

LISA holds first professional seminar

By Adnan Naseem and Charles Wahab

As part of an effort to bring professionals from industry closer to students at the ISI Group, LISA held its first professional presentation on March 5th, 2009. Senior Value Engineering Principal at SAP, Mr. Kalim Khan was invited for a talk to the students of IS447 at LSE. Khan discussed the IT investment value lifecycle, and how SAP helps companies achieve that.

LISA vice chair Adnan Naseem, Chief Operating Officer at Social eCare Solutions(UK) LLP, introduced Mr. Khan on a gratifying note for taking the time to travel to London and speaking to the students. Naseem also stressed upon the increasing need for relationship building between academia and industry, and that classrooms should become a familiar place for industry leaders. “The LSE has a rich tradition of hosting world leaders who come and speak to students, but today, this tradition has not confined itself to lecture halls. It is now extended to our classrooms as well,” he said.

Taking the floor, Mr. Khan discussed two aspects in his presentation; first, his personal experience and the views of his domain; second, about SAP, its business model, and its efforts to maximize value of IT investments for small and large companies alike.

The presentation was thought-provoking in its own right and also served as a launch-pad for an interesting discussion between the students and Mr. Khan. In addition to presenter, he often played the role of discussion leader for a variety of topics ranging from how business today has changed with technology, all the way to how the global crisis has affected the technology sector. He mentioned that it was only 10 years ago when having an email address for smaller businesses was not a foregone certainty. Mr. Khan discussed the challenges faced by companies like SAP in penetrating the small business market. He indicated that small and medium sized enterprises wrestle with several concurrent demons with respect to information technology: mastering a rudimentary understanding of its impact, IT budgetary constraints and the struggle to measure and tailor software to match business needs. Mr. Khan suggested that, even in an internet world, it remains difficult for brick-and-mortar rural businesses who have held on to business models with proven success over decades to accept that incorporating some degree of IT in their strategy will play an integral part in their future prosperity (or demise).

The presentation lasted its full time allotment and beyond as students accompanied Mr. Khan outside the classroom to continue the discussion, while LISA committee members crossed their fingers, hoping the successful seminar augurs well for the many more presentations to come.