PCQUEST

TECH TODAY & TOMORROW

CyberMedia

Looking *ahead*

Tracking Technology for

35

Years

Looking *back*

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Join the 35-year journey

It's great to be the Editor of the oldest technology magazine in India that boasts of a rich heritage of editors, writers, authors, contributors and reviewers. A brand that has a rich bank of magazines, articles, events, innovations and milestones. The India of 1987 would probably be unrecognizable to the youngsters of today. It's been one long journey and we managed to document it all.

In this Special Edition we are looking at the history of technology in India, take stock of the present and look into the future. For that we have roped in dozens of industry experts to tell the tale. Some sent in an article and that will be denoted by a simple byline. But wherever you see "in conversation with", be sure to check out the detailed and exhaustive video interview that has been posted on our YouTube channel. If you are reading the PDF version, then you can simply click the hyperlink to do so.

This will give you a ringside view of the early days of the computers upto the 1970s. The nascent 1980s which saw the coming of the New Computer Policy (NCP). The roaring 1990s with Liberalization, the National Telecom Policy, the coming of the mobile and the Internet. The 2000s have seen the proliferation of laptops, smartphones, tablets and all manner of smart devices. Wi-Fi and broadband became the very part of the DNA of this country while the 2010s have seen great digital leaps followed by the technological acceleration (Techceleration) of the 2020s. This edition is forward looking too.

We look at the PCQ Story, our very own personal account of this magazine with a timeline and old covers. It was great interacting with all those associated with PCQuest from the 1980s and taking many trips down memory lane. But that has only scratched the surface and we would look to interacting with more contributors, readers and industry people for their rich stories.

CyberMedia launched India's first software industry magazine Dataquest in 1982 and after that it has been a pioneer all the way. The telecom industry magazine Voice & Data. CIOL.com, India's first tech news site in 1996. DQ Channels India, for channel partners. The DQ Week. BioSpectrum magazine. Living Digital, the tech lifestyle magazine. Global Services magazine. DARE for entrepreneurs.

We look forward to your views, comments and suggestions via email or any of the social media channels.

We hope you enjoy reading this Special Edition. A lot of effort has been put into it.

Sunil Rajguru

"We would like to thank all our esteemed contributors for their great insights for this Special Edition. Together they have told the amazing story of India's tech journey thus far and the road ahead of us."

–Editor

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Taking computer education to the masses

in conversation with
RAJENDRA S PAWAR

Edited excerpts from an exhaustive video interview…

The state of IT education in 1981

"**A**t that time, it was non-existent. But the manufacturing industry was already anticipating a problem of talent shortage. This was the number one concern: How will the industry grow? NIIT was born out of that threat. It was a problem and we saw that as an opportunity. At that time there were a handful of people coming out of the IITs, but they were not the ones writing programs. There was nothing significant to build talent for the sector.

Basic courseware for a brand new era

The first two courses that NIIT announced in 1981 were one, an entry level BASIC. It was a 4-week programme, 5 days a week and 2 hours a day. We had a long-term programme: Entry level COBOL, for 12 weeks. The early thrust was on languages. COBOL was at that time state of the art. We also taught FORTRAN to engineers and scientists.

The continuous evolution of training

Very soon we realized that programming is one part of it. We need to do analysis. You need to define a problem. Companies wanted to build a strategy. We spent a lot of time doing user education for corporates and ran a programme for them called: How to buy a computer. As people came to study, they articulated what more they wanted. We were extremely responsive. We covered the whole gamut of information system management at one level down to entry-level programming. It was languages, structured system analysis and design, structured methodology, database, database design… all of the "nuts and bolts" issues in the 1980s that were important.

We were trying to track developments in all the places where there was a thought leadership. There were a few campuses which were doing path breaking work and we interacted with them. Edward Yourdon was the father of software engineering. We made an arrangement with his company to teach structured methodology and TCS was a very big participant. We tried to expand to cover all constituencies, but quite clearly the largest need was for people who could write programs.

NIIT: First of its kind franchise in education

We created the idea of a franchise for education which had never been done before. We found like-minded entrepreneurs in cities and motivated them to go back to their towns and set up an NIIT centre. If you walked into

any NIIT centre at its peak (there were thousands) it would give you the same look and feel. *Far Eastern Economic Review* talked of it as the McDonald's of education.

1990s: Y2K & the perfect storm

1990s was a golden decade. For the IT sector there were a couple of things happening at the same time. India's Liberalization had happened. We got the STP policy. India needed foreign exchange. We got a lot of push. At the world stage, the Y2K opportunity was becoming large and the West knew that if they didn't fix their problem by the Year 2000 they would have a catastrophe. They were willing to spend a tonne of money. The Internet had arrived. It was a perfect storm. 1990s was an era where Y2K added fuel to what was already a high growth area.

After the bubble burst, post-Y2K, a few years later we started growing again and went into new technologies. Governments were beginning to invest. The PC was in the home. Everyone was getting on to the Internet. There was growth and a huge amount of tailwind that took us into the future.

The evolution still continues...

By this time, we were in the face of every consumer in India. We were 90% B2C and had some amount of leadership training. But over a period of time as our international business grew, we found a solid demand coming from corporations. Today that is 80% of our business. That's for the Fortune 100 companies, in all sectors: healthcare, airlines, engineering, oil etc. For these companies we do something called Managed Training Services. It's like a learning process being outsourced.

Future of online education: Who'll get the blend right?

Education is a very engaged and involved process. Every learner learns in a unique way. Trying to put everything into a process has its downsides. Human intervention is a must. What happened during Covid, everybody did online learning but now you are seeing the underbelly. Online learning has a very important role to play, but a very specific role. A proper hybrid blended model is the solution. So, the one thing is who gets the blend right? That will make the difference between making an impact on people's lives or just giving them a piece of paper."

(These are excerpts from a video chat with Sunil Rajguru. Catch the complete interview on the PCQuest YouTube channel.)

RAJENDRA S PAWAR

Chairman & Co-founder, NIIT
Founder, NIIT University