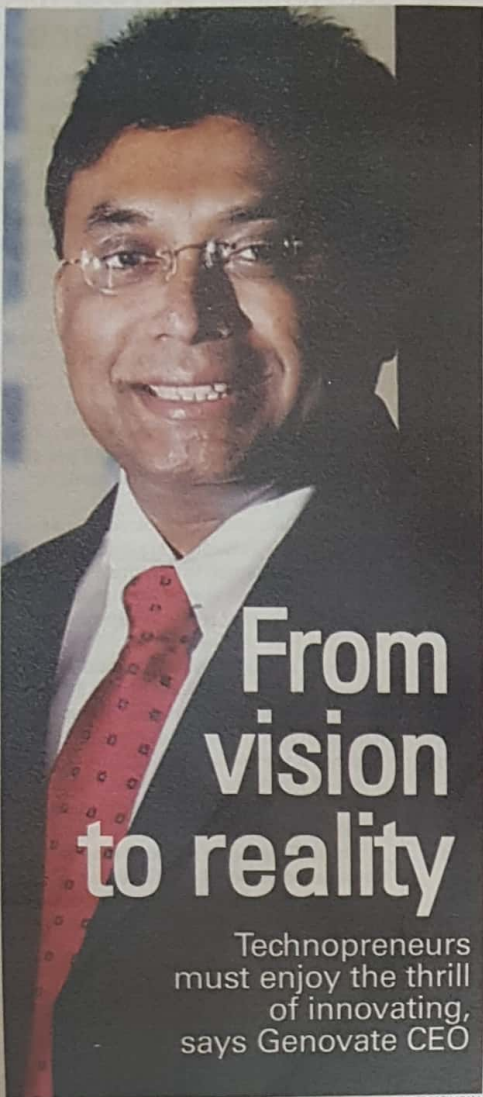


Infotech solutions for business



From vision to reality

Technopreneurs must enjoy the thrill of innovating, says Genovate CEO

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GENOVATE Solutions has come a long way. Founded in 2000, the company has grown from a single office in Singapore to a global network of offices from the Middle East to the Pacific Rim.

Specialising in software, training and professional services in SAP, bio-informatics, Web services and mobile commerce, Genovate has developed products targeted at different vertical industries, such as healthcare, construction and transportation.

In August, Genovate became the first foreign company approved by the Thai government to develop the Thai software industry and train IT professionals. It plans to go public within the next 12 months and aims to penetrate the North American market.

We spoke to Mr Anton Ravindran (picture), co-founder and group CEO of Genovate Solutions, who shared with TODAY the importance of human capital in a knowledge economy and how entrepreneurs must enjoy the thrill of exploring and innovating in order to succeed.

What was your business strategy when you started Genovate?

I identified a pressing need to offer professional training in IT skills, with the aim of marrying real-world experiences in IT with a classroom-style of education.

We adopted a strategy of providing consulting and professional training in leading-edge technologies by true practitioners – hiring only professionals who have had extensive industry experience with major MNCs (multinational corporations)

implementing UMS (unified messaging system), WAP (wireless access protocol), mobile commerce, ERP (enterprise resource planning) and CRM (customer relationship management) systems.

What is the outlook for the IT software industry? What are some key trends?

We are beginning to live and conduct business in a virtual world. For the near future, the penetration of mobile phones and m-commerce will accelerate and RFID (radio frequency identification) tagging will replace the use of bar codes.

IT will also transform how we learn. Textbooks and exams will go online while Internet searches will replace physical libraries.

Cash cards and online banking will replace human bank tellers and cheque books. Internet security will be big.

What strategies should software firms adopt to prepare for the opportunities in the future?

To capitalise on market opportunities, they should:

- Pair fresh ideas with original solutions.
- Develop in-depth technical expertise to convert ideas into marketable solutions.
- Remain nimble to stay relevant in today's fluid marketplace.
- Hone your ability to execute your business plan and have the tenacity to see it through.

Innovation, acquisition of hardware/technical skills and execution are key points as the future of the IT industry will be service-driven, with software licensing playing a supporting role.

Do you see yourself as a successful technopreneur?

Yes, I do and I'm proud to have made my technological vision a reality. And the entrepreneurial spirit crystallised when I left an MNC to start Genovate and explore uncharted territories, to go against the tide, to enjoy the thrill of exploration and innovation.

What are some mistakes you've made and what have you learnt from them?

Many, but I will elaborate on one. You need the right people who can relate to your vision, passion, sense of understanding and who have the desire to advance their careers. If you get the wrong people, your business may stagnate or not grow as quickly.

Past records of individuals are no longer a testimony to what they can deliver in forward-looking organisations. In fact, their prior successes based on conventional methods may hinder their entrepreneurial spirit in a forward-looking organisation.

What advice would you give to aspiring technopreneurs in Singapore?

If aspiring technopreneurs have fresh, realistic ideas and are prepared to embrace fresh perspectives and take risks, they should not hesitate to take the plunge. They should realise that opportunities don't wait.

To be successful, entrepreneurs have to be creative with their solutions and must have the determination to succeed.

To execute their ideas, they need to do the necessary preparation (gather skills, funding and passionate people) and plan the execution (develop a proof of concept and framework).