

DELHI HIGH ON ENTREPRENEURS

From music to pottery to rural marketing, they have successfully turned daring, out-of-the-box business ideas into reality. These entrepreneurs are the new faces of the country's rapidly transforming urban landscape

Manash Pratim Gohain | TNN

It's been long considered the power capital — a city of argumentative politicians and suave government babus. But saddy Dilli is also known for its enterprising traders who sell their ideas and products with pleasing tact and a little aggression. Not surprisingly, the city has seen many out-of-the-box business dreams turning into happy reality. And that's why 20% of 433 nominations for an all-India contest that awards

startup ventures are from Delhi.

Trying out never-tested and daring business ideas, they are faces of country's changing economic outlook and the emerging culture of entrepreneurship in our rapidly transforming urban landscape. Meet Vikas Verma, an alumnus of St Stephen's and Faculty of Management Studies. After working with the corporate sector for 20 years, he started in Gurgaon India's first chain of 'paint your own pottery' stores, a leisure activity retail concept where you can create your own designs on various ceramic items to make your own customized pottery.

Thanking the city and its adjoining regions for making more resources available for business, he says: "The entire entrepreneurial ecosystem has changed over the years. There's greater acceptance of new ideas in the city, infusing confidence among young businessmen." Explaining how ideas of the west are now readily accepted in India, he says: "My wife was in Europe and I was working with Barista. I left my job and joined my wife with the entire family for a break. There I saw this concept and decided to be an entrepreneur and emulate the same in India."

Paras Chopra, an alumnus of Delhi College of Engineering, also finds Delhi a hot business destination for his new company through which he wants to fulfil social responsibility in the form of music. "The city has many rock bands and the rock community is strong here. It gives a boost to my project. The music scene here is very happening as the city hosts many fests. So, I get to meet many artists here."

Another nominee from Delhi, Annu Puri is also all praise for the Capital. "For a startup in healthcare sector, Delhi is very good since you need brands. Moreover, since I studied here and worked as well, the networking has been con-

ducive for the business. Also all the promoters of healthcare are in Delhi which has been helpful for us."

Similarly another nominee, Prashant Pitti, is trying to cash in on the Galli game culture of the city. An alumnus of IIT, Madras and a former employee of HSBC, Chicago, Pitti's concept 'India Khelo' took birth after the Indian cricket team was thrown out of the 2007 World Cup in first round. "I was really upset at India's performance. And when I saw so many kids playing in the rain on the streets, I

felt all the talent is going waste. So I started this venture to promote local sportspersons. My ultimate vision is to have India Khelo academy," says Pitti.

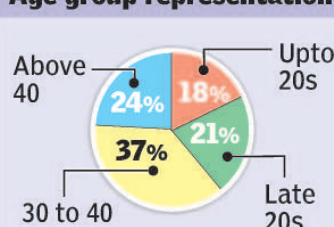
The ability to take risks is not confined to Delhi alone. In fact, Bangalore has emerged as the startup capital with 26% nominations from the IT city. Nalin Singh, who headed a global company in the US came



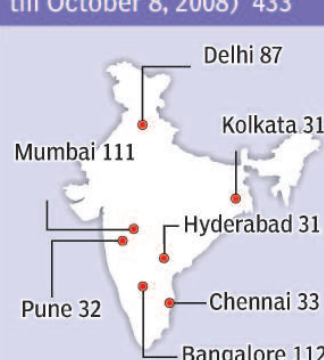
BUSINESS OF IDEAS

It's never been so good for entrepreneurs in India as people appreciate new ideas

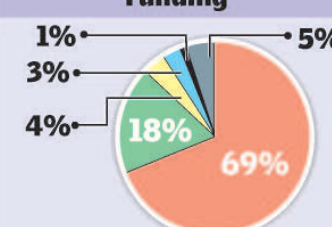
Age group representation



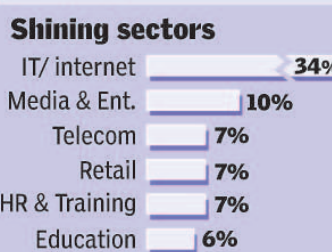
Total number of entrepreneurs (nominated till October 8, 2008) 433



Funding



Shining sectors



They took that risk and helped make a difference

Reshma Anand

With an initiative to organise rural artisans and enable them to create marketable quality products, package and price them and promote them in urban markets under a common shared brand, Reshma Anand started Earthy Goods from Del-

hi. An MBA from IIM, Bangalore, Reshma Anand, a first generation entrepreneur, switched from mainstream corporate jobs to start this venture to make a difference to society.

