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Learn Leverage Lead

That was the theme for the CRN Leadership Summit 2009 which was held over three days at the picturesque seaside Goa Marriott Resort. CLS, as it's popularly called, saw participation from 120 leading solutions providers, systems integrators and corporate resellers from across 25 cities.

True to its theme for this year, the CLS 2009 program was packed with Ideas@Work, management workshops and technology presentations.



mix of the finest elements of Indian IT channels.

LG Tech Seminar

On the first day of CLS 2009, LG India put up a grand hi-tech show titled 'LG Tech Seminar' where the IT major, for the first time in India, launched a range of products for the enterprise segment. LG, which is largely known as a consumer IT peripherals company, surprised everyone with its new products that included network monitors; the world's smallest and lightest projector; the world's first NAS device with Blu-Ray archival; security surveillance solutions; high-end graphic displays; and a range of digital signage solutions. Delegates at CLS 2009 were the first to get a glimpse of these products because the company is yet to launch them in India.

As usual, CLS 2009 was accompanied by the two award presentation ceremonies. The annual CRN Xcellence Awards 2009 saw 35 channel companies across different segments (such as systems integrators, solutions providers, systems builders, sub-distributors and retailers) receiving trophies as recognition for their performance in FY2008-09. The CRN Channel Champions of 2008 were also recognized at the event. In short, CLS 2009 emerged as a heady

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- Cisco: 'You Get What You Pay For' (1)
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Knowledge sharing

The biggest pull at CLS over the years has been the exchange of knowledge, and this year was no exception. Chiefs of leading channel companies shared their best practices and business innovations without any reservations about letting out their business secrets to competing peers.



The road to success: The highlight of this year was the keynote by Nitin Shah, CMD of Allied Digital Services, wherein he shared the milestones of his 30-year journey in IT channels and mentioned the lessons he learned at the turning points.

"When I look back I realize that my growth as an individual is linked closely with the growth of the company. I have been through four stages of evolution—from an entrepreneur to a manager to a leader and now a mentor," said Shah. According to him, the best way to transform a family business into an organization is to create the culture of meritocracy. "That's what we have tried to do at Allied. We have appointed a CEO from the ranks of our employees and he has been steering the company for the past seven years."



Admitting that it's difficult to let go Shah said, "It's tough to let someone from outside your family run the company you have built with your sweat and blood. But it's emphatic proof that anyone can aspire to run Allied one day. Employee empowerment is the only way to build a great organization. My job at Allied is to empower employees so that they can achieve the dreams."

Shah said that being a public listed company, it is imperative for Allied Digital to consistently create shareholder value. "This requires transferring the vision of the top management to every employee."

Secrets to enhance performance: Ranjan Chopra, MD, Team Computers, shared his thoughts on ways to sustain growth by improving on the leading indicators of an organization. "Turnover and profitability are lagging indicators for an organization, while the leading indicators are the people (productivity), processes (velocity) and customers (trust). It's vital to understand that growth is just an output while development is an input."



He emphasized that, no matter what, organizations should continuously invest in training the right people. "While organizations are cutting their expenses in most areas, the training of employees is the one thing we need to invest in. We implemented this in our organization, and we saw that the confidence level of our employees went up," Chopra added.

Team Computers, Chopra said, follows a customer relationship matrix where each account manager is not only supposed to KYC (know your customer) but also KYCC (know your customer's customer) and KYCCOMP (know your customer's competitor). "Unless you know your customer's customers and competitors it's difficult to understand his pain-points and needs," said Chopra.



Learnings from 2010

The year 2010 witnessed major shifts in the IT landscape, driven by considerable changes in customer behavior and new concepts such as cloud computing and unified computing taking center-stage

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NEW PRODUCTS

Epson AIO inkjet printers

Epson recently announced the launch of an entry-level all-in-one (AIO) printer—Stylus TX121—and a mainstream AIO printer—Stylus TX220

- Qnap's mid-range NAS
- Fujitsu's Primergy BX400

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POLL

Has payment defaults increased among your channels?

Yes

No

Can't say

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CRN SPECIAL



Effective control of AR: Vijay Wadhi, MD & CEO, Locuz Enterprise Solutions, spoke about the effective control of accounts receivables (AR). "One of the most common pain areas for partners is working capital management. We measure it as DSO (days sales outstandings). In a typical SI business there are many factors which can delay the collection of AR. Locuz has successfully implemented a program to involve every stakeholder in the company in this key aspect."

Wadhi shared the process of AR collections at his company. "The first thing to do to ensure optimum DSO is to ensure that all the documentation is proper. The lack of proper documentation between partner and customer often delays the process. We have evolved a system where employees get an incentive for meeting their AR targets. There is an individual bonus as well a team bonus which ensures that everyone works together to reduce the DSO."



Diversification within: R S Shanbhag, MD, Valuepoint, presented an interesting reason why resellers should look at diversification into a non-IT business. He highlighted how such diversification helped Valuepoint to reduce risk and expand business.

"Any business lifecycle has periodic ups and downs. In such a scenario it's always advisable to have parallel streams of revenue to balance things and grow consistently irrespective of market behavior."

