

Closing the gap between start-up founders and opportunities

MEERA SIVA

Chennai, July 19

When Amit Mishra took up the job of bringing to India a platform that connects entrepreneurs with stakeholders, he never foresaw the many heights it would scale. F6S — short for founders, ('6' is the number of letters between the first and last letter in 'founders') — a London-headquartered company, started operations in India two years ago. Now, the country accounts for 15 per cent of the 1.3 million users on F6S.

The platform helps founders get information and apply to various funding programmes, including global accelerator and incubator programmes, and government funds.

"A single window for multiple programmes helps founders save time and focus their energy on building their business," says Mishra. To date, 8,500 start-up-related global programmes have been featured on the platform.

Founder friendly

The platform is free and is a source of information on various global accelerator programmes, workshops and other

competitions such as hackathons. Taking part in these can help entrepreneurs learn, raise funds and open the doors to customers in otherwise difficult-to-crack global markets, says Mishra.

Users can also find talent for their business using the platform. When people register, they can indicate if they are open to job offers.

Founders with failed ventures may find opportunities to be a co-founder, for instance, says Mishra.

F6S negotiates favourable pricing with product and service providers and passes on the benefits to its members. "Over 1,200 companies offer their products and services through our marketplace. Often, these are free or at heavily discounted prices."

Investors can filter companies based on their preferences.

Information gap

Mishra says entrepreneurs are often unaware of many opportunities they can tap into, because of their focus on developing their product or service. Even if they are aware, the process and the follow-up can be te-

F6S connects entrepreneurs with stakeholders and is a source of information on various global accelerator programmes

dious. F6S helps them and earns a service charge when the payment is received, he says.

There are also gaps in the understanding of what it takes to run a business, Mishra feels. He says that raising funds is seen as the only holy mission and there is not enough thought on generating revenue or building a customer base. "Running a business is about people and money management. Companies stand on people."

He feels that if companies initially operate in a bootstrap mode, they will be able to raise funds with a clear vision.

"Companies often tend to be technology or idea focussed. They never engage with customers. By the time the product is built, a customer may not want to pay for it." Taking part in structured programmes and building relationships can help founders learn and grow their venture, Mishra says.