



September 2023

EMPOWERING TIMES



THINKING ALOUD

Calling all Home Chefs!

Jay

PODIUM

Ashwini Malhotra
Managing Director,
Weikfield



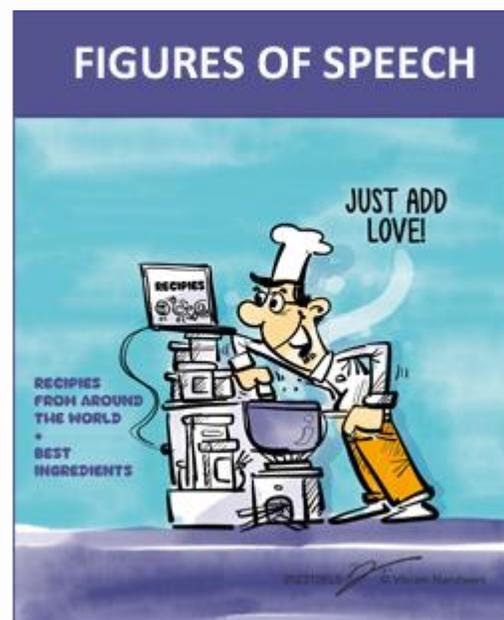
WE RECOMMEND

Rewired
E. Lamarre, K. Smaje, and
R. Zimmel

Dear Reader,

Urban Indian kitchens are evolving to meet the demands of our fast paced lives. Pre-packaged and ready-to-cook options have gained significant popularity in recent years, catering to the fast paced lifestyles of many urban Indian families. While traditional cooking methods and homemade meals remain an integral part of Indian culture, there is a growing acceptance of convenience foods into daily cooking routines. The pandemic accelerated home cooking, and 'eating out' and 'ordering in' trends have positively impacted the industry.

In the hustle and bustle of urban life, the kitchen is a place where family traditions meet modern convenience, where generations come together to explore new flavours, and where shared meals create lasting memories. The kitchen isn't just about cooking...it is a space where families collaborate, experiment, and connect. As the world changes, the kitchen adapts!



The theme for **ET** this month is *'What's Cooking? Exciting Times in the Urban Indian Kitchen.'*

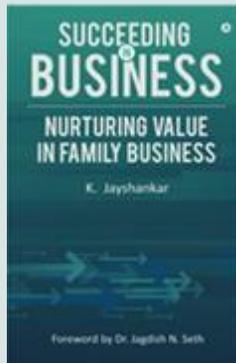
In the **Thinking Aloud** section, **Jay** highlights how the pandemic has led to urban households embracing experimental and glamorous home cooking, driven by changes in family dynamics, celebrity chef influences, marketing strategies, and a growing appreciation for diverse cuisines. On the **Podium**, Weikfield's Managing Director, **Ashwini Malhotra**, discusses trends like convenient meals, tech-driven customer experiences, and the company's response to increased home cooking and dining out. In the **We Recommend** section, we review **"Rewired: The McKinsey Guide to Outcompeting in the Age of Digital and AI"** by **Eric Lamarre, Kate Smaje, and Rodney Zempel**. The book offers a roadmap for businesses, combining practical insights with a structured approach to master the complexities of digital transformation in an ever-evolving landscape.

In **Figures of Speech**, **Vikram's** toon reveals the secret ingredient of urban Indian kitchens!

Please also [Click Here](#) to check out our Special issue of ET, which is a collation of selected themes that were featured over the years highlighting the changing landscape of the business world. This special edition has been well received and can be [Downloaded Here](#) for easy reading and is a collector's item.

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know how you liked this issue. To read our previous issues, do visit the Resources section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [X](#), [Threads](#) & [Instagram](#) - where you can join our community to continue the dialogue with us!

Succeeding in Business: Nurturing Value in Family Business



What makes some family businesses grow from strength to strength? How do you ensure that value is created and not destroyed when a business passes hands from one generation to the next in the Indian context? How can old families incorporate new ideas to revitalize themselves? Is there a role for professional management in Indian family business?