She says: "I've worked in rural markets throughout my career. As I travelled around the country, I met a number of enterprising women and farmers who could make quality products using locally available natural ingredients and traditional methods handed over generations. However, buyers would typically come to them for sporadic orders.

There was little effort to give them inputs in quality control, technology, packaging and marketing. This led to the idea to work with them and promote their products under a common shared brand."

This had led to empowerment of rural women, she claims. Many rural women have found personal expression and financial liberation as a result and have gone on to further make a difference to their village communities and families. Their children go to schools, the families can afford better food and for the first time in their lives, the women have savings and hold bank accounts.

Annu Puri

Taking Indian healthcare abroad is the focus of this graduate in radiology from All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Annu Puri, a master's in hospital administration, decided to drop out of her corporate profile in healthcare sector to start Indicare Health Tours. Puri says: "Since healthcare is one sector where India can offer a lot to foreign clients I decided to venture out into this field."

The focus of this enterprise is not only to promote Indian healthcare abroad, but also to facilitate ticketing, travel and providing best options in healthcare in India. Puri says: "Healthcare in India is almost 10 times cheaper than any western country. In the US, the number of uninsured people is high while in the UK and Australia there's a long waiting list of patients. In the middle east and African countries, quality facilities are lacking. These factors place India in a unique position."

Vikas Verma

Verma, an alumnus of St Stephen's and Faculty of Management Studies of Delhi University, has worked with corporate houses for over 20 years. But he always harboured a desire to be an entrepreneur and with his startup, 'The Colour Factory', he

realised his dream. Like many, his startup too has a social message. "Entrepreneurship is not just doing business, but it is also about creating jobs. Moreover, such initiatives help boost the confidence of the young generation waiting to take off on their own," explains Verma.

Started in Gurgaon, his venture is India's first chain of paint-your-own-pottery



stores, a leisure activity retail concept that has spread wings to Goa and Bangalore. Verma says: "I was on vacation in Europe where my wife was working. It was then I realised that in India we don't have many leisure options for letting out our creativity. Once I returned to India I decided to emulate this concept."

Sahil Suri

Sahil Suri's startup, Script Hub, promises you the platform to unleash your creative juices. A 23-year-old alumnus of DPS Vasant Kunj, he started the project after witnessing the difficulties his associates and friends encountered in the media and entertainment industry in selling their scripts. The focus is not only to help writers sell their scripts but also to assist producers in getting the right script for their projects. A graduate in media studies, Suri has been a camera buff since his teens. "Apart from selling my own scripts, this is a platform for writers and producers to meet and collaborate. Otherwise at an individual level it is tough for a writer to come in contact and showcase his/her creativity," says the young entrepreneur.

"There was a need for a place where writers of all ages and all genres, spread across different geographical regions, unite, share and sell their ideas. Producers or executives can choose from our bank of ideas and convert it into reality," he says.

Paras Chopra

Kroomsa is all about social responsibility with a musical note. A startup enterprise initiated by Paras Chopra, a biotech engineer from Delhi College of En-

gineering, the idea was to create a mutually beneficial business model for independent artists and bands. The 21-year-old entrepreneur says: "I was attending a party listening to the music when the idea of popularising bands online through streaming videos and embedding them with advertisements struck me. We are building



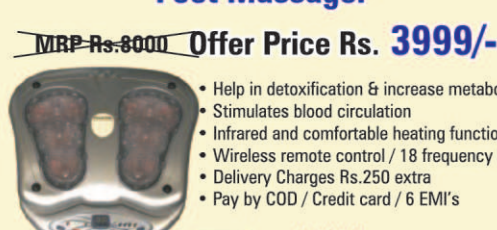
a database of songs and artists from all corners of the country and providing them a platform. At present we have 60-odd original numbers from 30 artists." The soundtracks, available for online streaming and download, are embedded with advertisements. The revenue generated on per-download and per-play basis is shared in a 40-40-20 ratio by the artist/band, Kroomsa and an NGO of listeners' choice.



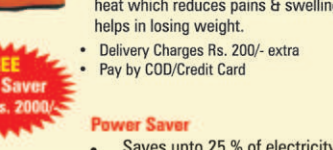
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