

Partner Profile: India's Station Satcom Celebrates Nine Years of Growth

On the first of December 2007, Station Satcom celebrated nine years as an agent in India for Stratos and its predecessors, Xantic and Station 12.



"It has been a good journey, and we have seen only growth all nine years," says **Anshul Khanna**, founder and CEO of Station Satcom, which is based in Bombay. "All of Stratos products - if they can be used by Indian shipping and energy companies - are being rolled out in India. We have 100 percent penetration in some companies. They don't use any other satellite service provider."

Mr. Anshul Khanna, founder and CEO of Station Satcom, has been an agent of Stratos and its predecessors in India since 1998.

Getting Off The Ground

The company started as a one-man operation in 1998. "I left another company where I was working to start Station Satcom," Anshul explains. "So I was on retainer and had six months to prove myself, starting off from my house in Bombay with just a mobile phone given to me by Station 12 and my computer. At that time, Station 12 had essentially no market share in India. But we both put energy into this, and the business started to come in."

For the first three years, Anshul worked out of his home, collaborating with his account manager who visited India every couple months from the Netherlands. "The support I received was tremendous," he says. "The Dutch culture is fantastic. It's all about share-and-grow - just working together, slogging it out and achieving common goals. I respected their culture, and they respected mine. We worked hand-in-hand the first couple years to build this business."

The company's first big win came in early 1999. "We won the Great Eastern Shipping Company - all 50 odd ships they own. The second big breakthrough was in 2004, when we got a blanket contract with The Shipping Corporation of India, which owns and manages 125 ships." Other top clients of Station Satcom's today include Varun Shipping Company Limited, Mercator Lines Limited, Essar Shipping Company, Tolani Shipping Company Limited, the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard. In 2007, the company won a Web-based fleet management and vessel tracking tender from Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), the national petroleum company of India - a prestigious client to have in the portfolio.

Focused exclusively on the maritime industry and energy companies with ships and offshore installations - since Indian regulations do not allow individuals or companies to own satellite phones on land - Station Satcom has become one of India's leading satellite communication providers. The company now owns a 1,000 square foot office and employs ten people including engineers, accountants, and sales support personnel.

Strong Focus on Customer Value

From the beginning, Station Satcom has maintained a strong focus on the customer, emphasizing the value of local service and support. "That philosophy has been in place since day one," Anshul stresses. "Back then, I was the sales guy, the accountant, the customer support guy - a one-man operation. All of this had to be done to get the business in India. No one was going to pick up the phone and call the Netherlands. So it has always been important to act as the first level of support. Any problem our customers have, they put on us. Then it's our problem."

Although he has a professional service and support team now, Anshul still gets personally involved when a customer has a problem. "Just after midnight yesterday," he explains, "I got a call from one of our elite customers, the Great Eastern Shipping Company. Our AmosConnect email system was down, and one of their ships had to send an important document to another ship, to fill out and send to their General Manager in India. Although there was nothing I could really do, I was an ear. He knew I was there. I told him I would keep checking until the system came back up, and then we called both ships and made sure the document went through."

"In this industry, systems go down," he says. "It's inevitable. Just being available to take care of the situation is important. We employ engineers who understand how the system works on every ship. We are attempting to replicate St. John's in India, just for our small business. That's a very important value-add we give customers."

Building on a reputation for honesty, reliability and transparency, Station Satcom has achieved and maintained its leadership position in satellite communications, despite increasing competition.

"Our existence depends on the added value we give to our customers in India. Otherwise, all service providers are the same!" he exclaims. "Other satellite companies have tried for years to lure away all of our customers with lower rates, seminars and big parties at five-star hotels. Mind you, to date we have never thrown those kinds of parties in India to get business. Our concept is different: we focus more on the decision-maker. And after all these years, we have really strong relationships with our customers."

Healthy Relationship with Stratos

Despite his success, Monday mornings still give Anshul a shiver.

"Every day is a new challenge. You have to stay on top of things. If you lose one top customer, you might not remain the leader," he observes. "Sometimes we run into problems we don't have a clue how to solve. That's where support from Stratos is so important. Because we have a very healthy relationship, things move forward. It's like the relationship you have with your wife. If you're honest with her and she's honest with you, you can conquer the world."

"If you don't have a peaceful mind," he adds, "you can't accomplish anything."

A few years ago, Anshul began reporting directly to Gerbrand Schalkwijk, Vice President Asia Pacific, who is based in Singapore. "I guess after all these years, I'm a veteran of the company," Anshul says, laughing. "I know the systems,



I know the people, and they know me. We have built a lot of trust. It has been fantastic working with Gerbrand. He has stood by me during difficult times, providing continuous support and guidance. At the end of the day, it all shows in the growth."

"To be perfectly honest," Gerbrand counters, "during all those years, Anshul himself has been the driving force behind the growth we have realized and the current position we enjoy in India. It has been terrific to see Station Satcom develop from a one-man, single portfolio operation to an expanding professional organization without losing any of its dedication or customer focus. I look forward to many more successful years to come."