Case study

The Onset of 3G Technology for the Idea Network implemented by the Nokia Siemens Networks Ltd. in Uttar Pradesh - Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

3G is the third generation of wireless technologies which is taking over the world by a storm. It comes with enhancements over preceding wireless technologies, like high-speed transmission, advanced multimedia access and global roaming. 3G is mostly used with mobile phones and handsets as a means to connect the phone to the Internet or other IP networks in order to make voice and video calls, to download and upload data and to surf the net.3G has the enhancements over 2.5G and previous networks like much higher data speed, enhanced audio and video streaming, video-conferencing support, Web and WAP browsing at higher speeds, IPTV support.

3G was relatively slow to be adopted globally. But by December 2007, 190 3G networks were operating in 40 countries according to the Global Mobile Suppliers Association (GSA). In Asia, Europe, Canada and the USA, telecommunication companies were using W-CDMA technology with the support of around 100 terminal designs to operate 3G mobile networks. The transfer rate for 3G a network is between 128 and 144 kbps (kilobits per second). For fixed wireless LANs, the speed goes beyond 2 Mbps or more.3G includes W-CDMA, WLAN and cellular radio, among other technologies.

The Hi-tech era was in its full bloom when Indresh Mishra one of the brightest and senior most Telecom Professionals was appointed as MS-Setup and Transition Manager in Nokia Siemens Networks Ltd., Gurgaon, India. His current assignment was for the reputed Idea account, to help setup the 3G network for the UP circle i.e. for the state of Uttar Pradesh, in North India. And as the Job Title suggests he was also responsible for the smooth transition to the new set up. This was a serious and challenging task as a lot of revenue was in the picture.

MS stands for Managed Services which became very popular in the last decade. Facing increasing competition and commoditization from traditional telecom

products, service providers like Ericsson, Nokia Siemens Networks and Huawei etc. have moved to next generation, congregate, network infrastructures in order to offer new, revenue-generating services. Making this transformation can be intricate and difficult. However, if done correctly, working with a managed services provider and outsourcing all or part of the next generation network planning, implementation and management, the transition to the new infrastructure can occur quickly and efficiently and with reduced risk.

The key reason for managed services market growth in India is not just cost savings, but the use of managed services as a business optimization and growth driver. Another key reason for adoption of managed services over strategic outsourcing is access to best of breed services without the fear of losing control of IT. Managed services provide opportunities for enterprises to focus on their core business competencies while leaving day-to-day IT based telecom operations to a third-party service provider. Also, enterprises gain access to high-quality, expert support and best-of-breed management tools with a minimum investment.

Indresh reports to Athar Malik who is an ex-air force officer and has an in-depth knowledge about the working of Telecom in the Indian Army. On the other hand Indresh having served various Telecom giants in more than a decade of his experience has closely witnessed the journey of Telecom in India, with a few networks launched with his own hands in cities where mobile telephony was a novelty and in others where people had no idea what a mobile phone is.

Shuktij Singh the MS Setup and Transition Head was in talks with the Idea people for the preliminary discussions regarding what were their expectations. After the first few rounds of meetings they came to an agreement on the deliverables and timelines with impeccable and comprehensive detailing. After finalizing the number of sites required and their respective location, Indresh was briefed about the same and he started planning his modus operandi with immediate effect. Among other things manpower planning was one of the most important and key tasks. After analyzing the tasks and measuring the volume of work it was decided that a 300 skilled manpower, with sufficient hands-on knowledge of the 3G network would be required.

Indresh went to Shuktij, the MS Setup and Transition Had for the approval of his proposal. Shuktij studied all the aspects of the proposal and asked Indresh to wait till he had a discussion with the top management about the same. A day after Indresh received a call from Shuktij and he was sounding grim. He said," Indresh the top management has strictly ordered not to make any new recruitment for this project as we already have excess manpower in the front office as well as the back office. And they intend to use the same for this upcoming venture." Puzzled by the discussion, Indresh started mailing various Team Leaders to suggest valid candidates for the various roles.

As the time was running out, without any further delays he together with Athar Malik started interviewing the candidates. And to his utter dismay he discovered that most of the candidates were not suitable for the challenging roles offered. It

so turned out that the team leaders were letting the resources go which were already non-performing and a burden to the team. As 3G was a relatively new technology, the expectations set by Athar and Indresh were realistic. And they were not expecting the candidates to have sound knowledge about the same as these engineers had expertise of 2G only; well, at least theoretically. But certainly both of them were quite keen on the qualities like learning abilities, attitude and willingness to give oneself completely for the success of a project. And sadly very few candidates did fit the bill. "The skill issue is easier to deal with, whereas the will issue can become really tricky"- Indresh thought.

He said to Athar," Sir, this is a very difficult situation and these resources I am sure, will let us down. They don't have the fire to get a new Network up and running, forget knowledge and skillset". Athar went into a deep thinking mode analyzing the problem domain and the probable solutions. After a while he said," Indresh lets get this documented. I mean lets create a document stating that the suggested resources are lagging under such and such heads and therefore it will not be the best idea to get them deployed for the project. And then we'll mail the same to Shuktij. What do you think?" Indresh replied," You are right Sir that will justify our plea".

Within no time they created the document and mailed it to the MS Setup and Transition Head. But they were disappointed to see his reply after sometime, in which he said "Athar and Indresh, making new recruitments will take a lot of time and at the moment we are already running out of time. And apart from this fact, the top management is adamant to use the existing excess staff for the project which cannot be rendered incompetent as they belong to the Nokia Head Count and has been placed after getting through the rigorous technical and HR rounds of interviews as well as written examinations." They were completely baffled by the mail. And they wondered how to deal with the situation.

After a lot of brainstorming and weighing of the probable options available they concluded that they must arrange for the rigorous training of the selected candidates. And those rendered completely unfit for the role will be sent back to their respective teams. Balu Rajendran an ace 3 G expert was assigned the job of training them through a short but intense workshop. The training programme finished in the due course and now they had to face the interview panel from Idea.

Athar and Indresh were nervous. But they were quite sure they did their best under the given circumstances. The launch was in a week's time and things got really out of hand when the Interviews began. The Idea guys were not at all happy with the resource's potential. And they blamed the whole MS team. But they could not really do much as the launch could only be postponed to a few more days. Whether they liked it or not, now they were in the same boat. On the other hand after trying so hard for making the ends meet, Indresh and Athar were still clueless, how to decipher the crisis?