

How this entrepreneur converted the dot com bubble burst into an IT training centre with Rs 200-crore turnover

It was the year 1993 and the IT sector in India was buzzing with activity with Infosys going public. Among the many eyeing this lucrative space was Rohit Aggarwal, an engineering graduate from Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh. His interest in mathematics and computers had made him build a mini-ERP for the SME sector while still in college.

Before setting up his own IT export company, Rohit worked at his father's company, Essen Deinki. "I wanted to start my own IT export company. Not knowing where to start, someone suggested starting an IT training company as a stepping company. Digital Equipment Corporation was looking for franchise, and I applied for Chandigarh. They, however, offered in Delhi, and so Koenig started its operations in Delhi," says Rohit.

The dot com crash and pivot

Initially, the company was just another IT training centre catering to the domestic market. However, when the dot com bubble burst, the firm ran into rough weather. The company struggled to survive in a highly competitive market and suffered huge losses. However, Rohit believes that he found a saving grace. He noticed that almost every training batch had one or two students from Europe.

The team decided to offer accommodation and airfare to offshore students within the training package, making it a win-win situation for Koenig as well as foreign students. The idea clicked and Koenig opened training centres in tourist places such as Shimla, Dehradun and Goa. "I believe we're the pioneers in the space of education tourism," adds Rohit.

Aiding education tourism

Koenig has customers from over 50 countries across the globe. With this business model in place, the team now focusses on helping global IT knowledge seekers get training at the best prices through certified trainers and world-class infrastructure.

Rohit explains: "Due to IT training in USA, UK and other European nations being expensive, students prefer India as their IT training and certification partner. While students from USA, Europe and Australia look towards India for their IT training needs because of low costs and tourism, African and Asian students choose India for its quality and availability of highly-skilled trainers." In order to solve concerns with regards to the Indian visa, Koenig also started operations through a new modern training centre in Dubai.



Rohit Aggarwal, Founder and CEO Koenig

Traction and combating challenges

Koenig today is an authorised training partner of Microsoft, Cisco, Oracle, VMware, Red Hat, SAP, Novell, EC Council, Adobe, Apple, Autodesk, SCRUMstudy, Check Point, PRINCE2, PMI, Salesforce, Zend, EMC, Citrix, Android, Symantec, IIBA, SAS, Linux Professional Institute and CompTIA. It is also the authorised testing centre for Prometric, VUE and Novell.

The main challenge for the team was convincing customers about the advantage of education. Rohit adds that though the ROI of good IT education is proven, it still does not get the priority it deserves. “This is true because of the non-urgency of IT education and though the results are empirically proven, they are not guaranteed for every transaction,” he says.

To combat this, the team became more agile to customer feedback and market changes. It introduced new delivery models and value-added services to enhance the overall experience of customers at Koenig. Customised training at Koenig ensured individual needs of the customer were given priority.

Future plans and sector

Koenig plans to set up training centres in every continent and become the world’s most preferred IT training company by 2020. Koenig today claims to have a turnover of Rs 200 crore and has seen a growth of 40 per cent from the previous financial year. With the growth of online educational centres, Koenig also has several online training courses in place.

The education sector is set to touch USD 50 billion by 2017. Reports by IBEF suggests that with the strategic bilateral partnership with Germany and India, the need for vocational education and training will increase. The Indian IT industry is at USD 118 billion and about 1,80,000 new employees were added last year.