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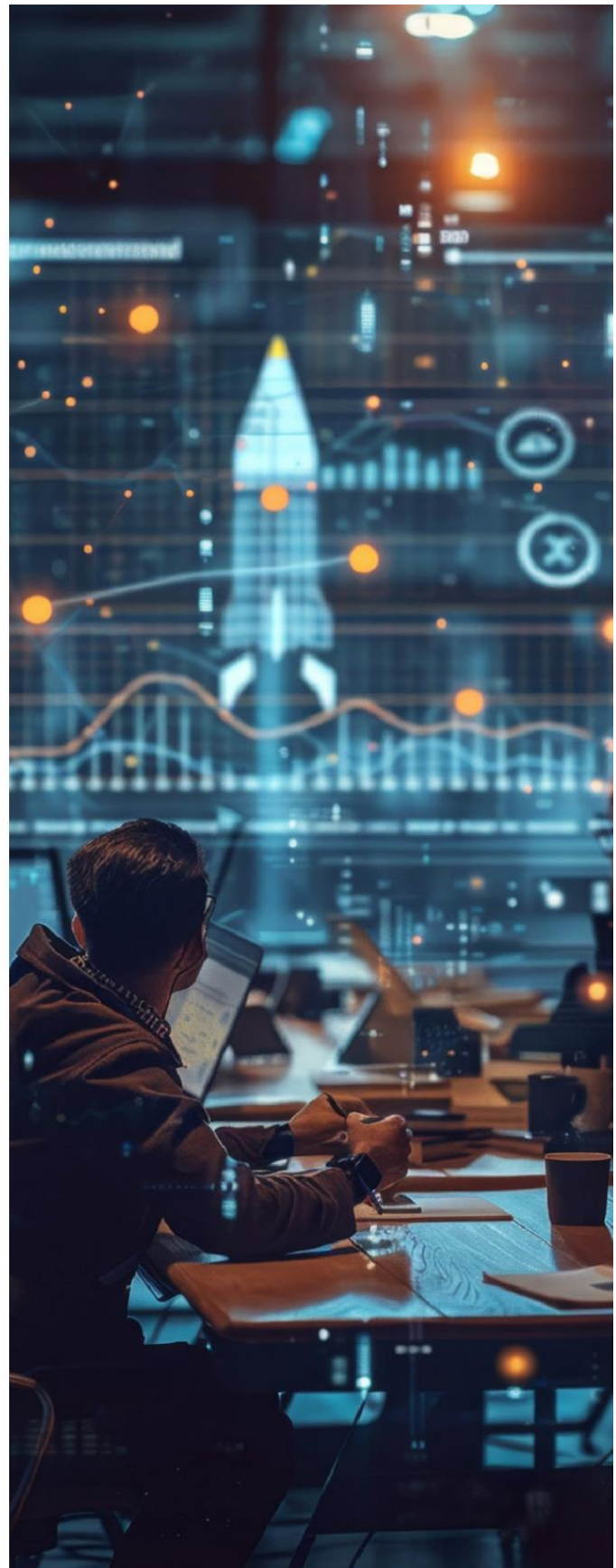
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Editor's Note

Reeling the Next Phase of India's Startup Growth

India's startup ecosystem is entering a new phase- one where capital is becoming more selective, but opportunities are spreading across a wider range of sectors. In the first half of 2026, Indian startups raised \$7.2 billion across 652 funding rounds, with capital flowing into fintech, e-Commerce, artificial intelligence, advanced technology, cleantech and HealthTech.

Artificial intelligence has emerged as one of the strongest magnets for investors. AI startups raised \$676 million across 57 deals in H1 2026, more than four times the funding recorded in the same period a year earlier. HealthTech, cleantech and advanced hardware are also attracting meaningful investment, widening the technology and innovation base of the ecosystem.

This diversification matters. Funding is enabling startups to address opportunities beyond consumer internet, right from enterprise AI and digital healthcare to climate solutions, mobility, cybersecurity and deeptech. Recent investments in areas such as sovereign AI and neurotechnology further illustrate how investors are backing technologies with longer-term applications.

Yet funding alone cannot define success. As investors become more disciplined, founders must convert capital into sustainable revenue, stronger unit economics and defensible technology.

India's next startup chapter will therefore be shaped not simply by how much money is raised, but by where that money goes, and whether it helps build businesses capable of creating lasting economic value.

The current edition by siliconindia **Startup City 'Startup of the year – 2026'** September edition is a highlight of that kind of growth. It features the acknowledgeable market leaders across sectors defining their evolving business sense with every next innovation and development of products, solutions and services.

Do read to know more about them and share your valuable feedback!

Mandvi Singh
Managing Editor

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THE FIVE SECTORS DRIVING INDIA'S FUNDING LANDSCAPE IN H2 2026

By Priyanka R, Copy Writer, Startupcity

India's startup funding market has entered H2 2026 with investors becoming more selective. Startups raised around Rs 59,760 million in H1 2026, whereas funding activity has been strong in July-August 2026, with several large deals taking place.

The shift is not away from startups; it's actually more inclined towards companies that have proved their demand and are differentiators, having a clear roadmap to growth. So far in H2, the five sectors have received maximum attention from investors include Electric Mobility, AI, Fintech, Consumer, and Deeptech.

But what is really driving these big cheques? Let's take a closer look at these companies, what they have built, and why investors are willing to bet so heavily on them.

Electric Mobility

Total H2 funding tracked: Rs 3,000 crore+

Electric mobility has remained one of the biggest funding themes in H2 2026. The sector has attracted capital across electric two-wheelers, fleet mobility, battery swapping and other EV infrastructure. The biggest deal in the sector so far has come from River Mobility, which raised \$120 million in Series C funding in August. The round is one of the largest private EV fundraisers in India this year.

But the interesting part is not just the size of the cheque. It is what River has built before raising it.

River entered the market with its Indie electric scooter and has focused on a utility-oriented product rather than trying to compete across every two-wheeler segment. The company has now sold more than 50,000 units and is selling around 6,000 vehicles a month. Its revenue also grew sharply in FY26.

The new capital will help the company expand its existing manufacturing facility, build a new plant and launch additional models. Its current production capacity is around 10,000 vehicles a month, with plans to eventually take capacity to 80,000 vehicles a month.

This makes River's funding story straightforward. The company has already demonstrated demand for its product. The next challenge is manufacturing and distribution at scale.

The same trend can be seen elsewhere in the sector. Yulu raised \$93 million in August to expand its electric mobility fleet from 50,000 to 200,000 vehicles and increase its presence from 12 to 20 cities. The company is also targeting the growing demand for electric vehicles in quick commerce and last-mile delivery.

The Why: Investors are backing EV businesses that are solving specific mobility problems and showing that their models can scale. Product demand, manufacturing capability, fleet utilisation and infrastructure are becoming stronger funding triggers.

A lesson for the founders: Being in EV is not enough. Investors want proof that the product works, customers are willing to pay and the business can scale profitably.

AI

Total H2 funding tracked: Rs 2,000 crore+

AI continues to be one of the most closely watched sectors in India's startup ecosystem. However, H2 funding shows that investors are becoming more selective within the category.

The biggest opportunity is moving towards companies that use AI to solve a specific business problem rather than simply adding AI to an existing product.



One example is Ringg AI, which raised \$10 million in fresh funding, taking the current round to \$15 million. Peak XV Partners led the round, with Arkam Ventures and Capital 2b participating. Ringg AI is focused on enterprise voice technology. Its platform allows businesses to use voice AI for customer interactions and other business applications.

This gives the company a clear commercial proposition. Businesses are willing to spend on technology when it can reduce repetitive work, improve customer service or make existing processes more efficient.

The company's business model is therefore built around solving an enterprise problem rather than simply selling an AI feature.

Other H2 funding rounds point in the same direction. Blacksmith raised \$45 million for AI-powered code testing, while Discovered Materials raised \$9 million to use AI agents for semiconductor material discovery.

These companies operate in different markets, but they share one characteristic: AI is being used as a solution to a valuable problem. That is becoming increasingly important as the AI market becomes crowded.

Arjun Malhotra, General Partner, Good Capital, says, "The real business value over the next few years will come from companies that own a hard operational chain and use AI to eliminate the coordination costs that have historically limited their growth."

The Why: Investors are looking for AI companies that can demonstrate real business value. Enterprise adoption, recurring revenue, proprietary technology and a clear problem-solution fit can make an AI startup stand out.

For founders, the takeaway is clear: Do not make AI the entire pitch. Explain what the technology helps customers do better, faster or cheaper.

fintech

Total H2 funding tracked: Rs 2,500 crore+

Fintech remains one of India's largest startup funding categories, but H2 activity suggests that investors are becoming more careful about the types of financial businesses they back.

Scan the QR code to read the full Article



IN FOCUS

01

RENTOMOJO FILES RHP FOR RS 1,256 CRORE IPO

Rentomojo has filed its Red Herring Prospectus (RHP) for an IPO of around Rs 1,255.6 crore, setting a price band of Rs 384–404 per share. The Bengaluru-based furniture and appliance rental platform is targeting a valuation of around Rs 4,200 crore at the upper end.

The IPO comprises a fresh issue of Rs 150 crore and an offer-for-sale of around 2.73 crore shares worth Rs 1,105.6 crore. The issue will open on September 9 and close on September 11, with anchor bidding on September 8.

Existing investors, including Accel India, Edelweiss, IDG Ventures India, ValueQuest, Madison India and GMO, along with founder Geetansh Bamanian, will sell shares through the OFS.

Rentomojo plans to use Rs 70 crore from the fresh issue to repay debt and around Rs 42.5 crore for warehouse and experience-store lease rentals and license fees.

Revenue rose 45.5% to Rs 387 crore in FY26, while profit more than doubled to Rs 104.2 crore. The company had 2.54 lakh subscribers across 29 cities as of March 2026. 

02

ZERODHA GETS SEBI NOD TO ENTER MERCHANT BANKING

Zerodha has received approval from SEBI to enter the merchant banking business, expanding beyond its core retail stockbroking operations. Zerodha Corporate Advisors received the approval on September 1, following its application filed in April 2026.

The company must complete the formal registration process before beginning merchant banking services. The new business will allow Zerodha to participate in IPOs, securities issues and other capital-market transactions.

Zerodha has been diversifying its financial-services portfolio through businesses such as asset management and lending, while its investment arm Rainmatter has backed several fintech and technology startups.

The move comes as India's IPO market gains momentum. In August, 23 mainboard IPOs raised Rs 22,439 crore, the highest monthly count so far in 2026. Zerodha's merchant banking entry could help it serve companies seeking capital while creating another revenue stream beyond brokerage. 

“

InsuranceDekho and RenewBuy merge to create a pan-India insurance distribution platform, combining their networks and technology capabilities under the InsuranceDekho brand

03

JHARKHAND ENTREPRENEURS ASSOCIATION SIGNS MOU TO EXPAND STARTUP ACCESS

The Jharkhand Entrepreneurs Association (JEA) has signed a three-year MoU with Noida-based JSS Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Park (JSS STEP) to expand opportunities for startups across Jharkhand.

The partnership will connect startups, particularly those from tribal regions, mining towns and smaller cities, with national markets, investors, mentors, incubation support and advanced prototyping facilities. JSS STEP has a network of more than 200 mentors and investor connections.

