



Partnering to Success

Information technology has probably been the most prolific value creator of all times as far as commerce-oriented technologies are concerned. While IT giants that are at the forefront of these technical advances are celebrities in their own rights, let's take a look at another group of companies that make IT more meaningful and accessible.

Information technology has invaded every aspect of global business. Technological advances in fields like networking for example have been embraced by almost all progressive organizations in the world. Technology leaders like Cisco have helped companies create tremendous value for their customers through innovative solutions. While huge investments in R&D, talented human resources and strong innovation culture are obvious drivers of

global technology leadership, there is more to the story.

Developing world-class technology solutions is one thing but making them accessible, customizable and scalable according to the evolving needs of the end customers' is quite another. Even with a formidable product portfolio, reaching out to customers from Dallas to Dhanbad is a daunting task. Take out the large customers from the list and you would notice that even the best IT companies around the world struggle to penetrate further.

Challenges in the new world

Historically the global economy has been dominated by a reasonably small list of corporate behemoths, but that is changing now. Economies around the world, especially the developing ones are turning to the Small and Medium Enterprises to help fuel their growth. With incremental

growth and greater global integration, demand for IT solutions from this segment is growing at a fast pace. While the IT giants were servicing their large customers, niche IT players with a progressive outlook and passion for innovation have made this segment, their stronghold.

These niche companies serve their customers from close quarters, understanding each aspect of their business and hence proposing the most suitable solutions to their problems. While their customer reach is a big boon, these companies have to contend with several challenges as well. With changing customer needs, these companies have to continuously adjust their business models to align to industry trends. They have to develop critical relationships and work with diverse ecosystems to deliver the solutions that their customers are asking for. This demands technology innovation, product

CASE STUDIES

Dimension Data

Dimension Data is a specialist IT services and solution provider that helps clients plan, build, support and manage their IT infrastructures. Headquartered in Johannesburg, Dimension Data was founded in 1983 at the inception of networked communications. Today they are positioned at the forefront of networking and communications in 51 countries across five regions – Middle East & Africa, Europe, Asia Pacific, Australia and the Americas.

Dimension Data India has been operating in the country since 1995 and has been working with large enterprises for consulting, integration and management of their IT infrastructure through multiple lines of business encompassing network integration, security, collaborative communications, performance optimization, data center services and infrastructure management services. With their global experience and service expertise, they were confident of serving the Indian market but were prudently looking to strengthen their product portfolio and market penetration strategy. They acknowledged the need of working



Kiran Bhagwanani,
CEO, Dimension Data, India

with a reliable vendor partner who could help them address challenges with respect to maintaining their technical relevance and solution support that could help them scale up at a rapid pace. They were however conscious of the challenges of forging such a relationship and were looking at a comprehensive partnership platform that could help them address all these issues at once.

The solution

Analyzing their long and prosperous relationship with Cisco globally, Dimension Data continued their strong partnership in India. They found a reliable partner and technology leader in the form of Cisco India, a company that is renowned for having a partner-centric sales and services model.

Cisco India was also keen to replicate the success of their association with Dimension Data globally and extended their complete support with respect to solution

structuring, manpower training and marketing/promotional activities.

Kiran Bhagwanani, Chief Executive Officer, Dimension Data India, says, "Our strategy is guided by the market transitions that affect our clients. Cisco as a leader in the converged infrastructure space has helped Dimension Data to catch and address the various market transitions that affect our clients. Cisco was an obvious choice for us given the success of our association with them elsewhere in the world. Their technology and service capabilities were a clear attraction but more importantly what drove us towards them was their partner friendly approach to doing business. This has helped us to align our strategy of leading with Services combined with products and technology innovations from Cisco that will benefit not only our clients but our market positioning equally."

The results

Dimension Data's association with Cisco India has been hugely successful with several new clients being served with technology solutions from Dimension Data and Cisco. Dimension Data's recent foray in data center hosting and cloud services again leverages Cisco's networking and compute platforms. More importantly, it allows both the business teams to develop joint solutions that are relevant to their client's business in newer areas like cloud, mobility and managed video services. Working together on the PBG (Partner Business Group) framework has seen both companies drive new business models and create new opportunities for solutions and services.

Commenting on the success of the relationship in India, Kiran Bhagwanani says "Our partnership with Cisco has helped us jointly develop new go-to-market models that we can offer jointly to our customer base, thus helping us in enhancing our market coverage and accelerating adoption of new technologies."

Ingram Micro Inc.

Ingram Micro Inc., a Fortune 100 company, is the world's largest technology distributor and a leading technology sales, marketing and logistics company for the IT industry worldwide. As a vital link in the technology value chain, Ingram Micro creates sales and profitability opportunities for vendors and resellers through unique marketing programs, outsourced logistics services, technical support, financial services and product aggregation and distribution.

Since its beginnings in 1979, Ingram Micro has connected technology solution providers with vendors worldwide, identifying markets and technologies that shape the IT industry. Today, Ingram Micro remains at

the forefront of the global technology marketplace, bringing the latest products and services to market and finding new ways to bring value to its customers.

Leveraging India

India is a big market for Ingram and it was critical that the company replicated its global success here as well. With a host of IT service companies in the country serving domestic and global clients, Ingram wanted to establish its leadership in the Indian market quickly. Jaishankar Krishnan, MD, Ingram India says, "We wanted to become



Jaishankar Krishnan,
MD, Ingram India

the one point solution for all enterprise needs in the IT space without restricting ourselves to a few geographical markets in the country." Ingram's goal not only demanded a robust list of key technical associations with large technology providers but also an effective marketing plan that was supported by its vendor partners.

