

Cisco's 'Network on Wheels'

Written by Nina Rai
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Since past one and half years, one multi-national company has literally been a juggernaut on roll, driving up to the doorstep of clients to market its products, services and networking solutions. It is especially targeting those at the far end of the spectrum, particularly those with low technology awareness such as the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The latter posing a major challenge, as they are diverse, scattered all over and out of reach. This is the segment that Cisco India has set its eye on and hence spending a major portion of their marketing budget on. Its venture Cisco Express - 'Network on Wheels' mobile van (N.O.W van) was first inaugurated in 2006 in India.

Since then it has been on the roll all over the country, playing the savior and reaching out to SMEs units in various industrial belts. Its objective is to create awareness on the benefits of technology and then disseminate knowledge about its core solutions, so that it can then "leverage the power of networking technology for business growth."

On board the 25' ft mobile N.O.W van are Cisco's varied networking solutions for SME's and advanced technologies pertaining to security, wireless connectivity, mobility, unified IP communication and conferencing.

Cisco's marketing strategy, of which the N.O.W van is an integral part, is focused on helping organisations solve business problems with a bunch of easy-to-use solutions that are designed to provide the basis of a small business' network. The products are so designed as to integrate easily and provide complete data, voice, video, and wireless networking solutions for businesses, and deliver advanced features at affordable rates.

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The mobile van will traverse to strategic industrial belts across key cities and hold live demonstrations for more than 100 customers per city in the country.

From the SMEs point of view, the latest technology they require to deal with business and operational challenges, of today is now coming up close to them. 'Cisco N.O.W Express' will be the starting point for companies aspiring 'to work smarter, not harder.' Its technology according to the Cisco management, will help small entrepreneurs in reducing operational costs, increase operational efficiency & security; maximize productivity, enhance their competitive advantage as also customer loyalty; ultimately driving their business growth.

Towards this end there will be hands-on demos comprising available and relevant solutions, with smart business solutions customised to a client's business needs. SMEs will in-fact find innovative ways to deal with challenges and gear-up their company for future growth through Cisco technology. It will be a great opportunity for them to build high-value connections with their partners, suppliers as well as with the large network of industry leaders.

According to industry estimates there are around 7 million SMEs in India, with a large chunk of these businesses on the threshold of globalisation. Out of this 7 million, Cisco offers a range of products and solutions designed to benefit about 70 lakh small business units and the N.O.W van primarily features technology of interest to this segment. As of date Cisco has sold its technology to less than 3% of the targeted SME segment.

As part of their larger strategy to tap into the SME segment in Western India, Cisco rolled-out its 'Network on Wheels' program into Mumbai and Maharashtra on 3 Nov, 2009.

Cisco is looking to reach out to fast-growing sectors like IT, education, stock-broking, automotive and textiles, amongst others. According to Cisco officials in India the Cisco N.O.W van is already catching up in a big way and becoming an easily-visible technology showcase for SMEs across India, as it has already covered many key cities and towns on its way. They reckon this as amongst their biggest marketing initiatives in India as also the key driver to their SME marketing strategy.

Affirming the company's commitment to the SME segment, they aver that their technology solutions will go a long way in increasing their business efficiencies, and since Maharashtra is at

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the forefront of India's continuing industrial and financial revolution, they are confident that SMEs here will be able to use Cisco technology as a stepping-stone for greater success.

Commenting on N.O.W initiative Amit Sinha Roy, Vice President, Marketing, CISCO India & SAARC says, "The Cisco N.O.W van allows us to reach out across multiple cities in India and to people who may never have had the opportunity to experience Cisco's technology firsthand.

This mobile networking technology showcase has completely redefined networking and its applicability across various businesses, helping thousands of organisations & visitors utilize benefits of Cisco's networking technology and solutions. The N.O.W van has successfully demonstrated our technologies to our customers in larger cities.

He also added that the response to N.O.W program kicked off in India in 2006 is highly positive and during the first phase of the program, the van successfully reached out to over 3500 SMBs across the country, with a special focus on Tier - I, II and III cities. The N.O.W van traveled to twenty five major cities of the north and west of the country. Plans are afoot for the van to cover key industrial cities in the South including Kochi, Coimbatore, Madurai and Puducherry. The van will pass through the industrial clusters, individual premises and to technology events which Cisco is organising.

According to Cisco officials the response to the N.O.W van has been quite encouraging, with business houses eager to adopt technology best practices. The accent is more on offering relevant customised solutions to suit the needs of its potential customers.

Apart from India, the N.O.W programme is also being operated in the US and Canada. India is the first country in the Asia Pacific region to adopt this model. China just recently got started on the N.O.W project. Cisco India will be adding more vans and is also looking to put up mobile 'solution centres' or kiosks in technology parks for short durations of time.