

LIVE ON FACEBOOK ON FRIDAY
Dec. 10th, 4pm to 5pm
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Join us in our discussion on **Why we need more women in middle & top management in the Indian tech industry**



Subhashini Sriram | STAFF VICE PRESIDENT, HR, LEGATO
Madhurima Agarwal | DIRECTOR, ENGINEERING PROGRAMS, NETAPP INDIA
Sangeeta Gupta | VP & CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER, NASSCOM

TIMES TECHIES FRIDAY++



TIMES TECHIES WEBINAR

Our discussion today is on **How prepared are employees and organisations for hybrid working**



Peter Jayaseelan | VP & MD (SOUTH ASIA) AND HEAD - APAC (PUBLIC SECTOR BIZ UNIT), JABRA
Blessing Joseph | MANAGING DIRECTOR, VEGA INDIA & MEA
Alysha Sidhartha | PARTNER ACCOUNT MANAGER, TEAMS ROOMS, INDIA, MICROSOFT CORPORATION

LIVE ON FACEBOOK ON WEDNESDAY
Dec. 8th, 5pm to 6pm
Event page link: <http://bit.ly/techieswebinar84>
Or scan the QR code

Why some Indian tech ventures are building a base in Dubai

The govt is tech savvy, doing biz is easy, infrastructure is world-class

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Wi-Fi is everywhere. Earlier you used to meet tourists and artists from around the world here, now you bump into techies and VCs. On roads where you wouldn't have imagined bikes, you now see Talabat grocery delivery services alongside fancy cars. Online team meetings are a norm. Sprawling tech campuses are buzzing. Words like AI and ML are part of official lexicon. The rulers are seen as among the biggest patrons of tech ideas, regularly tweeting their support for small tech enterprises and startups.

Dubai is trying to accelerate into the future. Ammar Al Malik, MD of Dubai Internet City and Dubai Outsourcing City, recalls that not very long ago, tech companies would build their products in San Francisco or Bengaluru and have their sales office in Dubai to sell to Europe, Africa and Middle East. In the last few years, Malik says, Dubai has emerged as the destination for tech professionals and entrepreneurs to establish firms and develop cutting edge technology for the world.

The biggest attractions are the ease of setting up business, access to world-class infrastructure, lots of investors, no income tax, minimal VAT (value added tax), and proximity to India. Ajinkya Tanpure, who provides Dubai-based venture Crossval, provides financial modeling software to speed up fund

THE GOVERNMENT IS AHEAD OF THE CURVE

The Dubai government is ahead of the curve. It itself works like a startup. It knows the nature of work and demands of the tech industry. The authorities understand words like SaaS, Bitcoin, blockchain, IoT, AI, ML.

Ajinkya Tanpure | FOUNDER, CROSSVAL

There are 1,200 startups around me at Dubai Startup Hub and almost 24,000 engineers. The region has the largest aircraft firms, labs of top tech brands, carmakers, and a thriving VC ecosystem.

Ajith Nayar | CO-FOUNDER, CAMCOM

At the In5 incubator, not only was my company incorporated in no time, we also got space to seat four employees at a very attractive cost. We get access to mentors who taught us pricing strategy.

Madan Kumar | CO-FOUNDER, D FEMININE COLLECTIONS

From mentor sessions, networking sessions, meetings with decision makers in companies, investor meets, to allowing access to their database of existing companies - this support In5 offers, no other place does.

Pranav Aijaonkar | MD, GANYMEDES

Not very long ago, tech companies would build their products in San Francisco or Bengaluru and have their sales office in Dubai to sell to Europe, Africa and the Middle East. But in the last few years, Dubai has emerged as a destination to develop cutting edge technology for the world.

Ammar Al Malik | MD, DUBAI INTERNET CITY

With an AED 1 billion venture fund, the Dubai Future District Fund aims to build an innovation-driven startup ecosystem by providing financing and investment facilities.

Saeed al Falasi | EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DUBAI FUTURE FOUNDATION

There are lots of compelling reasons for people to move here - quality of life, infrastructure, tax benefits, and now, the increasing growth of the ecosystem. It allows you to build a truly global hub with talent from India, Pakistan, Jordan, eastern Europe.

