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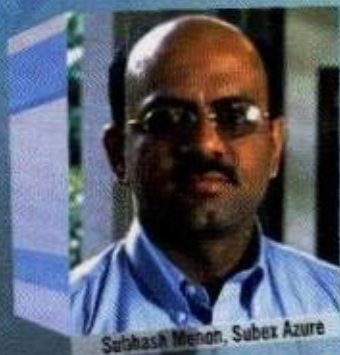Moblogging is set to rock the Indian mobile world /74

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OFF THE SHELF

How some Indian players who sniffed out the global product opportunity are gearing up for the $350 bn market /24

Not just BFSI

There has been a bit of an issue with Indian product companies so far. They have been mostly focused in the BFSI space. The reasons are plenty—the immense success of products like Flexcube and Finnacle could have spawned a whole generation of me-too players. Also the fact that till sometime back the only Indian sector that was able to provide business was the banking sector. Thus, there are a host of companies in this space.

Yet, there have been a few ventures that truly stand out. One of them is Cranes Software that makes statistical analysis tools. It has a unique business model of 'Acquire-Enhance-Expand'. Re-engineering them to add new features and functionalities, and expansion to the global market in itself involves a significant amount of R&D. Newgen is another noteworthy example in the document management space and many other ventures like these.

Big Services Daddies

It is not only the dedicated players that are eyeing this segment, so are the big daddies like TCS and Infosys. TCS, after its acquisition of FNS has been relatively active in the core-banking space. It has not really been worth too much in terms of revenues for the company. As TCS is getting much money from servicing clients, it does not seem to be too keen on the products game.

Pola-rising Market

Sometime in 2001, Polaris did a reality check. It was established in 1995 and doing reasonably fair for a services company, but Arun Jain, CEO, Polaris, knew that it would not be able to compete with the likes of TCS and Infosys. For all its efforts, it would be tough to break into the big club. It was around this time that Polaris changed tracks. It adopted the Blue Ocean strategy; instead of slogging it out in the highly competitive services domain, why not coast along in the relatively newer space of product development. The company's expertise in the banking domain would also come very handy. But even the banking domain had a few strong players like i-Flex and others. There were quite a few players competing on the plank of technology and cost. Polaris decided to bring its technical expertise on the table, and introduced componentized products based on SOA principles.

Jaideep Billa,
CTO, Polaris

"The idea was fairly simple, but complex at the same time. Rather than selling a product, we decided to present a platform to our customers, whereby he or she could pick and choose modules or applications that were required by the business rather than going for a big-bang implementation. We termed it as Non-Disruptive Measured Steps Method or NDMS," says Jaideep Billa, CTO, Polaris Software Lab.

With NDMS, companies were able to migrate from another core-banking platform to the Polaris platform with little or no hassle. And the results were there for all to see. "Today, top 7 banks from the top 25 use our solutions in some way or the other," says Billa. Though Polaris could not be a shining star in the services domain, it certainly emerged as a force to reckon with in the product domain.

Infosys has been accelerating on the products domain. Its banking solution, Finacle, enjoys quite a good installed base in the industry and yet its con-