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**Featured Spokespeople**: Rohit Mahajan, Founder & MD, Saviance Technologies  
 Dr. M. L. Singla, Professor, Faculty of Management Studies, DU

# Connect with Alma M@ter

*e-networking is helping alumni of institutions across the globe come together.*

**CHITRA NARAYANAN**

**B**y next year, the Faculty of Management Studies in New Delhi hopes to have 10,000 members registered with its alumni association.

"Over 11,000 people have graduated from FMS. Of this more than 5,500 are already registered – that's 50 per cent on the alumni network," says management professor Dr M.L. Singla, the driving force behind the alumni association that the institute supports.

Dr Singla says that it has become easier to round up some of the missing alumni members of the 57-year-old institute and bring them closer to the alma mater, thanks to e-networking on the institute's Web-based alumni platform.

As many a former student has found out, a lot can happen over the FMS alumni Web site. Apart from usual alumni stuff such as finding batchmates, getting event updates and so on, members can chat with each other, thanks to social networking interfaces, post blogs, and even look for employees or find jobs.

Dr Singla says for him the biggest boon is the electronic payment gateway through which alumni can pay their annual membership fee of Rs 750 or shop for merchandise – t-shirts and mugs and other institute memorabilia – or even raise funds for alumni events.

Set up by Gurgaon-based Saviance Technologies, the Viburnix alumni software that FMS uses is helping many such alumni movements across the world gather momentum.

For instance, two weeks from now, the British School in Delhi's alumni portal will go live. Among other things, it will also have mentorship programmes, live discussion forums, SMS integration and even a Facebook



**A feel of the action.**

connect. "We build in connectivity to social media so that an event published on the alumni site is also posted on the Facebook page," says Rohit Mahajan, founder and MD of Saviance Technologies, and a former Wi-pro hand.

With boyish excitement, he also shows a feature on the alumni portal where, when you click on an alumni's name, it throws up the geographical location where he or she is on a global map. "It's nothing but visual rep-

**Set for rollout.**

resentation of where somebody is, but gives a person kicks," says Mahajan.

Already Saviance has developed portals for Wharton Alumni in Delhi, the National Intelligence Educational Foundation Inc (the institute in the US that trains a lot of FBI officers), the National Defence College, Birla Institute of Management Technology, Harvard Club of India and so on.

Queries are pouring in – one has just come from Bulgaria while British public

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school Harrow has called Mahajan's team for a presentation. With nostalgia prompting some generous give-backs (industrialist Anand Mahindra recently gifted \$10 million to Harvard where he did his MBA), schools and colleges are galvanising their alumni like never before.

This is where products such as Mahajan's Viburnix are proving very useful.

The amiable IT entrepreneur says he has Nasscom to thank – in a small way – for this.

In 2008, three years after Mahajan launched Saviance Technologies in India – before that he was in the US running Software Folks Inc, an IT consulting company he founded in 1999 – it developed four products. "We had never been in the IT products space but thought India would be a huge potential market for the new products we had developed," says Mahajan.

One was the alumni software, Viburnix, another was Illuminix, recruitment and talent management software, the third was called S-Connect, which was an intranet connecting the back offices of an organisation, and the fourth Rivinium was event management software.

Around this time Mahajan was being mentored by Nasscom. His mentor at Nasscom told him that instead of rolling out all four products, he should test the waters with just one product and if it worked, put the entire marketing muscle behind it.

"Those days alumni events were in the news – Indian educational institutions were coming of age, so based on the pulse of the situation, we chose Viburnix," says Mahajan.

As he points out, "It's a pretty robust functional product with career centre, knowledge sharing, event management, giving back, mentoring, all built into it."

Although Mahajan built the product for the Indian market and to tap the domestic institutions, the surprising thing, he says, is the interest from abroad – especially Europe. Now, he has beefed up his London office to service demand from Europe.

He is also planning to get into the next level – corporate alumni. While schools and colleges are natural clients, Mahajan thinks there is huge opportunity even among corporates to set up similar portals for their alumni. It's a great employer branding exercise to have an alumni portal set up by the company and, besides, has its uses in terms of referrals and employees joining back, he says.

The first client, Mahindra Finance, has taken the bait – but unfortunately, Mahajan rues, they are using Viburnix not to connect their alumni, but as an intranet portal!



Rohit Mahajan