Pradeep Kar
Chairman & Managing Director of Microland

Pradeep is the Founder, Chairman & Managing Director of Microland, India’s leading IT outsourcing company of IT Infrastructure Management Services. A visionary and industry pioneer, Pradeep leveraged the power of networking & e-business technologies long before they were recognized as critical business enablers when he founded Microland in 1989. Under Pradeep’s leadership, Microland has emerged as a leading Indian pure play IT Infrastructure Management Services Provider. Pradeep’s philosophy of driving business transformation by leveraging Remote Infrastructure Management, with a strong customer driven service perspective has enabled Microland to grow to 12 locations, 8 Operation Management Centers and 2200 people. Microland has been named for the second consecutive year as one of Top 100 Global Services Company for 2008.

A serial entrepreneur, Pradeep founded Planetasia, India’s first Internet Professional Services Company, which was acquired by a US Software Services company. Pradeep also founded Indya.com, India’s leading portal, which was acquired by News Corporation and Net Brahma, a telecom software company that was acquired by a US telecom equipment company in 2001. He merged his Internet Media Business, Media2india with Connecturf, India’s leading online marketing company. He also founded, ITspace, India’s premier technology portal in 1999.

Pradeep is the President of The IndUS Entrepreneurs (TiE), Bangalore Chapter and frequent speaker on industry trends. His leadership acumen has been recognized with numerous accolades. Notable among these is the Indian Express “India Young Business Achiever Award” as well as being selected by the World Economic Forum as a ‘Global Leader for Tomorrow’. He has been featured in ‘Newsweek International’ as ‘Stars of Asia’ and in ‘Business India’ as ‘Stars of India’.

Tholons:
Technology infrastructure is vast and diverse (multiple email vendors, multiple network vendors, different ERP systems, etc). How do you manage such a diverse technology and vendor base remotely?

Pradeep Kar:
Managing diverse technology infrastructure is one of the biggest challenges for RIM players. It directly impacts the operational costs. However, as the industry is maturing, IT infrastructure management tools available in the market have simplified over time with well defined functions. These tools are integrated
with governance features which address management of multiple vendors. Microland invests ahead in time in third party IT management and contract governance tools required for future engagements. Also, based on experience in RIM space, Microland has invested in proprietary tools which enable management of diverse technology infrastructure.

In house proprietary processes and automated tools also help manage diverse technology and vendor base. Automated operational processes ensure real time correct allocation of relevant technology task to the right skilled resource, while Knowledge Management and operational process compliance ensures that multiple vendor management in a real time environment is on-time and robust.

We also have an in-house Talent Transformation Cell to train employees in diverse technology areas and tools. We have a state-of-the-art Virtual lab which functions as a platform for proof of concept, technology experimentation and skill building. The lab offers a learning ground for working with diverse technologies in RIM space.

**Tholons: What is the initial fixed cost to setup RIM? Can you throw some light on what may be required as a set up from an offshore perspective?**

**Pradeep Kar:** The initial fixed costs include investments in NOCs (Network operations centers) and purchase of software licenses for managing operations. The recurring costs include having a dedicated service delivery team. The actual cost is entirely a function of facility size and diversity of operations management tools and software licenses.

**Tholons: Are clients truly leveraging offshore nations like India? Which other countries provide stiff competition in this space?**

**Pradeep Kar:** A recent market analysis done by Nasscom-McKinsey puts the addressable market for RIM services between $96 Bn - $104 Bn. As of now only $6 Bn to $7 Bn is addressed from offshore vendors. The unaddressed market shows that there is a large potential for leveraging RIM capabilities from offshore vendors and only a small set of clients have leveraged the offshore advantage.

However, the barriers for RIM services are now coming down. This is happening because of improvement in process tools used for remotely managing IT infrastructure/ vendor governance, improved skill set at offshore locations and significant operational productivity improvements at offshore locations. As a result, clients would be able to leverage the offshore advantage much more as compared to the current situation.

Other countries which provide competition in this space are China, Malaysia, Singapore and Eastern Europe countries. However India still retains an advantage in terms of the existing pool of talent available and early leadership in offering RIMs from India.
Tholons: With newer concepts such as virtualization, cloud/utility computing emerging, how do you see these technologies benefiting RIM suppliers?

Pradeep Kar: Newer concepts such as virtualization, cloud computing are creating win-win situation for the customers as well as for the suppliers. The newer concepts in technologies are paving way to consolidation and standardization of IT infrastructure for global players. The reduction in complexity makes it less risk for the clients to outsource it to RIM suppliers.

These newer concepts thus make it easier for the RIM suppliers to provide centralized remote management through standardization, automation and governance.

Beyond the technology and delivery aspect, one great change these technologies are bringing is one of a mindset. CIO’s are now more comfortable with the thought of having the IT operations hosted and delivered out of locations outside the enterprise premises and Global Delivery Models is strongly gaining acceptance in the IT Infrastructure management domain.

Tholons: With multiple suppliers offering RIM, what will the key differentiators among the suppliers to emerge as leaders in this sector?

Pradeep Kar: The key differentiator for the suppliers would be in helping customers achieve higher SLAs at reduced cost on a continual basis. Another differentiating factor would be strong service delivery capabilities. This would be achieved by continuous focus on process improvements initiatives. Creation of proprietary methodologies (Service Intellectual Property) based on the process improvements would provide significant value added benefits to the clients. These methodologies, honed through several client engagements, ensure service quality, SLA compliance and cost effective service delivery. The Service IPs would distinguish the leaders in RIM space.

The flexibility of a supplier firm to work across RIM service lines and across a diverse customer base would be a distinguishing factor. One key differentiator for RIM acceptance would be to move quickly from a FTE mode to a utility or per device mode. Microland from the beginning has been a strong proponent of the same as it directly impacts the customers bottom line and provides transparency and predictability in pricing.

Best in the industry training practices and talent retention practices in the RIM space would also be key differentiators for the suppliers.
Tholons: The “green IT” movement is fast gaining traction and the energy (and other resource) consumption by data centers are in focus. What do you see is the impact from "green IT" to supplier firms such as yours?

Pradeep Kar: IT Infrastructure management services firms like Microland will assist companies in the “Green IT” movement based on IT infrastructure expertise gained over time. This is in addition to the Green initiatives internal to the organization.

Areas like Server virtualization and storage consolidation can offer significant green benefits and we have gained expertise in these areas from our previous engagements.

In a nutshell, there are few areas where a supplier firm like Microland can contribute:

• Measurement and monitoring of energy consumption by data centers
• Planning for green IT initiatives (for example, Server Consolidation Planning)
• Implementation of green IT initiatives

As organizations start focusing on Green IT, they can avail services of supplier firms with IT Infrastructure management expertise.