

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Several businesses in India are recession-proof

Economic slowdown. Business worries. None of that was visible in the TiE Entrepreneurship Summit in Bangalore that started on Tuesday. If was anything visible in abundance, it was a sense of optimism about India's ability to create a whole new world through entrepreneurship

Debojyoti Ghosh & Swati Anand / TNN

Bangalore:



Moorthy Uppaluri, GM in Microsoft India, Sheila Gulati, GM in Microsoft Corp, Ashok Kumar Manoli, Karnataka IT secretary, and Suren G Dutia, CEO of TiE Global, launch Microsoft BizSpark. The BizSpark programme will provide Indian startups with software, support and visibility during their first three years, with no upfront costs. The technologies provided include a host of Microsoft products, including design tools, server software, Windows, Office and hosting servers. Microsoft has also put together a set of network partners — including TiE, National Entrepreneurship Network (NEN), Nasscom, and some venture capitalists — to facilitate access to technology and provide guidance, mentorship and resources. BizSpark is available to all startups engaged in the development of software-based product or service and who have been in business for less than three years.

Sanjay Mehta, CEO of MAIA Intelligence, a Mumbai-based, 40-people company that's into business analytics, said BizSpark would enable him to save about Rs 20-25 lakh. Microsoft also gives a lot of support. But don't think this is charity. Microsoft, Mehta says, will make its money when MAIA's customers — to implement their solution — buy Microsoft products like Windows server, SQL server, Sharepoint Portal, Biztalk Adapter and Exchange

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Bangalore: For all entrepreneurs who feel that getting venture capital funding in times of downturn might be tough, here's a sunny story. Suresh Narasimha, CEO of TELiBrahma, received venture capital funding of \$2 million two months ago. Narasimha who started the



Carl Schramm, CEO of the Kauffman Foundation, one of the world's first institutions to foster entrepreneurship, used the examples of Infosys Technologies and Akshaya Patra to demonstrate how entrepreneurship can expand human welfare. To day, he says, we are on the threshold of a huge green revolution in entrepreneurship.

50 employees. The company powers solutions like blue-tooth-based mobile advertising, promotions, enterprise solutions and location-based social networking and appears unaffected by the slowdown.

Experts believe that there are other sectors too that are likely to do well, no matter what the current situation of the economy is.

"Sectors like healthcare, education, consumer goods and retail as well as media and entertainment are bound to do well. The slowdown is not that severe in India as yet," says Pradeep Kanakia, national head of markets at consultancy firm KPMG.

As for the IT sector, the focus has shifted from pure services to products, and technology in education and healthcare. At IDG Ventures, for instance, six of the nine companies that received funding from them are product companies. "We believe there are certain sectors that are truly recession-proof, like security, medical sciences and technology in defence and remote monitoring," says Sudhir Sethi, managing general partner, IDG Ventures India.

In the slowdown, companies will invest less in new cap-

ital and would like to extend the life of existing capital assets. Hence demand for remote management and predictive maintenance technologies is expected to grow. "A major construction company has used such a technology from ConnectM and has already seen a 15% cost saving," says Sethi.

Energy management too is seen to be an area that will gain in such times, since it is a major cost for most companies. "Gifting is an area that might see downtrading, but will not stop. Hence our investment in the online initiative Myntra," says Sethi. "Avionics, auto-electronics and robotics will continue to do well."

Laura Parkin, executive director of National Entrepreneurship Network (NEN), cites the example of an entrepreneur who runs a snack food company: "The company has grown by 10% in recent times. The entrepreneur told me that since people have stopped eating out, they buy more snack foods and eat at home."



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company around 2004 is seeing the positive side of the slowdown. "As an entrepreneur this is the time to focus on the actual value of your business and differentiate it with more propositions," he says.

TELiBrahma is a Bangalore-based mobile solutions company which currently has



Scott Cook, founder of Intuit Inc, talked about how Intuit had sold its accounting software at double the price of competing products with half their features. "Within one month of launch we had twice the marketshare of the leader till then. Our simpler software appealed to small family owned businesses, people who did not know accounting," he said. His message: See your customers first hand, and find and seize opportunities that others miss



Rohini Nilekani, founder of Arghyam, with AI Fernandes, executive director of Myrada and Eric Savage, MD of Unitus Capital, at a session on how microfinance is empowering entrepreneurs

