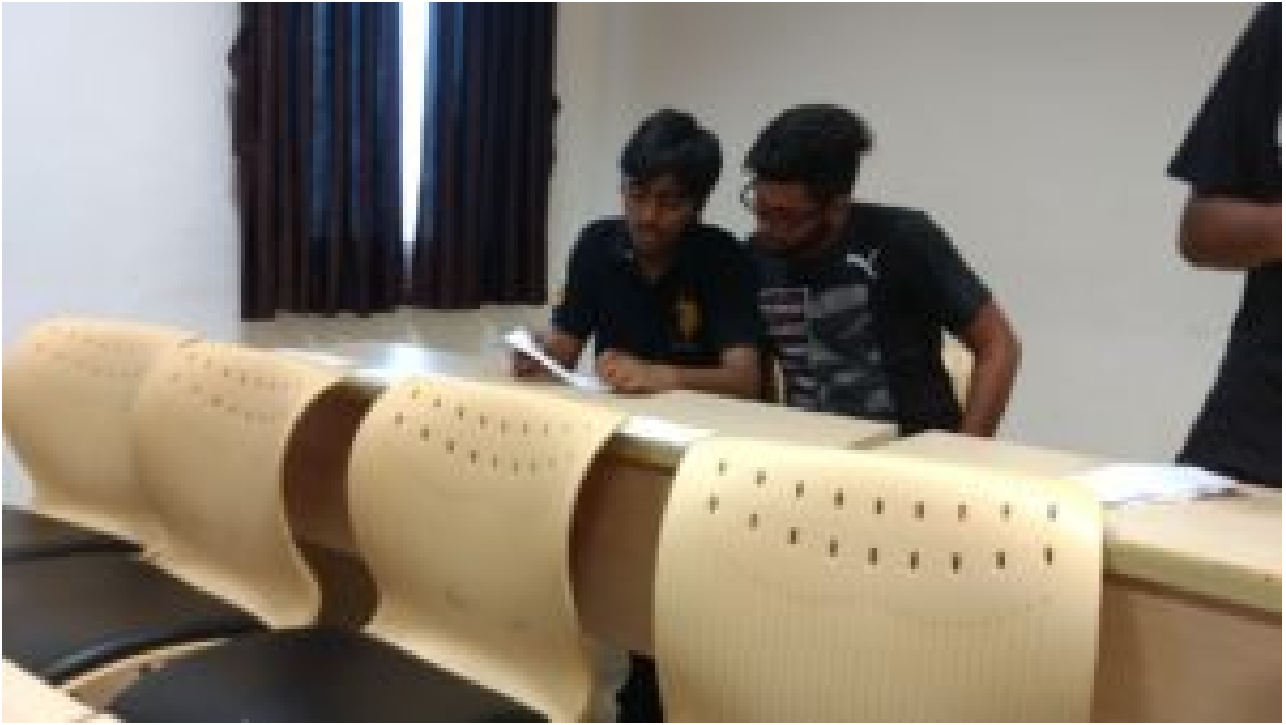


Civil Charades: PrisonBreak by ASCE

The Manipal Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers ventured out of their comfort zone on the 27th of January with Prisonbreak, a riddle – competition preceded by a sitcom quiz.

The preliminary round, which was a Sitcom Quiz, was advertised as an interactive competition spanning over four rounds and centered around the most famous series of the television world. The event played fast and loose with the meanings of sitcom and interactive. Almost half the questions were from the Star Wars and Harry Potter movie franchises. Only a fraction of the others were on actual situational comedies. However, when asked about the same, the organizers claimed that the questions were purely based on the initial feedback they had received from participants. The 'interactive' bit of the event was conspicuously lacking. The questions were displayed on a screen and the only communication between the participants and the organisers was when they had to move on to the next question.



Picture credits: Agniv Sarkar and Prabhav Bansal

A professional quizzer would tell you that the Quizmaster is required to reveal the answers at the end of the quiz. Unfortunately, there was no real Quizmaster to fulfill this obligation. However, when a participant asked about it, the organisers seemed genuinely surprised at the request, laughing it off and suggesting that the questions could easily be Googled. One even went so far as to ridicule the notion, saying that the question wasn't likely to be asked in an exam. When asked about the thought behind the event, ASCE's Publicity Head explained that quizzes were usually about a particular show or movie, so they wanted to make a broader quiz that anyone could attempt. Considering this, it is surprising that they limited their pick to around a half dozen productions.



Picture credits: Agniv Sarkar and Prabhav Bhansal

Four of the thirteen teams made their way to the final round. Three and a half of those teams showed up, after a phone-call in the afternoon on 28th January, which promptly informed them that the final which was initially scheduled for the 28th had been postponed to the 29th due to administrative and logistical difficulties, but was rescheduled again to take place on 28th January. The fact that TV trivia was deemed as an appropriate parameter to select the best teams to solve GMAT – level problems raises questions about what PrisonBreak aimed to accomplish. For instance, in the second round, there was a gross misrepresentation of what actually lay in store. Running around AB-5, figuring out number patterns and alphabet ciphers would not have necessarily been a bad event. However, when a club promises riddles, riddles are what they ought to provide.

PrisonBreak was either a case of providing misleading information deliberately or a lack of effort to find out what the words being used to promote the event actually meant. Either way, ASCE failed to live up to expectations in terms of organisation or quality.