

THE ECONOMIC TIMES



A PSU man like NANDA KUMAR metamorphosing into a biz legend is rare



HE CAN WRITE A CODE AND SELL IT TOO

IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD OF RELATIONSHIP-BASED PRICING (RBP) or transaction billing management solutions (TBMS), it is unlikely that you would know the company that provides the software for corporates that have tens of thousands of customers to be billed regularly for services rendered. RBP is the generic name for the business of value-oriented billing and TBMS is perhaps the best-known technology solution brand for RBP internationally and both terms happen to be coined by Mr Nanda Kumar, CEO of Thiruvananthapuram-based software product company, SunTec.

The level of acceptance of the company's TBMS software is clear from the simple piece of statistic that three of the top 10 banks in the world and over a dozen global telecom companies use this solution to meet their demanding billing requirements and tap additional value from the possibilities offered by the solution.

Such global muscle for a software product company from Kerala was only in the realms of fancy when Nanda Kumar set out on his dream in 1990 after a six-year stint with state PSU Keltron. The opportunity presented itself when Keltron, faced with a cash crunch, allowed employees to take up to five years of leave to pursue entrepreneurship. The opportunity was grabbed and the magical story began unfolding.

A PSU employee metamorphosing into a successful tech company promoter is not the regular script of business legends, but Nanda Kumar points to what could have been different about him: "Even when I was in projects, at heart I was always customer-centric. With the result that I could not only write code or develop a product, but sell it too."

With that fortitude, SunTec found its first sub-contracted work, which was to develop a billing solution to the then Department of Telecom's secondary switching area in Thrissur. Reminisces Nanda Kumar: "The company that gave me the sub-contract provided the working capital and a single computer and the solution was ready in six months, employing just one person — myself." An opportunity in Malaysia for a telecom solution gave the fledgling company its first international exposure and tie-ups with Unisys and Logica gave further impetus to its international presence.

A dozen telecom licences in Europe alone echoed SunTec's global standing, while a \$4-million venture funding from Schroeder underlined the company's stature. By 2001 when the telecom market was going through a rough patch, SunTec had already built capabilities in the banking domain and went on to bag names like ING, Lloyds and Comcast. From a one-man operation to 500 techies working from India, US, UK, Germany, and Singapore, SunTec has definitely earned its stripes. But Nanda Kumar is hungry for more.

JOE A SCARIA IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

faces

“ Even when I was in projects, at heart I was always customer-centric. I could not only write code then, but sell it too. ”