



digital content for development in south asia

DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION

Letter from World Summit Award

MATHAN AWARDS IN INDIA & SOUTH ASIA ICT & Digital Content for Development



Salzburg/New Delhi, October 8, 2008: With the backdrop of identifying the best practitioners of the south asian region, the Digital Empowerment Foundation and the World Summit Award are organising together with the Center for e-Governance, the South Asia Conclave on ICT & Digital Content for Development as part of efforts to strengthen the Digital Content Movement in the countries of the region.

The prime objective of this initiative is to promote quality contents as an essential element in the creation of a quality information society and to address the widening digital divides and strategies to bridge the content gap between the North and the South.

South Asian countries play a critical role in advancing the Digital Content Movement thanks to the strong economic growth of the last years and the high levels of technical education and creativity among multimedia and internet professionals, companies and NGOs.

Yet, as the biannual global contests of the World Summit Award have shown in 2003, 2005 and 2007, the potential is not fully used. Rather, South Asian countries remain underrepresented among the winners of the World Summit Award.

Thus, the strategic direction of WSA is to strengthen the digital content industries and the creative development in the region by holding national contests in all countries and partnering with leading organisations such as the Digital Empowerment Foundation for conducting workshops, conferences and Global Digital Content Summits.

WSA's plan up to 2015 foresees a myriad of innovative content in fixed line and mobile Internet applications.

WSA takes great pride at leading this vision thanks to the cooperation with the Manthan Award, which now proactively encompass the entire South Asia for the World Summit Award.

I look forward to personally get involved with the movement in South Asia.

Cheers,

Peter Bruck
Chairman
World Summit Award



"Manthan is the first of its kind in e-world in India. It therefore deserves a lot of national, international and government support so that as years go by, Manthan becomes a more enjoyable and benchmarking institution."

Ramesh Kumar
Beltron Telecom

"Manthan is real 'Manthan'. Transparent, judicious, intense and cross industry views. Great collaboration too. Ranchi was a superb venue."

Satish Kaushal
IBM, India

"Fair, democratic, thorough and intense- The Manthan award incentivizes niche areas in India's e-journey."

Lekha Kumar
Government of India

"Excellent opportunity to access India's best IT enabled contents."

Amol Goje
Vidya Pratishthan's Institute of Information Technology

"ICT for development at its best."

Peeyush Bajpai
Raftaar.com

"The Manthan awards are a great opportunity for the smaller communities. A voice for the unheard, Great job Manthan-Way to go."

Ashish Garg
GeSCI

"Involved, Interesting, Been long since I have seen such passionate involvement by eminent Indians."

Dr Amir Ullah Khan
India Development Foundation

"Intense.....Inclusive..... Challenging! Best wishes."

Vinnie Mehta
Manufacturer's Association for Information Technology

"Fantastic experience, especially being in Jharkhand. Congratulations."

Manas Chakrabarti
Education Consultant

"Quite democratic and open kind of an event."

Mansoor Ahmed
Education specialist

"Beautiful process with rich contributions from diverse perspectives."

Rajen Varada
UN Solution Exchange

"Mind-blowing ideas. Very helpful for me to have a look at what other people are doing in South Asia."

A. A. Munir Hasan
PMO, Bangladesh

"It is an encouraging event for future participants."

Dr G Sahoo
BIT Mesra

Making best use of digital economy and technology to bridge digital divide...



PROF ANIL GUPTA

It is a world brimming with opportunities, and also challenges. We cannot afford to be left behind in making use of information communication technology for our progress. We need to work upon innovative ideas for the purpose of working towards this end.

I have on various occasions spoken and written about few ideas, which I believe can bring tremendous change in the state of affairs. These include, making use of the inherent talents and knowledge of the poor man, coming up with portals of various kinds, changing the education system, etc. All my ideas, except one or two, need ICT and digital application to reap fruit.

