

Writing on the digital board

Smaller companies are reinventing ways to spread the message

FORGET television. Nayan Kheda, president, View 24x7 is pushing for Sellivision. Now what's that? On screens mounted across 300 restobars, pubs and restaurants around the country, entertainment programmes and interactive games are played, with ads in between. "While at home, you may switch to a different channel when an ad starts airing. Here people look at an ad while waiting for their food or drink. These ads grab eyeballs for enough time to get the message across," says Kheda, who's taking his firm away from digital signage to an Out Of Home (OOH) TV channel. "We are talking about entertaining and amusing the customer just like a television channel does at home. In fact, we want consumers to come back to the restaurant or store to watch our channel. As of now, we are airing interactive games," says Kheda.

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers has ranked India as the fastest growing market in the world for spends on media and entertainment (M&E) over the next five years. At 18.5%, the Indian M&E industry is the fastest growing in the Asia-Pacific region and is expected to garner US\$200 billion by 2015. Sellivision has this market to tap.

"We earn a majority of our revenue from ads. But we also have tie-ups with players like PlayWin," says Kheda, referring to the raffle-draw games that people can play while sitting in a restaurant. They select a number, give it to the waiter, and then wait to see the result on screen. And while they wait, the screen shows advertisements. "These ads are seen by all of them," says Kheda, "thereby delivering value to our advertisers." The Indian OOH market is currently growing at 15-18% (compared to 9-10% growth in the overall media market) with major companies spending up to 40% of their total ad budgets on OOH media.

Just like Kheda improvised through technology on the existing OOH platform, Actis Technologies has improvised on interactive whiteboards since 2005. After generations of being taught on blackboards and then, one generation on white boards, comes the Team Board from this Mumbai-based company. While this is another type of interactive whiteboard, it comes with its own educational software, Easitech for schools, and new value features for corporate boardrooms. "We have taken the whiteboard to a higher level by adding our software to it. We are an integrated solutions provider" says Abhimanyu Gupta, director, Actis Technologies. The company's idea has been lauded by IIM-B Prof Rajendra K Bandi, after Actis designed the institute's distance learning centre. "This education is now available simultaneously to students in Bangalore and Chennai and potentially to students in other cities thanks to the seamless technology brought to the fore by Actis," says Bandi.

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Growing at 40% year-on-year, Actis is on its way to touch revenues of around Rs 100 crore by the end of the financial year in March, '08, says Gupta. The TeamBoard is a touch screen, using a non-reflective surface. A controller card at the rear of the board connects to a computer through USB cable. The board is capable of displaying text, graphics and animation, and everything displayed on it is automatically saved in the computer, thereby allowing the audience to concentrate on the lecture without bothering to furiously scribble notes, as was the case earlier, be it educational institutes or board rooms. After the lecture is over, the file containing the lecture is e-mailed to everyone.

With clients like Lehman Brothers, General Atlantic Partners, Bennett and Coleman, and others for its boardroom solutions, Actis is now looking to expand into Tier II and III cities. "There is a huge potential to deliver high quality education over the TeamBoard," says Gupta. The Indian education market is valued at Rs. 5000 crore and is growing at 20% annually.