*This book offers answers to the vexatious issues that families face in their growth journey. The pointers provided can be used as a guide for nurturing the business and to leverage the traditional strengths that family businesses possess. As a counsellor and trusted advisor, the author, **K. Jayshankar (Jay)**, has had a ring-side view of how family businesses have functioned. The practical insights drawn from his experience of four decades has been combined with conceptual elements to become a valuable primer for a family that wishes to succeed in the competitive marketplace that is India.*

Click below to order your copy now



Special offer for Empowering Times readers. Get 30% discount by using coupon **ETSPECIAL** on the [Notion Press online store](#).

[Click here](#) to connect with Jay.

THINKING ALOUD

Calling all Home Chefs!

Jay

One of the lesser-known facts - and certainly an unintended outcome of the pandemic - is that home cooking in the urban household has turned both glamorous and experimental.

A number of factors of course are in play. To name a few, first is the nature of nuclear families. Gone are the days when food was a must-do meal, routinely made by a full-time dedicated mother who endeared herself to the family with her unbeatable culinary skills. Today, the image of the urban family is often the dink (double income no kids) couple or perhaps a single child (plus a pet) with working parents. Food is important but a home cooked spread is a weekend specialty. In the daily grind to rush to work (and to pack the child to school) breakfast is a blur, and lunch is a bite at work. That leaves the evening meal, often consumed while watching a television show, which has been prepared in a jiffy or better still, ordered in through the obliquitous food delivery app.

The pandemic was a 'welcome' break – when husbands (and young brides) boldly entered the kitchen, armed with recipes and YouTube tutorials, to test their chef alter egos. The immense popularity of culinary competitions (think MasterChef) also inspired many to accept the challenge of cooking up a storm in the kitchen. Who would have guessed that bored sons would call up their mother and get cooking lessons over FaceTime when their movements were limited by the virus. Wonders never cease!

Indian audiences welcomed a new breed of celebrities over the last decade. Movie stars made way for the Super Chef, brought home through the television. No longer were Gordon Ramsay, Anthony Bourdain, Padma Lakshmi, Jamie Oliver or the ever-popular Australians (Gary Mehigan, George Calombaris, Matt Preston), strangers to the urban upper crust. Pushing aside Tarla Dalal, a new generation of Indian Chefs too found popularity, beginning with Sanjeev Kapoor. Since then, we have seen a plethora of names becoming Page 3 stars, be it Vikas Khanna, Ritu Dalmia, Vicky Ratnani, et al. Culinary shows in regional languages has created its own following & the humble kitchen maharaj is now the glorified chef who talks texture, taste and tang to a dotting audience.

The wizards of marketing from the corporate world have not lost a trick to boost this wave. Television commercials have widened the appeal to encompass the non-traditional domestic cook (read, men) and modern conveniences come in handy to make cooking into an aspirational art form. The many kitchen appliances, coupled with instant availability of packaged ingredients, has removed the drudgery of the kitchen into more pleasant exercise from a must-do chore.

The kitchen story also has other dimensions. Apart from the varied nature of Indian cuisine, Indians are now big lovers of Chinese food, and the Italian Pizza has immense following too. It is another matter that the version in India is a far cry from the original products from China or Italy! But as in other matters Indian, our assimilative culture has embraced both cuisines with a bear hug of sorts and re-written the recipes to homogenize them to our local palates.

With the vast number of Indians no longer battling the starvation demon – a phenomena so prevalent in the pre-liberalization days – many in traditional households have moved forward to experiment with tastes alien to their background. This has made them accepting of regional cuisine in a major way, apart from taking ownership and pride in their own food habits. Today, children grow up with exposure to the many forms of cooking at home and even the traditional boundaries of vegetarian and non-vegetarianism are being pushed back in many places.

There is more to Indian food than samosas, idli, biriyani, and butter chicken. Perhaps a late realization to the western world who have now begun to appreciate the infinite and delightful forms of food in India. The Godrej Food Trends Report 2023 calls India's multifarious offering an 'Atlas of food', an apt description of the unlimited gastronomic universe of India. An interesting annual report (now in its sixth year), the publication highlights trends in the food habits of Indians. While there is no surprise when it notes that Indians are great snackers, it throws up some other unusual points too, including a throwback to nostalgia foods! I guess there is a limit to what we can consume through packaged offerings and hark back to a time when home cooked delicacies, made the traditional way, appealed to us. A case in point is also the craving for Indian desserts/*mithais* of which we have an immense variety, as we all know. The rise in awareness of the need for enhanced nutrition and sustainability seems to have created a push for Millets, according to the report. Then again, in various regions of India, millets have been traditionally popular, only to be usurped by wheat and rice in recent times.

