



WHITE PAPER Learning Solutions for the Next Generation

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Introduction

It's a new script for South East Asia: Growth – On Scale. Since global deployment of high-speed communications renders geography almost irrelevant, any digital task can be performed equally well from any location on the globe. India and China in South East Asia have overwhelmingly become preferred destinations for outsourcing software and business processes. As both countries race to the top of the value chain, it is interesting to note that they have the ability to create sophisticated technology at a fraction of the cost in developed countries.

For long, classic assumptions have been that low-wage countries focus on labor-intensive production, while developed countries focus on innovation and capital-intensive production. Today, it is a matter of pride for us that history is being rewritten. India and China have the core capabilities of becoming the world's fastest growing economies. If India has to capitalize on the emerging opportunities in the knowledge economy, it needs to invest strongly in knowledge production, skill sets development, R & D and higher education. The question really is not when, but how we can overcome educational, infrastructural and other challenges to empower our people to partake in this new-age economy?

This paper describes how Liqwid Krystal's online academic learning exchange '**gyanX**' can bring hands-on IT learning to masses across India. For instance, gyanX helps a student to advance her proficiency in skills specified by the industry and obtain associated certification. More importantly, the industry should be able to achieve critical benefits in terms of improved productivity and also be able to save costs and time in training.

The Asian Sphinx

India, China and other markets in South East Asia offer an environment for growth – an environment that allows us to experiment with new technologies, new products, new markets and new applications. But, it is often only the students from major cities and premier colleges who get an opportunity to be part of the campus recruitment process.

To put things in perspective, we need to delve on a NASSCOM-KPMG survey that predicts a shortage of 0.5 million personnel in the ICT and ITeS sectors in India by 2008. Corporations have recognized the need to think not only within IT ranks but even across most corporate departments such as finance, customer service, sales & marketing and human resources.

To add to this situation, there is currently no academia-industry platform for setting up a curriculum, drafting of skill-sets and a working partnership to drive learning. NASSCOM, CII and a few other corporations have started fostering the industry-academia partnership programs.

Strategy & Roadmap

Innovations have a critical market in developing economies. The collaborative ecosystems that are typically part of these economies encourage and reward the best innovations, by adopting them. Companies need to build social and knowledge hubs to establish a source of competitive advantage not easily displaced. Today, employees increasingly seek meaning, social connection, and identity from their work.

With over 300 person years of research investments, Liqwid Krystal has developed an online academic learning exchange ideal for the situation. Powered by the company's CodeSaw™ technology, learners

get access to a virtual computer lab in a Web browser. A common Web browser can be used to develop programs in more than 25 of the most commonly used programming languages. Learners can be evaluated for the practical programming skills that they have learnt through online tests. These tests comprise of not just objective questions, but actual programming projects. All of this at zero cost of maintenance since there is no additional software installed on the desktop. The platform – gyanX - is designed to deliver IT skills in a highly cost-effective manner.

Inside gyanX

The ‘Content’ on the gyanX platform is a compelling value and one of the key differentiators of this decisive platform. Partnerships with Fortune 500 global providers ensure that the gyanX platform maintains its neutrality and richness. Courses from NETg and Course Technology add depth to the learning platform. Students have access to a deep pool of content from Safari®’s venture partners O’Reilly Media and Pearson, whose imprints include Addison-Wesley, Alpha, Cisco Press, Adobe Press, New Riders, Peachpit Press, Prentice Hall PTR, Que and Sams as well as other well-known publishers such as Microsoft Press and IBM Redbooks. The platform carries over 700 courses and 3500 books that cover the entire gamut of skills used in the IT industry.

