

# Escorts' top dogs brainstorm with reputed thinkers

Nandini Sen Gupta | T184

**Chennai:** In an effort to forge a culture change in his Rs 5,000-crore engineering company Escorts, MD Nikhil Nanda has introduced a new intervention. Once a quarter, he and his top team will brainstorm with a "person of prominence" not necessarily from the corporate circuit or even from the manufacturing sector. "The idea is to expose the top team to some accomplished thinkers, to allow them to think and do things differently" said Nanda.

The first of that series featured Nandan Nilekani. The interactions are part of a "culture changing 2020 vision" for the company "It will help us build a clear blueprint of what we want to build Escorts into," said Nanda. Nor are the interactions just a networking opportunity. "When Nandan Nilekani came and spoke to us, I asked him what it takes to build a company that has the values of an institution," said Nanda. "He said top management needs to spend 30-40% of the time on customers and the rest with



The first of Escorts' brainstorming sessions featured Nandan Nilekani, chairman of UIDAI

product development and technology."

Taking that advice, Nanda picked some key markets and met a cross section of his customers. "For instance, we went to Rajasthan where we met 2,000 customers. In one village, we found our tractors were being used for hauling stone and the backhoe loaders used for loading them. That's when it struck - why not integrate these synergies?" he said. That insight has led to a critical consolidation within the group allowing customers a single window to interact with the organisation instead of working through water-tight verticals like tractors.