

FAST TRACK

14.07.08

Envisioning the NETWORK

Cyberland Technologies, a company which started off as a small cyber café in Kerala, has now become a Rs 5.25 crore business. Madhav Chandran, MD of Cyberland shares the eventful story with us.

R MADHAV CHANDRAN, Managing Director, Cyberland Technologies, aspires to explore the advanced aspects of Networking.

By **Radhika Nallayam**
Photographs: **Srivatsa Shandilya**
Imaging: **Anil T**

BEHIND EVERY successful business is a visionary who can think ahead of time. R Madhav Chandran must have had a clear vision when he started his own business way back in 1998. If not, Cochin-based Cyberland Technologies would have become just another 'me too' player in the networking space.

Cyberland, when launched, was the first Internet café in Kerala and the second in India. Today, it is a pioneering network integrator, distributor and solution provider for computer products and services in the state.

Madhav Chandran left behind a high-profile job in a fast-growing metro city like Mumbai and came back to his homeland with a dream to do something new and innovative. "Those were the days when Internet was just coming up. Cyber café was not much heard of. We had to invest a huge amount to set up the first cyber café in the state, but the responses were very encouraging. During that time, we launched the first portal for Kerala called keralahome.com. It was selected by the National Geographic Traveler magazine as one of the best sites on Kerala," says Chandran.



Bundling Business

Within a few years, Chandran realized that it is time for him to find out new business domains. "We used to charge Rs 100/- per hour for using the Internet. Not many people knew the technology behind sharing an internet connection. However, within a couple of years, a lot of players came into this field as part of the dot com boom and the returns from the cyber café started coming down. Then, we decided to go for franchisees. We had around 28 franchisees who had set up internet cafes all across the state," says Chandran.

Cyber café business gave them the expertise to get into networking. In 2000, Cyberland partnered with D-Link and became the regional distributor for D-Link's modems. The very next year, Cyberland tied up with Dishnet to provide internet connection. "This partnership was a turning point in the history of Cyberland. Dishnet and D-Link was actually a good combination for us to sell. We bundled Dishnet's Internet connection along with D-link's modems and offered it as a single package. In fact, we spent a lot of money for advertising about this new package and it clicked. We sold about 400-500 modems per month at that time," adds Chandran.

Gradually, Cyberland started getting into bigger networking deals. In 2003, the company became the distributors for Dax Networks in Kerala. Since then, Cyberland has been working as an exclusive distributor for Dax in Kerala, with three offices in Thiruvananthapuram, Cochin and Calicut.

The company achieved a revenue of Rs 5.25 crore last year and is projecting to reach Rs 8 crore in the next one year. 35 percent of the company's revenue is being generated from the networking business. "Though our key focus is on the networking business, a major chunk of the business comes from desktop, server and computer peripherals in terms of volume. Desktops and servers generate 40 percent of our business," says Chandran.

Cyberland is a Value Added Reseller for networking products of Cisco,

SNAPSHOT



NAME: CYBERLAND TECHNOLOGIES

FOUNDED: 1998

HEADQUARTERS: Cochin

TOP EXECUTIVES: Sunil Dutt, General Manager; Jyothi Krishnan, Director- Technical, Linknet; K R Prasad, Director, Linknet

REVENUE 2007: Rs 5.25 crore

PROJECTED REVENUE 2008: Rs 8 Crore

REVENUE GROWTH RATE: 60%YoY

EMPLOYEES: 28

PRINCIPALS: Dax, D-Link, Cisco, Avaya, RAD, AMP, Compex, 3Com, Linksys, Intel, AMD, Asus, Samsung, Logitech, Mercury, Epson, HP

KEY BUSINESS ACTIVITIES: Value-added reselling of networking solutions, reselling on computer peripherals and software products, distribution of Dax's networking products

WEBSITE: www.cyberland.co.in

Avaya, RAD, AMP, Compex, 3Com and Linksys. The company also sells Intel, AMD, Asus, Samsung, Logitech, Mercury, Epson and HP computer peripherals. "We keep looking around for new business opportunities. I must say that we have been changing with times," Chandran points out.

Setting Up a Unique Path

Chandran believes that being aggressive is important when it comes to business, but just being aggressive isn't everything. "The amount of money that I spent years back to set up a small cy-

ber café is more than enough to set up a whole business now. It was not so easy for me to justify such a huge investment. But, I never believed in being very aggressive. I believe in adding value to our products, creating a good rapport with the customers and providing credible services to them," says Chandran.

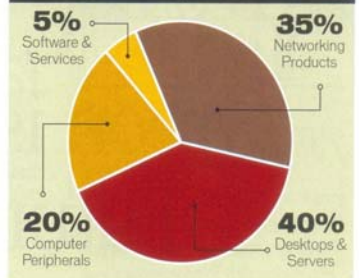
Cyberland has a unique strategy for meeting its customers' needs. "We believe in knowing the customer's customer. We try to find out what our customers want to offer to their customers and help them do it efficiently," says Chandran.

Cyberland has a long-lasting relationship with its customers. "Our customers rely on us as a consultant or a friend rather than just as a supplier. Basically, I believe in value addition rather than giving just solutions or boxes. We give some sort of extra edge to make the customer feel special," says Chandran.

Chandran is of the opinion that one should always keep the future in mind rather than considering only the current requirements of a customer. That's why Cyberland assures to give advice and guidance to its customers. "Even while selling a computer, we try to give them guidance to fulfill their upcoming needs as well. Networking is a key thing for the businesses nowadays. So we give them suggestions like attaching a router to the network, putting a firewall or keeping a virtual LAN. They may not use it today, but they may need it for tomorrow as the business grows. At that time, we don't want them to dump the existing system and go for a new one," explains Chandran.

He believes that the customer needs to feel confident to make sure that he is on the right track. "I don't do any sales talk with my customers. I just tell them about the evolving and emerging products and technologies in the market. That's how the customer starts respecting you. That's why competition or pricing does not become a problem for us," says a proud Chandran.

REVENUE SPLIT (PRODUCT-WISE)



SOURCE: CYBERLAND

The Trend Setter

"Networking," says Chandran "is an organized market where not every Tom, Dick and Harry can come and crumple the market." Cyberland proved its competence by getting into the market at a time when only big companies were present. Chandran foresees a huge potential ahead in Kerala for networking products and is planning to get into more untapped areas within the state before moving outside the state. "The networking market in the state is developing by all means. The state government is setting up lots of Info and IT parks. IT and ITES is booming in the state. Apart from that, tourism, real estate, banking and financial sectors are picking up momentum," opines Chandran.

Cyberland is serving about 250 customers on a regular basis. Chandran has formed another group of company called Linknet Solutions to solely take care of the networking and power solutions for corporates. The company witnesses a 60 percent year-

over-year growth and is planning to expand to more locations within the state. Chandran thinks that network security and 10Gigabit Ethernet is going to create many opportunities in the coming years.

"We will keep on exploring the advanced aspects of networking and ultimately become the pioneers in the industry. Our mission is to live up to our tagline-'networking and beyond'," sums up Chandran. ▀

60%

is the Y-O-Y growth witnessed by the company