

BETWEEN LIGHTS & SHADOWS



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FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Dear Readers,

I invite you to read the festive issue and experience the SoBA culture, community, and camaraderie.

Best Wishes,

Dr. Kiran Desai

Director, SoBA, Mumbai



Sips & Schedule

'CELEBRATING DIWALI THROUGH TRADITIONS, TASTES, AND TOGETHERNESS'

1. What's one Diwali tradition you absolutely can't imagine skipping every year?



Diwali cleaning. Every year I discover seminar notes, missing pens, and at least one USB drive labelled Important.

Decorating the house and making the front door rangoli is a thing I look forward to with my daughters.



Lighting diyas and doing rangoli, it is so peaceful when everything glows around you, signifying happiness.

Evening lighting and rangoli



2. What's your go-to Diwali outfit?



Classic professor look: a kurta that says 'I've been thinking,' a waistcoat that says 'grants pending,' and colours between festive maroon and academic fatigue.

Nothing can beat a saree during any Indian festival.



I'm going with orange and golden, for the perfect traditional and elegant look!

Embracing regal maroon and red this Diwali - where tradition meets the blush of festive décor



3. What's your favourite part about Diwali - the lights, the sweets, the outfits, or the overall energy?



The lights - they remind me of my students' faces when I announce surprise tests: bright, hopeful, and slightly alarmed.

Everything comes together during Diwali, family, friends, food, traditions, lights and the works. It's like one big celebration of life.



Everything from lighting diyas to the bursting of crackers and the lights and the sparkle all around.

Overall energy or vibes — the combination of lights, laughter, family time, and festive positivity that fills the air.



4. If you could give one message or wish to everyone this Diwali, what would it be?



May your homes be filled with light, your hearts with warmth. And may the only "deadline" you worry about be for finishing that last box of kaju katli!

Having a family to go and celebrate Diwali with is a blessing not many have. Be grateful to everyone in your life that makes it special. Best wishes for a beautiful festival season.



Along with your home, let your heart be lit by happiness and kindness.

Wishing you a Diwali full of light, love and gentle positivity



SOBA STARTUPS

STUDIO  



**JOEL
JAMES**

FOUNDER





Soba Snippets had the opportunity to interview Joel James, one of the co-founders of an agency co-founded by him. Joel shared valuable insights into the agency's journey, thought-provoking perspectives on startups and AI.



Scan here to follow the Instagram



SS: Could you briefly share your background and what led you into the AI field?

JJ: I've always been a musician at heart, that's where everything began. Wanting to elevate my work with visuals matching mainstream standards, I turned to AI as high-quality shoots were expensive. I started using it to design my album art and realised there was something big in this entire point of AI. Later, while interning at Hyper Collective, I worked with my boss (now co-founder) Dipankar Mukherjee and my other co-founder, Rishabh, to create the AI National Anthem. We cloned freedom fighters' voices to sing the anthem, which aired live on Aaj Tak and blew up. That's when I recognised AI's commercial value and founded StudioBlo.

SS: How did StudioBlo begin, and what core vision drives it today?

JJ: We realise that generative AI is this new technology that will help a lot of people in this entire field of art, tell their stories better. Our entire mission and vision is to tell better stories using generative AI. Our founding and Studio Blo's teams aren't just generic engineers but a mix bag of artists, cinematographers, and ex-directors who've killed it in their fields and are now tapping into AI to make it more usable and better commercially. Mr. Shekhar Kapur, the legendary director, is also part of the company. The word "Visionary" really resonated with him and how we were getting people who were at the top of their field, and enabling them with the best technology.



SS: For someone new to AI, what's the best first step—using it or building a career in it?

JJ: To answer this, I'll give both the technical and artistic aspects. Being an ex-student of SoBA, I know how much art really matters and by art I mean music, visuals, acting, and writing. Once you have a strong foundation in one of these mediums, using AI becomes easy. For me, music was my driving factor, and I had a decent edge in technology because I was always playing around with my phone, tweaking and optimizing things. Getting stronger at your art is the first step to using AI. Today, AI tools are easy for everyone to use, but what really matters is how good you are at telling the stories by using AI. That's what makes you stand out in this technological boom era. "A creative human will never be out of ideas."

SS: Your collaboration with Atlee Kumar stands out. How does AI help shape your projects?