Let me start by saying that there is huge digital divide prevalent in our society in urban and rural areas, in the formal and the informal sector, in the organized and the unorganized sector, between the literate and the not so literate or uneducated. This disparity is the biggest paradox of India and in entire South Asia. The big question is how to make best use of digital economy, digital technology to empower the knowledge and culture rich, but economically poor people, so that we can bridge this huge divide.

It is no less an irony that a country like India which claims to be a world leader in IT today and provide services to the top

companies of the world, is unable to provide digital content in the local languages to address basic education, health, governance and commerce needs. In case of education needs, while computers are reaching, the content is not reaching.

Making best use of ICT & Digital Content

Let us not deny the fact that we are yet to make actual and better use of various ICT tools and applications. When I say ICT I don't mean only the Internet. ICTs also include the traditional TV / radio sets which can be best used to reach out to millions in a rural society like India. For instance, in the 1960s, television brought about a revolution in our lives with its role as a countrywide classroom. It was on Doordarshan that lectures on various subjects were given. This had proved beneficial for schools in various parts of the country, especially those teaching underprivileged children. We can also think of a similar connection with radio.

The sad part is that today, I can't even think of even five programmes on radio that people listen to. There are few programmes meant for children that are broadcast on Doordarshan. However, their timings are not suited to the liking of the children. But as far as radio is concerned, I can claim that there are no educational programmes. The content of these programmes, if any, is a separate issue.

Here, I would like to put forward an idea

which I believe can do wonders. The radio can be used in combination with the telephone for the purpose of bringing about real development through delivery of useful content. For instance, we can have a toll free number which people can make use of to have their issues and problems aired on radio. The radio can serve as a medium to provide solutions to these problems as well as educate the masses. The idea of creating a portal on radio, especially an educational portal on radio through telephone is a brilliant idea as per my understanding.

Talking about the issue of making the vast reservoir of knowledge and content on internet accessible at the grassroots level, a very effective technique can be adopted. We should provide net access to the teachers, who can download the matter and disseminate the knowledge /information to the students. By paying Rs 4 to Rs 10 rupees to an interactive kiosk, a large number of people will be benefitted. Yet, still the larger question remains: where is the content for the school dropouts?

Now that we have a community radio act, I would say that the schools at block level should have community radio licence to be able to broadcast the lessons which will be taught by the local teachers in local languages. In this manner, those children who are unable to go to school for some reason can get some education.

Cultural enrichment using ICT tools and

Instead of few large companies taking care of the needs of the world, we can create a large number of hubs which will be networked to the international community through digital technology.

applications is equally important. My idea is to create a portal wherein a social and economic market for cultural creativity can be promoted. There are so many talents lying idle and obscure in remote areas of our country and that too diverse content. Why not tap all these through a cultural portal. It is very relevant to facilitate the artists by creating a demand for their work among people who love art and culture. The proposal is if somebody who is interested, can either video graph or record their performance with the help of a mobile and take down the name and the address of the artist and post it on the portal. This way, anybody who wants to listen to that music or art, irrespective of where he or she is sitting, Munger in Bihar or Champaran will be able to download the performance. If he or she appreciates the art, they download a form by paying 1 rupee for it. This money goes to the account of the person whose song it is.

Economic empowerment through ICTs is very much possible and has been demonstrated. ICTs can facilitate both the demand and supply chain of products and services. One moot point here is how to use the supply chain, which you can download from my webpage on integrating vertical and horizontal markets. Let's say you want a particular pickle or want to make a particular variety of pickle. Sitting in Delhi, you want to get the taste of that particular dish from another state. So what you do is you go to the net, find out the whereabouts of the person who makes that dish and place a order on the net. The order will reach the house, the courier agency will connect with the packaging industry, the packaging industry will coordinate with the courier agency and, and in 36 hours you will get that dish in your house from that village. So you are connected to the supply chain.

Inclusive Human Resources

The need to build and upscale the social capital which includes the human capital is critical for the growth process. And here I see the momentous role of the ICT tools and applications in enabling the same, in building and scaling up the social and human capital in diverse areas of interventions.

