

Healthy strategy

An Indian company starts working with a Canadian organisation to develop textiles and garments for the healthcare sector

Shuttling between his offices in Bengaluru and New York, Chocko Valliappa is all smiles as he looks back at the two decades since he set up Vee Technologies to offer technology-enabled solutions to a slew of businesses and organisations around the world. The newest feather in his cap is a tie-up with the Toronto-based University Health Network (UHN), Canada, to collaborate on a multi-institution research and commercialisation effort to develop smart fabrics that can help people meet health-related challenges.

Between his cross-continent travels, Chocko also finds time to keep his fingers on the pulse of Vee's parent, the 83-year-old Sona group of educational institutions in Salem, Tamil Nadu. "We at Sona proudly commit our best scientific brains to the FIBRE project," says his father C. Valliappa, who is the founder chairman of the group. "We hope that the application of this long-term research will bring much-needed relief to millions facing health challenges. When some of these products get to the market, those of us in India will be the big beneficiaries."

While three universities, four colleges and a number of industry partners are actively working on FIBRE's goal with the UHN hospital network -- which includes Toronto General and Toronto Western Hospitals, the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute and The Michener Institute of Education -- Vee Technologies and Sona group will be the only partners outside North America. The two will, apart from the 'significant' cash contributions to the current and future research projects, also contribute to the project through Sona's faculty, laboratories and facilities.

"This new partnership will help us move closer to achieving our vision of creating a healthier world," explains Bradley G. Wouters, executive vice-president, science and research, UHN. "It will bring together multi-disciplinary expertise to develop textiles and garments that can support the growing needs of

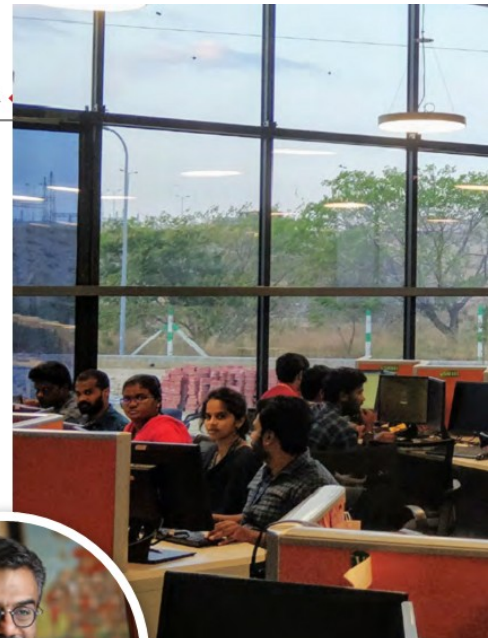
the healthcare sector for people in Canada, India and beyond." The health benefits of this team science approach to solving today's greatest health issues are far-reaching and will serve to help individuals experiencing chronic illness, aging as well as those living with disabilities, he adds.

Vee Technologies has teams for its various verticals like logistics and media, e-governance -- through which it facilitated NEET exams and helped power corporations across India to function -- and several processes, including everything from automation to creating apps like HireMee and VeeTrace and from RPA Botification to building workflow engines.

Over the past two decades of its existence, Vee Technologies has been providing information technology services to over 150 hospitals in the US, including six of the Top 20, handling their clinical coding and revenue cycle management in addition to providing e-learning and e-governance solutions. While the firm has all these business offerings, its biggest is healthcare, with 3,000 of its 5,000 employees engaged in healthcare analytics. "As healthcare moves from SickCare to WellCare, we are in the epicentre where wellness, coding, revenue cycle and payor teams continue to be the leaders in their areas," Chocko says.

Talent assessment

Its social enterprise HireMee offers a host of services including a learning management system and automatic and live proctored assessments. In the healthcare sector, it is demonstrating how medical assistants can be re-skilled, training medical assistants in administrative, clinical and non-technical skillsets to make them versatile members of any organisation they join and ensure their long-term



Chocko: our future remains bright

employment.

HireMee's digital platform has enabled talent assessment of a million young men and women from 800 towns all over India and connected them

to start-ups through a verified assessment process that evaluates their knowledge, skills, personality and communication. A cloud-based solution, this has helped recruiters select candidates for over 120,000 job opportunities without any cost and no carbon footprint. Team HireMee draws upon the experience of its affiliate SonaYukti, a pan-India player for skilling and re-skilling rural youth for a range of trades as part of India's ongoing mega-skilling initiative.

