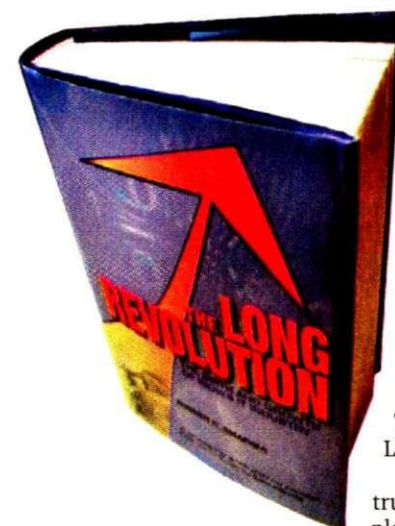


How HCL wrote the growth programme for the industry

THE changing character of computer usage in India—from mainframes and minis to microcomputers—at the start of the 1980s threw up new demands for computer education. In the mainframe era, the role of a computer user was limited. The software was written by IBM and the machine was also serviced by IBM. The same happened in electronic data processing centres and the RCCs. With the introduction of microcomputers, the situation changed.



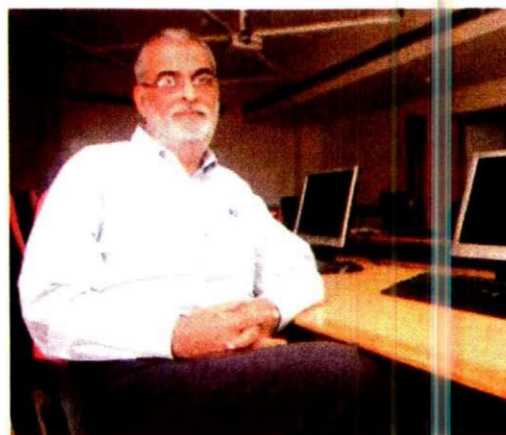
HCL, which pioneered this shift, had to educate customers on how to use its computers. One of its early advertisements said, 'Even a typist can use our computers,' emphasizing that companies don't have to depend on outsiders to operate their computers.

The origins of computer training in the private sector can be traced to HCL. Rajendra Singh Pawar, a 1972 electrical engineering graduate of IIT Delhi, joined HCL in September 1976, after a stint with Larsen & Toubro and DCM Limited.

In 1979, he was entrusted with corporate planning at HCL. He began exploring how the sale of HCL microcomputers could be boosted. A number of companies had entered the market which was already very sluggish. This exercise led to the identification of two constraints that were hindering the growth of the computer industry in general: lack of awareness and ability in corporate and government sectors on the use of new technologies and shortage of skills in the market to put these technologies to use. This brainstorming led to the conclusion that computer training was necessary to propagate microcomputer use in the country. It was this analysis that led the creation of a new business in

1981—training.

Pawar, along with his IIT buddies Vijay Thadani and P Rajendran, and the backing of HCL founder Shiv Nadar, founded India's first computer training effort in the non-formal sector. The venture was named the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT). It also helped bring to the public mind a relatively new phrase 'Information Technology' in place of 'Computing' and 'Data Pro-



(Clockwise from right) Rajendra Pawar, Shiv Nadar and Vijay Thadani: pioneers

from the DoE.

Meanwhile, NIIT started its first Computer Education Centre in a rented office at Mittal Court, Nariman Point, Bombay, in February 1982, with a single computer, a colour television set and a second-hand multi-system video cassette recorder. Pawar placed a small advertisement—measuring 40x6 column cm—in The Times of India, but nobody showed up for a few days.

Then there was only one student for some time. The numbers grew slowly. Several Indian companies began importing kits and assembling computers locally.

There was a lot of talk of using computers for a variety of purposes by various organizations, including banks, Railways, and so on. All this created actual and perceived demand for graduates skilled in operating a computer. This was good news for NIIT.

cessing' which were in vogue till then and were used in the context of older generation URMs and mainframes.

Around the same time, the government had accepted the Rajaraman Committee's recommendations but it took time for the MCA courses to be started in various universities with financial aid

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