

CV

NAME

Mahendra Nath Vyas

DATE OF BIRTH

August 1955

CAREER

Mahendra Nath Vyas was born in Rajasthan, India. After graduating in electronics and communications, with post-graduate specialisation in microwaves and satellite communications from the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai, he joined the Indian Space Research Organisation. As a design engineer, he developed subsystems for India's first communications satellite transponder (APPLE) and worked on defence VSAT networks. In 1995, after 15 years with ISRO and the Defence Production Unit of the Government of India, he moved to the private sector to Shyam Group (an Indian \$bn telecom-focussed group). In 1996 he set up Essel Shyam Communications as a joint venture of Essel Group and Shyam Group, initially as a VSAT service provider with NDTV among its first clients. When in 2002 the Indian government allowed private companies to own a teleport, Essel Shyam was among the first to be granted a licence. Mahendra Nath Vyas is currently Director of Essel Shyam and also a member of the board of WTA.

MEDIA USE

Reads the newspaper first as that gives him the details. During the day spends up to 2 ½ hours on the Internet; browses BBC and CNN sites for news from Europe and the US, watches NDTV – in particular NDTV Profits with latest stock market news. Watches TV for an hour or so during dinner with the family

FAVOURITES

Likes listening to Indian classical music - could spend all day doing this



GREEN SAVINGS

Essel Shyam is a very interesting story. From the inception of the company, the Telecom/IT & Media Broadcasting Technology service provider based in Noida, India, had one basic objective: to provide anything, everything related to satellite communications and broadcasting services comprehensively so that the customers are not looking at too many vendors. The target was not to lose money on any job, and operating the business efficiently and meticulously that has been achieved. Today, Essel Shyam has more than 350 people on board and provides origination and uplinking services for over 70 TV channels, constantly adding more and growing as a company. It is listed in the 'Independent Top 20' and the 'Fast 20' list of the WTA and has won the WTA's first 'Green Teleport' award. We spoke to **Essel Shyam** co-founder and director **Mahendra N. Vyas** to find out more

In this part of the world, being green is basically a necessity. In 2005 we started this initiative without calling it Green Initiative – we focused on three things: first, to reduce conventional fuel consumption, second, to save energy at every level, and third, to improve satellite usage capacities.

The challenge is the long-term contracts. If we are signing a contract today which is terminating in 2017, we need to be careful about the price of power /energy at that point in time.

Our target was to reduce our conventional fuel consumption to half within two years, and we initiated the process by small steps. By setting our air conditioning at 23 degrees – one degree higher - we saved almost one week of our power bill. By starting the air conditioning earlier at 7.30am instead of 9am, we found that the cooling was very effective and used less energy. In fact these were really small initiatives but in terms of cost savings they have given us large benefits. We don't plan to use any campus illumination and lighting

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with conventional energy, it's all solar. Internally we are changing everything to LED from conventional lighting in a phased manner. All our hot water requirements are to be fulfilled by solar energy. We are very close to the optimum that can be achieved.

The third initiative is the most important for our business - the efficient utilisation of the satellite. Today worldwide the capacities are there but they are not being used. We ensure that a transponder is used to the last bit of its effectiveness – that has really given us the advantage to sustain the business in which we are today.

Can others follow this?

Yes, I think so. Of our initiatives, the third one is relevant globally. If a teleport is covering a huge area and out of 4 antennae maybe one antenna is used and three are just waiting for use, the operators have to really look at consolidating and utilising those bandwidths they are holding on to.

What are your core services for broadcasters and media companies?

We have a very large portfolio of services. Most of the media groups in this region are our customers. We have done major projects with NDTV – the first project was a news gathering network way back in 1998/9 and that set the tone. We have worked with Eenadu Television, with Star TV, CNN, etc., we do a lot of our business with most of the major media companies.

We are the premium service provider in DSNG (Digital Satellite News Gathering) and we've covered the cricketing action in the Indian Premier League for the last three IPLs. IPL is a high pressure and very demanding event – like a military operation basically where you have to manage 56 matches at 11 venues, with HD and 3D transmissions.

On the teleport side we have recently added the Star India Group (Fox Group, Indian entity) – we are shifting their transmission and origination operations from Hong Kong to India.

How is HD progressing in India?

Many of the major media groups have either started or are planning ►

HD channels. Perhaps for the Commonwealth Games taking place in Delhi this October HD transmission will be seen. People used to buy a TV set of 19 or 21 inches, today the most sold size is 32". As panel sizes increase we are exposed to the deficiencies of SD.

Yes, the business is there, people are working on it, at the same time there is pressure from the customers to view more HD at home, not just HD DVDs or Blue-rays. The only concern is the lack of region-specific content - that is still holding back HD in India and this will continue to be an issue for some time.

Where are your main markets?

First, our target is to cover most of India and become a reliable hub for India. We launched our Southern teleport in Cochin in June, and we also acquired the land for a teleport in Mumbai to cater for our entertainment customers, that should be available next year.

For anybody looking at transiting India or looking at transmission to or from India we are well placed with three major teleports and world class facilities. To increase our global footprint we are looking at other markets like Europe, US and Africa.

India is a very attractive market – what about competition from abroad?

Yes, we are aware of the competition that is coming but there is enough market here. The total number of TV channels today is 350 plus. India has more than 1bn people and about 28 different dialect regions. If one premium channel starts translating into 28 different dialects, that is a huge business potential.

How is India's media landscape changing?

I think we are in a very interesting phase. Radio is at the stage where we just had the last auction of frequencies for 100 cities.

Radio is one thing which you can still depend upon while you are working and doing monotonous work – it is still very popular. So I think radio is going to stay, we still

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have a lot of uncovered area, we do not have FM in 600 cities/towns.

Radio used to be a luxury not so long ago, but today each mobile phone has a radio receiver. We have a huge penetration now of mobile telephony. There are close to a million phones being sold every month but this does not necessarily mean that there are a million new subscribers – every 6-12 months people buy a new phone.

People are more aware of things, they talk and say "Hey, did you listen to this?" In India the penetration of high quality Internet will take another five to six years. TV is going to be there for the next five to six years unless something drastic happens with Internet distribution. And you know, even if we have 4G licences, watching TV is an entirely different experience than watching something on the mobile phone.

So I think the future for radio and TV in India is extremely good - a huge number still have no access to digital TV. Internet usage today is basically for email and social networking.

I don't see a great possibility of browsing and important information out of that unless 3G/4G comes and we do have a great supporting infrastructure for the Internet.

Where do you see the satellite industry heading?

One thing I am very sure of is that

our company will keep growing in the next couple of years/decades.

On the satellite front, SD channels are going to increase and many of the established SD channels are going to be converted into HD – this will help us grow. Once we have HD it requires more bandwidth. We can have an MCPC platform with HD, to boost our revenues.

We keep on providing more services and we are quite hopeful that yes, there are going to be good times ahead. We are also looking into diversifying into related and adjacent unrelated areas.

Even if the economic conditions remain static or if there is a slump, what will happen to us is that we'll be stagnant for a while but we will not go down. That's for certain. Last year was a pretty bad year for everybody across the world, but our profits increased.

Your wish for the future?

My personal wish is that Essel Shyam should be a good big global brand and provide services for all parts of the world, especially in areas where things are not happening, like Africa. Even in India there are many places that are not yet connected. In this industry the team, the people behind the brand, are the most important. We are really lucky that we are a great team.

Mahendra Vyas, thank you.

www.esselshyam.net