



'Andheri E is the Hub For All Activities'

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# 'Andheri (E) is the Epicentre of Activities'

**Q&A** Co-founder of Professorbuddy.com, a professor-student facility portal in Andheri East, Purav Kothari talks to Ashwini Nair about the concept and viability of the portal. Edited excerpts:



**How did the idea of the portal come along? Who is the management and core team member?**

Professorbuddy.com is an online exam portal that enables students to appear for MCQ-based mock exams. We offer login to students through their coaching institutes and equip the teachers with a backend login, which allows them to keep a track of student's progress report as well as in-depth analysis. Professorbuddy.com provides conceptual and skill based analysis and we are pioneers in this segment.

It all started when we ourselves experienced the lack of testing at coaching classes. Major reasons that can be attributed for such inadequacy were vast and lengthy portions, too many courses conducted at single location, lack of time to set up test series etc.

While studying forms one aspect of education, self-assessment forms the other. We recognised a void between teaching and assessment. We decided to fill this void and launched a high-end exam portal.

My twin brother - Pratik Kothari and I co-founded this venture. I did my MBA in finance and worked with Religare Securities for one-and-a-half years. I look into product designing, development and business re-

lations at Professorbuddy.com. Pratik is a chartered accountant by profession. He looks into legal, financial issues, and content.

**What differentiates it in the current market place?**

In current market scenario, there are online exam portals, which are student centric. We have created a portal for teachers/professors as well as students. Professorbuddy equips professors with a unique 'dashboard', which offers them with a detailed 'buddy' (Student) Report. The dashboard is integrated with features such as, 'individual analytics of students', 'upload notes for a batch' and 'batch certificates'. For students, we provide skill level and conceptual analysis.

**What was the investment that went into launching the company? What do you expect to be its growth potential?**

The cost estimate that went into the product development, content, and marketing material was close to ₹10 lakh. In this segment, opportunity of growth and scalability is huge. With the impending list of MCQ-based exams, a huge expansion opportunity awaits for us. We plan to grow organically by continuously adding new courses as well as features. We expect to break even by the end of 2013. You are based in Andheri East, how conducive is the area for startups?

We are based in Andheri East and wanted to start from a location, which is close to our residence to avoid wastage of time. Moreover, Andheri is the epicenter of the city and makes it easier to commute to the western and central regions of Mumbai. Most of the renowned coaching classes, related to our set of courses are located in and around Andheri, so it gave us another reason to start our venture here.

**What are the various services that you plan to provide to students?**

When the students subscribe to a 'Test package', they are offered a seven-stage set up. First is 'Test Zone', where they can browse through available tests as well as appear for any test, anytime. Second is 'Buddy Page' which has three specific tabs viz. student's personal information (My Profile), batch activity updates (My Wall) and batch buddies (My Friends). Next is 'Challenge Zone' which is specially designed to improve the competitive spirit among buddies, where students can challenge their peers to take particular tests. Then is 'My Notes' which is primarily for students to share their notes in pdf, word, excel formats.

Here professors can also upload content, timetable and notes from the dedicated 'Professor login' provided to them. Then 'Danger Vault' provides you with an exclusive place wherein students can view the wrong answers marked while appearing for a test and the corresponding right answers to that particular question. Then we have the 'Analytics Lab', which would give buddies an opportunity to analyse their preparation with the help of in-

depth graphs and charts.

**As of now, there are two courses, CPT and CS-Foundation. Do you plan to introduce more courses?**

We have started with CA-CPT, CS-Foundation, followed by conceptual mock test series with analytics for CFA, IIT-JEE, NEET, MCA, MH-CET and CAT. Our future target is to create subject-wise MCQ exams for students in Secondary and Higher Secondary (SSC, HSC, CBSE, and ICSE).

We also plan to evaluate and conduct a written test series for coaching classes for all levels and professional exams. We aim to release Apps for android mobile, iPhone and iPad - to provide wider accessibility. Also we are looking into integrating the portal on a CD or DVD especially for secondary and higher secondary students, who are not able to access the Internet.

**Traditionally, our country still trusts the physical presence of a teacher or professor. Plus the Internet penetration in our country is too low. In such a scenario, what is the scope of such sites?**

India still trusts the physical presence of a teacher or professor because they are still not sure on how to implement it. Besides, there is lack of clarity on total cost involved and how to measure the benefits of e-testing and analytics. All these factors have delayed their impending decision to implement e-testing. The e-commerce space is growing fast year on year. Online application procedure reduces cost, resources and saves a lot of time. In 2002 less than 5 percent of all professional

courses had online applications, whereas today around 40 percent of the students apply for courses online.

Secondly, as per a report by Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and IMRB, 'the number of claimed Internet users has seen a growth of 16 per cent over last year. Also, the supporting technology must work well, there must be excellent human support, and the course content must reflect clear educational objectives. If all of this is taken care of, there is huge scope for online testing and assessment avenues.

As our pricing is concerned, we charge per login, per user depending upon the course with an idea of an affordable testing platform for coaching classes. Coaching classes spend approximately Rs 500 - Rs 600 per student on the testing part, which includes stationary, infrastructural cost, and supervisory cost. We are charging approximately Rs 800 to Rs 1,000 per student for a batch of 30 students.

**What would you say were the challenges having a start up?**

One of the major challenges, being from a non-technical background, was creation of an online portal. Sharp analytical skills and clarity on the idea blue print helped us in overcoming this hurdle.

**What are the prospects of your company? Any new project in pipeline?**

The web and mobile technologies will take our company to newer heights. We are working to release a mobile app for our portal as well.

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