The collaboration will launch a joint accelerator focused on agriculture innovations, artificial intelligence and deep-tech ventures led by students and young entrepreneurs. The program will support product development, market readiness and fundraising.

JEA and JSS STEP will also conduct entrepreneurship programs, hackathons, innovation challenges and knowledge-sharing initiatives, while working with government departments on funding, regulations and institutional support.

JSS STEP CEO Dr. Satyendra Patnaik has joined JEA's Advisory Council as Chief Council. JSS STEP has incubated over 150 startups, while JEA has more than 2,000 members. 

04

SOFTBANK SELLS RS 1,650 CRORE MEESHO STAKE IN BLOCK DEAL

SoftBank has sold 8 crore shares of e-commerce platform Meesho worth Rs 1,650.4 crore through a block deal on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). The shares were sold by its investment vehicle SVF II Meerkat (DE) LLC at Rs 206.30 each, representing about 1.73% of Meesho's equity.

Institutional investors, including Societe Generale, Motilal Oswal, Fidelity, Franklin Templeton, Manulife, Goldman Sachs Bank Europe, HDFC Standard Life Insurance, Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance and Canara Robeco, bought the shares.

SoftBank held an 8.60% stake in Meesho as of June 2026. If the entire sale came from its holdings, its stake would fall to around 6.87%.

The transaction follows SoftBank's recent Lenskart exits, including Rs 2,888 crore in August and Rs 2,873 crore in June. Meesho has also seen stake sales by early investors, including Y Combinator. Meanwhile, Meesho's Q1 FY27 revenue rose 48% year over year to Rs 3,713 crore, while its net loss narrowed 54% to Rs 133 crore. 

05

ALPHA WAVE SELLS NEARLY ENTIRE PINE LABS STAKE FOR RS 550 CRORE

Global investment firm Alpha Wave has sold 3.54 crore shares of fintech company Pine Labs for around Rs 550 crore through a block deal. The shares, representing a 3.11% stake, were sold at Rs 155.10 each.

ICICI Prudential Life Insurance emerged as the largest buyer, acquiring shares worth around Rs 160 crore. Other buyers included Societe Generale, Edelweiss Mutual Fund, Goldman Sachs Investments Mauritius, Morgan Stanley and Norges Bank.

Following the transaction, Alpha Wave will retain only 4.85 lakh Pine Labs shares, effectively marking an almost complete exit.

The sale follows Alpha Wave's recent exits from Delhivery, Lenskart and Aye Finance. Meanwhile, Pine Labs reported a 20% year-on-year increase in operating scale to Rs 737 crore in Q1 FY27 and posted Rs 20 crore profit, more than four times the year-ago figure. 

06

ADOBE ACQUIRES INDIAN AI STARTUP RILO

Adobe has acquired Indian AI automation startup Rilo to strengthen its agentic AI and marketing automation capabilities. Financial terms were not disclosed. The deal marks Adobe's second known Indian startup acquisition after Rephrase.ai in 2023.

Founded in 2025 by IIT Bombay alumni Dhruv Jaglan and Georgi Boby, Rilo developed AI agents that automate complex marketing and sales workflows using natural-language instructions. Its platform supported prospecting, competitive intelligence, LinkedIn outreach, social media, content repurposing and sales-call analysis.

Rilo attracted more than 10,000 users within months and had raised around \$1 million from Peak XV Partners, DeVC and Day Zero Ventures at a reported \$10 million valuation.

Adobe will license Rilo's technology and absorb its six-member team, while Rilo will shut down. The acquisition comes as Adobe expands its enterprise AI offerings beyond content generation toward automated, multi-step business workflows. 



Unacademy completes its acquisition by UpGrad in an all-stock deal valued at over \$200 million, marking a nearly 94% decline from its peak valuation of \$3.4 billion

SLICE SECURES \$100 MILLION ROUND AT \$450 MILLION VALUATION



A Digital banking startup Slice has reportedly raised \$100 million in a fresh funding round at a valuation of around \$450 million, marking a sharp decline from its previous peak valuation of \$1.5 billion. The round was led by Neo Wealth, with participation from Kado Global, Moore Strategic Ventures, Raise Financial, Neo Secondaries Fund, Blume Ventures, and DSP Investment.

Founded in 2016 by Rajan Bajaj, Bengaluru-based Slice operates across digital banking and financial services. The latest transaction includes both primary and secondary components, with the fresh capital expected to support the company's business expansion and growth plans.

According to RoC filings, Slice approved Rs 403.47 crore worth of compulsory convertible debentures and Rs 81.5 crore in partly paid-up shares to Neo Wealth. Moore Strategic Ventures, Kado Global, Neo Secondaries Fund, Blume Ventures, Raise Financial, and

DSP Investment also participated in the transaction.

The latest fundraise comes after a period of rapid expansion and valuation growth for the fintech. Slice became a unicorn in November 2021 after raising \$200 million in a Series B round led by Tiger Global and Insight Partners. The company subsequently raised \$50 million in a Series C round in June 2022 and reached a peak valuation of \$1.5 billion.

Despite the significant valuation correction, Slice has strengthened its financial performance after transitioning into a digital bank. The company reported a net profit of Rs 48.4 crore in FY26, compared with a net loss of Rs 217 crore in the previous financial year.

The improvement continued in FY27. Slice reported a net profit of Rs 50.9 crore in Q1 FY27, while total income increased 38.6% year over year to Rs 413.8 crore.

The latest funding comes as Slice focuses on scaling its digital banking business while maintaining its shift toward sustainable profitability. 📈

AYATI DEVICES RAISES RS 15 CRORE IN PRE-SERIES A ROUND



B Wearable health tech startup Ultrahuman has raised \$70 million in a funding round led by Qualcomm Ventures, with participation from Labcorp, Alpha Wave, Blume Ventures, Nexus Venture Partners, Alteria and other investors. The Bengaluru-based company will use the capital to strengthen product development across sensing, artificial intelligence, miniaturized electronics, health algorithms, clinical science and research.

Founded in 2017 by Mohit Kumar and Vatsal Singhal, Ultrahuman develops wearable health tracking products that combine data from the Ultrahuman Ring, Blood Vision, continuous glucose monitoring products, Ultrahuman Home and Jade AI. Its platform tracks physiological, metabolic, biochemical and environmental data, as the company expands its focus beyond wearables toward a broader human-computer interface built around data from the human body.

Kumar and Singhal previously founded logistics startup Runnr, which was acquired by Zomato in 2017. With the latest funding, the founders are looking to deepen Ultrahuman's technology and research

capabilities while expanding its health-focused product ecosystem.

The latest round follows \$35 million raised in Series B and \$17.5 million in Series A funding in October 2022. Entrackr had earlier estimated the company's post-money valuation at around \$363 million, representing a significant increase over its previous Series B valuation.

Ultrahuman is also expanding its health research initiatives through Pulsomics, an opt-in platform that allows Ring users to participate in health studies. Its programs cover areas such as sleep, VOn Max and glucose metabolism, alongside features including AFib Detection, Cycle & Ovulation Pro and cardiovascular fitness age.

The company reported Rs 565 crore in revenue and Rs 73 crore in profit after tax in FY25. It had projected revenue of around Rs 1,000 crore for FY26 as it continued expanding across international markets.

The latest funding gives Ultrahuman additional capital to scale its technology, research and product portfolio as demand for personalized health tracking grows. 

IN MY OPINION

THE PRE-SEED AI PLAYBOOK: WHAT IT TAKES TO ATTRACT EARLY INVESTMENT

Arjun Malhotra, General Partner, Good Capital

Arjun Malhotra is an entrepreneur and early-stage investor who began his investing journey through Investopad, the startup community and incubator; he co-founded in 2014. He made early bets on companies including Meesho, Autonomic and HyperTrack, gaining experience in identifying businesses at the earliest stages. In 2019, he helped launch Good Capital to back technology-driven startups solving India-specific problems. His investment interests span across AI, commerce, fintech, healthcare and logistics, with a particular focus on businesses where technology can strengthen complex operational and intermediary-led models.



In an email interaction with Priyanka R, Copy Writer at siliconindia; Arjun Malhotra, General Partner, Good Capital, shared his insights on 'The Pre-Seed AI Playbook: What It Takes to Attract Early Investment'.

AI has dramatically lowered the cost of building software. A startup can now prototype a product, automate a workflow and demonstrate a compelling use case far faster than it could a few years ago. But that has also created a new problem for early-stage investors: if almost anyone can build the product, what makes a startup worth backing?

At the pre-seed stage, the answer is rarely revenue, scale or a fully developed product. Instead, investors are looking for evidence that the founder is solving a problem that remains valuable even as AI becomes cheaper and more accessible. The focus is increasingly shifting from the technology itself to the problem being solved and the business built around it. The strongest signal is often found not in what the product does on the surface, but in how deeply the startup has embedded itself into the difficult operational layer behind it.

The Changing AI Product Advantage

The falling cost of AI has changed the definition of a compelling startup. A product that once required

significant technical investment can now be assembled with relatively limited resources. As models become more capable, the same underlying technology is also becoming increasingly accessible to competitors. That makes the product itself a weaker moat.

For pre-seed investors, the more important question becomes what the startup has built around the technology. Is it connected to a difficult workflow? Does it depend on proprietary operational knowledge? Has the company taken responsibility for parts of the process that competitors would find difficult to reproduce?

This is particularly relevant in India, where many businesses operate across fragmented supply chains, informal workforces and inconsistent processes. Building software for such an environment is relatively easy compared with making that software work reliably across the complexity underneath it.

The companies that stand out are those willing to take responsibility for that complexity rather than simply pushing it onto customers or third-party partners.

That distinction can become critical at the pre-seed stage because it reveals how the founder thinks about the business. A startup that uses AI to make an existing operational model dramatically more efficient may ultimately have a stronger investment case than one with a more impressive-looking AI interface but little ownership of the underlying problem.

Building through Operational Complexity

Operational depth is becoming one of the strongest indicators of whether an AI startup has substance beyond its technology. Consider a business where the customer experience depends on several independent parties. If something goes wrong, the startup may blame a logistics partner, a service provider or a third-party operator. The customer, however, does not care where the failure occurred. The startup still owns the experience.

Companies that bring critical parts of the operation in-house can therefore create a different kind of advantage. They control more of the customer outcome and, in the process, accumulate knowledge about how the business actually functions.

Some companies like Orange Health, for instance, built control over its laboratories and rider fleet, while companies like SolarSquare has taken ownership of installation and after-sales. These models demonstrate a broader principle: when a company owns more of the difficult operational chain, it also has greater control over quality, reliability and customer experience. AI makes this model more interesting because it can now coordinate parts of that complexity at a lower cost.

Instead of replacing the entire operation, AI can manage scheduling, reconciliation, documentation, planning, exception handling and other activities that historically required layers of human coordination. The result is that a startup can potentially own a complex operational business without allowing management overhead to grow at the same rate. For a pre-seed investor, that is a much more meaningful proposition than simply having an AI feature.

Workflow-Driven Defensibility

At pre-seed, most startups will not have enough revenue to demonstrate mature product-market fit. Investors therefore need to look for behavioral evidence. One of the clearest signals is whether customers have started changing their own workflows around the product.

There is a significant difference between a customer using an AI tool because it is interesting and a customer restructuring how work gets done because the tool has become useful.