HireMee also made it to the shortlist of 10 qualified teams out of 118 entries from 20 countries in the \$5 million XPRIZE Rapid Re-skilling challenge. Aimed at incentivising teams to develop and demonstrate the effectiveness of a quick training and re-skilling solution for those who are most vulnerable to employment loss in the US, XPRIZE challenged contestants to develop solutions that would cut training time by half for occupations with a living wage.

"The team sought to tap the best CEO and technology talent in the world in solving the critical challenge of rapid re-skilling," Chocko says. The aim is for the finalists to offer training solutions to 3,500 displaced workers first and



Enterprise

Meanwhile, Vee Technologies USA celebrated its 10th year in August 2020, spending two days “looking back, reminiscing the past and looking at the progress we made as a team and the achievements and awards we have won as a company”. The year also saw Vee Technologies emerging as the only Indian company to make it to the list of the Top 100 Healthcare Companies in the world to work for.

Vee Technologies also bagged a spot among the top healthcare employers in 2020 in Modern Healthcare’s global rankings. “We are particularly pleased that this recognition has come at a time when the global healthcare industry is navigating through the Covid-19 pandemic,” says Chocko.

Modern Healthcare is a 44-year-old

then expand this to help at least 25,000 such people by the last round. The best solutions, if adopted on a nation-wide scale, have the potential of transforming the way workers train for more than 12 million jobs.

HireMee, founded in 2017 with the vision to get companies to discover young graduates from Tier II and Tier III towns, is empanelled as an assessment agency by NSDC’s three sector skills councils and NASSCOM’s IT/ITeS sector skills council. “The past year presented us with unique challenges,” says Chocko. “The global pandemic disrupted the way we work and the way we go about with our day-to-day lives. If the 9/11 incident brought a shift towards security as the central focus for businesses, the recent pandemic made healthcare the epicentre of all businesses.”

However, the Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to rethink our priorities and diminished the line between work and life outside as everyone has to answer questions like “Do we work where we live or do we live where we work?” he points out. On the bright side, however, the world has healed because reduced human activity. “We hear more birds chirping and for the first time we saw peacocks in the Sona campus,” he says.

The fact that Vee Technologies’ employees adapted to the work-from-home model in just eight hours, he points out, showed that the business continuity planning that had been planned and designed was ‘indeed

very useful and effective’. Thanks to this, the company was able to fulfil all its clients’ requirements without any disruption.

During the year, Vee Technologies and Sona College collaborated on a CSR project to develop VeeTrace, an app to measure social distancing. This project won the first prize in the government of India’s fight against Covid-19 and won the Vishwakarma award.

Mapping hunger spots

Technology has also helped the Valliappa Foundation’s Anadhanam, a platform to solve global hunger, providing tools for NGOs working to feed the 800 million people in the world who are hungry, by mapping the hunger hotspots and identifying surplus food centres. Vee Technologies has also worked with Saudi Arabia in 2020 to help create the Kingdom’s DRG-based reimbursement system, working with hospitals and insurance companies to set up a payment method. And, in Toronto, it co-founded a new hygiene start-up, Code-9 Technologies.

“We were forced to change our offerings to our engineering services clients,” Chocko says. “We started offering new services like 7D, including scheduling and cost analysis, and started a sustainability engineering, energy modelling and digital twins practice.”

ENTREPRENEUR
Chocko Valliappa

COMPANY
Vee Technologies Pvt Ltd

BUSINESS
Strategy and consulting services for healthcare and other industries

LOCATIONS
Bengaluru, India and New York, US

NO. OF EMPLOYEES
5,000

TURNOVER
₹300-350 crore

weekly business publication from Detroit, US, targeting executives in the healthcare industry. Its recognition programme honours companies in the healthcare industry that empower employees so they can provide patients and customers with the best possible care, products and services. This year, the companies have been selected on multiple factors, including how they navigated the

Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Vee Technologies’ teamwork, in tandem with hospitals and insurance companies in the US, has come up with a new-age medicare plan that incentivises people to stay healthy. It is the only company in the list with development centres in India at Bengaluru, Salem and Chennai.

“Our future remains bright with our students of both Thiagarajar Polytechnic and Sona College of Technology winning the All-India Smart India Hackathon to solve farmers’ problems. Our research labs have conceived products like nano quantum dot organic oil to save the environment,” Chocko adds. “Our group of institutions have won over 10 awards this past year from Visvesvaraya Best Teacher award to AICTE-CII award.”

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