Shanbhag said that the diversification strategy has helped Valuepoint to create a successful legal BPO business and a language translation business. "We have aligned with a few customers to address their tour & travel, healthcare, insurance and cafeteria requirements. We are also assisting some of our IT customers with solutions like manpower recruitment."

He however clarified: "For the non-IT services we don't do it ourselves. We tie-up with related companies who are leaders in their respective fields. We work with them to offer our customers non-IT services which gives us a stronger hold on them."



RIMS of opportunity: K V Jagannath, MD, Choice Solutions, spoke about the opportunities that remote infrastructure management services (RIMS) present for partners. He stressed how by providing RIMS partners can optimize and scale up their support business compared to the traditional break/fix model employed by them.

"By simply moving toward a stringent SLA-based RIMS model, an organization can lock a customer into a fixed monthly contract. With less ground force you can service a larger customer base because RIMS brings a proactive approach to infrastructure management as compared to the reactive approach we all have today," opined Jagannath.

Building a brand: Sanjiv Bhavnani, Chief Mentor, Mentorpreneur, gave a brief presentation on the basics of building a brand. "There are five key things your brand should do—deliver the message clearly, confirm your credibility, connect to your target prospects emotionally, motivate the buyer, and cement user loyalty," he stated.



Lifeline of IT uptime: Biju Bruno, MD, Green Vision Technologies, spoke about the criticality of batteries for ensuring IT uptime.

Discussing the pain-points in choosing the right battery he said, "The battery is the least understood link in the IT infrastructure chain. One needs to know the right capacity of the battery for an application, the backup time, the quality, and how safe a battery is. It is also important to understand that batteries have to be replaced after their life is over. Your team should be trained to choose the right power solution with the right capacity. A partner should seek info from his vendor on the basic parameters of a battery."



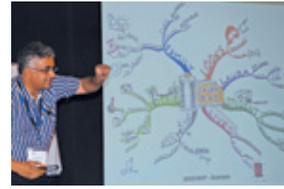
Channel
Champions
2009



Outlook
2010

Workshops

Creative thinking tools: Shiva Subramaniam, an expert in Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats, conducted a workshop on using creative tools for business innovation. Shiva used practical examples to show how various creative thinking tools can be used for disciplined thinking. He also taught mind-mapping tools which could be of help to partners while studying customer needs and new opportunities.



Best practices for employee retention: Chand Narayan, Co-founder, Value Inc, conducted a workshop on how to use the best practices to retain employees. Narayan shared with delegates PRIYA (Proactive Retention Interventions among Young Associates), a unique tool he has developed to create a matrix of the value of each employee against the risk of his/her leaving the organization. He offered several best practices that could be used to motivate and retain valued employees.

Technology Tracks

Innovation loves a crisis: Divyesh Shah, Director, Systems Engineering, Sun Microsystems India, urged partners to innovate and use alternate technologies, especially open software stacks, to reduce costs for customers.



He explained, giving examples, how through innovation solutions providers and their customers are cutting their bills during the current economic crisis. "CIOs across the world are being asked to cut costs, and this requires solutions providers to come up with innovative ideas and technologies to solve problems at a lower price tag. Open source today offers tremendous cost benefits," Shah pointed out.

Accelerate your time-to-market: The new distributor on the block, Avnet, spoke about their India operations, partner programs and the various services they have for partners to sell effectively.



"We don't consider ourselves a distributor but a solutions marketing company, and we are working with our vendors to tailor-make solutions for each vertical. We have a bouquet of services in the security, virtualization and networking space that we offer to customers through partners," said Michael Costigan, Director, Marketing and Business Innovations, Avnet Technology Solutions, India.

The next dimension: Jayas Damodaran, Director, Channels and Alliances, Sybase India, spoke about how organizations today are using data as an asset for cross-selling and up-selling thereby improving their business. He also emphasized the fact that Sybase is no longer only a database organization. "Sybase is primarily known as a database company. But now we are a player in analytics, hosted services, mCommerce and data management," said Damodaran.



Services transformation: Girish Krishnamurthy, MD, Kaseya Software, shared his views about the opportunities in the managed services segment. "With the need for computers to be running almost all the time, managed services are only going to witness growth in the future. However, to cash in on the opportunity, one needs to transform the business and delivery model into a more scalable one. An organization should try to transform its

existing model by changing it from a reactive model to a proactive model," said Krishnamurthy.

Opportunities with LG: R Manikandan, Business Group Head, Digital Display & Storage, LG India, shared info on how partners can benefit from his company's exchange program by replacing CRT monitors with LCDs. "Our LCDs offer higher TCO and come with higher viewable screen sizes. We have different sets of discounts for different sizes and we offer multi-location transactions," informed Manikandan.



He also highlighted the fact that the company is going to work with B2B VARs for the first time.

Winning in a down economy: Mohammed Yamin Khan, National Channel Manager, India and Saarc, Extreme Networks, made a presentation about how one can win in a down economy.

"In today's scenario, partners should look at becoming consultants to their customers. They should be able to clearly evaluate and articulate the TCO of their offerings, learn how to respond to customer objections, recognize industry trends, expand into new markets, and increase profitability," he said.

He also highlighted Extreme's offerings including its 10G products, and provided a TCO comparison with Cisco for each product saying that Extreme's TCO was much lower than that of its competitor.



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