If employees are being trained to use the product, if the system is connected to other software, or if teams are redesigning processes around it, the relationship has changed. The product is no longer operating alongside the business. It has become part of the business.

That integration matters because it creates switching costs. A customer can easily stop using an experimental AI tool. Removing a system that has become embedded in daily operations is much harder. The more workflows connected to it, the greater the disruption caused by taking it away.

This is why early customer behaviour can be more revealing than early revenue. A small number of customers deeply dependent on a product can provide a stronger signal than a large number of users who interact with it only occasionally.

Another important signal is expansion. When customers begin asking whether the same technology can handle another process, another team or another part of their operation, it indicates that they are beginning to see the product as infrastructure rather than an experiment.



The real business value over the next few years will come from companies that own a hard operational chain and use AI to eliminate the coordination costs that have historically limited their growth

Defensibility Will Come From the Workflow

As AI models become increasingly commoditized, startups will find it difficult to build lasting advantages simply by using a particular model. The defensibility will increasingly come from everything surrounding that model.

A company that has spent years understanding a complicated workflow develops operational knowledge



that cannot be replicated by simply accessing an API. If its technology is connected to customer systems, trained around specific processes and continuously improved through real-world usage, the company develops a deeper relationship with the customer.

This is especially important at pre-seed because investors are effectively betting on what the business could become, rather than what it already is. The question is therefore not simply whether the startup has an advantage today. It is whether the business is accumulating advantages as it grows.

Every new customer should ideally contribute more than revenue. They should generate workflow knowledge, operational data, integrations, feedback and process intelligence that make the product harder to replace and easier to improve. That creates a compounding effect.

AI as an Operational Engine

This also changes what an investable AI startup may look like. The strongest company may not describe itself primarily as an AI company at all. Its customers may buy logistics, healthcare, construction, financial or operational services, while AI works behind the scenes to make those services faster, cheaper or more reliable.

Some companies like Xhipment, offers an example of this approach in freight forwarding, where AI is applied to documentation, reconciliation, invoice validation and exception handling. The customer is not necessarily paying for an AI product. The value comes from reducing the operational work required to run the business.

That distinction is important because it moves AI from being the product to being the economic engine of the company. For investors, that can be more attractive than another standalone AI application competing for attention in an increasingly crowded market.

The Foundations of an Investable AI Startup

At the pre-seed stage, there will always be uncertainty. Founders may not yet know exactly which customer segment will scale, the final pricing model may still be evolving, and the product itself may change considerably. But the underlying problem should be difficult to dismiss.

The most convincing AI startups are likely to be those where the technology is enabling the company to attack a problem that was previously constrained by cost, coordination or operational complexity. Their advantage is not that they have discovered an AI capability nobody else has. It is that they are applying that capability inside a problem that requires far more than technology to solve. That is ultimately what the pre-seed AI playbook comes down to.

In essence, as building AI products becomes easier, investors have less reason to reward technical novelty on its own. The more important question is whether the startup is building something customers will eventually find difficult to operate without. If the answer is visible in the customer's workflow, in the operational layer the company controls and in the complexity it is willing to absorb, the startup has something more valuable than an impressive prototype: it has the beginnings of a business that AI can make structurally stronger. 

ETCETERA

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Building the Knowledge Layer for the Intelligent Enterprise

Suitepedia

Enterprise technology is entering a defining phase as ERP systems, cloud applications, APIs, automation and artificial intelligence converge into increasingly connected business environments. For organizations, the challenge is no longer simply adopting sophisticated software. It is ensuring that technology works coherently across processes, data, finance, security and operations while remaining scalable and governed. As enterprises move from systems that record transactions toward platforms capable of interpreting information and initiating actions, practical implementation knowledge is becoming as important as the technology itself.

Against this backdrop, Suitepedia.com, founded by Sagar Gupta, is positioning itself as an enterprise technology knowledge and innovation platform built around practical, implementation-oriented learning. Drawing on Sagar Gupta's more than two decades of experience across ERP platforms, enterprise applications, integrations, cloud infrastructure, cybersecurity, automation and digital transformation, the platform addresses a persistent gap between product documentation and the realities of deploying technology inside complex organizations.

Connecting Technology with Enterprise Architecture

Suitepedia is built on the premise that understanding what a software feature does is only the starting point. Enterprises must also determine when a capability should be used, how it should interact with the broader technology stack, what accounting or operational implications it creates, which controls are necessary and whether the resulting architecture can scale without accumulating unnecessary technical debt.

The platform covers ERP architecture, Oracle NetSuite, CRM, enterprise integrations, cloud platforms, artificial intelligence, business-process automation, analytics, cybersecurity, application governance and digital transformation. Within the ERP ecosystem, its

knowledge areas extend across NetSuite architecture and administration, SuiteScript, SuiteFlow, SuiteAnalytics, REST APIs and SuiteTalk integrations, migration strategy, role-based security, master-data governance, financial systems integration and ERP optimization.

What distinguishes the approach is the emphasis on connecting these disciplines. A modern lead-to-cash process, for instance, may begin in CRM, move into ERP, trigger procurement or project activities, connect with logistics providers, generate invoices and accounting transactions, and eventually influence analytics and cash-flow forecasting. Each stage introduces considerations around data ownership, APIs, authentication, workflow orchestration, financial controls, security, exception handling and reporting. Suitepedia seeks to explain these relationships as part of one enterprise architecture rather than as disconnected software functions.

Bringing a Practitioner Lens to Enterprise Knowledge

Technology professionals today have access to an enormous volume of information, yet much of it tends to sit at either end of the spectrum: detailed product documentation explaining individual functionality or broad discussions about transformation that offer limited implementation guidance. Suitepedia aims to occupy the space between them by examining how technology behaves when deployed within actual enterprise processes.

For Sagar Gupta, technology should ultimately be evaluated through business outcomes. A sophisticated customization delivers limited value if it introduces operational complexity, while an integration cannot be considered successful merely because two APIs exchange information. Enterprise-grade integration must also account for authentication, retries, duplicate prevention, transaction sequencing, monitoring, reconciliation, failure handling and data ownership. The same rigor applies to AI, where technical capability must be accompanied by explainability, governance and appropriate controls.

This practitioner-first philosophy is particularly important as the internet becomes increasingly saturated with AI-generated technology content. Suitepedia's response is to prioritize accuracy, technical depth, research orientation and practical implementation thinking rather than publishing volume. It also seeks to make sophisticated concepts accessible without stripping away the architectural realities that determine whether a solution succeeds in production.

As Sagar Gupta explains, "Enterprise technology is moving from systems that record what happened, to systems that understand what is happening, and ultimately to systems capable of deciding what should happen next. Suitepedia's mission is to make the knowledge required to build that future accessible, practical, and responsible."



Suitepedia's perspective is that AI will augment rather than displace the transactional foundations of enterprise technology

ERP Meets the Intelligence Layer

The rapid development of generative and agentic AI is creating another important opportunity for Suitepedia. Enterprise systems have historically operated as systems of record, with business-intelligence platforms subsequently helping organizations analyze the information those systems generated. Generative AI is now making enterprise knowledge accessible through natural-language interaction, while agentic systems could increasingly recommend and execute actions across applications.

This shift changes the knowledge enterprise professionals require. Knowing where a particular function exists within an ERP application may become less important than understanding the business process, data structure, control framework, API architecture, security model and decision logic behind the transaction. Suitepedia is consequently expanding its focus across enterprise AI, AI agents, intelligent workflows, retrieval-augmented generation, enterprise search, API-driven architectures, data governance, AI security, observability, application governance and human-in-the-loop systems.

Sagar Gupta encapsulates this direction succinctly: "The future of ERP is not ERP versus AI. ERP will remain the trusted transactional foundation, while AI becomes the intelligence layer that understands, recommends, and increasingly orchestrates enterprise operations."

Building an Enterprise Knowledge and Intelligence Ecosystem

The next phase for Suitepedia is centered on evolving from primarily a knowledge destination into a broader enterprise learning and innovation ecosystem. One priority is developing more structured knowledge, enabling professionals to

understand how interconnected concepts such as APIs, authentication, middleware, data mapping, security, error handling and business-process dependencies collectively influence enterprise architecture.

Sagar Gupta describes Suitepedia's broader progression as "Knowledge → Community → Intelligence → Innovation." The ambition is to create an ecosystem where CIOs evaluating architecture, CFOs examining ERP controls, developers building integrations, AI architects designing enterprise agents, ERP professionals resolving implementation challenges and students entering the industry can derive value from a common knowledge foundation.

As enterprise interfaces become more conversational and intelligent systems assume greater responsibility for business activities, the technologies themselves will inevitably change. Suitepedia is therefore anchoring its long-term vision around a more enduring question: Does the technology understand the business problem it is supposed to solve? By connecting enterprise knowledge with implementation realities, governance and emerging intelligence, the platform is working to ensure that the answer increasingly becomes yes. 



Sagar Gupta, Founder

INDUSTRY SPEAKS

HOW LENDING BECOMES AN INVISIBLE PART OF EVERY BUSINESS WORKFLOW

Gautam Udani, Vice Chairperson, Co-Founder & COO at Veefin Group

Gautam is a serial entrepreneur and technology leader with nearly two decades of experience building innovative digital businesses across fintech, e-commerce, education, and enterprise technology. With a background in computer engineering and management information systems, he has founded and scaled multiple ventures, including India's pioneering midnight food delivery platform, Mad Orders. Passionate about solving complex business challenges through technology, he is recognized for combining deep technical expertise with entrepreneurial vision to drive innovation in digital finance and business transformation.



In an interaction with Mandvi Singh, Managing Editor at siliconindia; Gautam Udani, Vice Chairperson, Co-Founder & COO at Veefin Group shared his insights on 'How Lending Becomes an Invisible Part of Every Business Workflow'.

How can generative AI and marketplace transaction data be used to design dynamic, personalized credit products for thin-file customers without increasing systemic lending risk?

One of the biggest misconceptions in MSME lending is that the industry suffers from a lack of data. In reality, it suffers from a lack of connected data. Millions of businesses generate rich commercial signals every day, but traditional underwriting still relies disproportionately on collateral, bureau scores and historical financial statements.

I believe the future of credit lies in understanding commercial behavior rather than simply analyzing financial history. Generative AI allows banks to interpret invoice flows, supplier-buyer relationships, payment discipline, inventory cycles and cash-flow patterns as a connected story of how a business actually operates. That enables lending decisions to become dynamic, contextual and responsive.

In supply chain finance, the commercial transaction itself becomes one of the strongest indicators of

repayment capacity. As businesses grow, financing should evolve with them instead of remaining tied to a static assessment completed months earlier.

Responsible AI is non-negotiable. Trust is built through explainability, governance, model validation and meaningful human oversight. The institutions that succeed will not be those with the most AI, but those that use AI to extend access to capital while strengthening risk discipline.

What new marketplace business models emerge when platforms embed programmable payments and tokenized assets, and how should traditional incumbents adapt their strategy and partnership structures?

Businesses do not wake up looking for a loan; they wake up looking to fulfil an order, pay a supplier, manage inventory or optimize working capital. The future of finance is therefore not about selling banking products; it is about embedding financial capabilities exactly where business activity takes place. As finance becomes

increasingly integrated into digital commerce, access to credit, payments and treasury services will become a natural extension of the business workflow rather than a separate destination.

