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FROM DAS'S DESK

In previous columns, I've shared our ongoing work around continuous engagement and lifelong learning—the idea that your time at HBS, whether in the MBA Program or an extended Executive Education program, should not be considered a one-and-done deal. In today's rapidly changing world, learning—whether it's for a few hours at a reunion session, over several days back in a classroom for a refresher course, or at your own pace and on-demand wherever you happen to be—is a process that has to continue throughout your life.

I'd like to share a bit more of our thinking around tailoring and delivering this lifelong learning to you. We're calling this work “stages not ages,” as a shorthand way of noting that the learning needs of our alumni are constantly changing yet fall loosely into five stages based on several factors. These include, among others, the time gap since attaining your degree from HBS, your professional status, your relative age, where you are in your personal life, and your aspirations generally.

To get a fix on these “stages not ages,” a team in External Relations has been conducting workshops with groups of alumni and colleagues across HBS to develop a conceptual framework that identifies the professional and personal needs, challenges, and goals of alumni and then maps these to the School's resources and competencies.

In the first phase of our discovery, we have arrived at five stages in the alumni life cycle:

- Early-career alumni are going through a period of discovery while establishing themselves in their industry or field.
- Mid-career alumni are in the process of investing in and expanding their careers, their professional selves, and their personal lives.
- Later-career alumni are capitalizing on their career growth, working at an advanced level in their profession, and beginning to think about their legacy at work, in their field, or in the world.
- Senior alumni, while continuing to seek further growth opportunities on all fronts, have amassed a high degree of professional and personal experience and perspective and are in a position to share their knowledge with peers and mentees.
- Cutting across all the stages are “next act” alumni. They are in transition. They could be first-time entrepreneurs, serial entrepreneurs, or alumni who have successfully fulfilled their commitments in their current situation and are now looking to pivot. This broad category also includes those who are returning to the workforce after a pause or in the midst of a career change.

Looking at our alumni population using this framework will inform some early decisions on new programs to pilot, such as The Reflective Leader, which was well-received last June. It will also help us explore ways to highlight existing Executive Education programs that may be relevant to alumni in each stage. At the same time, we are working with Harvard Business Publishing to make its extensive content—from timely HBR articles to the many tools in Harvard ManageMentor—more easily accessible to alumni.

These are still early days in our exploration, and there is much more we can learn. I hope you'll join us on this journey. As always, I would value hearing your thoughts on how HBS could contribute to your continual learning and growth.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Narayan Das". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

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