



## Practicing e-content

# Bringing Excellence in English Language Training



'LIQVID', the e-learning company, which by definition means to take the shape of the mould, is built upon the idea of learning that takes the shape of the learner. To create effective and enjoyable learning experiences for people everywhere, through the use of technology is the objective that Liqid carries forward. **Vivek Agarwal**, the Chief Executive Officer of Liqid, comes up-front in this space sharing the role, the vision and the contribution of the company to the entire gamut of e-learning. Speaks to **Manjushree Reddy** of Digital Learning on how he uses his brain today to create a scalable model of education and learning for hundred of million of student in India

**Vivek, a graduate from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, previously co-founded eGurucool.com in 1999 where in three years he was able to establish it as India's foremost e-learning brand, created over 8,000 hours of e-learning content, tied-up with over 1,600 schools and established sound pedagogical basis for online learning. With his present capacity and responsibility with Liqid, he has been able to create a huge**

**? You are one of the founders of eGurucool. Will you please detail some of your contribution to e-learning world through eGurucool?**

eGurucool was lunched in 1999. It is an e-learning company, designed to help students preparing different exams, board exams as well as test preparations like IIT, Medical, etc and all predominantly happening online. We had a few portals where students can do study, we had a massive infrastructure of technology and processes, which allowed us to create very large content, and also we had a very high power editorial board in conjunction with the technology team who created a very sound pedagogy for online learning. We raised a lot of venture capitals through it.

**?What is the core vision of Liqid and how do you see e-learning customers benefiting from that?**

We are not a technology company engaged in e-learning, rather we are a learning company which leverages technology. There is also the fundamental belief that pedagogy precedes technology. If we use technology for the sake of using, it doesn't work. That is one of the prime reason for which e-learning has not worked yet the way it should work. The use should be in a framework of 'what is your objective, what is your programme, then create a programme according to that'.

**?Please elaborate on the products or services Liqid has in its stock for the e-learners.** We offer a versatile range of development services and products to meet varying needs of customers. We provide content services like courseware design, content integration, blended learning, content conversion, SCORM and localisation services. We provide content assessment, learning management and other technology services and other learning support services like e-tutoring. Coming to the products, we want to be specialist in English language training provider in India market. English Edge

to create a huge technological and process infrastructure including an authoring tool, content management and content delivery system.

is the product, which is a combination of technology and content. We have an association with BBC for this. For the first time BBC has done a blended learning programme. We use BBC's contents, its methodology and pedagogical approach too. The product is focused to a group who know some English. We want to go in a different level, want to go to a different market size, and want to go to different geographies. Our product is sort listed by British Council's worldwide competition. Last year, the product was in top 10 worldwide.

**?How are you associated with British Council for English Edge?**

British Council incubated the product. So there is an association, there is learning that is happening and there is credibility with British Council.

**?Tell us about the target and reach of English Edge. Is it something that can be used by people from rural India also?**

Everyone is our target, right from the guy who goes to the kiosk to access his land records to the persons in the educational institutions. Right now we focus to India only and in the next step we will go to the other parts of the world. Coming to its reach, we have sold this to many engineering colleges around the country and we have been in talks with many others too. We have around 25 franchise centers all around India. We are working with several call centers, and engineering colleges. We expect at the end of the year there will be some 15000 learners who would have gone for using this programme. But we have not reached to the schools yet. In fact, we are not targeting schools in this way. Schools in India need a different solution. We need to work more on our product before we launch it in schools.



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**?Is there any plan or strategy to scale up the product?**

We have plans to make the programme available to everyone in the country. The strategy is to work with people who have existing distributing channels. We are specialist in technology, in content. So we are certainly interested to work with people for example, who are having Internet kiosks or that sort of existing infrastructure, who run programmes and need English language support.

**?How will you analyse the e-learning market in India in comparison to the global market, in terms of its size and growth?**

E-learning market in India is of 2/3 different types. The pocket size is where the software companies who use e-learning fair extensively. Companies like Infosys, Wipro, Tata Consultancy Services, BPOs are looking at it very progressively. Those are India's cutting edge companies who are looking at e-learning in a big way. Increasingly there is the other segment of some manufacturing companies who are having a range of options and we are discussing with several of them who do a lot of customer service and sales training. There is a fair amount of it going on, although it's definitely very small in comparison to US market. US market is huge and we are all in the race to tap that market.

**? What are the challenges you face while imparting the services?**

Infrastructure is one challenge. We have the product, but getting the right distributing channel is the challenge. There is some problem at policy level also. There are so many plans and announcements like rolling out of community service centres, but implementation should follow immediately. The other big challenge is, the e-learning companies like us need to be more open to experimentation and innovation. We have set up a dedicated R&D team. We are making investments, we are doing innovations, we are taking risks, which is why I think we are far ahead of the curve than most people are. We have done satellite-based training, computer based training, pod casting, m-learning, simulations; you name the technology and we definitely are into that. So now the biggest challenge is to reach out with all those to the people and stay ahead.

**?Would you like to make any remark or demand on the policy front?**

There are two things to say here. First, people need to recognise that private sector has a huge role to play. And second is, it cannot be done otherwise. For me, the government should prescribe the standards and make people do things according to those standards. We will be benefited if the market is large, if everybody including school students given access to the services. Today government has 90% of schools. Without it becoming proactive, we cannot make any difference.

**?Any sort of pressure comes for you from other private players, or from any other angle?**

In segments, yes. Lot of people are trying to do, though not directly. For example, there are several English language

training organisations. But no body is using technology in a fundamental way that we are looking at. The other thing is, sometimes some people become so insular, like we have to be just Indian and that entire sort. And sometimes some people say we have to get everything from Silicon Valley. None of the approaches is right. You have to adopt and tap best from the world and make it work in Indian market, which is the real pressure. ■

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