Programmable payments, digital documentation and tokenized assets are accelerating this transition by making financial processes faster, more transparent and highly automated. Smart contracts can trigger payments when predefined commercial milestones are met, while tokenized invoices, receivables and other assets have the potential to unlock new liquidity opportunities and improve capital efficiency. Together, these innovations enable marketplaces to evolve beyond transaction platforms into intelligent operating systems where commerce, payments, financing, collections and treasury functions work together seamlessly.



Tomorrow's fintech leaders will be defined by their ability to connect technology, finance and human insight; not by technical skills alone

As these ecosystems mature, I expect a significant share of SME financing decisions to originate within digital marketplaces rather than through traditional lending channels. AI will further strengthen this shift by analyzing real-time transaction behavior, supplier-buyer relationships and cash-flow patterns to deliver contextual financing exactly when businesses need it. The financing experience will become proactive, personalized and embedded into the commercial journey.

For traditional financial institutions, this represents a strategic shift rather than a competitive threat. Banks should position themselves as trusted infrastructure partners by investing in API-first architectures, interoperability and ecosystem collaboration instead of operating in closed environments.

Success will increasingly depend on forming partnerships with fintechs, marketplaces and technology providers to create integrated customer experiences.

Ultimately, the institutions that thrive will not be those that simply digitize existing banking products. They will be

the ones that orchestrate connected ecosystems where finance becomes almost invisible securely powering commerce in the background while enabling businesses to grow with greater speed, efficiency and confidence.

Which regulatory and governance frameworks are needed to ensure accountability when autonomous AI agents negotiate, sign smart contracts, and execute financial transactions inside marketplaces?

The conversation around AI should move beyond capability to accountability. Financial services have always been built on trust, and that principle becomes even more important as AI begins executing transactions rather than simply supporting decisions.

Every AI-driven action must remain transparent, explainable and auditable, with clear accountability across banks, technology providers and ecosystem participants. Strong model governance, cybersecurity, operational resilience and human oversight for high-impact decisions should be viewed as strategic capabilities rather than compliance exercises.

In my view, AI is not the disruption. Trusted digital infrastructure is. AI simply makes that infrastructure more intelligent. Organizations that combine innovation with governance will create durable competitive advantage because customers and regulators ultimately adopt systems they trust.

How did UPI, AI-based alternative credit scoring, and digital marketplaces combine to expand financial inclusion for Indian SMEs, and which parts of this model can other emerging economies safely replicate?

India's greatest innovation is not UPI in isolation; it is the way digital identity, payments, marketplaces and financial institutions have been connected into an interoperable digital ecosystem. Rather than creating standalone solutions, India has built a technology stack where every layer reinforces the others, generating trusted digital footprints for millions of MSMEs. This integrated approach has transformed how businesses access financial services and has become a powerful enabler of financial inclusion.

The convergence of UPI, AI-based alternative credit scoring and digital marketplaces has fundamentally changed the lending landscape. Instead of relying primarily on collateral, bureau scores or historical financial statements, financial institutions can increasingly evaluate businesses using verified transaction behaviour, payment patterns, invoice flows, supplier-buyer relationships and real commercial activity.

AI helps convert these diverse data points into meaningful insights, enabling lenders to assess repayment capacity with greater speed and accuracy. This reduces information asymmetry, shortens credit decision cycles and expands access to working capital for businesses that were previously underserved by traditional banking models.

Digital marketplaces have further strengthened this ecosystem by bringing commerce and finance together. As businesses buy, sell and transact within these platforms, they generate real-time operational data that enables contextual and embedded financial services. Financing is no longer a separate process but becomes part of the commercial journey, allowing businesses to access credit precisely when it is needed.

For other emerging economies, the lesson is clear. Financial inclusion is rarely created by one successful technology or a single policy initiative. It is achieved by building trusted digital infrastructure that enables governments, financial institutions, fintechs and businesses to collaborate through common standards and interoperable systems. Countries should focus on creating secure digital identity frameworks, real-time payment infrastructure, responsible data-sharing mechanisms and regulatory environments that encourage innovation while protecting consumers.

Ultimately, India's experience demonstrates that sustainable financial inclusion is built on connected ecosystems where technology, trust and collaboration work together to unlock economic opportunity for millions of small businesses.

For students entering the job market, which interdisciplinary skills will be most valuable for building AI-enabled fintech marketplace products and what short, portfolio-ready projects best demonstrate those skills?

The next generation of fintech leaders will need to be translators as much as technologists. While AI, data analytics, APIs, cloud computing and cybersecurity are becoming foundational skills, their true value lies in the ability to combine technology with a deep understanding of banking, regulation, customer behavior and product thinking. The future belongs to professionals who can bridge the gap between business problems and technological solutions rather than specialize in only one discipline.

The most successful fintech products are rarely those with the most sophisticated technology they are the ones that solve meaningful business challenges with simplicity, trust and an exceptional user experience. As AI becomes

increasingly accessible, competitive advantage will shift from building models to designing intelligent financial products that are explainable, secure and aligned with regulatory expectations.

Understanding responsible AI, data privacy, governance and ethical decision-making will therefore become just as important as technical expertise.

For students entering the job market, building a strong portfolio is often more valuable than simply listing certifications. Practical projects demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge to real-world problems and showcase systems thinking. Students can develop AI-powered MSME underwriting models using alternative transaction data, intelligent supply chain finance platforms, early-warning risk engines that identify potential credit stress, automated trade-document verification systems using generative AI, or embedded finance applications that integrate payments and lending through APIs.

Even small prototypes that solve a specific business problem can effectively demonstrate technical capability and product thinking.



Equally important are communication and collaboration skills. Fintech innovation happens at the intersection of engineering, finance, compliance and customer experience, making cross-functional collaboration a critical capability. Professionals who can explain complex AI models to business leaders, regulators and customers will be uniquely positioned to lead digital transformation initiatives.

Ultimately, the most valuable skill will be the ability to think in ecosystems rather than individual technologies. The future of fintech will be built by professionals who combine systems thinking, financial knowledge and customer empathy to create trusted digital infrastructure that helps businesses grow and economies become more inclusive. 

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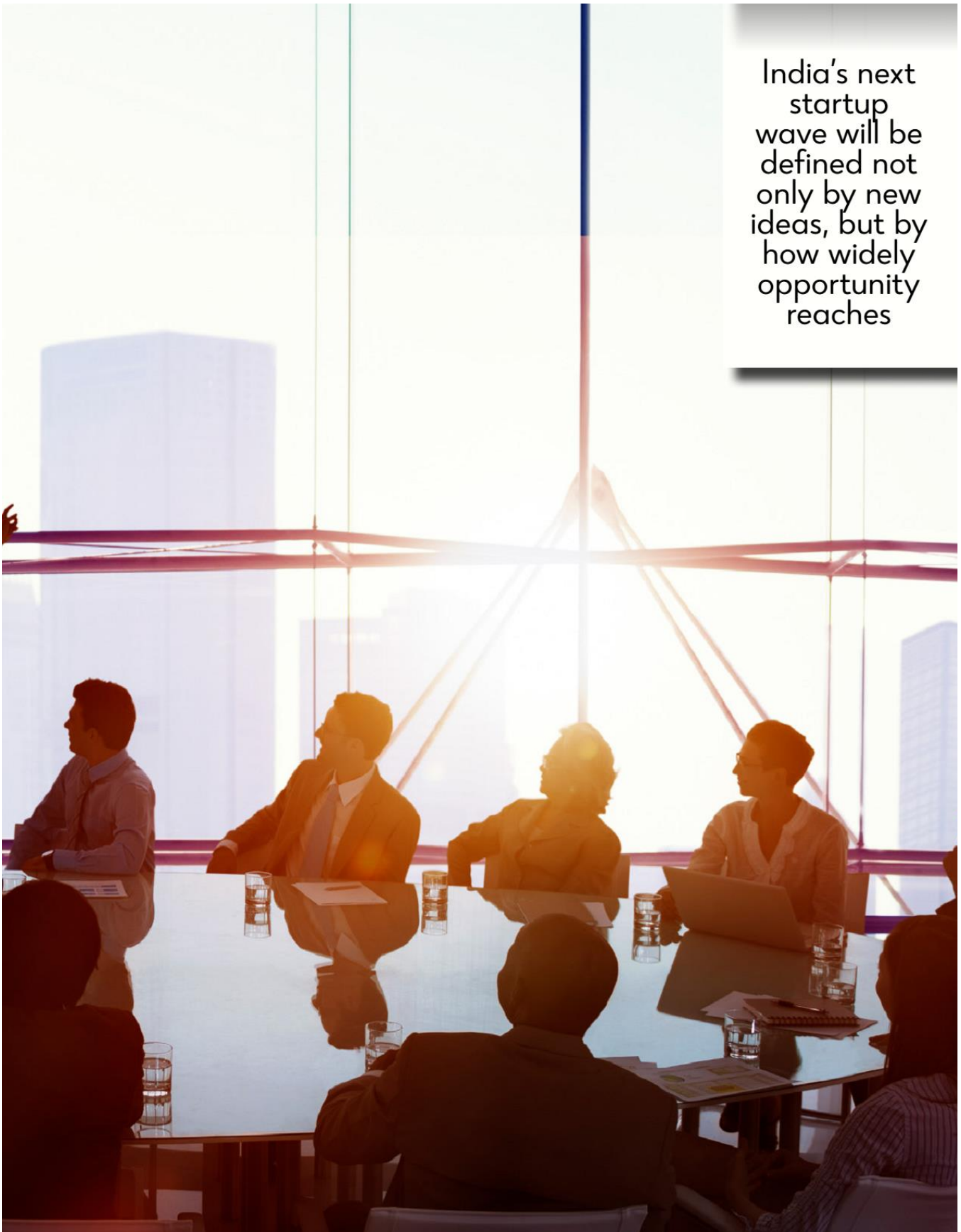
India's startup story is entering a more distributed phase, where the next set of scalable businesses may not necessarily come from established startup hubs. The bigger shift is in the infrastructure supporting founders outside these ecosystems access to mentors, investors, incubators, and markets is gradually moving closer to smaller cities and underserved regions.

This is particularly important for states where entrepreneurial potential exists but remains disconnected from mainstream startup networks. Jharkhand offers a clear example. A recent MoU between the Jharkhand Entrepreneurs Association and JSS STEP aims to connect startups from tribal areas, mining regions, and smaller cities with mentors, investors, accelerators, and the Delhi-NCR ecosystem. Such linkages could determine whether regional startups remain local ventures or become nationally competitive businesses.

In this **'Startup Special- 2026'** edition, **siliconindia** highlights emerging enterprises and innovative organizations shaping India's entrepreneurial landscape. Spanning diverse sectors, these organizations reflect the ideas, capabilities, and innovation driving new opportunities, transforming industries, and contributing to the next phase of India's business growth.



India's next
startup
wave will be
defined not
only by new
ideas, but by
how widely
opportunity
reaches



ALMERANT GROUP OF COMPANIES: Building Nutraceutical Products with a Global Outlook



Vickrant Singh,
 Founder

Poonam Yadav,
 Founder

Building a nutraceutical product is not just about finding a supplier and getting it made. There is sourcing, testing, registrations, Free Sale Certificates, and exports to consider. For businesses entering international markets, managing these through different vendors can become complicated.