Vikram Ahuja | FOUNDER, TALENT500

raises by startups and valuations by investors, says he was able to set up his firm in DIFC (Dubai International Financial Centre) within seven days, as there was complete clarity on paperwork needed. And he got his first paying client within a week of setting up the office. "The cost to set up your firm is also low, the legal framework is well defined, laws are simple and in English," he says.

Ajith Nayar, co-founder of Camcom, which has developed an AI-powered platform for visual inspection, was to be in Dubai for a fortnight to showcase his venture, but

now has been there for almost nine months. The former Wipro and Oracle professional says Dubai has managed to wear some top talent from India, US, Singapore and Germany. "The heterogeneous pool of talent brings significant value. The second generation of expats who have come out of local universities are an excellent pool to choose from - they can work anywhere in the world. IT salaries here are more or less comparable with anywhere else in the world. The major advantage is there's no tax, and the living standards are great," Nayar says.

Great incubators
Dubai's Startup Hub has more than 10,000 small and medium firms, and Dubai Internet City has over 1,600 companies and is home to over 24,000 professionals. DIFC has almost 27,000 professionals working in more than 2,900 firms - some 350 of them are new fintech startups that have emerged in the past few months. There are also academies to train techies, incubator and accelerator programmes.

Pranav Aijaonkar, whose India-based venture Ganymedes helps companies build apps and products and provides services, says the In5

incubator is among the best in the world. "In5 not only selected our project as a startup idea to incubate, but also made the process of trade license and opening bank accounts easy," he says. And then, they were "handheld at every step," through mentoring sessions, meetings with decision makers in companies, investor meets and more.

Madan Kumar, co-founder of D Feminine Collections, an e-commerce platform for ethnic Indian fashion, is another beneficiary of the In5 programme. Kumar says he was given access to mentors who taught him pricing strategy, and the city infrastructure ticked all the right boxes.

These centres also proactively connect startups to infra providers, government agencies, universities.

Dubai is also a great launchpad for forays into the Middle East, North Africa and Europe. And given that it's home to nationalities from across the globe, selling into distant places like Australia, New Zealand and Latin America are also relatively easy.

Watch out

However, be cautious of agents that offer help with registering companies, setting up of offices in partnership with local partners, opening bank accounts. They may not deliver anything. Dubai is also a place that sees many companies going bust overnight. It is best to go through official channels.

Raising capital is easy, with a thriving VC scene, but do due diligence on the investor, as there have been cases where promised investments did not come even after shares were allotted.

You should also know clearly which businesses can be set up without local partnership.

(The author was in Dubai at the invitation of Dubai Tourism)

intel. XEON
TIMES TECH TIPS

Here are some tips to choose the right SaaS provider for your organisation based on your business goals.

- 1 Decentralise: Involve the end-user in your organisation who will be using the tool in decision-making.
- 2 Scope and evaluate cost vs benefits, and shortlist based on available budgets.
- 3 Choose a tool that complements existing system and MIS, not one that radically changes your strategies.
- 4 Check for proven industry-specific use cases, and cybersecurity.

S@IRE Sunil Agarwal & Ian Baker



You and your open door policy. We just got robbed

Gaming biz has tech talent, needs more designers



Shilpa Phadnis & Sujit John | TNN

The gaming ecosystem in India is growing rapidly - in terms of gamers, the capability to build games, the funding. The country has particularly good skills in the software side of gaming. There's also a growing base of talent that knows how to work with game engines like Unity and Unreal. In five to ten years, with more design experience, with more funding, India could be in a position to build world-class big games. Especially mobile games.

That was the message from the webinar we held last week on the gaming business, and the skills the industry needs.

Rajan Navani, MD of gaming company JetSynthesys, and the first national president of the recently constituted Indian Digital Gaming Society, noted

"We are trying to bring together the entire ecosystem - game publishers, hardware manufacturers, gaming investors, servicing firms, skilling institutes. The idea is to make gaming significant in India."

Rajan Navani | MD, JETSYNTHESYS, AND PRESIDENT, INDIAN DIGITAL GAMING SOCIETY

We have built a couple of games out of India that we are actively testing. They are in the hybrid casual category. If all goes well, these games will become casual games and will open the doors for us to do bigger things.

Kishore Kichili | COUNTRY HEAD, ZYNGA INDIA

WORLD OF GAMING

that India accounted for as much as 17% of the games downloaded on Google Play. He said there are also an estimated 2,000 startups in the gaming space, though the vast majority are currently very small. "But the frugal way in which India does things, anything we make here we should be able to take to the world," he said.

