

Building a sustainable business is more about creating a differentiator

[Business](#)



Realizing the potential future businesses from his venture of free mail to domain hosting to digital advertising solution space Ashish Shah, Founder, Vertoz Media has sensed the right business opportunities while traversing the entrepreneurial journey since 1998.

Despite the market being cluttered with a numbers of digital advertising solution providers, Ashish has come up with the complete advertising and monetization solution that helps buying and selling of a media, digital media in real time without human intervention.

Thus narrating his journey of entrepreneurship Ashish Shah spoke to Entrepreneur India.

Please tell us about your entrepreneurial journey?

We started our journey in 1998 with the company called Indiafreemail. com. The website was launched to connect the Indians living abroad with their relatives here in India where people can post the message with postal address where they want to deliver it.

We use to take the print out of that message and courier it to the recipients. Hence revenue source was the advertising but the market wasn't ready for it in 2000 for the advertising industry so eventually we had to shut the business.

What led you to venture into advertising business?

While registering the domain name for Indiafreemail. com we realized that registering a domain name and providing cloud hosting services was also a good business and we eventually started it. Simultaneously in February <https://assignbuster.com/building-a-sustainable-business-is-more-about-creating-a-differentiator/>

2012, we thought of venturing into advertising business and started Vertoz. It was a debt-funded company which is fully paid back. We roughly invested \$ 3-5 mn to start in San Francisco, US first and then in 2014 in India.

What was your family reaction towards your decision?

My family is already in business they know about the ups and downs and pros and cons of the business. They were always supporting my decision. I learnt the ethics of the business from my father. He taught me that you need to have 100 percent ethics intact.

What is unique with the advertising solution Programmatic Plex?

We call it as Engineers' Programmatic Plex. It is the complete advertising and monetisation solution. It offers all the advertiser side and publisher side features under one roof. It's a buying and selling of a media, digital media in real time without human intervention. We avail all the channels in the advertising side including display, mobile and video among others for the advertisers and the publishers.

Initially, the challenge was to build the international standard product and then we were able to gain the traction from the customers. Currently the India market is contributing less than 5 percent of the total global revenue.

Which are the companies you have worked with so far?

There are two sides of the companies. One is the partners whom we work with and second is the advertisers which are our key customers. In India we work with premium brands like Lenovo and Godrej and in international market we work with Amazon kind of companies. Currently everybody is

moving towards a digital front. Premium brands and startups in India moving their budget from offline to online channel of advertising.

How an entrepreneur can adapt the skills required for different ventures and build a sustainable business?

It's about you listen the market what happening to your surroundings, talking to your customers, partners. At the end the day if you have some bandwidth available you can start learning about it, start investing in that idea and see if it's workable to scale up or you may scale it down.

Building a sustainable business is more about creating a differentiator. If you have a differentiator you can lead the market. You need to have right people supporting you. And if the business model is not leading to some profit, you are just spending and not reaching to break-even point it doesn't make sense.

How is the market for Prgrammtic Plex in India?

The Indian market is around a billion dollar and the global market is overall \$ 150- 200. In India it's a very miniscule and small size market compared to the international market. Digital India initiative is helping but market still it will take another 2-3 years to become sizeable market compared mature market internationally.

What are your future plans of expansion and funding?

We will look at the multiple tranches of funding may be \$8 - \$10 mn and scale it up with the growth. We are in discussion with local VCs and investors from US. We may do acquisition in future if it's matching our vision.

What is your current market presence?

As of now we have seven offices across India, US, UK and Dubai. The current strength of the people is around 180 people. Around 80 percent of the team is based out of India. And in Mumbai we have two offices and eventually we are planning to open our offices in Delhi and Bagalore. Further eventually by 2018 we are looking to get into Israel.

How governing policies are conducive in India?

The policies are similar to digital laws in India which is about privacy side of the business. Though every country has its different definition of privacy more or less it's similar. We don't take the personally identified information.

What is your current revenue?

Our revenues are in couple of million dollars as of now and growing 100 percent on a year-on-year basis.