Almerant Group of Companies was built after seeing this problem first-hand. A distributor and export house focused on nutraceutical and food products, the company works across sourcing, manufacturing, documentation, testing, registration support, and exports. Its philosophy, "Crafted for Wellness", reflects its aim to make the import and private-labelling journey simpler.

A Simple Idea Behind the Business

The idea for Almerant came from an experience Vickrant, Founder, had while working in the Pharmaceutical industry. While handling a nutraceutical registration, he saw a client coordinating with different people for manufacturing, documents, testing, and registration. It raised a simple question: why not bring these requirements together under one roof?

Today, Almerant supports businesses developing and launching private-label nutraceutical products. Depending on their needs, the company helps with product selection, manufacturing coordination, Free Sale Certificates, Apostille, legalizations, registration documentation, and exports. Its wider business also includes FSSAI-recognized distribution of nutraceutical raw materials in India.

"We have seen how difficult it can become when a client has to keep following up with different vendors for the same product. We want to make that easier. The idea is that clients can work with one team through different parts of the journey instead of managing everything separately," says Poonam Yadav, Founder.

Building Almerant from the Ground Up

Almerant was bootstrapped. Vickrant initially worked on it while managing multiple jobs, using his grandfather's old office cabin as the starting point. He handled registrations, the website and CRM, data, prospecting, and the first sales himself.

There was plenty of trial and error. Months were sometimes spent following up with prospects who ultimately went nowhere. These experiences taught the business to choose clients carefully, ask better questions, and improve its processes.

Poonam Yadav joined while the company was still at an early and uncertain stage. She left a stable career to build the business alongside Vickrant, taking responsibility for business development, client relationships, and international opportunities. Together, they learned that growth cannot only be about numbers; finding the right clients, understanding their needs, and

consistently delivering matter just as much.



The best businesses don't follow the market, they shape it

Growing One Step at a Time

The founders now want to enter more international markets, participate in industry expos, improve outreach, strengthen manufacturer and supplier relationships, and develop Almerant's own products.

Innovation is another focus. Vickrant and Poonam are particularly bullish about Vitamin D and the wider wellness market. They want to identify genuine opportunities and develop products around real needs rather than simply following trends.

"We have a bigger vision, but we also know that we are still building. Right now, it is important for us to understand the market, work with the right people, solve real problems, and build a strong foundation. We would rather take it one step at a time and do it properly", shares Poonam.

Being selected as leading Nutraceutical Export House & Contract Manufacturer is meaningful, but the founders do not see it as a point of arrival. They see it as reassurance that the work is moving in the right direction and a responsibility to keep improving.

In the years ahead, Vickrant and Poonam want Almerant to build nutraceutical products they can be proud of and contribute to India's growing presence in global nutrition exports. Their ambition is to play a meaningful role in taking Indian nutraceutical products to more markets around the world. 

VC VIEWPOINT

WHY TECHNOLOGY ALONE WON'T SCALE GCCs WITHOUT HUMAN-CENTERED AI LEADERSHIP

Biddappa Muthappa, Co-Founder & CEO, Sash.AI

Biddappa Muthappa is an AI and data science expert with extensive experience driving transformative AI solutions across industries such as Retail, Technology, and AdTech. He has led high-impact teams, scaled Data Science centers, and delivered measurable business growth. Recognized with multiple awards, he focuses on human-centered AI, mentoring emerging talent, and shaping innovative, real-world AI strategies.



In a recent interaction with M R Yuvatha, Senior Correspondent at siliconindia Startupcity, Biddappa Muthappa shared his insight that GCC growth relies on human-centered AI leadership, not just technology.

Global Capability Centers (GCCs) are shifting from cost arbitrage to becoming strategic innovation hubs, and artificial intelligence (AI) is a key catalyst for this transformation. The challenge, however, is not just piloting proof-of-concepts (POCs) but scaling adoption responsibly and sustainably. For GCC leaders, this means navigating governance, workforce readiness, and organizational trust in ways that accelerate not hinder innovation.

Governance That Accelerates, Not Delays

Governance is often misunderstood as a brake on innovation, but in reality, it should act as a steering mechanism. GCCs must build frameworks aligned with their specific industries and regulatory environments. For instance, BFSI operates under very different compliance expectations than healthcare, making a one-size-fits-all model ineffective.

Instead of treating governance as an afterthought, leaders should embed it into the development lifecycle, ensuring AI systems are transparent, explainable, and reliable. Done well, governance does not slow adoption

it builds trust and speeds deployment by reducing risks before they escalate.

Ethical AI should never be treated as a compliance checkbox, it is, in fact, a prerequisite for adoption and growth. By embedding transparency, fairness, and accountability as upfront design parameters rather than leaving them for post-deployment audits GCCs can create systems that are both trustworthy and scalable.

Responsible AI is not just about cultural alignment, it is about building the organizational confidence required to scale AI use cases into production. Governance frameworks must balance global consistency with local relevance, ensuring AI decisions align with both enterprise-wide values and regional realities. When done right, ethical AI governance delivers measurable ROI by reducing risks, accelerating trust, and improving model performance through cleaner, bias-aware data practices.

Reskilling as a Growth Enabler

AI is reshaping job roles across GCCs. The traditional data scientist profile, for example, is evolving into the full-stack AI engineer, with responsibilities spanning engineering, deployment, and model lifecycle management.

Leaders must anticipate such shifts and redesign work-force strategies accordingly.

Reskilling should extend beyond AI-specific roles to create adjacent skills and new functions that complement AI and add strategic value. This requires a commitment to AI literacy across all levels of the organization, preparing employees to adapt and thrive in a future where human and machine collaboration defines success. Far from being a cost burden, reskilling must be treated as a core driver of adoption velocity and organizational resilience.

Responsible AI governance and human-centered leadership are essential for GCCs to scale innovation, build trust, and unlock sustainable competitive advantage.

Human-Centered AI Leadership

AI has the potential to be either a multiplier of inefficiencies or a catalyst for scale and the difference lies in leadership. Human-centered AI leadership ensures that technology is not deployed in isolation but anchored in a broader redesign of processes, culture, and governance. Instead of applying AI on top of legacy inefficiencies, leaders can use it as an opportunity to reimagine workflows end-to-end, integrating automation, data intelligence, and human expertise.

This shifts AI from being a tool that merely accelerates existing systems to one that reshapes operations, enabling GCCs to deliver new value at scale. The emphasis here is not on technology alone, but on aligning AI with human judgment, trust, and creativity so that it becomes a true enabler of transformation.

One of the biggest risks in AI adoption is not technological it is human bias. Left unchecked, leadership assumptions and cognitive blind spots can seep into data models, decision frameworks, and governance, turning AI into a mirror of personal or organizational biases.

Human-centered AI leadership addresses this risk by fostering diverse decision-making forums, stress-testing AI outputs, and encouraging open challenges from employees across levels and functions. Leaders who model humility acknowledging where they might be wrong create an environment where biases can be surfaced and corrected before they scale.

Balancing Machine-Driven Speed with Human Creativity

As AI takes on more cognitive functions, GCC leaders must evolve beyond traditional management skills and embrace new leadership capabilities that balance machine-driven efficiency with distinctly human strengths. Every leader must develop at least a high-

level understanding of AI's architecture, opportunities, and limitations. This knowledge is essential to navigate trade-offs, make informed decisions, and engage confidently in AI-driven transformation.

Equally important is adaptive risk-taking. GCC leaders must be willing to experiment with emerging technologies, evaluate their pros and cons, and adapt quickly without being paralyzed by fear of disruption. Partnerships with startups, academia, and global teams play a critical role here, allowing GCCs to stay at the forefront of innovation while continuously refreshing skills and capabilities across the workforce.

The leadership quality that will differentiate the best from the rest is empathetic foresight. As AI changes the nature of work, leaders must anticipate human concerns such as job displacement, erosion of creativity, or fear of irrelevance. By addressing these proactively through reskilling pathways, transparent communication, and recognition of uniquely human contributions leaders can preserve trust and foster creativity even in highly automated environments.

Cultural Reinvention Through AI

As GCCs scale, the pressure from parent organizations is shifting from efficiency toward strategic decision-making and innovation. Leaders cannot view AI integration purely as a technical rollout they must approach it as a cultural reinvention of work. The true competitive advantage will not come from speed alone, but from the ability to embed AI in a way that amplifies human strengths such as trust, collaboration, and creativity.

Trust becomes a strategic asset in this journey trust in data, in AI systems, and most importantly, in leadership. Building this trust requires transparency in how AI is used, clarity on its limitations, and consistent communication about its role in decision-making. Collaboration becomes a competitive edge when leaders encourage human-AI teaming rather than substitution. By positioning AI as a collaborator, employees are empowered to focus on problem-solving, storytelling, and creativity while machines handle scale, speed, and pattern recognition.

Looking Ahead

When leaders embrace this mindset, AI integration moves beyond automation and efficiency into the realm of cultural reinvention. It creates organizations where human creativity is unleashed, innovation thrives, and competitive advantage is sustained. Far from slowing down the race for adoption, this balance between machine-driven speed and human-centered strengths allows GCCs to scale AI in ways that are both fast and future-proof. 



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ASCENTA:

Elevating Land Ownership into a Lifestyle Experience



Karan Bahl
Founder & Director

A compelling real estate solution today has to deliver more than a well-located property. For discerning buyers, particularly HNIs, the definition of value is expanding to include privacy, clean surroundings, wellness, security, convenience, and long-term appreciation. This is driving interest in low-density communities, nature-led living, and professionally managed second-home estates that combine the tangible value of land with the intangible value of lifestyle.

Ascenta, founded by Karan Bahl, is emerging at this intersection of real estate and experience-led ownership. The company is creating professionally managed private villa estates designed around nature, privacy, thoughtful infrastructure, and enduring value. Its proposition addresses an important gap in India's premium plotted development market, where ownership often ends with the sale of land, leaving buyers to navigate development and management independently. Ascenta is instead building an integrated ownership experience where the land, home, community, and services are conceived as one proposition.

Beyond the Conventional Plot

Ascenta is building its vision around a more considered approach to land ownership - one that prioritizes enduring value over fleeting real

estate trends. Its developments are conceived as thoughtfully planned homes and communities that can remain relevant across generations. "By combining premium plotted development with structured estate planning and professional management, the company enables buyers to experience the value and flexibility of land ownership alongside the comfort, infrastructure, and convenience expected from a premium residential environment", says Karan Bahl, Founder and Director.

This approach aligns with the evolving aspirations of affluent homebuyers, who increasingly seek an escape from dense urban living without sacrificing investment potential, security, or contemporary amenities. Ascenta responds by creating private estates where the tranquillity of nature is complemented by dependable infrastructure, thoughtful planning, and a professionally managed ownership experience.



Where Wellness Meets Design

Wellness is becoming an increasingly important dimension of residential decision-making, influencing everything from density and landscape planning to outdoor experiences and indoor environments. Ascenta's development philosophy responds to this shift through low-density planning, green spaces, privacy, biophilic design, and an emphasis on creating environments that support a healthier and more balanced lifestyle.

Basalt Hills, located in the Mumbai 3.0 corridor, exemplifies this

approach. Spread across 20 acres, the project is envisioned as a low-density, infrastructure-led private villa estate where the natural terrain informs the overall design. "Rather than functioning as a conventional land subdivision, Basalt Hills is conceived as a boutique community with structured estate planning, professional management, infrastructure, and hospitality thoughtfully integrated into the experience", adds Karan Bahl.

