

Helping schools to pull up their socks

Ciarpro Tech says it can help school staff **focus on core Activity** while it takes other chores off their hands.

ENTREPRENEUR'S CORNER

K. Bharat Kumar

Jayakumar Sambandamurthy makes entrepreneurship look almost easy. There is little trace of tension or the mild fear of the future that is ever-lurking in the average start-up promoter's mind. It probably has to do with the sector that he is targeting: Education. After all, if you are in the education or the healthcare sector, your chances of success are high.

After several stints as an employee in the IT industry, namely at Hexaware and Birlasoft, Sambandamurthy started Ciarpro Technologies.

The company focuses on schools. Sambandamurthy's primary focus is improving productivity in the administration of a school. Ask him about the technology experience for a student to better the study environment and he says that will obviously follow but schools' main grouse now is with regard to administration inefficiencies. Not to mention the different boards, such as CBSE, Matriculation and Anglo-Indian in the system.

"Hence, to start with, we decided that we would develop our applications to focus on the core areas where productivity is highly impacted, than the teaching-learning side."

Sambandamurthy sensed this opportunity by observing systems in "countries such as Singapore where parents and teachers collaborate through online applications effectively."

Clearly, the use of IT is key in helping schools pull up their socks. He says, "Our target market is schools that have at least a PC and a Net connection. Without that, it's difficult to make a beginning."

iSchoolworks.com is a Web site whose framework has been developed by Ciarpro's team.

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by a survey that the company commissioned to understand the gaps that schools faced in their daily work.

The site works on a Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model. So no new software need be installed by schools. Log onto the Net and start cruising, is Ciarpro's motto.

FREEING TEACHING TIME

So what exactly does the software do? Sambandamurthy says, "An example would be the admission process. This can be done online, be it for the students or candidates wishing to fill vacant teachers' posts."

His argument is that often, numerous administrative activities become part of a teacher's routine. That takes time away from a teacher's day to focus on the core activity: Teaching students!

Additionally, performance reporting as well as scheduling of events is an option that a school could choose to work on.

According to Sambandamurthy, school authorities find it difficult to get information at the appropriate time.

"Be it the students' performance report or staff/parent information, school authorities require information instantly. In reality, the student's performance report should be accessible anytime but most schools use manual report cards that take considerable time for preparation."

At a more evolved stage, teachers could create projects online. Students could then work on these at their pace and convenience, again online, and submit assignments.

Ciarpro's customised Web site promises reports varying from simple listing to a complete analytical reporting for schools. "The concept works for individual students as well."

Students use a separate channel of services called 'AfterSchool' to link to iSchoolWorks directly. "The idea is to help increase the attention span of the individuals as well as stimulate self-learning."

Ciarpro is yet to sign on big names but, says Sambandamurthy, "It's exam time now. Decision-makers will be free shortly. That's when we should step on the gas."

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