What next in the Indian home kitchen? Not so difficult to predict, I think. The mercurial and curious Indian will continue to mix and match his food and fuse together novel menus to satiate himself – and his family. This is music to the food industry who are poised to continue their good run – all the way to the bank!

[back to top ^](#)

Podium

Ashwini Malhotra

Managing Director, Weikfield



Ashwini Malhotra is the Managing Director of Weikfield Foods Pvt. Ltd., the flagship food business company of the Weikfield group, which was founded in 1956. He is also a Director in the other Weikfield group of companies, the Vice President and Trustee of the Malhotra Weikfield Foundation, Trustee of Janaseva Foundation and the President of Top Management Consortium Foundation and a Director of Lighthouse Communities Foundation.

He is an active member of the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) at the zonal, state, regional and national level. He is a Past Chairman of the Pune & Maharashtra State Councils of CII.

Ashwini is a Past President of the Rotary Club of Poona Downtown and is involved in several charitable activities. He is an avid swimmer and tennis player and a past college champion. His hobbies include singing (mainly old Hindi & English songs), reading & travelling.

ET: What are some of the key trends and innovations you've observed in the food and beverage industry that have impacted urban Indian kitchens?

AM: With the increasing nuclearization of families and dual working households, there has been a distinct change in the direction of the food and beverage industry that has impacted urban Indian kitchens. This has resulted in the proliferation of convenient and time saving options for home cooked meals in the form of pre-packaged and ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat food products, mixes & meal kits.

One interesting change that has also been observed lately is that the male family member is also playing an increasingly active role in the planning and cooking of meals for the family. However, the women of the household continue to be the main decision makers in the kitchen.

ET: With the rise of Digitisation and e-commerce, how has Weikfield leveraged technology to reach a broader audience and improve customer experience?

AM: Digital technology is being used across the entire value chain within Weikfield wherever possible. Predominantly, it is being used in interactions with Weikfield's customers (distributors, retailers and large consumers) through the digitisation of the order management process right till the retail end. Weikfield is also very active with its digital marketing initiatives for giving the consumer a more effective and exciting experience with Weikfield's products and services.

ET: There has been a surge in home cooking and DIY culinary experience especially after the pandemic. What role does Weikfield play in empowering urban Indian home cooks with convenient and high-quality cooking solutions?

AM: The pandemic has had a positive impact on our business. As our products and ingredients are an ideal choice for home cooking and DIY culinary experience, our Dessert mixes like Custard powder, Jelly crystals, Falooda mix, Caramel pudding mix, etc. were extensively used during the pandemic and continue to be used even after the pandemic although at a lesser velocity. Similarly, our baking ingredients like Baking powder, Baking Soda, Cornflour, Cake mixes, Cocoa powder, etc. were the ideal choice for home bakers, many of whom have made this into a business post pandemic. Essentially the Weikfield range of products viz Dessert mixes, Bakery ingredients, Pasta, Pasta sauces, Sauces, Dips and condiments, Organic Green Teas & Mushrooms, are mainly used in international cuisine. This aspirational trend is gaining favour with the Indian consumers rapidly.

ET: From your perspective, has the rising trend of 'eating out' and 'ordering in' epitomised by the Food delivery business, adversely impacted your industry?

AM: On the contrary the rising trend of 'eating out' and 'ordering in' has impacted our industry positively as the Food Service business (HORECA) of most companies has grown substantially. In our own case we have had a 25% growth in our food service business without impacting our retail business.

ET: Weikfield has a strong presence in the baking and dessert industry. In a competitive market, how does your brand maintain its position as a leading name in the F&B Industry, and what sets it apart from the competition?

AM: Legacy: Over the past six decades, we have created a comprehensive portfolio to cater to the changing tastes of the generations of consumers that we have served since 1956. Our iconic portfolio consisting of Custard powder, Cornflour, Baking powder, Veg Jelly Crystals, Drinking Chocolate, Cocoa powder & Mustard seasoning. Our more

recent introductions like Pasta, Falooda mixes, Cake mixes, and Sauces, Dips, etc., are immensely popular with a very strong customer equity.