Building a Future-Ready Ownership Model

Technology further strengthens Ascenta's real estate solution. Smart-home technologies, energy-efficient systems, and digital security features are being incorporated to improve convenience, safety, and long-term functionality. At the same time, the company's understanding of evolving buyer behaviour informs homes designed around flexible living, wellness, sustainability, and seamless technology integration.

Looking ahead, Ascenta is focused on expanding thoughtfully designed second-home communities while building a stronger end-to-end development ecosystem spanning land acquisition, construction, property management, and rental services. The company sees significant potential in the convergence of hybrid work, wellness-led lifestyles, and growing demand for nature-connected second homes.

Ultimately, Ascenta's ambition extends beyond creating premium addresses. It is seeking to establish a more considered model of land ownership - one where design, nature, technology, professional management, and long-term value come together to create places that families can own, experience, and pass forward with confidence. 🏡

INDUSTRY SPEAKS

WHY INDIA'S EV GROWTH HINGES ON GRID READINESS AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Manoj Gupta, CEO - ECOFUEL EV Charging Technologies, JBM Group

Manoj Gupta is a seasoned business leader in India's electric mobility ecosystem with over 33 years of industry experience. He specializes in building EV infrastructure and scaling integrated charging solutions for public transport and emerging mobility segments. He focuses on developing robust EV ecosystems by combining technology, managed services, and strategic execution to accelerate adoption. Known for driving large-scale initiatives and fostering innovation-led growth, he brings a strong blend of technical expertise and business leadership to advance sustainable mobility solutions.



In a recent interaction with Priyanka R, Copywriter at siliconindia, Manoj Gupta, CEO - ECOFUEL EV Charging Technologies, JBM Group, shared his insights on 'Why India's EV Growth Hinges on Grid Readiness and Energy Management'.

India's electric mobility journey is entering a critical growth phase, where rising EV adoption is putting greater emphasis on grid readiness, energy management, and scalable infrastructure. Although the government policies have provided the necessary framework for this evolution, the next level of growth will be contingent on the smooth integration of technology and efficient implementation.

EV Infrastructure as a Gradual and Collaborative Evolution

Infrastructural development for EVs does not happen all at once; rather, it happens incrementally. It involves a process of collaboration between various parties and co-creation. The process of aligning technology with implementation on the ground and product-market fit are some of the critical components in the process.

As an infrastructural component of nation building, it is vital for EV infrastructural development to be aligned with governmental initiatives. Such alignment helps ensure consistency in efforts within the overall framework. Currently, EV infrastructures have been described as Greenfield activities that continue to learn from their environment while implementing new technologies.

This stage is not a bottleneck but rather an inevitable phase. Just like the development in the IT industry, the telecom industry, and other industries involved in providing infrastructure, there is also steady growth in the EV infrastructure industry.

Building a Unified Digital Layer for EV Charging Ecosystems

Any emerging technology will encounter difficulties with standards, integration, and interoperability, which can be resolved only with time once all the parties get on the same page, just as it happened in telecoms.

The EV charging industry also finds itself at that point since there are various types of standards such as GB/T, CHAdeMO, CCS2, and proprietary ones, which results in fragmentation of this market. Until there is consensus among manufacturers and the industry at large, other innovations can wait.

However, when these issues are sorted out, the digital aspect will move forward with features such as energy trading, p2p transactions, and renewable sources integration. As a result, consumers too will have an opportunity to take part in the energy ecosystem.

This transformation is helped by an increasing self-sufficiency in the ecosystem. The software and charging infrastructure management are being created in the region, along with the manufacture of components through startups and big companies alike.

Thus, the industry is moving towards an integrated ecosystem, which creates a strong foundation for global expansion.

India's Emergence as a Global Benchmark in EV Infrastructure

India will never become a victim of fragmentation in standardization; instead, it will slowly but surely become

a standard bearer in the EV landscape. JBM Ecofuel's standardization initiatives, such as the implementation of CC2 protocols, dual-gun charging for e-buses enabling faster turnaround, and the launch of India's first megawatt charging solution in December 2023, clearly reflect this direction. The reason is that India is able to deliver quickly and with strong execution, supported by robust integration capabilities, project management skills, and the effective use of technology and talent.

At this juncture, the success of executing EV infrastructure projects in India commands tremendous respect globally. Markets across the world are closely watching how things are unfolding in India.

Though India first made a name for itself with its IT and services sector, making a formidable pool of skilled manpower available, its capabilities are now moving beyond such sectors into that of infrastructure.

It has moved from just being a supplier of manpower to playing a pivotal role in the development of global EV infrastructures. This is an indication of maturity on India's part, as it works hand in hand with other countries in developing infrastructure.

Strengthening India's Battery Ecosystem for Long-Term EV Competitiveness

For India to be successful in developing its own battery technologies and thus maintain long-term competitiveness within the EV ecosystem, it will take time. With the passage of time, while initially the emphasis was on the use of lithium, other areas have become more important, including electronics, semiconductor chips, rare earths, and artificial intelligence systems.

Mining, material processing, and recycling have become more important. Although the manufacture of battery cells requires additional progress, impressive success can be seen in other related areas like EMS, BMS, and chip developments from startups.

The ecosystem is also undergoing changes from innovation in isolation to collaborative value chain integration among start-ups, industry, and academia.

All things considered, despite obstacles, India is gaining traction and building its base towards becoming self-reliant in the electric vehicle ecosystem.

Bridging the Talent Gap for a Converging EV Ecosystem

India has a vast reservoir of talent; however, the primary issue is keeping pace with industry requirements. The problem is not one of availability but rather one of attitude, adaptability, and skills.

Some are sticking to conventional careers, while industries such as electric vehicles, energy systems, and advanced technologies need a different approach. Educational reforms are taking time compared to the

evolution of industries, causing a gap between education and employment.

Therefore, there is often a lack of practical exposure in domains such as mobility, data centers, and Industry 4.0 among others. This issue can only be solved through continuous skills upgrading rather than certification-based learning.

Fortunately, initiatives spearheaded by the industry are contributing to solving this problem by ensuring that talent is incorporated within the ecosystem. Additionally, India is increasingly focusing on developing capabilities internally rather than externally.



India will never become a victim of fragmentation in standardization; instead, it will slowly but surely become a standard bearer in the EV landscape

Shifting from Policy Support to Localized Execution

The various government schemes in the past ten years have been instrumental in the uptake of electric vehicles by fostering awareness and kick-starting the process. Programs such as FAME, PM E-bus Sewa & PM E-Drive have been the catalysts, motivating people and demonstrating their intentions.

Nonetheless, these programs were never designed to be the end-all, be-all for infrastructure creation. The goal was always for the programs to act as a trigger that would rouse the ecosystem into action.

In today's world, however, priorities are evolving to include other sectors such as semiconductors, data centres, and artificial intelligence-based demand. EV development is simply a logical extension of the ecosystem.

In essence, the next level of scaling infrastructure will be dependent on implementation from the state, city, and municipality perspectives. A bottom-up strategy is needed, wherein local government agencies assume responsibility for developing urban infrastructure as well as establishing a conducive environment for business and citizens.

It has also resulted in stiff competition between states in attracting investments through improved infrastructure facilities and favourable policies. In this phase, the focus is not much on launching new programs but rather on establishing a conducive environment. 



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INFOAIDATA TECHNOLOGIES:

Powering Smarter Decisions through Data Engineering



Hemant Kumar Sahoo
Founder & Director

Data has become central to how modern businesses operate, but having more data does not necessarily mean having better insights. As organisations accumulate information across databases, spreadsheets, documents, applications and cloud platforms, the ability to integrate, structure and transform that information into usable intelligence is becoming increasingly important. Data engineering sits at the heart of this transformation, creating the infrastructure that enables businesses to access reliable information and make faster, more informed decisions.

For growing businesses in particular, the challenge is often not a lack of data but its fragmentation. Manual processes, disconnected systems and legacy infrastructure can make valuable information difficult to access and even harder to interpret. This is where Infoaidata Technologies Private Limited, a Bhubaneswar-based data engineering and technology company founded in November 2025, is building its proposition.

Turning Fragmented Data into Business Intelligence

Founded with a clear understanding of the gap between data generation and meaningful utilisation, Infoaidata Technologies works across data engineering, business intelligence, cloud, automation and AI. Its approach is deliberately practical: rather than pushing clients towards unnecessarily

complex platforms, the company first understands the business problem and then develops an appropriate solution.

With nearly two decades of experience in BI, data engineering, cloud and analytics, the founder brings a strong understanding of the challenges organisations face when dealing with disparate information. “The company helps clients integrate data from multiple sources, develop dashboards and reports, automate workflows, process documents and invoices, migrate data environments to the cloud, and build foundations for AI adoption”, says Hemant Kumar Sahoo, Founder and Director.

The objective is straightforward - transform scattered information into accessible, actionable intelligence while helping organisations save time, reduce errors and improve visibility.



Infoaidata Technologies begins its engagements by understanding where a client's information resides and what is preventing it from being used effectively

Building Solutions Around Real Business Needs

Infoaidata Technologies begins its engagements by understanding where a client's information resides and what is preventing it from being used effectively. Data may exist within databases, Excel files, PDFs, invoices, emails or multiple software systems. The company assesses these sources, connects and cleanses the relevant information, and structures it into a format that supports business decisions.

“The resulting solutions can range from automated reporting and data pipelines to dashboards, alerts, document processing and workflow automation. This problem-first approach allows the company

to address immediate operational challenges while creating scope for broader transformation”, Hemant Kumar Sahoo.

Its positioning is particularly relevant to Indian businesses where legacy systems and manual processes remain part of everyday operations. By introducing technology incrementally, Infoaidata Technologies enables organisations to demonstrate tangible value before expanding their data infrastructure.

A Practical Foundation for Long-Term Growth

As a young company, Infoaidata Technologies is maintaining a deliberately lean operating model. With two founders currently driving the business, the leadership remains closely involved in requirement gathering, solution design, implementation, data engineering, analytics, automation and AI. This hands-on structure enables faster decisions, direct client communication and close attention to project requirements.

Looking ahead, the company plans to strengthen its capabilities across data engineering, BI, cloud, automation and AI while exploring AI-enabled analytics, document processing, workflow automation and reusable technology solutions. Its ambition is to serve both MSMEs and larger organisations without losing its focus on practical outcomes. Rather than pursuing growth for its own sake, Infoaidata Technologies is focused on building credibility through quality work and lasting client relationships. As its team and capabilities expand, the company aims to evolve into a reputed provider of data engineering and AI solutions - helping businesses replace fragmented information and guesswork with reliable data-driven decision-making. 

INDUSTRY SPEAKS

THE MOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE TRAP: BUILDING EV INFRASTRUCTURE THAT CAN ACTUALLY MAKE MONEY

Kunal Khattar, Founding Partner, AdvantEdge Founders

Kunal Khattar is an entrepreneur and an early stage investor with a diverse experience in automotive mobility, technology & venture capital. He was formerly associated with Carnation Auto where he gained valuable insight into the art of building companies. His areas of specialization include entrepreneurship, startup investing, raising money, business strategy and growth. Over the years, he has developed a strong understanding of emerging technologies and evolving mobility models, with a particular focus on India's automotive, electric vehicle and mobility ecosystem.



