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THE DISRUPTORS



From Top Left :- Amar Pandit, Vikram Kumar, Byju Raveendran, Ankur Jain, Shailesh Gupta, Dr. Ritesh Malik, Korthik Reddy, Sanjay Nath, Sridhar Vembu, T.A. Krishnan, Kapil Sekhri, Srividya Kannan, Rubal Jain, Sam Santosh, Keshav Bansal, Rahul Narayan, Nami Zarringhalam, Alan Mamedi, Shriranga K. Sudhakara, Vineet Rai, Sanjeev Srinivasan, Vinay Agrawal, Harshvardhan Lunia



EXPRESS TO THE ECOMMERCE

Ecom Express was among the first catering to ecommerce companies to set up a multi-modal transportation delivery system early in 2015, using airlines, lorries, trucks and motor bikes

CASH ON DELIVERY (CoD) may not have evolved as an ecommerce option, but for the northern region head of Blue Dart, T. A. Krishnan realised that since online payment methods were not always accessible to consumers, the only way to make ecommerce work was to also have CoD as an option.

In 2012, he along with three other logistic veterans, K. Satyanarayana, Sanjeev Saxena and Manju Dhawan (the only lady among three gentlemen), rolled up their sleeves and went to work establishing a company able to keep pace with the lightning speed of delivery expected of ecommerce. They called themselves Ecom Express and have made over 120 million deliveries on behalf of ecommerce companies since 2013.

Ecom Express CEO and co-founder, T. A. Krishnan, says the company was among the first to deliver on Sundays and holidays. It was also among the first catering to ecommerce companies to set up a multi-modal transportation delivery system early in 2015, using airlines, lorries, trucks and motor bikes.

"We started in Haryana. Our mission was to service 100 per cent PIN codes, including the villages," says Krishnan, speaking of the logistics startup's first milestone – full state coverage. "We made inroads into the remotest locations and cracked the challenges of last mile deliveries. This spurred ecommerce sales from customers who were earlier unable to experience the benefits of online shopping".

After Haryana, full state coverage was extended to Delhi, Goa, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bihar and West Bengal. Krishnan says Ecom Express is among the fastest growing startups in the country. The company expects to post a profit this year, its revenue having nearly tripled since last year. The company reaches over 17,000 PIN codes across 1,600 cities and towns in 29 states through a network of over 1,700 delivery centres.

But barely four years ago, Ecom Express was a team of four people working on abandoned furniture and not much else. Krishnan says, "We were first generation entrepreneurs and started from ground zero. Our first office was a 40 square foot leased facility on the second floor of a shopping complex in Dwarka."

"We had no business cards or letter heads," he goes on to say. "It was as if we were running the office out of our back packs." Ecom Express hired a small IT firm from Mumbai and placed them in budget hotels in Delhi to whip up a ERP system for them in a fortnight. "Then came the mammoth task of getting 300 employees on board, distributing uniforms and running two days of rigorous training something that we will never forget," recalls Krishnan. Ecom Express launched its service on January 31, 2013.

"We picked our first load of 46 parcels from two anchor customers," exults Krishnan, adding, "I can't tell you how madly we cheered for the first pickup boy when he got to our Parcel Processing Centre." At the start, the four partners only had their personal savings to bank on, along with "a dream to build a world class organisation".

Subsequently, Ecom Express received \$134 million (Rs 850 crore) of the more than \$330 million that private equity investor, Warburg Pincus has invested in Indian logistics since June 2015.

"Our innovative solutions have contributed to the growth of the ecommerce ecosystem and employment generation, especially in tier 3 and 4 towns and the untapped rural belt," says Krishnan. ■

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