Niche play strategy: Our Company is a niche player in the overall food category with a portfolio of Ready-To-Cook products and with a dominant market share in such niche segments.

Innovation driven diversified product portfolio: Over the years, our company has successfully identified multiple opportunities across categories and has made many additions to its portfolio with internationally inspired food products to cater to the market trends and the changing tastes of the consumers.

Our diversified product portfolio, spanning across multiple price points, enables us to cater to a wide range of consumer segments – retail consumers & institutional buyers, value conscious as well as price conscious consumers. Such a diversified product portfolio, is relatively less susceptible to shifts in consumer preferences, market trends and corresponding risks of operating in a particular segment.

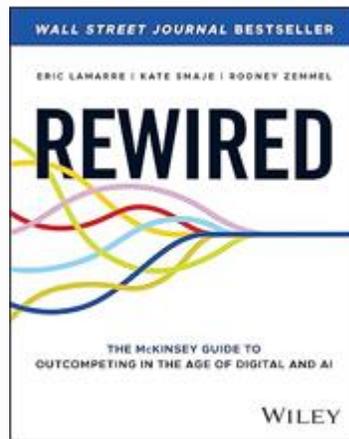
Offering superior value proposition for consumers: All our diversification initiatives have been driven with an eye on the market trends and the consumer need gaps. Our philosophy of providing superior value to our consumers and innovations in products & processes has been the bedrock of our company & is a key differentiator. This has helped our company to not only build a sustainable business but also remain a pioneer & market leader across many categories.

[back to top ^](#)

We Recommend

Rewired

E. Lamarre, K. Smaje, and R. Zimmel



Today, digital transformation is a necessity for businesses striving to remain competitive. In **Rewired: The McKinsey Guide to Outcompeting in the Age of Digital and AI**, McKinsey senior partners Eric Lamarre, Kate Smaje, and Rodney Zimmel provide a comprehensive roadmap for organizations looking to navigate the complexities of digital transformation effectively.

The authors' motivation for penning this book was to create a playbook that bridged the gap between theory and practice in digital transformation. In their respective years of experience, the authors have understood the pain points that many business leaders faced when trying to navigate through the complexities of a digital transformation journey. The authors offer strategies developed over years, making this book an invaluable resource for organizations embarking on their digital journey.

The read provides actionable insights, practical strategies, and tangible recommendations to help leaders and decision-makers leverage digital technologies effectively.

Central to "Rewired" is the role of artificial intelligence (AI) in digital transformation. The authors recognize that AI (especially generative AI), is driving changes across industries. They emphasize the importance of developing a clear strategy for AI adoption to ensure value creation. The read also offers critical insights into creating a holistic technology architecture that accounts for factors like data management and model operations (MLOps). The book also highlights the critical importance of aligning senior leaders and fostering a culture of transformation. In an era marked by increasing concerns about data privacy and ethical AI, "Rewired" places a strong emphasis on responsible technology integration. The authors advocate for ethical considerations in every step of the digital transformation journey, aligning with the growing global awareness of the importance of ethical AI practices.

The importance of building a talent bench where digital talent thrives has also been explored. The authors also emphasizes on re-architecting the organization and governance for speed and flexibility, moving from doing agile to being agile and the importance of customer experience design. "Rewired" doesn't shy away from the

complexities and challenges organizations face but instead equips leaders with the knowledge, strategies, and ethical considerations needed to succeed.

[back to top ^](#)

THROUGH THE LENS



Our in-house photographer, **Rupesh Balsara** spots the Greater Racket-tailed Drongo which is found in the hilly regions of the Western Ghats, Eastern Ghats, and the Himalayan foothills. This bird is known for its remarkable vocal mimicry and feeds on insects and small invertebrates. Currently, it is classified as a species of least concern on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.

Empowered Learning Systems

www.empoweredindia.com

101, Lords Manor, 49, Sahaney Sujan Park, Lullanagar, Pune – 411040, Maharashtra, India

[FEEDBACK](#)

[ARCHIVES](#)

[UNSUBSCRIBE](#)

®The ELS Lotus logo is trademark of Empowered Learning Systems

©2023 Copyright Empowered Learning Systems (ELS). For private circulation to clients and well-wishers of ELS. While ELS endeavors to ensure accuracy of information, we do not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage to any person resulting from it.