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 Extraedge

Tikona's Wireless Backbone

All they ask for is a little room on your roof and a share in the bandwidth, and in return you get a wireless backup to your primary Internet connection, so your business keeps moving, without interruptions

Patanjali Pahwa

Tikona's sales pitch has always been that of a wireless Internet service provider. The company has been around for a long time. They have fought the uphill task of entering a market that has been adamantly refusing to accept a wireless ISP. Tikona however, has not been one of those start-ups to have folded. They established themselves in a space so unique they have inspired CTOs in Malaysia and Indonesia to introduce the DTO that has been Tikona's flagship project. Their prized Direct to Office concept has been catching on with mid-sized companies. With focus on medium to large businesses, Tikona has nonchalantly occupied the secondary ISP role. With unreliable wired lines, a wireless backup can keep the uptime to, an admirable and almost enviable, 100 %.

Tikona has made their peace playing second fiddle but Heramb Ranade, CMO, TDN, prides himself in giving uninterrupted service. Ranade explains the need for a DTO plan by giving a simple example: If a company has 1000 usage hours and the internet companies have a 10-15% outage time, it means there is a 100-150 hour outage. With an outage such as that "some of the websites can collapse," said Ranade. In situations such as these, for mission critical utilities there was no solution, that's where Tikona walks in.

While the country prepares for 3G, Tikona gives the country a taste of 4G with OFDM and MIMO to improve throughput. Tikona's transmitter is mounted on the roof of the typical office building. The transmitter is then connected to the router with a CAT 5 cable. Seems standard enough, but the twist starts just before the transmitter. The usual ISPs for a dedicated 2MB line will lay lines; establish breaching points and then the painful period of waiting for a set up. Across 26 cities, Tikona has maintained a 3-5 day turnaround time—start to finish. The ISP establishes the transmit-



Heramb Ranade, CMO
Tikona Digital Networks

ter connection to a node, wirelessly, which is then connected either through fiber optic cables or another transmitter which then connects to the major node. The transmitters boast of the same power consumption as a 10 watt bulb.

"There is no major change needed in the IT setup," Ranade explains. Tikona just needs a portion of the bandwidth to do its job. Tikona has not had a single day of outage despite the rains that lashed the major metros in the country. One user explained how meteorological

conditions have had no effect on the service and has given him uninterrupted service. Tikona's service also provides the standard email address, desktop security if required and a WPA2 security encryption.

This however, has a few drawbacks; the service cannot be set up by a CTO with a modest budget. A 2 MB line which is recommended to be used when users are less than a 100 will cost closer to two lakhs; one of the reasons it hasn't been the back-up service of choice amongst smaller companies. A Tikona network is dependent on geography. For the network to be established in an office, it has to be within line-of-sight to the closest node. The network relies on a single-hop shooting range of 2-3 kilometres from any of the 7000 nodes available. The size—smaller than a DTH dish—is an added bonus but cannot function if a higher structure comes in the way.

Tikona's simplicity is where it wins all its points. Surprisingly, Tikona has been the first of its kind to implement this concept in South East Asia. As it tries to spread its legs over the country, the company plans to reach out to a 100 Indian cities within the next year and a half. It might be a good idea to deploy it as the secondary ISP but just hope you are close enough to a node and no major constructions stand taller than your office!