JJ: Working with Atlee sir was a true honor, and we've been collaborating with a lot of other directors, like Mr Sudhir Mishra, one of India's most prominent filmmakers. Working with directors who know exactly what they want, AI helps bring their vision to life much faster, and people like me come in to help them creatively think about it. For Mr. Sudhir Mishra, I helped take his vision and build an entire soundscape around how some scenes would look. For Ching's ad, I created some establishing B-roll shots like explosions and drones that would have taken hours and a lot of money to shoot. We were able to do them easily using AI.

SS: What advice would you give startups or small businesses aiming for collaborations like that?

JJ: Networking is the key. Making quality content with the right amount of networking is the best way to grow. What really helped me was getting the right mentors at the right time. For entrepreneurs or businesses just starting out, to attract opportunities like this, there's a three-step method. First, make some powerful content. Second, always talk about your content on social media. Third, be in the right room at the right time. This isn't about luck, but about how you position yourself. For me, I've met half of my clients at my gym because I go to a gym where I know many could end up being my clients. But more than that, I want to emphasize that real relationships matter more than sales. Once we lock on those things, life becomes easy.

-Tvisha Sheldekar (FY-E)



BEYOND THE MIC

“WHERE EXPERIENCE MEETS ASPIRATION”

In a recent interview, Sonali Ramaiya, founder of Roarr Media, offered key insights into the modern PR and branding landscape, emphasizing that success begins with ethical promotion and authentic personal branding.

Sonali strongly believes that personal branding is a vital tool for everyone, not just professionals. She highlighted its role in promoting self-awareness and strengthening confidence, which helps individuals align their personality with their public interactions. "Personal branding can open a lot of doors and opportunities," she noted, "and is extremely important."

When onboarding new clients, Roarr Media prioritizes one thing above all: clarity. "Once self-awareness is established and when people have that clarity of who they are," Sonali explains, the agency uses detailed questionnaires. These help determine how a client wants to be positioned and what impact they want to make. From there, Roarr develops a bespoke proposal and a clear "action plan" to build the client's ideal brand, rooted in ethical promotion.

With over 15 years in PR and 11 years in business, Sonali has seen the industry transform. She noted the significant shift from "traditional monitoring agencies to today's Google Alerts and sentiment analysis tools," which provide immediate insights into market sentiment and customer perception. To navigate this fast-paced environment, Roarr Media operates on both flexible retainer and project-based models.

In conclusion, Sonali Ramaiya's insights serve as a powerful reminder that all success in the branding world begins with authenticity. She stresses that only when brands and individuals stay true to who they are can they build the trust, credibility, and lasting impact needed to thrive.

(Interview credits: Diya Mehra, Dhruv Jain & Dhruv Bhojwani)

-Simrit Ghotra (FY - F)



Scan to watch interview !!



PLACEMENT

Chronicles

KISHIKA MALIK



SoBA Snippets recently caught up with Kishika Malik for her take on the placement journey. They shared key advice on balancing academics, the value of the Placement Cell, and the lessons they learned about embracing unexpected opportunities.

Q1. What advice would you give current students to make the most of the opportunities and support offered by the Placement Cell?

KM: Even if you're not sure about a company, attend the briefing anyway. You'll always walk away with some learning - or at least a new LinkedIn connection. The Placement Cell puts in a lot of effort to bring opportunities to every student in mind. It might not be your fit, but it could be perfect for someone else. And don't shy away from asking questions. I must have bugged the Cell a thousand times, and they still had my back every single time.

Q2. Being at the top of the Dean's List while also preparing for placements is no small feat. What do you feel was the key factor that helped you balance both demands so effectively?

KM: Balance? Haha, I wish. It was more like stress, juggling, and then more stress. I thrive under pressure, but what really helped was knowing the Placement Cell had my back -so I could focus on academics and extracurriculars without panicking. Did I have a "perfect plan"? Not really. What worked was simply showing up - lectures, projects, presentations. Sometimes you'll ace it, sometimes you'll make a fool of yourself (maybe more than sometimes), and that's the point.

TIPS!

- The more rooms you enter, the wider your world becomes.
 - It's never a loss - either a lesson or a win.
- Sometimes knowing where you don't belong is the first step to discovering where you truly do.
 - Trust the process - the opportunity you least expect may be the right one.
 - And ..Do not doze off during talks! (ifykyk)

Ps: Read more below.





Q3. What role did the Placement Cell play in providing you with exposure to industries, recruiters, or professional expectations during your time at SoBA?