There is tremendous restructuring going on in the manufacturing industry because many large companies are vertically integrated. Outsourcing is now getting to the next level. This is the age of restructuring. What I am saying is that if you have 5 machines and I have 4 machines, some have 3, others have 5; a pool can be created for helping industries of the world. You can place an order for that on this portal, place requisition and we will our supply chain, organize them and will give you product, whether we make it from 10 places or one place.

This is decentralizing the process and making use of small workshops. We are trying to give work to lesser known names. This way, instead of few large companies taking care of the needs of the world, we create a large number of hubs which will be networked to the international community through digital technology. Let us create a pool of villagers who are skilled. We have to network them, decentralize the opportunities. This way, things can be and will be done through distributed models. Local supply chains will be made and global markets will be created. We want our skills to be engaged with organizing things on a scale where people will contribute their best. Their creativity will be enhanced. Here we are talking about grassroots to global ,or what I would call G2G. You may even call it gLocalisation.



Prof Anil Gupta, IIMA, is Padamshree and Vice Chairperson of National Innovation Foundation. He can be reached at anilgb@gmail.com

Creating Digital Content is fundamental



SAM PITRODA

There is a Herculean task before India. The task is the development of the country. As an Indian, I would say that we need to realize how important it is the role of information communication technology in digital content and digital services as far as the developmental sector is concerned. India has a huge potential in this field, which results from our disparity and diversity, coupled with our strong heritage in art, culture, music, food, paintings.

This gives us a huge canvas of our own content. If you look back a little, you will realise that we have created a lot in the last two-three years that needs to be documented with the help of digital media. Besides, we have to remember that the content has to be about things that really made an impact on the history of India. Whether it is about our religious places, our poetry, and our way of life, a lot of content needs to be documented.

Content for decreasing divide

We have to start somewhere. In a country like India, where we have this huge divide between the haves and the have-nots, between the urban and the rural, between educated and uneducated, our efforts have to be directed towards decreasing the divide. Creating digital content is fundamental to decreasing the divide in a modern day environment like we are in. So, on one hand the job is to create whole new content and documenting it, followed by targeting the people for whom it is meant for, and the issue of how will it be delivered. We must remember that this cannot be accomplished by a single soul. It requires thousands and thousands of people.

I believe that the local content which we are creating is short of what may be used as a domestic content. I feel the question is how to bring the already existing digital content into the virtual world. We probably have more regional content than any other country. I am convinced of that. Nowhere will you find such diversity. Multiple tribes, multiple races, multiple religions, you name it and we have it. Our local content is very rich. Be it the Madhubani Paintings, or some tribal art (even art of masks), or tribal languages. All this is real world heritage of our own content which needs to be brought before the masses through the virtual medium. Here the process of digitization comes into picture.

Reaching out to the last mile

I would like to draw your attention towards mobilisation of the last mile, or reaching out to that man at the far end or the end of the ladder. My concern is that a mechanism to reflect the

accountability of the representatives in a huge democracy like India is non-existent. Where is the platform for the masses to get an answer to their questions about the manner in which the MPs, MLAs etc are dispensing their duties? You won't see even a single Panchayat, MLA or MP portal or website. ICT is hardly used to inform the people. None of those in seat of authority are interested. Also, MPLADS fund does not give scope for the same.

To connect the representatives and those whom they represent is a rare phenomenon. When I think it seems really funny, that I select people, I elect people, send them to the Parliament, to an Assembly, but they are not accountable. This is unfair. If we start the trend, linking representatives with the people, you will suddenly have 5000 websites resplendent with the nitty gritty.

If you look at expansion of governance, there is e-governance in India. However, governance is really not up to the mark in our country, despite all the money that we have spent on it and keep spending. At least I do not feel satisfied as a citizen. I really need to look at 20 processes which have contributed to improving services provided to the citizens. Have they really succeeded? Has it changed our culture of unaccountability? Have we become open, responsible, accountable and answerable? If not, then it is e-governance for namesake and not for real change.

