

LIVE VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS

Time to grab the \$20-billion global IT training pie

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The Narendra Modi government's ₹100-crore commitment towards establishing live virtual classrooms (LVC) and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) is a testament to the potential the concept holds. At a time when the PM's call to 'Make in India' is resonating across the globe, the LVC concept too presents the country with the opportunity for inviting students from abroad to 'Study in India', via the online route.

Given the LVC set-up is flexible and cost-effective for students and employees abroad, the abundant opportunities for Indian players who can impart trainings via the LVC channel are waiting to be seized. While some Indian companies have made a foray in the field, their participation is just the tip of the iceberg, as a lot more still needs to be explored.

According to the 2013 *State of the Industry Report* by Association for Talent Development, US companies spent \$164 billion on employee learning and development in 2012. Of this, IT training constituted \$6 billion. When IT training and certification market globally stands at \$20 billion, the \$6 billion US chunk alone is a big pie Indian IT training companies can eye.



Till a decade ago, LVC looked like a distant dream for IT training companies due to several bottlenecks—poor internet services being the biggest issue in delivering trainings online. However, in the last few years, there was a turnaround in the internet delivery services in the country, with high-speed internet gaining ground.

This has enabled hitch-free video conferencing, making LVCs a reality for Indian IT training players who looked to impart training overseas through LVC. Indian IT training firms can deliver sophisticated training online and cash in on the cost advantage such a set-up offers to corporate clients abroad.

The Indian government recently approved the Digital India project, under which it plans to spend ₹1 lakh crore and introduce high-speed internet in the rural parts of the country.

The government aims to complete the project by 2019, providing a shot in the arm for players who aim to operate in the LVC domain from far-flung areas.

The requirement to cater to students and corporate employees who want to upgrade their IT skills is minimal—there is just a need for a laptop or a desktop and internet. A 2-Mbps line is sufficient to support video conferencing through which trainings can be delivered. For example, a Koenig employee successfully trained corporate employees in the Silicon Valley from the remote Himachal Pradesh town of Nahan. Sound broadband facilities made it possible for him to tutor his clients sitting abroad without any interruptions.

If such a model is replicated elsewhere in the country too, with the availability of basic resources for LVC training, it will become a panacea for India's

lingering problems of unemployment and people migrating to cities for want of opportunities in rural areas.

Youngsters from rural and small cities come scurrying for jobs to metropolitan cities. This happens in the wake of opportunities in rural areas either being scarce or they eke out meagre amount which is not enough to fulfil their personal and social responsibilities.

Tutoring students abroad through virtual classrooms is gaining currency in urban areas. Those who move to cities and deliver coaching from there will have greater opportunities in their small towns if the vision of Prime Minister Modi on Digital India is realised.

The successful model of Bangalore-based TutorVista speaks volumes about the potential LVC channel holds. The company provides online tutoring services by connecting in-

structors in India with school and college students, mostly in North America. Besides IT training, tutoring via LVC is another area people in the country can very well look at.

Coming back to IT learning, opportunities for IT training companies and individual IT trainers are enormous as the \$20-billion global LVC market is still unexplored. For IT professionals, skill set updation is a continuous process to match the pace and requirement of the corporate IT world. When IT learning is an ongoing process, corporates spend a lot on honing skills of employees.

For corporates abroad, training their employees onshore is an expensive deal. Offshore training companies in India lend them cost advantage and allow the employees to get training at a time convenient to them. Corporates shell out \$2,000-5,000 for one week of training via LVC which they find cost-effective, as their employees are able to learn without hurting their job responsibilities and the price is not much for the companies to bear.

The IT curricula of Microsoft, SAP, Oracle, Adobe, Cisco, among others, are global, training on which can be provided from any part of the world. Providing technology training via LVC has huge potential and India just needs to grab the opportunity to make the most of it. The time is ripe.

The author is chief executive officer, Koenig Solutions, the country's leading offshore IT training company