KM: The Placement Cell was my first real bridge to the corporate world - it burst my perfect bubble. Through workshops, talks, and interactions with recruiters, I realized that industries look beyond academics; communication, adaptability, and cultural fit matter just as much as technical skills. We often assume that joining the “perfect company” will give us exposure and put us on the right path, but when it doesn’t work out, we feel disappointed. For me, that experience turned into something valuable - it helped me understand what isn’t my field, and that clarity is just as important as finding what is.



Q4. Every placement journey has its hurdles. Could you share one challenge you faced during placement preparation and how you turned it into a learning opportunity with the help of the Placement Cell?

KM: The hurdle was the picture-perfect plan I had in my head. I believed placements would play out exactly as, I imagined, and that only the “perfect” company was worth waiting for. Because of that, I didn’t even want to explore the options coming my way - they didn’t feel “good enough.” But the Placement Cell kept encouraging me to apply, to stay open. I almost skipped applying to Dentsu based on what I’d heard - that would have been my dumbest decision.

Q5. Looking back, which skills or qualities developed through Placement Cell initiatives proved more valuable in your career than you initially expected, and how would you recommend current students start building these strengths?

KM: Never fall into groupthink - whether it’s placements or corporate life, always speak up and stand by what you believe, respectfully. Skills like teamwork, problem-solving, networking, and building your personal brand may seem small, but they make a huge difference. Step out of your comfort zone: try roles you wouldn’t normally take, or present ideas you aren’t 100% sure of. Lastly, don’t put too much pressure on yourself - it usually works out in the end, and you’re capable of more than you think.



-Bhavya Arora (FY-C)



AD TALK Tears OR Thrills

Ever watched an ad and suddenly felt a lump in your throat? Or one that made your pulse race like you were in an action scene yourself? That's emotional vs. thrill-based advertising, two totally different moods, but both equally powerful.

Emotional ads are the heart-tuggers. They make you feel warm, nostalgic, or teary-eyed. Remember Google's "Reunion" ad that reconnected two childhood friends separated by borders? Or Ariel's "Share The Load"? These ads don't scream "Buy this!" They gently whisper, "Feel this." Their secret weapon is emotion because if you feel something, you'll remember the brand.



Thrill-based ads, on the other hand, want your adrenaline pumping. Think of Nike or Mountain Dew, their ads feel like mini action movies. Fast cuts, intense music, a hint of danger. You're not just watching, you're in the moment. These brands sell excitement, risk, and that "Let's go!" energy.

So, the next time an ad makes you tear up or sends chills down your spine, just know, it's all part of the plan. After all, whether it's heart or heartbeat, brands know exactly which spell to cast.

-Twisha Sharma (FY- B)



SPOOKTOBER!

Did you know?

Halloween originated from the ancient Celtic festival of 'Samhain' celebrated on October 31st.

The Celts believed the boundary between the living and dead blurred that night, allowing spirits to return to Earth. Although with the spread of Christianity, Samhain merged with All Saints' Day (November 1), and October 31st became All Hallows' Eve. Halloween, then, evolved into a secular holiday focused on costumes and trick-or-treating.

Today, Halloween has turned into a fun, festive occasion full of costumes, candy and creative marketing. For brands, it's the perfect time to grab attention, boost sales, and connect with customers. From spooky-themed offers to limited-edition products, Halloween campaigns often play on urgency, "only for a limited time!", eye-catching visuals, and interactive ideas like games or influencer collabs. All of this helps brands create buzz, attract shoppers and stay memorable when people are excited about something new and different.

In India, Halloween is still a fairly new and mostly urban celebration, but it's catching on fast, especially among Gen Z and millennials in big cities. Many brands are joining in by mixing Western Halloween vibes with a local twist.

In 2023, Zomato launched a "Spooktober" campaign featuring Halloween-themed meals and limited-time discounts. The app showed off spooky designs and catch taglines like "No tricks, just treats." Influencers also joined the fun with makeup looks and food challenges, turning social media into a Halloween party of its own.

Even though Halloween isn't a traditional Indian festival, brands are treating it as a small but impactful moment, giving them a chance to connect with young audiences online, drive engagement and give sales a festive boost.

- Aashna Aslam (FY - A)



WHERE SHADOWS BREATHE

It begins like all ghost stories do, with a dare, a shortcut, and a night that feels just a little too quiet.

Aarey Colony by day is green and generous, a breath of forest in the middle of Mumbai's concrete chest. But come October, when the air thins and Halloween slips through the cracks, the trees seem to lean in closer. The shadows grow bolder. The stories come alive.

