

Working out in smartphone generation

HealthifyMe is an app that connects users to fitness trainers virtually, motivate them on goals, writes **Alnoor Peermohamed**



HealthifyMe's Chief Executive Officer Tushar Vashisht (left), with head of engineering, Sachin Shenoy

What happens when you take a corporate finance analyst and provide him a first-hand lesson in grappling with the complexities and diversity of India? One outcome is he turns into an entrepreneur, as Tushar Vashisht did, focused on transforming the way people live.

Vashisht, a former analyst with Deutsche Bank, began working in business development for the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) in 2010. His job took him across India to several villages, towns and cities. At the end of it, he was convinced he wanted to help people improve their lifestyles.

Lifestyle diseases, which Vashisht noticed were a major problem among the vast population, caught his attention. Even during his UIDAI days, he began putting together a list of foods and their calorie values as he attempted to build a service that would help people eat and live healthier.

The Journey

In November 2011, Vashisht began

working on a service that would allow people to track their calories burnt and their basic activity levels, using nothing but a smartphone. After a mammoth struggle, including having run out of funds a couple of times, the idea is today among India's leading virtual fitness training apps.

HealthifyMe, an app that helps people connect with wellness and fitness trainers via smartphones, has half a million users. The service started as a simple calorimeter pivoted into a marketplace for trainers, a move that helped it scale 16 times, from 30,000 users in January to half a million today. The move has provided HealthifyMe a viable business model, with people willing to pay for such a service.

Trainers on the platform interact with users via the app and track their progress in achieving fitness goals. The underlying mechanism is to motivate users to keep up their fitness routines, with experts guiding users to do things the right way.

A year into building HealthifyMe,

Vashisht ran into Sachin Shenoy, another entrepreneur, at the Microsoft Accelerator. Shenoy, a former Google employee, was quick to notice the impact of what Vashisht was building. Today, with Shenoy's product focus, HealthifyMe is one of only two Indian apps to have the 'Top Developer' badge on Google's Play Store.

EXPERT TAKE



The positives for HealthifyMe is that they are participating in a very vacant space. There are many things that are missing, such as a good site for getting the nutritional values of Indian food. They've done a remarkable job of not only calculating the caloric values of Indian food but also gone deep

into the fact that the same food is used in many different regions of India, often called by different names. The second is their ability to develop apps that really have the magic fairy dust of just understanding what a consumer wants.

They need to do more on covering the basic of, "what should I eat?". They need to look at things such as where you can photograph your

food and it will calculate the calorie content. The other is building the complete ability to get trainers both from the app and on-call to help you train and track your training.

Also, it's important during the very tough part of a diet, the first 14-20 days, to subscribe to some supplemental food.

I'm not sure how this virtual fitness trainer will

eases and what is needed to be done to fix them is growing. New gyms are coming up almost every other day. At the same time, there is a much larger population that would prefer if someone delivered the same solutions through mobile," said Rutvik Doshi, director at Inventus Capital, on why the firm decided to invest in HealthifyMe.

Going Forward

HealthifyMe wants to grow its base of users to five million by 2018 and realises it will have to add many more fitness and wellness trainers to its platform. While trainers are currently on the company rolls, it plans to build a freelance model, for which it will have to put in place more robust tests and screening processes.

The company also plans to utilise machine learning and artificial intelligence to aid trainers. Today a single trainer on the platform can service 200 users. By the end of the year it plans to increase that number to 350. With AI and other advancements, that number will go up further.

With 30,000 to 100,000 users signing up on HealthifyMe every month, the company is also looking at expanding its base of paying users as well. With subscription ranging between ₹800 and ₹1,200 monthly, the cost of having a personal trainer has never been so low.

HealthifyMe is also exploring the corporate market, where large companies are interested in utilising technology to keep employees fit and happier.

It has already signed up a few corporate customers but says it has barely scratched the surface. In 2017, HealthifyMe will also exploring Southeast Asia and West Asia.

FACT BOX

Inception: November 2011

Area of business: Marketplace for wellness and fitness trainers

Funding: \$6 million in Series-A by Blume Ventures, IDG Ventures & Inventus Capital

Goals: To have five million users on its platform by 2018

"Though I'm a computer science major, I've been in business my whole life. I did not have significant engineering expertise, despite mine being a tech product. Having a strong engineering co-founder helped me very early on in building a very good product," said Vashisht.

Fund Crunch

HealthifyMe raised its first round of institutional funding of \$6 million in May this year. Prior to that, the company ran on funds from angel investors and faced a severe crunch. Vashisht says being cash-strapped built character for doing things frugally and efficiently and brought in a sense of monetising the business early on.

The company's fortunes changed once it altered its model to become a marketplace for fitness trainers. Today, HealthifyMe not only helps people lose weight but also has trainers for prenatal and postnatal care. The move drew in IDG Ventures, Blume Ventures and Inventus Capital.

"Public awareness of lifestyle dis-



Managing delivery more efficiently



Kushal Nahata, co-founder and chief executive officer, FarEye

Earlier, there was a 24-hour lag to know the status of shipment. Delivery management software maker FarEye has tackled the problem by automating the last-mile delivery process. Last week, SAIF Partners pumped in \$3.5 million in the start-up.

Using its app, the logistics firm pushes the daily list to delivery persons. Companies like DTDC, Bluedart, Ecom Express, Bajaj Capital, etc, which used to operate manually or relied on software that was expensive and not mobile-friendly, have embraced FarEye's workforce management solution on mobiles. Founded by Kushal Nahata, Gautam Kumar and Gaurav Srivastava in 2013, FarEye enables real-time coordination among employees on the go, job execution and customer requests by moving operations to a mobile platform. Through the automation software, companies can schedule and dispatch goods, monitor execution and analyse real-time performance, making enterprises more effective and streamlined.

"I don't want to build something that goes away in two to three years. We want to go global. With the capital raised we plan to open offices in Dubai and Singapore by the end of this year," says Kushal Nahata, co-founder and chief executive officer. The start-up has plans to integrate with IoT (internet of things) platforms and drones to enable automated delivery. The software-as-a-service platform, makes money by charging a licence fee and transaction fee. India accounts for two-third of its revenue. Currently, it has a team of 30 and plans to expand sales, delivery and product teams to 60 in a few months.

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