In an email interaction with Priyanka R, Copy Writer at siliconindia; Kunal Khattar, Founding Partner, AdvantEdge Founders, shared his insights on 'The Mobility Infrastructure Trap: Building EV Infrastructure That Can Actually Make Money'.

India's EV charging network is expanding, but a bigger network does not necessarily mean a better business. The real challenge is making each charging site productive enough to recover its capital cost and generate sustainable returns.

This is where the economics of EV infrastructure become difficult. A charging network may have hundreds of locations, but if those chargers remain underused, the business is effectively carrying expensive assets that generate little revenue. The question is no longer simply how quickly charging infrastructure can be built, but whether every new site can contribute to the bottom line.

Low Charger Utilization is the Real Profitability Challenge

The Charge Point Operator (CPO) business is increasingly shaped by one basic metric: revenue generated from the space occupied by the infrastructure. That makes energy throughput, utilization, land cost and uptime central to the economics.

As of March 2026, government data tabled in Parliament showed around 27,700 public charging stations in India,

with approximately 22,750 operational. The gap highlights one of the industry's fundamental problems. Infrastructure that exists on paper does not necessarily translate into infrastructure that customers can reliably use.

Even operational chargers face significant downtime because of grid, hardware and vehicle-related issues. At the same time, utilization across most public charging stations remains low.

A 60 kW DC charger operating at around 10 percent utilization can dispense roughly 140 kWh a day. Against an installed cost of around Rs 15-20 lakh, including the transformer and upstream electrical work, the payback can stretch for several years before accounting for land rent, maintenance, operations and software.

That makes one thing clear: building first and waiting for demand later is a risky model.

The Best Charging Sites Start With Demand

The strongest charging sites are unlikely to be those selected simply because a particular piece of land is available or because a road has high traffic. EV users generally charge where they are already going.

That could be a fleet hub, airport, bus depot, hospital, quick-commerce facility or another location where vehicles naturally stop.

The economics improve significantly when a site has an anchor source of demand. A fleet, operator or route can provide predictable charging requirements from the beginning, while walk-in customers add incremental revenue.

This changes the traditional approach to infrastructure development. Instead of asking where a charger can be installed, operators need to ask where vehicles already spend time and how much energy those vehicles are likely to consume.

Land is another critical part of the equation. Fixed leases can become a major burden when utilization is low. Revenue-sharing arrangements can create a more flexible cost structure because the land expense moves with the site's revenue.

In a capital-intensive business, that distinction can determine whether a location becomes an asset or a liability.



The most common failure in Indian EV infrastructure is not a bad thesis. The thesis is largely right- this build-out has to happen and it will. The failure is a good thesis funded with the wrong kind of capital, on the wrong timeline, measured by the wrong metrics

Fleet Vehicles Could Be the Key to Better Utilization

Private EV owners will eventually become an important part of public charging demand. But for infrastructure companies looking for high utilization today, commercial and high-frequency vehicles offer stronger economics.

A private electric car in an Indian city may travel around 30-40 km a day and consume roughly 6-8 kWh. A large share of private EV owners also have access to home charging, keeping much of their charging demand outside the public network.

Commercial vehicles have a very different usage pattern. Fleet cabs and commercial LCVs can travel 200-250 km a day and require around 35-45 kWh. Their routes are also more predictable, making their charging requirements easier to plan and contract.

The difference is particularly important because infrastructure businesses depend on cash-flow certainty. Retail charging demand is uncertain. A private EV owner may or may not use a particular public charger on a given day. A fleet vehicle operating on a fixed route is far more predictable.

That certainty can compensate for the lower margins typically available from fleet customers. Fleet operators are likely to negotiate harder on charging prices, but higher and more consistent throughput can make the trade-off worthwhile.

The goal, therefore, is not simply to earn the highest margin on every unit of electricity. It is to keep the expensive infrastructure working for as many productive hours as possible.

Fast Charging Pays When Time Has a Business Value

Fast charging is often treated as an automatic upgrade, but higher charging power only creates value when speed itself is valuable to the customer.

For commercial vehicles, it often is. A cab sitting at a charger is not generating fares. A delivery vehicle that is stationary is not completing orders. An intercity bus waiting to charge is not carrying passengers.

Reducing charging time can therefore directly increase vehicle productivity. In these cases, the additional investment in fast charging can be justified because it creates more earning hours for the vehicle.

The calculation changes for vehicles with long dwell times. A private car parked at an office for several hours does not need a 120 kW charger simply because the technology is available. A lower-power AC charger can deliver the required energy over the same period at a much lower cost.

High-power charging also brings additional infrastructure costs. Transformers, cabling, sanctioned load, grid upgrades and demand charges can substantially increase the fixed cost of a site.

Over-specifying charging capacity before demand is proven can therefore turn faster charging into an expensive asset that remains underutilized. The better approach is to match charging power with the customer's dwell time and the economic value of the time saved.

Battery Swapping Works Best Where Vehicles Run Hard

Battery swapping has a stronger economic case in segments where vehicles are used intensively and batteries can be exchanged quickly.

Two-wheelers and three-wheelers fit this model particularly well. Delivery riders, e-rickshaws and urban

cargo vehicles can use their vehicles throughout the day and may need several energy replenishments during a shift.

Swapping allows the driver to replace a depleted battery within minutes rather than waiting for a charging session. It can also reduce the upfront cost of the vehicle when the battery is separated from the purchase price. But the model depends heavily on battery utilization.

The key questions are how many times a battery is swapped each day and how many useful cycles it delivers over its life. High battery turns can make the asset productive. Low utilization can leave operators holding a large inventory of depreciating batteries.

The economics become more difficult with passenger cars, where battery packs are significantly larger and heavier. Buses and heavy commercial vehicles can also have a stronger case for depot charging when they already return to a fixed location and have sufficient time to charge.

Fragmentation remains another challenge. If swapping networks use incompatible battery formats, the effective network available to a driver becomes much smaller than the headline station count suggests.



Station Count Matters Less Than Energy Throughput

The biggest mistake in evaluating EV infrastructure is treating the number of chargers as a proxy for business strength. Station count shows how much infrastructure has been deployed. It does not show whether that infrastructure is generating returns.

A more useful starting point is kWh dispensed per charger per day. Median performance is particularly important because a few high-performing locations can make an average network utilization number look healthier than the majority of sites actually are.

Site performance over time also reveals whether the network is improving. Older site cohorts should ideally become more productive as EV adoption and demand density increase. If newer sites continue to show weak throughput, adding more locations simply increases the capital burden.

Contribution margin per kWh provides another important test. The calculation needs to account for land, demand charges, maintenance and payment costs rather than focusing only on the difference between electricity purchase and selling prices.

Uptime and successful charging sessions are equally important. A charger that appears operational on a network map but fails when a customer arrives is not a productive asset.

Another useful measure is capex per kWh dispensed per day. It connects infrastructure investment directly with the demand generated by that investment.

The ownership of the physical assets also matters. Venture capital may be suitable for building software, technology, customer acquisition and demand aggregation. Funding large amounts of physical infrastructure with equity can create a different problem, particularly when those assets have long payback periods.

The Next EV Infrastructure Race Is About Returns

India will need substantially more EV infrastructure as electric mobility expands. But the next phase of the market will be less about counting chargers and more about proving that those chargers can make money.

The winning model is likely to combine contracted demand, high-throughput commercial users, flexible land costs, reliable infrastructure and carefully matched charging capacity.

The fundamental trap is confusing physical expansion with business growth. A company can add hundreds of chargers while simultaneously increasing its capital requirements, fixed costs and losses.

The more important question is what each new charger contributes to the economics of the network.

If every additional site generates stronger throughput, improves asset utilization and moves closer to payback, infrastructure expansion can create a scalable business. If new sites simply add more underused hardware, growth becomes dependent on continued capital rather than operating performance.

For India's EV infrastructure market, the opportunity is therefore not simply to build more. It is to build infrastructure that earns its place on the balance sheet. 🇮🇳

MANODNYA:

Building Organisations Where People Come Before Processes



Himanee Kardile
Founder

As businesses adapt to changing workplace expectations, organisational development (OD) has become a strategic priority rather than a support function. Organisations today are increasingly investing in leadership development, employee engagement and workplace culture to improve performance and retention. According to Gallup's State of the Global Workplace report, low employee engagement continues to have a significant impact on productivity worldwide, reinforcing the business case for people-centric organisations. In this evolving landscape, organisational development consultancies are moving beyond conventional training to help companies build stronger leadership, healthier cultures and sustainable growth.

Founded in 2022, Manodnya is part of this new generation of OD consultancies. The firm works with organisations that view culture as a long-term business asset, delivering leadership development, executive coaching and experiential learning programmes designed to create lasting behavioural change rather than short-term interventions.

A Purpose-Driven Beginning

Founder Himanee's journey into organisational development began during her first role as a school counsellor and Social Emotional

Learning (SEL) facilitator with an NGO. Working closely with teachers, school leaders, counsellors and parents, she witnessed how leadership and workplace culture directly influenced individual and organisational outcomes.

She also noticed a recurring sentiment among peers - a desire to work in environments that encouraged learning, trust and collaboration. That insight inspired the launch of Manodnya, a Sanskrit word meaning 'one who has the ability to know the mind'. The consultancy was established to help organisations build stronger cultures through learning, development and organisational transformation.



Manodnya is helping organisations strengthen these skills while encouraging leaders to use technology as an enabler rather than a substitute for meaningful workplace relationships

Driving Change Through Experience

Manodnya's approach begins with understanding an organisation's business goals, leadership philosophy and desired culture before designing customised interventions. Rather than relying on classroom-style training, Manodnya uses experiential learning methods, including role plays, simulations and interactive activities that encourage authentic behaviours and practical reflection.

"Success is measured by stronger leadership, improved team collaboration, goal achievement and the creation of people-centric workplaces that support business growth while prioritising employee wellbeing. At Manodnya we focus on long-term partnerships,

working with organisations that are prepared to invest sustained time in developing their people", speaks Himanee, Founder.



Preparing Organisations for the Future of Work

As artificial intelligence automates routine tasks, Himanee believes human capabilities such as empathy, communication and trust will become even more valuable. Manodnya is helping organisations strengthen these skills while encouraging leaders to use technology as an enabler rather than a substitute for meaningful workplace relationships. The firm's philosophy is centred on solving people challenges by addressing root causes instead of applying temporary fixes. It believes lasting organisational change comes from building solutions collaboratively with leaders and teams rather than relying solely on systems and processes.

Since its inception, Manodnya has partnered across industries including manufacturing, automobiles, software, architecture, services and the non-profit sector. Backed by experts from Psychologists, HRs and Executive Coaches, the firm now aims to deepen its engagement with SMEs that are committed to investing in their people.

For Himanee, the company's vision remains unchanged: helping organisations create cultures where people come before processes, enabling stronger teams, better leadership and sustainable business performance. ■

INDUSTRY SPEAKS

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL INTELLIGENCE ON GRID MODERNIZATION AND EFFICIENCY

Akilur Rahman, Chief Technology Officer, Hitachi Energy India

Akilur Rahman is a seasoned technology leader with over three decades of experience in power, automation, and digital technologies. An electrical engineering post-graduate from IIT Kharagpur, he has held global roles across India, Germany, and Switzerland. His expertise spans smart grids, automation, AI-ML, Industrial IoT, digitalization, and sustainable energy solutions, with a strong focus on driving large-scale technology transformation



In a recent interaction with Priyanka R, Copywriter at siliconindia, Akilur Rahman, Chief Technology Officer, Hitachi Energy India Limited, shared his insights on 'The Impact of Digital Intelligence on Grid Modernization and Efficiency'.

