

Highly mobile, to beat slowing times



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Rahuldev Rajguru (left) and Devang Thakkar at the Aquilonis office in Bangalore.

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THEIR ONE-ROOM office in Bangalore may look nondescript, but their innovation doesn't, even during these days of economic slowdown.

In fact, the technology they have developed has enabled their start-up company, Aquilonis Technologies Pvt Ltd, grow at an astonishing 200 per cent-plus per annum, albeit on a small base.

It is from this room that Rahuldev Rajguru, 35, and Devang Thakkar, 31, B-Tech graduates from Dharmsinh Institute of Technology (DDIT), Gujarat, are designing unique software solutions for the telecom industry and catering to a worldwide niche market of about \$5 billion.

What turned them from techies to entrepreneurs? Thakkar said: "We are from Gujarat, and like most people from that state, we wanted to turn entrepreneurs. We registered and started the company in late 2007." Their investment: Rs 20 lakh, which they pooled in from personal resources. He said the duo "tuned well" also because they have known each other for eight years and worked together in HCL Technologies and Trianz India.

Their innovation - the first such by an Indian firm - is a data synchronisation solution between the central server and mobile phones that facilitates transfer of data between mobile phones and servers of all makes.

Technically, it is known as a "platform-agnostic solution". Shorn of jargon, this means the technology enables field staff to access their company's central server(s) from any mobile phone, regardless of make and model.

Aquilonis already has customers in the US healthcare, hazard audit and mobile gambling sectors.

Rajguru, co-founder and CEO of Aquilonis Technologies, said: "We were

overwhelmed with our first sale to a healthcare firm in California in early 2008. We didn't even know how to transfer money back to India from the US. It was a three-phase project and our earnings from the first phase alone was \$70,000. We are now looking forward to the second and third phases."

The upshot: earnings of over \$150,000 during 2008-09 - or 75 per cent of the company's turnover - from just one deal. "It has clicked faster than we expected and, therefore, the cash flow has been regular," Rajguru said.

By May, Aquilonis will launch its flagship technology - a cross-platform suite for mobile management, a solution now being tested on platforms such as Windows, Symbian and BlackBerry - in the United States.

This technology will enable the complete transfer of data from one mobile handset to another, irrespective of make or model. "One can transfer all data at the click of a button. Of course, we will enter the domestic market with this product later on. Overall, we plan to achieve a target of one million customers worldwide in five years," said Rajguru.

In 2007-08, the first year of operations, the company logged \$65,000 revenues, with a 50 per cent profit margin on sales. In 2008-09, revenues shot up close to \$200,000. "We

have reinvested the profits in new equipment and human resources. We now have 12 employees, but this will grow to 20 in six months, and cross 100 over the next five years," Rajguru said.

What, then, about the slowdown?

Rajguru smiles. "It has actually helped us, as the cost of infrastructure has fallen 40 per cent." Aquilonis is moving to a spacious new office. "We can afford the rent now because it has fallen over the last six months," he added.

For Aquilonis and its promoters, the slowdown has proved to be a blessing in disguise.

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THE BIG IDEA: Develop mobile phone-based technologies that bring down companies' cost of operations.

DOWNTURN TIPS: Operate in niche areas where there is not much competition.

SLOWDOWN BLESSING: Office space is cheaper as rentals have been falling.