Pradeep Gupta, head of marketing & growth at game developer Gameberry Labs, said India has great strengths in core game development, software development, QA (quality assurance), analytics. What it lacks, he said, are good designers who can conceptualise and design games. So far, India has mostly taken concepts from successful games globally and finetuned them for different audiences.

Kishore Kichili, India head of Zynga, the maker of the enormously popular game Farmville, said a lot of creativity goes into designing games. "Much of it comes from playing lots of games. Add to that

India's real strength is core game development, software development, QA, analytics. We need to improve on design. We lack design talent because we don't have much experience building games from scratch."

Pradeep Gupta | HEAD OF MARKETING & GROWTH, GAMEBERRY LABS

an education from something like a National Institute of Design. Playing lots of games will help you understand game mechanics, what are the different levels, what to present to different players at what time," he said.

Kichili said Zynga has started conceptualising and designing casual games out of India. Like other major game developers in India, Zynga has designers, artists, programmers, producers, product managers, UI/UX and QA experts, and content delivery teams.

Navani said India has leapt from the console era, and moved directly to smartphones. He said immersive game experiences can today be built on smartphones, and that's where India's biggest opportunities are.

Harman India engrs build solution for safe return to office

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Harman are masters of the auditory world. Their engineers are behind the success of renowned brands like JBL and AKG. A lot of this R&D work is done by the company's India staff. Of the 7,000 employees that work for the digital technology services unit of Harman, close to 6,000 are based out of centres in Bengaluru, Pune and Gurgaon.

But the US company's expertise goes far beyond audio electronics. It encompasses everything from telematics and connected car tech to 5G, healthcare and in-flight entertainment tech. A major recent success of the India R&D team was the development of what Harman calls AccuAlertMe - an employee movement tracking and secure contact tracing platform. It won Nasscom's 2021 Social Impact Solution of the Year award.

The solution comprises Android and iOS apps for the end-user, and a dashboard for HR managers and campus administrators. The target users are enterprises with large, global workforces, as well as facilities that manage high footfall properties, such as shopping malls and airports.

David Owens, senior VP & GM for digital technology solutions at Harman, says the system records employees' entry and exit information, movement coordinates, and proximity data while within the office premises, and pushes real-time violation alerts. It helps employees comply with social distancing protocols. AccuAlertMe does not monitor or store any personally identifiable employee data.

Owens says the platform offers a secure, scalable and comprehensive

"Our India engineering capabilities are being utilised in a wide variety of industries, leading to the company constantly on the lookout for specialists from a myriad of different backgrounds. We built a remote care platform that has shown a lot of success. We have even partnered with Roche to create a digital therapeutic platform for individuals with autism spectrum disorder."

David Owens | SENIOR VP & GM, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS, HARMAN

framework for safe return to work, while also providing options for automated contact tracing that goes up to three levels - direct, indirect, and contacts of indirect contacts.

The development team adopted a design-led approach, wherein the design and engineering teams worked with the HR team to arrive at the right workflows and reporting needs. The data protection and privacy teams were involved to ensure the solution is in compliance with those guidelines. The solution's implementation went through an agile process and sprint-based releases. Demos to stakeholders were planned accordingly. The team included development and QA experts across mobile, cloud (data platforms), AI and analytics domains.

"The roll-out involved extensive training across facility, admin, engineering, HR and IT teams to accelerate adoption and address concerns," Owens says. The solution is now used by several global organisations.

CUTTING EDGE MADE IN INDIA

REMOTE FIRST: CACTUS TELLS STAFF TO WORK FROM ANYWHERE

Abhishek Goel and Anurag Goel's Cactus Communications has told its 1,200 employees that they can work from anywhere in future. The 19-year-old company uses its employees and 4,500 freelancers across the US, UK, Australia and India to help Japanese, Chinese, and Korean researchers write their



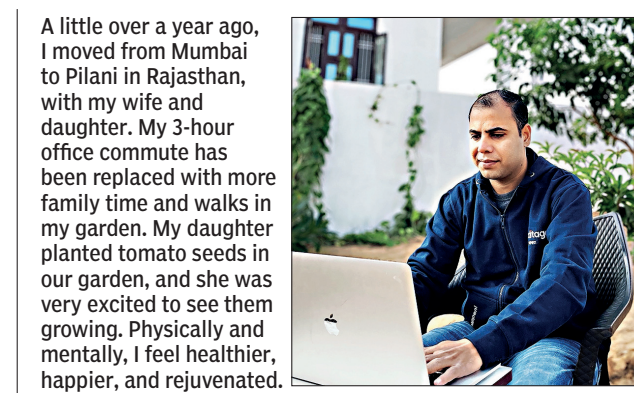
research papers in English and have them published in the foremost English scientific publications.

