

Profile: Mr. Amit Dasgupta (IBM India) presenter at the Web2fordev Conference



Amit Dasgupta is one of the few presenters at the Web2forDev Conference with a private sector background. Currently he is working for IBM India in the Global Business Services division. He is engaged in managing consulting and software projects from the Global Delivery centre in Bangalore for IBM clients worldwide. Prior to IBM, he has worked with leading organisations in India and overseas in manufacturing, technology consulting and managing internal IT services.

Amit is a Mechanical Engineer and holds a Master's degree in Management from USA. His interests are in IT strategy consulting, business processes design, knowledge management and social entrepreneurship. He is the Chair for the Social Entrepreneurship Committee at The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) Chapter, Bangalore.

At Tuesday, the first day of the Conference, Amit Dasgupta will do a presentation on practical examples of how knowledge sharing and collaborative efforts within key stakeholders and community members can be more effective using Web 2.0, to improve the richness of knowledge sharing applications for the agricultural sector.

A personal interest

Amit Dasgupta has always been very interested in the development of livelihood generation programmes for economic underprivileged people. 'Prior to being associated with community development projects at IBM, I was involved in development activities with other organisations as well. I have for instance worked on a project for development of social entrepreneurship and assisted organisations such as UNICEF, Children's Christian Fund (CCF), Goal International and Child and Need Institute in conducting management training programs and advising them on processes improvements.' During the early part of his tenure, he was not involved in IBM's corporate community development projects. That has changed as of 2006. 'I got involved in IBM India's projects regarding the economic development of rural Communities in 2006. Since then I have worked on two endeavours: "Mission 2007", a project launched by the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MMSRF) and other partners (including IBM) for establishing "Village Knowledge Centres" in 100,000 villages, and a project focusing on developing social entrepreneurship in the Apparel Industry.

Economic development as part of a business strategy

For IBM India using IT for development projects is not limited to charity programmes. 'IBM is deeply committed to becoming a premier partner of the government in India's development agenda, by closely aligning with the country's priorities including addressing the digital divide. It is part of IBM's business strategy in India, to support sustainable development and bridging the digital divide by democratising computers – making it accessible to all and develop and upgrade local IT skills to contribute to India's growth. In this context, using latest developments in technology for providing better solutions to rural communities is also a part of IBM's business strategy in India', says Amit Dasgupta.

IBM runs a Corporate Community Relations programme encompassing not only CSR issues, but many other activities in the field of education, health, diversity, transportation, energy. Amit Dasgupta: 'IBM India is involved in two key programmes in the rural sector: KidSmart and SME Toolkit. KidSmart is a programme focusing on one of the biggest challenges that

India faces today: a pervasive access to quality education, particularly in the rural and semi-urban areas. With our vast knowledge repository and cutting edge technology we have tied up with a number of like minded non-government organisations (NGOs) to address this issue. The SME toolkit (see also www.thenewsmarket.com/ibm) is a cutting-edge set of assets that helps promote economic growth in underserved and emerging markets through access to real-world business knowledge, online collaboration and capital resources’.

About his topic and the benefit of Web 2.0 to India

However interesting these programmes may be, Amit Dasgupta has chosen a topic for his presentation that is not on the same lines of IBM's ongoing CSR programme in India. Instead, he has chosen a topic that is rather new for IBM, but what he thinks will be very valuable in the long term.

Amit Dasgupta: ‘The thematic context of the paper has no relation to the type work I usually do in IBM, although from a technological standpoint one could say it is linked with my work. I have chosen to talk about making existing knowledge sharing applications and collaboration attempts within rural communities much more effective by using Web 2.0 as I strongly believe Web 2.0 will be helpful to the agricultural community in India’. ‘Web 2.0 offers so many compelling advantages compared to older technologies, that I foresee an extensive use of this new technology. In order to develop effective knowledge sharing applications for the agriculture sector for example, academic and research institutions, government agencies, NGOs, commercial organisations and users must collaborate since, integration of data from multiple sources is necessary to provide meaningful information and content. Moreover, dissemination of this knowledge is crucial for successful deployment of these applications. The challenges for geographically dispersed organisations working in different fields, to jointly work together to address the requirements for such solutions are real; but could be resolved by leveraging the Web 2.0 framework which facilitates collaborative development of functionally richer applications’.

‘Through my presentation I hope to create a better awareness on how Web 2.0 can be harnessed to provide useful solutions for agricultural communities and emphasize the need for collaboration amongst key stakeholders. Use of technology and collaboration are both essential, to develop applications that would make a significant impact on economically underprivileged farmers. I sincerely hope this conference will encourage government agencies, NGOs, research institutions and other organisations to set up collaborative working groups and use the power of Web 2.0, to make knowledge more accessible to rural people. Such initiatives would have a tremendous economic impact on agricultural communities – worldwide’.