



BUSINESSMAN IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Xpress dreams become virtual reality

When Chetan Shah started his infotech business in 1997 with just Rs 5,000 borrowed from his father, it was a do-or-die gameplan of the second year college student. The family business in textiles, kept going for three generations, had reached a dead end and he desperately needed to branch out on his own.

What started as a one-man-show 17 years back is today being run as Xpress Computers Ltd. With Shah at its helm as managing director, XPress Computers employs 60 people and has become a name to reckon with in systems and network integration, with wireless networking as its focus area. Over the years, not only has Xpress Computers served as an effective router of technology between its developers and end-users, but the company has itself keenly embraced technology to serve its clients better.

Shah maintains an exhaustive database, which details the computer brands, peripherals and upgrades sold to each customer since 1995. This, he says, helps his service staff to precisely understand customer needs and facilitates trouble-shooting.

"We are recognised as one of the most wired companies in Mumbai," Shah claims. Indeed, all corporate communications are digital, and one of India's first webshops, xpressindia.com, was also set up by the company in 1997, "much before the dotcom frenzy broke out". Today, Xpress Computers has tie-ups with technology giants like Microsoft, Intel and Cisco to offer services like IT facilities management and network consultancy. B4U Television, Bharat Electronics, McKinsey & Co, Nuclear Power Corporation and Sony Entertainment Television are among its top clients.

Shah attributes the company's growth to its customer focus. "Our customer-centric business approach is what has taken us here. Earlier on, we sold box PCs because that was what customers wanted. Today they are demanding the product, implementation and back-up support, all together, and so that's what we are offering them." This end-to-end approach has swelled the company's turnover from just Rs 1.50 lakh in its first full year of operations to Rs 8.50 crore in 2003-04. In a business where retaining customers for more than two years is considered tough, Xpress boasts of customers who have stuck with it since its inception. — TNN