The gyanX way

gyanX’s primary mission is to help students connect to jobs. We believe it is just as important to ensure that they obtain employable and industry relevant skills, so as to cut out the learning and finishing school cycles at both ends. We conceived a 3-Tier model to enable students to acquire skill sets in suitable increments and scale progressively based on our survey conducted amongst engineering students with diverse interests from various universities. We recognized that students needed to go through a good mix of programming foundation, for instance Data Structures, Algorithms, Networking Basics etc and soft skills, like Business Communication, familiarity with Technical English etc. during the first two semesters. Hence, this learning would form part of Tier 1. During their second and third years, the students start to think of electives, and specialization streams. They begin to mould themselves for a career ahead, getting ready for campus interviews and career orientation. Tier 2 with various vertical topics like Open systems, Web/Middleware, Microsoft Technologies, Mainframe Technologies, Communication Technologies, Embedded Systems and Databases is a real learning crucible. In today’s global sourcing environment, companies need to be in a ‘reinvent’ mode and align technology with business. IT drives the bottomline in today’s highly focused business environment. In the fourth year of the student lifecycle, the student prepares herself for the world outside the campus. The ‘Certification’ process at gyanX, endorsed by institutions like IITB and IISc, and [if required] the host University takes care of this imperative.

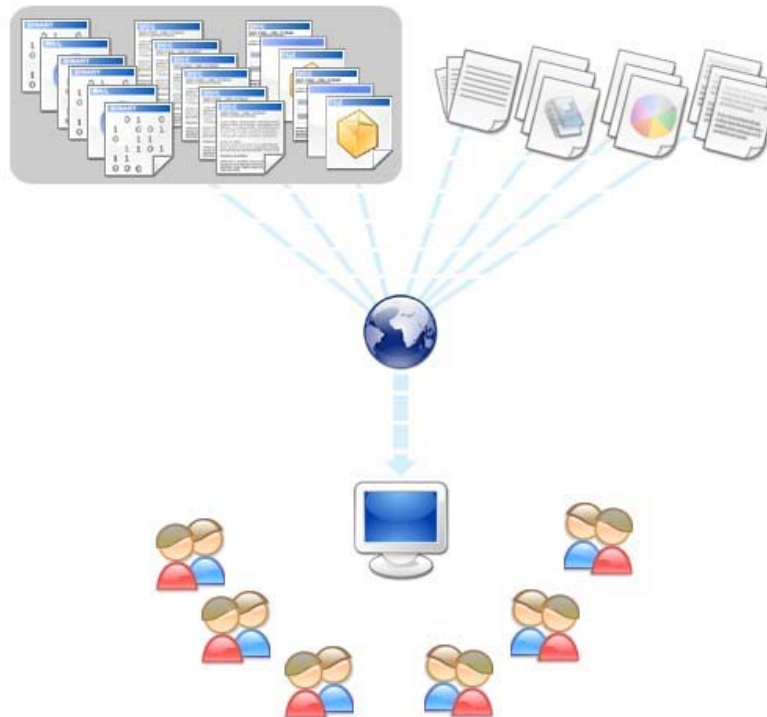
A Case in Proof

Liquid Krystal has signed an agreement with Vishveshwaraiah Technological University in Karnataka to deliver 50 books and 50 courses to its students on gyanX. The program is designed to build a well-rounded IT professional – soft skills, programming skills and career skills are developed in a phased manner over four years of college. It will allow graduates to qualify for jobs in top companies and also greatly reduce the burden of training in companies.

Since gyanX integrates a hands-on virtual computer laboratory with content, students will be able to observe sample programs in action, practice by writing programs in a Web browser and will then be

evaluated on the skills that they have acquired. The program will reach around 120 colleges affiliated to the University around the state.

Exhibit 1: A Virtual Learning & Library Environment



In Conclusion

Innovations evolve to real solutions when they intrinsically solve hard issues. Solutions need to be driven by meritocracy and represent diversity in delivering tangible value. gyanX is very middle class in concept. It helps fuel the concept of hands on learning through a browser-based platform; requires no special hardware or software. And above all is integrated with world-class content from top publishers and learning companies. In fact, gyanX is a technical synergy that addresses regional pain points with a global flavor while providing scale and cost-efficiencies.