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hacking the galaincha industry

HOW COMPUTER CHANGES THE NEPALI CARPET

Nepali carpets have drama attached to them – the heritage of Tibetan artists, the conflicts and the ups and downs it's seen over the years. The silver lining is piece of software, developed locally, used globally, that has transformed the Nepali carpet industry for the better.

Text **Srizu Barjacharya**

Steve Job once said, "I think if you do something and it turns out pretty good, then you should go do something else wonderful, not dwell on it for too long. Just figure out what's next." It seems Dr. Jyoti Tandukar realized this very early on in his life. Since his company, Alternative Technology, started in 1997, it's never stopped working to bring in computer graphic innovation to the field of customised carpets. At a time when computer technology was still being eyed with questions like "What is it? What can it do? How is it going to make things easier?", Dr. Tandukar's company had already started to test the potential of the new found technology in his line of work.

Their very first software, Galaincha, opened new opportunities for the Nepali carpet industry. When asked about when this idea came to him, Dr. Tandukar says, "We were talking to a carpet entrepreneur who was complaining about how difficult it was for him to make the graph to weave a carpet." A graph in carpet-making is an important part of the process; basically, it shows you how the design of a carpet will look before knotting it down into a

physical carpet. Soon after this realization, the team at Alternative Technology started digging into more computer-based technology to solve such and other problems. Transforming the idea into reality, they realized that carpet makers and manufacturers had to wait till the end to see how the carpet looked. Naturally, the process was flawed at first. "So what could we do to end this problem and help the 'makers' was our main concern," says Dr. Tandukar.

This is when their software, Galaincha, was created. The realization of such ideas is rare but Dr. Tandukar and his team believed that computer graphics would start its own legacy. "The power of computer technology is immense. With domain connections, it can solve problems in different areas. We just have to realize where the problems lie." Galaincha went on to become a business savior in custom carpet production; today their popular software is used around the world.

Mr. Shreeniwas Sharma, who is the Chief Technical Officer at Alternative Technology, explains that software making is a continuous process. Over the years, Galaincha has accepted change gracefully.



Alternative Technology also has online sales tool for custom rug business exploRUG.net. This online sale tool can also be used in smart phones, iPhones, and tablets from exploRug.com. Both these tools allow the users to transform the way carpets are designed, produced and marketed. While onlyhundred.com sells packages of 100 designs that can be used for different purposes after the user buys the rights for it.

"Initially we focused on users' requirements. Then after doing some research we worked on the user friendliness, and then on the interface and even today we are still working on the software," says Mr. Sharma. While Galaincha's file rendering took hours before, today it does so in seconds. It went on to adapt to the internet in 2007. "That's when we started being approached by international companies," says Dr. Tandukar.

Witnessing the transition of technology from the days of CDs to internet-based deployment, both Dr. Tandukar and Mr. Sharma are humbled by the internet's generosity. When asked about the challenges they face, they answer in unison - "Access to the internet." Explaining further, Dr. Tandukar says, "Well for power cuts we have generators and inverters, but when the internet connection collapses, our entire operations come to a

problem through a technological connection is a quite a way of doing business - and Alternative Technology does just that.

Alternative Technology had introduced Galaincha software in 1998 - the same year when Google was invented. It sorted internet based deployment in 2008. Today Galaincha is accessed by 133 countries. Galaincha's most popular features include letting the users design and turning the design to graph. Also it allows the users to choose between textures and automatic color combinations. Furthermore it provides the feature of changing a picture into a carpet design as well.

halt; Nepal's internet facility isn't just costly but also unreliable."

With their innovation, the majority of the industry's graphs are now done on computers. Moreover, the users of Galaincha have the privilege of choosing between colors, designs and access to the cost of the production. This scheme has provided a great deal of international exposure to the Nepalese carpet industry. "The most expensive carpet I have ever come across cost 11 lakh rupees. It was ordered by a foreigner," says Dr. Tandukar. Alternative Technology has resolved problems like percentage controversy of silk and dyeing colors, graphing time, and color selection.

The success that Galaincha software has seen was unexpected. In their early days, they were targeting a hundred people. As they moved ahead, the ease they brought to the industry started to create a buzz around their name in the local market. "We dared to take the right but unconventional decisions. As we stayed in the market, talk about our work spread through word of mouth."

Today Alternative Technology, along with Galaincha, has an online sales tool for custom carpets - exploRUG. It also has a website onlyhundred.com where they sell hundred designs in a package that costs \$100. From the stone age to the smart age, time has introduced new technology that can help solve many problems. Realizing this problem solving aspect of technology, Alternative Technology is forging new paths ahead with their innovative graphic inventions, always asking themselves one important question - 'what next?' ■