"Our work with freelancers, and the pandemic experience, gave us the confidence to do this. We believe remote workers are not slackers. They can be leaders too," Abhishek says.



I'm based out of Mumbai, but I spent over five months living in other places in the last year - Kandaghat (Shimla), Bengaluru, Delhi and even Goa! With the pandemic forcing us into work/school from home, we decided to make the most of it in locations that had beautiful scenery and lovely weather.

Shilpi Mehra | HEAD, PUBLICATION SUPPORT SERVICES



Praveen Sharma | VP, ENGINEERING

A little over a year ago, I moved from Mumbai to Pilani in Rajasthan, with my wife and daughter. My 3-hour office commute has been replaced with more family time and walks in my garden. My daughter planted tomato seeds in our garden, and she was very excited to see them growing. Physically and mentally, I feel healthier, happier, and rejuvenated.



Ravish Tiwari | ARCHITECT, DEVOPS

I live in the hills of Surajpur in Chhattisgarh, a place so close to nature that we recently had an elephant scare! I grew up here and it's a place close to my heart. My children get to see the Milky Way, and explore the hills that surround us, and I get to stay close to my roots.

Heena didn't let cancer get the best of her

Aadra.Shankar@timesgroup.com

It's July 2010 - Heena Saini has the date firmly etched on her mind. With the big day just five months away, the 28-year-old bride-to-be had skipped festivities, and made a trip to the hospital with a lump in her left breast she had been avoiding for months. It turned out to be an

INSPIRATION

insidious cyst. It took a few days for the biopsy results to arrive. On July 1, Heena was diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer - a rare type of cancer that affects 'one in a million'. "So I am, indeed, one in a million,"

Heena would later tell her doctor with a chuckle.

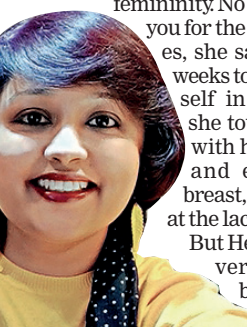
In a couple of days, Heena was to go to Delhi to buy her wedding dress. She cancelled the trip, and instead went to another doctor for a second opinion. Then a third, and a fourth. Finally, she accepted her fate and started to read about the condition. She soon chopped off her waist-length hair and started chemotherapy - or 'wellness voyage', as she calls it - at a Bengaluru hospital.

Heena, who has a bachelor's in science from Bangalore University, was working as a business analyst at Oracle at the time. With a flexible schedule, she continued working from home - or hospital - throughout the treatment. "It's

Be grateful for the body you're blessed with. Self-acceptance can be hard, but it's important."
Heena Saini | PROGRAM MANAGER, CISCO

what kept me going," she says. "I remember walking across the hospital reception every Friday, with a laptop bag over my shoulder." She also finished her MBA through a weekend programme during the treatment.

After undergoing six cycles



of chemotherapy, Heena had a mastectomy surgery followed by breast reconstruction. "It was one of the most painful parts of the journey - one that almost made me give up," she recalls. Heena had to find new ways to define her femininity. No one can prepare you for the physical changes, she says. It took her weeks to look at her bald self in the mirror. As she touched her head with her swollen arm and eyed her new breast, she broke down at the lack of familiarity.

But Heena did not waiver. Her younger brother became her caretaker.

She soon completed the radiation and on 25th February, 2011, was declared cancer-free.

Today, it's been close to ten years since she defeated the malady. She had let go of her wedding plans back then, and to this day, believes that self-love is the greatest love. Despite the curveballs, Heena never let her career take a back seat. She was promoted right after the treatment, and every two years over the last decade. She's currently a program manager for information security at Cisco. She's also part of several cancer support networks. "Talking about your journey is the first step towards destigmatising the disease," she says.



A section of Harman's India team