

Google targeting start-ups, SMBs with cloud services

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Google is currently the only large provider of public cloud computing services in India that does not have a data centre in the country. This restricts the company from working with many regulated industries, including banks, as well as with the government.

In a conversation with *BusinessLine*, Rick Harshman, Managing Director, JAPAC for Google Cloud Platform (GCP), talked about how the company would focus more on start-ups and small and medium businesses rather than going all out in India. Edited excerpts:

What is your plan for India for the next one year?

We will continue to focus to build out the team, build out the partner ecosystem. From the consulting perspective we are working with born-in-the-cloud partners as well as larger global systems integrators, including Accenture, Wipro and Infosys.

The other side is building out the independent software vendor ecosystem. What's fantastic about India is that there are about 3,500 Indian ISVs. They just don't think about the

Indian market, they also think globally.

We want to continue to build channel managers and run more events here. We'll also

continue to run training and enablement sessions and that's going to be across Google for Work – whether it's app specific or cloud

specific – and we want to tie in the Android developer community as well. Training and enablement is very important for prospective customers, future employees – we want them to be comfortable with GCP. We'll be doing that directly as well as through training partners.

Do you think Google is late joining the cloud services party?

We've been offering cloud services for a number of years now. One of the reasons I joined was to continue to build and accelerate the adoption of GCP out here in the Asia Pacific and Japan. Specific to India, we are seeing a tremendous amount of adoption and interest around a variety of our services, whether its cloud compute, storage, database or networking services.

People are also looking at data, analytics and machine

learning. We actually have a multi-year advantage in both of those areas and we are seeing that translate into a great advantage here in India.

Among large providers, you're the only one without a data centre in India. What is the reason for this?

We don't have plans in the immediate future to set up a data centre here. We listen to our customers and take guidance from what they are looking for. Other providers have recently launched infrastructure here but the reality is that one of the advantages we have is that we have the largest software-defined network in the world.

When you start to leverage Google services, whether it is Gmail or search, it is the exact same performance you're going to get leveraging our enterprise services in the cloud.

Then the other argument is regulated industry. If you look at financial services, they have thousands of applications. Not all of them by law have to remain in the country. So, there a number of workloads they can still run outside of the country.

It doesn't mean we are not looking at India. But what we're first looking at is building our capabilities from a sales perspective, building up our eco-



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RICK HARSHMAN
Managing Director,
JAPAC for Google Cloud Platform

system with our partners from consulting and ISVs (independent software vendors), and building up our client base in India.

What's interesting and fascinating about India is that there are couple of interesting dynamics; first, it has a very vibrant start-up community. For the most part start-ups don't

care where their infrastructure is hosted – we've got a lot of start-ups. Second, SMBs; there are 50 million SMBs here in India. They are looking at flexibility, scale and price-performance. They don't much care where the infrastructure resides.

So, you've got a pretty sizeable market just in those two areas. Then you start looking at mid market and enterprise.

What will your core focus areas be: start-ups, the mid-market or enterprise?

What I've seen in the three months here, is that we've got a tremendous amount of momentum around the start-up and SMB space. And in specific areas in the enterprise, we are seeing quite a substantial amount of interest and customer acquisition.

When it comes to start-ups, we have people who specifically work with Indian VCs, accelerators and incubators. That's important because you want to be a part of that community. We have staff that work with them whether its overall Google for Work or specific to cloud. That means we not only work with those VCs and accelerators but we also work with their portfolio companies.

We also work with different

universities, including the IITs, to be able to help their cohorts from a technological perspective and educate them. So there's a lot of training and enablement we are doing across those areas. That helps provide the groundwork for people to be familiar with the technology. So, when they graduate and they go to a company, they are familiar with the Google cloud platform.

What we see as an evolution is that there's a big drive from the mid-market and enterprise companies to be able to wrangle all of their data into a centralised location and create actionable insights out of that data. Data analytics is a huge push. We believe at Google that we provide the best data analytics services.

The second thing they are keen on is machine learning. Google was the creator of MapReduce, BigQuery. So we have been really pushing into the big data space for a number of years – for our own internal use as well as offering to a wider community, whether it is in open source or for use in the cloud platform.

In machine learning, we have a multi-year advantage over others with our Translate API (application programming interface), speech API, natural language API and vision API.