

THE CTO FORUM

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Technology for Growth and Governance

Giving the go-ahead

Almost every state has initiated an e-governance project in one form or the other; all it takes is a political will to integrate them together.

CASE STUDIES

E-Arik – Arunachal Pradesh
E-Gram Vishwagram – Gujarat
E-Lokshahi – Jalgaon

SREI Sahaj e-village – West Bengal
Karnataka State Police - Karnataka
Nemmadi Telecentres – Karnataka



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Cloud Computing and e-governance:
A cloud over sovereign skies

Security and collaboration:
Revolutionising armed forces

Channel partners at large

THE SREI SAHAJ E-VILLAGE PROGRAMME HAS ESTABLISHED OVER 20,000 KIOSKS THAT SERVE AS A DISTRIBUTION CHANNEL FOR ALL GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

Transforming the lives of rural citizens remains the biggest challenge in India in spite of various steps taken by the government and NGOs. The problem lies in providing a framework where Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can bring in economic benefits for the country and its people.

Srei Sahaj e-Village, a subsidiary of Srei Infrastructure Finance, started a project to bridge the digital divide between rural and urban India, under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) of the Government of India.

Srei Sahaj would establish Common Service Centres (CSCs) across the country and each CSC will be owned and operated by a Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE). These would provide the village with all services that their urban counterparts are already familiar with. It is also an employment-generation scheme that would give a full-time job to the VLE.

The project would open up new channels of distribution in rural India for products and services. These CSCs aim to lower costs and provide income enhancement opportunities for rural customers. With this initiative, the rural population will get all the government services in an integrated manner at their doorstep.

The CSC scheme has a 3-tier implementation framework:

The first level is the local VLE - loosely analogous to a franchisee - who will service the rural consumer in a cluster of five-six villages.

At the second/middle level would be an entity termed the Service Centre Agency (SCA) - loosely analogous to a franchiser - to operate, manage and build the VLE network and business. An SCA would be identified for one or more districts (one district would cover 100-200 CSCs).

At the third level would be the agency designated by the state - the State Designated Agency (SDA) - to facilitate implementation of the scheme within the state and to provide

requisite policy, content and other support to the SCAs.

The CSCs are meant to provide high quality and cost effective video, voice and data content in the areas of e-government, education, health, tele-medicine, bill-payments and bookings, data entry, entertainment, micro-finance, etc. These services include:

- Internet access
- Digital photography
- Basic computer training
- Access to MS Office applications, printing and scanning
- Online examination results
- Online job application
- Online matrimonial information
- PCO services
- Railway tickets
- Astrology
- General insurance
- Life insurance
- Consumer finance
- Mutual Funds

Chennai-based Dax Networks, a network service provider, last month executed a deployment of a comprehensive IP-based network connecting 4937 village kiosks in West Bengal enabling seamless videoconferencing and voice and data transfers. This project is being implemented in phases and the first phase has already been completed and the second phase is being rolled out.

The deployment did not face much of a challenge on the technology front but there were issues related to get technically qualified teams for the implementation as the networks were to be implemented in villages. The structure and installation pattern had to be simple and easy to understand. Hence to make it user friendly, a special customised packaging - Network in a Box Solution - wherein all the workings required setting up a kiosk was put together along with creating proper instructions. This led to a decrease in the deployment time. The bandwidth was delivered by wireless WAN (wide area network) connectivity to each CSC location.

Srei Sahaj e-village is planning to set up CSCs in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Assam in the near future. The four states are together proposed to have approximately 12,000 kiosks. ■

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Illustration: Chaitanya Surpur