The solution

The partnership with Cisco has given Ingram a definitive edge in bringing their goals to reality as they were now confident of having a wide range of technically superior products across a spectrum of service horizontals like networking, data centres, virtualization etc. Cisco PBG as a partnership framework also helped Ingram leverage Cisco's sales team, investment from Cisco to increase profitability.

The results

Ingram and Cisco have been able to continue the success of their two decade old global relationship in India. They have together completed several challenging yet rewarding projects in India and are slated to craft many more success stories in the future. Commenting on the success of Cisco's partner led model in India, Jaishankar Krishnan, MD, Ingram India says, "Cisco's hand-holding approach for its partners is an important reason for its success. The kind of support we get from Cisco with respect to training employees, market scoping and consistent solution delivery is the real reason for our success in India."

Pramodh Menon, President - Partner Business Group, Cisco, India & SAARC, shares his views on the phenomenal growth of Cisco's Partner Business Model in India.

Please elaborate on the success of the PBG model in India from Cisco's perspective.

Well, PBG has been a great success for us in India. Majority of our revenues are earned through our partners and that is set to grow even further along with the overall pie itself. We have not only grown significantly higher than the market but also gained a sustained edge with the strong set of partnerships across the country that give us reach, a large customer base and a significant differentiation over the rest of the players. While we have been able to replicate the success of some of our global relationships partners in India, we have also over the last few years incubated great India based partnerships which are now achieving global scale and relevance for Cisco.

Partners want predictability, innovation consistency, and leadership. Please elaborate on how these key aspects are catered to, by Cisco.

At Cisco we strive hard to ensure that our partners are able to keep themselves relevant to their end customers. Ours is probably the only Partner program in the industry which has partner capability and not just revenues at its core. We have enabled our partners to have access to the most dependable solutions available in the world and worked alongside them to consistently achieve successful solution deployments. In many cases, our partners have been able to enhance the

differentiation and a focused marketing strategy.

So, on one hand we have large IT players like Cisco wanting to expand their market beyond the large corporates while on the other, we have these progressive companies eyeing technical and marketing prowess. This unique situation calling for symbiotic association between these niche players and IT leaders, led to the evolution of Cisco's Partner Business Group (PBG) model.

The Partner Business Group Model

PBG is a remarkable business initiative whereby Cisco partners with innovative and ambitious organizations to serve more and more end customers through, customized and innovative solutions. This model has not only enabled Cisco to extend its market leadership but also helped its partners grow manifold through deeper technical expertise, an augmented solution portfolio and unparalleled market support from Cisco. Pramodh Menon, President - Partner Business Group, Cisco India & SAARC says, "Cisco India garners majority of its revenues in India through its partners and some of its partners in India have grown into large companies themselves. The model derives its strength from the value exchange-Cisco leading in areas like technology architecture and partners leading in areas of vertical market experience and pervasive market presence, together addressing the needs of the market and creating enhanced customer value."

Partnership is our DNA

PBG is not a routine transactional partnership, its scope and spirit goes far beyond. Cisco's deep commitment to their partners' success has been core to its philosophy since inception. Cisco's partner-centric sales and services model is the foundation of Cisco's commitment and value proposition to partners. Cisco helps its partners to differentiate in the market, solve customer business problems and build a services practice through: technology innovation, practice enablement and a commitment to partner profitability. Highlighting the importance of the partnership orientation in the organization, Pramodh Menon says, "Each



Pramodh Menon,
President - Partner Business Group,
Cisco, India & SAARC

relevance of our architectures by adding their own vertical capabilities to our offerings. We work with our partners to co-create demand, provide intelligence on markets and customers so that they can target better and lead the way with respect to marketing and promotional activities.

Which technologies/solutions are going to be the mainstay for Cisco India going forward?

Our core offerings in the Enterprise Networking area continues to be a major revenue opportunity for our partners and us as more and more customers expect enhanced intelligence and pervasive access in their networks. We are also placing our bets on rapid growth in areas like Video centered Collaboration, Cloud and Data Centres and security solutions going forward.

new offering at Cisco-be it a new product, a new service or a new solution must pass through the test that evaluates its potential to fit in the partner centric scheme of things, ability to create value for our partners and help them build a practice and derive sustained benefits from the practice."

Why partner Cisco?

At a broad level, partners do business with Cisco because their business model complements that of Cisco. They depend on Cisco to develop world-class technology solutions that solve customer needs, and Cisco relies on them to establish close relationships with customers and provide the services that are essential to deliver this technology. Apart from this interdependence what makes Cisco a preferred vendor is its ability to support the entirety of the partner relationship.

Cisco helps partners adjust to the competitive landscape, align to technology trends, and grow their bottom line. Right from keeping their partner's product portfolio updated with the latest technology, training their partner's sales team to providing them support with respect to marketing/promotion needs and constantly validating the economic rationale for the partnership by measuring "Return on Cisco", it manages its partner relationships with great professionalism and care.

Cisco's commitment to the relationship is not driven only by the revenue generation potential. Cisco creates a level playing field so that all partner types, regardless of their business model, can thrive in the market and compete for various customers' business based on their unique value-add.

Ruling the future

As Small and Medium enterprises around the world confront challenging economic environment around, the productivity of IT applications and service providers is of paramount importance. It is only through adoption of unique partnership models like PBG that niche IT companies in the medium enterprise segment can keep themselves relevant. Hence it is important to scan out for quality partners like Cisco to compete and thrive in times to come.