call it financial technology but hate referring to it as fintech, because it shortens the essence and power of technology in the sector. Customers' expectations are met because of this development. Trends in the future of IT indicate the ability of big and small



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data to improve customer service. If big data is the speed of computation, then small data is part of human judgment. HDFC brings out the essence of both, which is also defined as artificial intelligence.

What excites you as a banker?

I am excited at the ability to combine and provide seamlessly the old classical human-to-human conversation with technology. I think this will be the future, that people call chat-bot. So I read and think a lot about this future.

So you must be enjoying tech-fiction movies?

Matrix comes close.

Is that the reason you like Super star Rajinikanth's 'Robot'?

It is the trunk of the tree of evolution (artificial intelligence). But the beauty is, the movie Robot made money. It is an indication of how things are going to change. Japan has tried it in restaurants, we haven't yet, but Banks could be the first in India.