

Living an Audio Visual Dream

By Yogesh Gupta

MAGNET, ENHANCING THE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: SRINATHA SHANDESAI

While attending a mundane training session by one of its principals, the talented brains at Actis started working on a revolutionary business idea - selling Audio Visual products through IT Channel. Today that idea has turned into a Rs 18-crore business.

YEAR 2003 will always be marked as a turning point in the history of Mumbai-based Actis Technologies. At a training session held in Goa by one of its principals, the company's top brass coined a new idea and decided to embark upon a new business journey. The idea was to sell Audio Visual (AV) products through the IT channels. This radical step to push projectors in the IT channels came across as a brilliant business move. The AV channel business today contributes a whopping 30 percent of Actis' total revenue of Rs 60 crore, which amounts to Rs 18-crore. "Long back we foresaw that AV products won't be restricted to institutional centers and strongly felt that IT resellers/retailers would eventually expand beyond mere IT products," recalls Abhimanyu Gupta, Director, Actis Technologies.

ABHIMANYU GUPTA, Director Actis Technologies. This is the company's first office in India to sell AV products through the IT channel.

FAST TRACK

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Beginning of a New Journey

Upon its return to Mumbai, the excited team took the initial few steps to convert this idea into a real business plan. Gupta, who exudes strong business acumen, recalls that his aides were adamant to execute this plan. "We recruited experienced people to set up a distribution network. The channel distribution network grew slowly but steadily and today we have over 500 partners, which include dealers and system integrators dealing with audio visual and office automation products," says Gupta. A specialization in presentation systems, teleconferencing and AV presentation helped Gupta ascertain that pushing AV products through IT channel is a worldwide norm and will work for India too. This move made Actis a unique, first of its kind company to develop an AV channel.

Strategic Foray into AV Market

In 2004, Actis initiated its strategic foray by pushing projectors first in the market. Later, it added flat display panels and then video conferencing equipment. "Phased introduction of products was a conscious effort to slowly educate the partners on AV business, without confusing them," says Viraj Talmaki, Zonal Channels Manager for Actis. Pushing AV products to IT or Office Automation channels wasn't an easy job. A slue of training programs, demonstrations, dealer meets and other such practices were required to fulfill the agenda. Then a marketing team was put together to generate business leads to be passed to the partners for better prospects.

This hand-in-hand approach still exists. "We always try to augment the profitable opportunities for our partners. Our wider product portfolio helps channels aggregate good business and improved margins," says Gupta. The company today has a ready blueprint to route 28 of its products through its partners in the near future.

Riding the Explosive Growth

Estimated to grow at 35 percent annually, the AV business spells good prospects for Actis and its partners. "Every corporate today has certain requirements for AV solutions and all that is opportunity for us," says Sachin Prabhudesai, Head of Project for Actis. The potential areas for AV deployments include boardrooms, video conference areas, training rooms, broadcast stations, homes, hotels and so on. The fast eroding line between IT and AV industry has helped Actis to reign as India's leading AV solution provider. Once the clouds got clear, the company expanded and appointed partners in most lucrative markets like Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune and Ahmedabad. Actis was able to convince its partners which were conventional IT resellers to sell AV products. Diversifying his 26 year-old traditional business Gupta went ahead to sign strategic tie-ups with world's leading AV Brands. "We are not mere fulfillment agents. We are value added distributors in this space," he claims.

From Rags to Riches

The basic business module of Actis, over the past one decade, has transformed from manufacturing to

SNAPSHOT



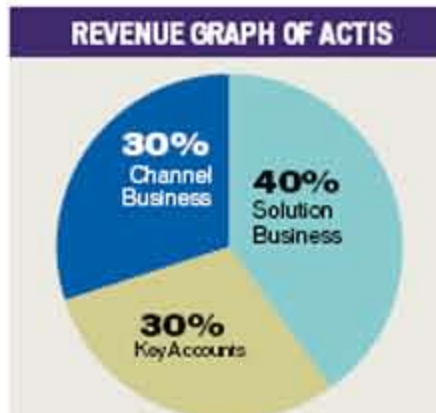
COMPANY NAME: ACTIS TECHNOLOGIES PRIVATE LIMITED
GROWTH RATE: 40% (YoY)
HEADQUARTERS LOCATION: Mumbai
TOP EXECUTIVE: ABHIMANYU GUPTA, DIRECTOR
FOUNDED: 1971
2007 NET SALES: Rs 60 Crore
EMPLOYEES: 190
PRINCIPALS: BenQ, Clarity, Codan, DNP, Da-Lite, Epson, Extron, Kramer, Samsung, Sony, TeamBoard, Beyerdynamic, Blamp, Chief, Clpearl (Schneider Electric), Coolsign, Crestron, Crown, DataPath, InterLink Electronics, Jupiter, Kaleidescape, Konifal, Navitar, Lutron, Polycom, RGB Spectrum, SpeakerCraft, Tridonic, WolfVision
KEY BUSINESS ACTIVITIES: Audio, Visual & Environment Control Solutions Provider/Value Added Distributor for AV products
WEBSITE: www.actis.co.in

with its own set of nuances. It was not easy. I personally visited the deployment sites to help my team," reveals Gupta. This commitment led to establishing a full fledged installation team which is today 30 people strong and is the backbone of Actis. The key verticals served by the company include BFSI, logistics, education, government, defense and residential. But Actis's manufacturing now supplements its AV channel business. Mohammed Mustafa, Head, Design and Implementation at Actis shares that he often receives installation orders for customized AV solutions at a short notice. "Our in-house manufacturing unit producing projector lifts, mount racks and racks come handy," he says.

Rewards at Last

The good results have started embracing Actis almost after three years. Though the revolutionary idea has some inherent risks and involves huge investments, the company is reaping good benefits. Today the company's major focus is to have a dedicated team to target key accounts which contributes 30 percent to the revenue. "These accounts are basically large enterprises where AV requirements are massive. We directly service these accounts," says Gupta. The aggressive future plan includes adding at least 100 odd partners and a couple of more branches. Actis will add 8 new AV product brands to its kitty in the next few months. A network of dedicated partners for each product range in a respective region is another major plan of the company.

The new potential verticals for Actis will be state legislatures, Parliament and PSUs. Actis also has plans to supply projectors to a major retail chain. An additional recruitment plan for 100 employees in the next 12 months indicates its seriousness in this business. "We want to expand our horizon - be it products, geography, technical expertise, employee strength or profits," concludes Gupta.



- ### SOME FACTS ABOUT ACTIS
- ▶ The AV channel business today contributes to nearly 30 percent of the company's total revenue of Rs 60 crore.
 - ▶ Actis has over 500 partners dealing with only audio visual and office automation products.
 - ▶ Actis already has a ready blueprint to route 28 products through its partners shortly.
 - ▶ Actis will add 8 new AV product brands to its kitty in the next few months along with 100 odd partners.

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SOURCE: ACTIS TECHNOLOGIES