

School of Design Thinking, in partnership with SSC NASSCOM, hosts one-of-its-kind 50-hour non-stop “Design Spark Challenge” to Ignite Innovation leveraging Design Thinking principles

Students from renowned colleges will solve real-world problems through specific problem statements aligned to the UN Sustainable Development goals

Chennai, India – March 7, 2025: [School of Design Thinking \(SoDT\)](#), India’s leading organisation for promoting Design Thinking as a mindset for problem-solving and innovation, in partnership with **Sector Skills Council (SSC) NASSCOM**, proudly inaugurated the “**Design Spark Challenge**”, a 50-hour non-stop innovation challenge dedicated to the transformative power of Design Thinking.

A one-of-its-kind innovation challenge hosted in India, Design Spark Challenge 2025 will be driven by Design Thinking principles and leveraging AI tools. The competition commenced today (7th March 2025) at Intellect Design Arena's global headquarters in Chennai, marking a significant milestone in fostering a culture of innovation among students.



Photo caption: **Vanitha Venugopal**, Chief Executive Officer, Tamil Nadu Technology (iTNT) Hub; **Dr Anbu Rathinavel**, Co-Founder & Head of School of Design Thinking and Chief Design Officer of Intellect; **Krishna Rajaraman**, Chief Technology Officer of Intellect; and **Udaya Sankar**, National Lead - Academia & Government Relations at NASSCOM, at the inauguration ceremony held on Friday

The challenge brought together 75 students pursuing diverse education streams from 15 renowned colleges, all vying to push the boundaries of creativity and problem-solving using Design Thinking

principles. Each group comprising five students was paired with a faculty mentor from the respective colleges to provide guidance and support throughout the competition. This initiative not only emphasised collaboration and innovation but also aimed to prepare the next generation of problem solvers for real-world challenges in healthcare, education, rural empowerment, agriculture, and the gig economy, among other sectors.

The inauguration ceremony featured **Udaya Sankar**, *National Lead - Academia & Government Relations at NASSCOM*, as the Chief Guest, **Vanitha Venugopal**, *Chief Executive Officer of Tamil Nadu Technology (iTNT) Hub*, as the Guest of Honour, along with **Dr. Anbu Rathinavel**, *Co-Founder & Head of School of Design Thinking and Chief Design Officer of Intellect Design Arena*; and **Krishna Rajaraman**, *Chief Technology Officer of Intellect*.

Design Spark Challenge encouraged participants to engage deeply with the problem, fostering a sustainable, holistic approach to design rather than mere problem-solving. It emphasised the importance of understanding the end user, which leads to falling in love with the problem instead of jumping to the solution. The structure was designed to enhance collaboration and a rich learning environment to nurture their thinking for additive product and service design.

The competition had a timeline that started on Friday and ended on Sunday. As the students embarked on this intensive innovation journey, they had access to mentorship from industry leaders & experts from SoDT and the chance to present their groundbreaking solutions for the problem statements to a panel of esteemed judges at the end of the competition.

Udaya Sankar, National Lead-NASSCOM, said, *"In an era of rapid technological evolution, equipping students with critical thinking, collaboration, and a mindset of continuous learning are key to solving real-world challenges. Design Spark Challenge 2025 redefines how educational institutions approach innovation and problem-solving, empowering students to create meaningful solutions. At SSC NASSCOM, we are committed to fostering industry-relevant skills and ethical values to drive sustainable innovation and build a resilient future workforce. This is the future of learning - immersive, hands-on, and impact-driven."*

During her address, **Vanitha Venugopal, CEO-iTNT Hub**, said, *"Innovation is the key to shaping the future, and platforms like Design Spark Challenge play a crucial role in empowering young minds to think beyond conventional boundaries. This one-of-its-kind inter-college competition fosters holistic yet creative problem-solving while aligning with Tamil Nadu's vision of becoming a hub for deep tech-driven advancements. At iTNT Hub, we are committed to nurturing an ecosystem where technology and innovation fuel progress, ensuring that Tamil Nadu remains at the forefront of cutting-edge solutions with real-world impact."*

“Design Thinking is not just a methodology; it’s a mindset that empowers individuals to challenge norms and innovate beyond boundaries,” said Dr. Anbu Rathinavel, Head-School of Design Thinking. “The idea to host the Design Spark Challenge was fostered from our previous experience with a similar innovation challenge for Intellect associates worldwide in 2023. We thought now is the right time to extend this opportunity to college students. This 50-hour-long competition embodies this spirit, stimulating a collaborative environment where young minds can explore new ideas and solutions. We are proud to partner with SSC NASSCOM to seed this initiative and make this a country-wide movement in the future.”

Krishna Rajaraman, CTO-Intellect, highlighted the importance and impact of integrating AI into the Design Thinking process. *“Leveraging AI tools and advanced technologies in this challenge allows participants to explore cutting-edge innovations, enhancing their creative output and providing real-time data analytics that inform and optimise their design processes. Prior to the commencement of the 50-hour challenge, we conducted an orientation session for all participants on how Design Thinking principles combined with these technologies can effectively tackle real-world challenges and drive impactful solutions,”* he stated.

About School of Design Thinking

Design Thinking is a Human-Centered Approach to problem solving, thus enabling ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Our belief in Design Thinking and taking it to society at large is not only to teach them about our design thinking process and design thinking tools to solve complex problems but to instill them as a life skill. It believes in the practical application of Design Thinking and places equal emphasis on first ‘Design the Thinking®’ and then ‘Thinking the Design’. For further information, please visit <http://www.d-thinking.com/>

About SSC nasscom

The SSC, as part of NASSCOM, is specifically tasked with reskilling and upskilling India’s workforce to ensure that the talent is future-ready in terms of new-age skills and jobs. SSC NASSCOM sits squarely at the center of all talent development initiatives along with Future Skills. For further information, please visit <https://www.sscnasscom.com/>

About Intellect Design Arena Limited

Intellect Design Arena Ltd is an enterprise-grade financial technology leader, providing composable and intelligent solutions for futuristic global financial institutions across fifty-seven countries. Intellect’s revolutionary First Principles Thinking-based Enterprise Connected Intelligence Platform, eMACH.ai, is the most comprehensive, composable, and intelligent open finance platform in the world. With an impressive array of 386 microservices, 650 events, and over 2015 APIs, eMACH.ai enables financial institutions to design and deploy future-ready technology solutions that provide a significant global competitive edge.

With three decades of domain expertise, Intellect offers a full spectrum of banking and insurance technology products through four lines of business: Global Consumer Banking (iGCB), Global Transaction Banking (iGTB), IntellectAI and Digital Technology for Commerce (iDTC). Intellect is a pioneer in applying Design Thinking and our 8012 FinTech Design Center, the world’s first Design Center dedicated to Design Thinking Principles, underscores our commitment to continuous and impactful innovation, addressing the ever-growing need for digital transformation. We proudly serve over 325+ customers worldwide, supported by a diverse workforce of solution architects and

domain and technology experts in major global financial hubs. For more information about Intellect, visit <https://www.intellectdesign.com/>

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