Enabling a Flexible, Bidirectional, and Sustainable Power Grid

Modern manufacturing requires dynamic power that entails adaptation of renewable energy sources, storage and digital protection and control in order to meet the real-time requirements. Bi-directional energy transfer enables industries to use power when required and contribute the excess back to the grid, which uses storage technologies like battery energy storage, pumped storage and green hydrogen fuel-cell.

The domestic sector is evolving with prosumers on the demand side, i.e. they are generating, storing, and sharing energy in to the local distribution system, which raises energy availability, efficiency and reliability of the grid. The high-voltage direct current (HVDC) technology is demonstrated in major infrastructure development project, Raigarh-Pugalur UHVDC transmission link, which transmits power across long distances and enables a two-way transfer of thermal, solar and wind energy in milliseconds.

The growing use of electric vehicles (EV) reaffirms the notion that the smart charging infrastructure has to be developed using fast and flash charging technology coupled with renewable energy and storage systems so that electric vehicles can operate on the green energy with lesser burden on the grid.

Digital intelligence, which relies on real-time observation, prediction, and automatic control, is essential for the modernization of the grid. It enables flexible transmission and delivery of energy with

integration of renewables, and mass electric mobility while maintaining a reliable and sustainable energy supply.

Building a Layered Cybersecurity Framework for Modern Power Grids

Since power grids become increasingly networked with automation and digitalisation, cybersecurity is a key concern during grid modernization. The combination of SCADA, OT, and IoT-enabled assets has increased the attack surface leading to cybersecurity vulnerability of the network to propagate very fast.

Layered, system specific protection is needed. The utilities need to perform the incessant threat modelling and maintain a defensive-in-depth approach with the primary focus on the protection of the critical assets including generation, storage, and core control and protection systems. This is aided by digital intelligence that can be used in real-time monitoring, AI-based anomaly detection, and predictive analytics.

It is also important to have operational discipline. Help is provided by secure access policies, regular software patching, hardening of the systems, and strong backup and recovery procedures in ensuring resilience during the system life cycle. Power systems, unlike enterprise IT, value availability as the most important followed by integrity and confidentiality because any form of disruption will result in power outages, safety hazards, and loss of production.

With SCADA, OT, and IoT systems deeply



interconnected, cybersecurity must be applied uniformly across the grid. Domain and digital expertise from technology providers such as Hitachi Energy ensures security measures strengthen resilience without compromising reliability, making cybersecurity a continuous and adaptive process for modern grids.

Time-Based Maintenance to Real-Time and Predictive Grid Operations

Asset management in the power sector is changing using edge analytics, sensors and predictive AI. The utilities are shifting towards real-time, condition-based and reliability-centred operations as opposed to periodic maintenance and responds to the actual performance of the assets.

Transformers, switchgear, substations, HVDC systems, and EV charging infrastructure are considered critical assets that are carefully monitored by sensors and digital platforms. They use the engineering-based algorithms and AI models to analyse their operational data and identify anomalies in the early stages and predict failures long before they happen. Asset health is represented as real-time indicators, which allow maintenance teams to prioritize fast. As time passes every asset will have its digital twin comprising design, operational history, and ageing behaviour to predict risks and make decisions.

The strategy is applied to groups of assets, such as fleets and substations. Reliability-based maintenance assists utilities to concentrate resources on critical equipment that failure would lead to the maximum impact on the system instead of all problems at the same time. Deterministic models of engineering models render a certain degree of accuracy whereas AI can add probabilistic knowledge based on large sets of data that can be used to make smarter prioritisation.

This combination of edge analytics, digital twins, and predictive AI allows them to transition to proactive operations and maintenance to improve the performance of assets, minimize downtime, and increase grid resilience in a digital energy world.

Integrating Grids and Microgrids for Smarter Cities

Smart cities are geared towards low carbon with resilience based on the smooth connection of central grids to microgrids and distributed energy resources on industrial, commercial and residential end users. Rooftop solar, energy storage, EV charging depots and community microgrids should be a coordinated, bi-directional system not an isolated resource.

Protection and power flows are controlled and automated in real-time with millisecond speeds, with a digital layer gathering sensor data at substations, feeders, and distributed assets. Analytics and AI aid the optimisation of efficiency, loss or fault identification, and rapid isolation of failures and recovery by using other routes- vital in hospitals and other critical services.

Digital platforms contribute to asset and workforce management in another way, as they offer real-time insight into the health of the system, which can be responded to more quickly than responding to maintenance and restored faster. On the consumer side, new models of energy trade enable prosumers to distribute excess power in the city to enhance overall efficiency and resilience.

As the use of smart meters and connected assets grows, cybersecurity has to be implemented across the network equally. Collectively, these services can help give cities a reliable, efficient, and sustainable energy infrastructure that supports large-scale electrification and accelerates the transition toward decarbonisation.

Collaborative Innovation for Digital Grid Modernization

The implementation of accelerated next generation power automation in India would need the industry, academia, startups and government to work closely. The concept of shared innovation platforms is significant in commercializing digital intelligence of research into grid practice.

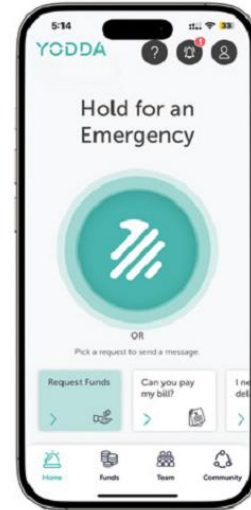
One good example is the Smart Electric Grid Lab installed at NIT Warangal (NITW) by Hitachi Energy along with NITW. The lab is in line with a master's course in smart electric grids, which underpins curriculum design, practical experimentation and applied research. Faculty and students get the exposure of real industry practices through mentoring and lectures as industry experts are exposed to the knowledge flows in both directions.

This partnership is growing with a digital twin lab that would simulate the campus energy system, which enables students to test a situation on a grid and with digital technology. The institute's interaction with the policymakers and grid operators like Grid Controller of India will make it aligned with the national priorities.

In essence, additional programs that facilitate the creation of startups include innovation challenges (INNOTHONS) where students are provided with infrastructure and actual problem statements. All these models combined will help to develop talent, promote entrepreneurship, and expedite the uptake of digitally intelligent and resilient power grids in India. 



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LASTWORD

SUSTAINABLE CORPORATE GIFTING: WIN-WIN FOR BRANDS & THE PLANET

Karan Sehdev, Founder, Merch Matters

As a seasoned professional in the gifting and merchandising industry, Karan specializes in crafting bespoke solutions to enhance your business relationships. With a track record of working with renowned clients such as Droom, Oyo, Uber, Eats, and many others, Karan has honed his expertise in effectively communicating brand identities through thoughtful and value-added gifts.



Corporate gifting has been a timeless strategic means of building relationships, displaying appreciation, and reinforcing brand values. However, the increasing awareness of environmentally friendly businesses and consumers means that sustainable corporate gifting is no longer a choice but a need. Sustainable gifting companies contribute to a healthier planet while growing their brand reputations, aligning with consumer values, and leaving lasting impressions.



Boost the impact of your brand by picking gifts that give back only the good to the planet and the people who receive them

The Shift Toward Sustainable Gifting

Today's consumers and corporate clients are selective. They tend to opt for brands that share their values, especially on environmental and social responsibility. According to a study, over 70 percent of consumers want to buy from companies that adhere to sustainable practices. This shift implies that corporate gifts often mirror a brand's ethics and embody those same principles. Sustainable corporate gifting is a holistic gift-sourcing approach: Less traditional, scarce recommendations of promotional products. It involves sourcing sustainable materials, minimizing waste, maintaining ethical production practices, and considering the longevity of the usability of the gifts that are created. Brands that look towards sustainability would take their stand as responsible, forward-thinking, and aligned with global sustainability goals.

How Sustainable Gifting Benefits Brands

Enhancing Brand Image & Loyalty

Sustainable gifts convey the commitment of a company toward corporate social responsibility. This resonates with employees, clients, and partners, building goodwill and long-term loyalty. Through this brands communicate a message of caring about the environment and social impact by choosing eco-conscious gifts.

Differentiation in a Competitive Market

Thoughtful, sustainable gifting puts a brand miles apart from its competition, who still use run-of-the-mill, non-eco-friendly things. Gifted items, if made of recycled, biodegradable, or upcycled materials, leave an impression on one's life.

Sustainability Gifting

This encourages consumer engagement. Whether it's a reusable bamboo coffee cup, an upcycled notebook, or a contribution in another person's name, gifts spur the recipient into engaging with and discussing his or her understanding of sustainability. They also reinforce the company's wider environmental initiatives.

Cost-Effective in the Long Run

The benefit of sustainable gifts is that they are worthwhile, even though they are expensive to obtain. Reusable and durable gifts prevent waste and create longer-term brand exposure compared to disposable, low-quality products in landfills.

Making corporate gifts sustainable is beyond just a passing wave. It is one of the critical strategies modern businesses should use for their success. The choice of an eco-friendly gift will contribute to a healthier planet while presenting their responsible business practices to customers. Sustainable gifts are proven to be a win-win situation for both nature and profitability, making long and lasting impressions on the receiver. 📌

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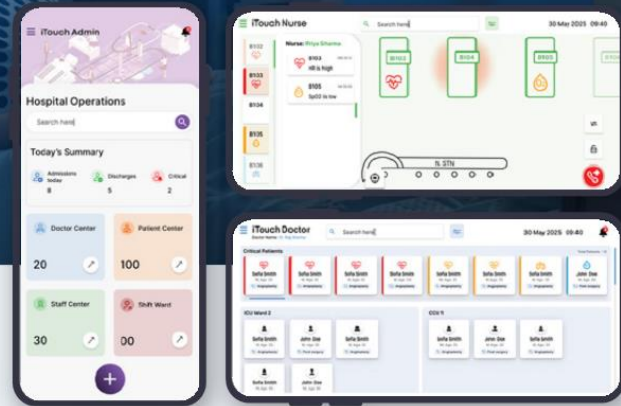
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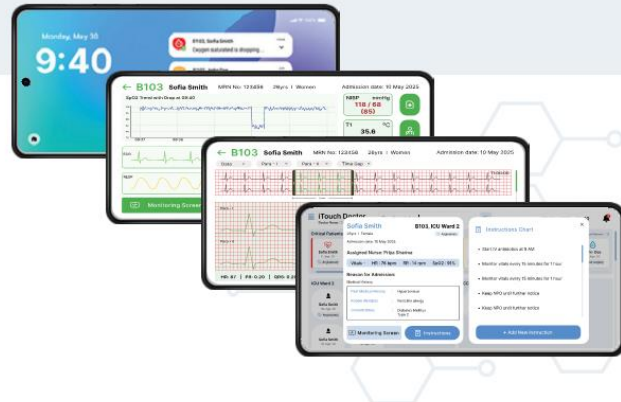
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