Absence of 'e' in education

Coming to education, every school should have its presence on the web. I need to know my physics teacher. My question is how many teach-

ers are there on the net? What about places of higher learning, like IITs and IIMs portals? Every university should have a portal. All course work, all grades, all admissions, the background of all teachers, all courses, what the teacher teaches, everything should be there on the portal. These are institutes of higher learning, so they should set the trend. I believe the representatives of the people will eventually follow. Not even the so called progressive institutions have done it.

Active district portals are needed.

You need portals for every district. For example, I am in a district of Balangir where I was born and I need to know about the place, what is the size of the district, its demography, how many schools are there, the teachers, colleges, business activities of the district and much more. But who is going to do it?

Most people do not understand the information technology culture, even the best of intellectuals. It's all about openness, all about accessibility, connectivity, it's all about networking, it's all about decentralization. I think it requires people to be very accessible. If I can talk to you, I should be able to talk to a person in Uganda at the same time. How do I change the way I see the world today? Today, the entire world is going through a major transformation. The world has to be made a more local place.

ICT needs to be made much more use of and also the all new methods we will have to adopt. New economy has to be developed; new skills have to be developed. Everything today is localized, and information bridges the distance.

Value of Information & Digital Content

It is not possible to change the DNA of the whole system overnight. People have to understand the value of information and digital content, which they do not. The digitisation process and documentation of content will in the end effect generations. A lot of work has started taking place.

E-governance is a good way to reach out to people, to improve access to each. Birth certificates have to be made available through the internet. Land records should be available on the net. On one hand you need standardization, and on the other its implementation.

Few Points Vital

There are a few points which we need to concentrate upon while working towards the digitization process, or digital content creation process, or digital service delivery process. This will push the process into a fast forward mode.

Successful e-governance has to be our target. We need to identify the areas where e-governance has to be strengthened, fund them properly through public private partnership, and make it global content. The implementation of e-governance has to be at the district level. We must remember that all these efforts require large amount of participation from people. We have started doing things in our capacity. We have India Water Portal (www.indiawaterportal.org) in association with Arghyam. In energy we have a portal with Teri, in environment with the Centre for Science and Environment. A health portal is coming up soon.

The question is how to bring the already existing digital content into the virtual world. We probably have more regional content than any other country.

We have to move in the right direction. A country as gifted as India with so much talent only requires the will and effort, and the results will surely become visible. India has to rise and shine before the world.

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M-CONTENT

Mobile has become the most powerful medium for the exchange of content, services and building communities. With the high penetration of mobile devices, content and services are becoming essentials in mobile devices



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DESCRIPTION

It is truly a cell bazaar at your service from Bangladesh. The service allows buyers and sellers to meet in a mobile marketplace. Sellers post items, buyers view them, and contact sellers. Nearly more than 20 million users can access this service to buy any agricultural product, such as rice, fish, chicken, as well as large scale purchases like apartment, land, car, and consumer goods such as TV, fridge, etc. People can also offer services such as tutoring, repair, video, etc. CellBazaar brings the buyer and seller to point of transaction. At the final stages, buyer speaks to seller, agrees on terms, and meets them in person to transfer cash and take delivery of the good. When mobile payment is integrated into the system, buyer can complete the entire transaction from the mobile.

CellBazaar provides a birds-eye view of the entire market for sellers and buyers

CITATION

In highly populated South Asian countries, interestingly, mobile is reaching out to more people than any other ICT tools. Creating bazaar on mobiles and offering transaction services on cellular network could be a great leveler if the content, services and transactions are seamless and painless. Cell Bazaar in Bangladesh seems to have been succeeded in providing buyers and sellers market place on mobiles. CellBazaar provides a birds-eye view of the entire market for sellers and buyers. Those lacking capital for brick-and-mortar structures learn about CellBazaar through word-of-mouth networks and then set up shop on mobile phones. This allows them to bypass the middlemen, weakens the power of syndicates, and pushes the market towards efficient prices. By enabling micro-market makers, this service empowers small businesses.