You don't need pumpkins or plastic skeletons here. Aarey has its own decorations: crooked banyan trees, half-forgotten shrines, and an abandoned milk plant that creaks even when the wind is still. The road twists like a spine through the woods, and if you're driving alone at night, it's not uncommon to feel like you aren't. Alone, that is.

Ask the rickshaw drivers. They will tell you about the woman in white, always barefoot, always silent, who appears by the roadside asking for a ride that never ends. Or the old tree near Unit 16, where no birds nest, but people still leave offerings. Just in case the stories are true.

And they are. At least on Halloween, they feel true.

The locals say the forest has moods. It remembers every footstep, every secret buried in its soil. Some swear they have seen lights dancing between the trees. Others say they have heard laughter. Not cruel, not kind. Just there.

But maybe the scariest things aren't what you see. It's what you almost don't. What you hear when nothing should be heard. Because perhaps it's not the fear of being alone in the dark that makes a person tremble, but the quiet, creeping possibility that they are not alone after all.

So this Halloween, if you are brave or foolish enough, take a walk through Aarey after dark. But do not go alone. And if the wind starts to whisper your name, do not answer. Because some stories aren't told. They are lived, one frightened heartbeat at a time.

-Kartikay Kapoor (FY-B)



The **DIWALI** Effect

Where profit meets “Nostalgia”

Diwali doesn't just bring light and sweets into our otherwise monotonous lives but also sparks profits to most businesses as well as opens doors to branding opportunities. Every business around us taps into these festive spirits by giving discounts, Diwali special offers, creative gifting items and much more.

While shopping for new gifts for ourselves and our loved ones, you also stumble upon old stuff during the yearly “safai” that gives you full nostalgia.



You find half-burnt candles from years ago, a cracked diya that once sat proudly on your windowsill, or that faded card you made in school with glue and glitter. Suddenly, the smell of fresh paint and the sound of old Bollywood songs playing in the background take you back to a time when Diwali meant handmade lanterns, stolen sweets, and helping your parents untangle fairy lights that somehow always got knotted.

It's funny how these small moments, dusty yet precious, remind you that Diwali isn't just a festival you celebrate, it's a memory that keeps growing with you every year.





With every passing Diwali, there are new advertisements, catchy taglines, special logos and campaigns that redefine creativity for sure.

Yet, no matter how modern the world gets, there's something timeless about the feeling this festival brings, the rush of seeing your home sparkle, the warmth of hugging your friends after months, and that quiet joy of seeing every lane lit with diyas that flicker like tiny promises of hope.



It's a good day for new beginnings, so we see several new start-ups making their way into the industry as well. My personal favourites are the notifications food delivery apps use to lure you in to gain some extra holiday weight, and the insane offers on beauty products, little digital nudges that make you smile because they, too, have learned how to speak the language of Diwali.

All these might be sales or marketing strategies, but it's just their way of reminding all of us that "Diwali sabki hoti hai."

-Likita Padma (FY-F)



NEWSLETTER TEAM

EDITORS & CO-HEADS

Aryaa Girkar, Batch 27'
Tanisha Chadha, Batch 27'

HEAD OF DEPARTMENTS

Kashvi Mahajan, Batch 27' Reporting
Idikaa Gupte, Batch 27' Social Media
Nidhi Sanghavi, Batch 27' Photography & Tech

SUB HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

Ishana Vaish, Batch 28' Designing

REPORTERS

Aashna Aslam- Batch 28'
Tvisha Sheldekar- Batch 28'
Simrit Ghotra- Batch 28'
Likita Padma- Batch 28'
Twisha Sharma- Batch 28'
Risha Sahni- Batch 28'
Kartikay Kapoor- Batch 28'
Dia Chaudhry- Batch 28'
Saiesha Naik- Batch 28'
Jiah Shah- Batch 28'
Saanvi Jog- Batch 28'
Bhavya Arora- Batch 28'
Dhanishka Mane- Batch 28'
Harshini Jain- Batch 28'

DESIGNERS

Akshita Jain - Batch 28'
Bhamini Gaur- Batch 28'
Devki Virani - Batch 28'
Fatema Sodawala - Batch 28'
Ishana Vaish - Batch 28'
Mishthi Suriya - Batch 28'
Maishaa Mukherjee - Batch 28'
Preesha Periwal - Batch 28'
Prishita Agarwal - Batch 28'
Yashna Aggarwal - Batch 28'
Maanya Chowdhury - Batch 28'

PHOTOGRAPHY

Nidhi Sanghavi - Batch 27'

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