

Delivering Content Digitally

EC Media has built an ecosystem around e-publishing, starting with its own device called wink.

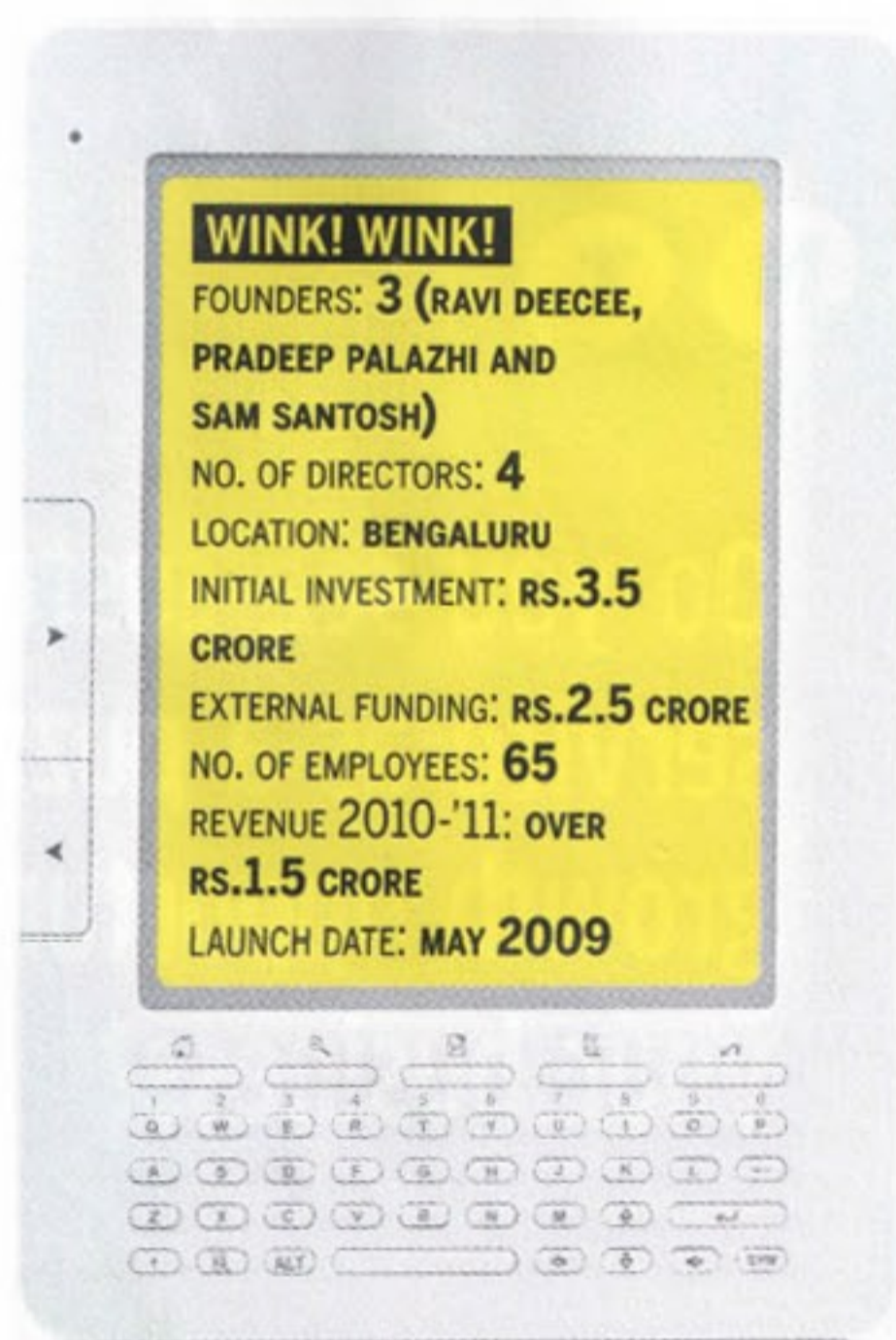
By Shonali Advani



Ravi Deece joined his father's 37-year-old publishing company DC Books headquartered in Kerala, in September 1991. However, it was only two years ago when Deece began to contemplate venturing into the space of e-books with friend Sam Santosh. Before he knew it, EC Media, based in Bengaluru, was launched in May 2009. "We believe media will be driven by convergence in future," says Deece, Co-Founder, EC Media.

However, his belief was not enough to convince publishers of the potential and viability

of a business in e-books. His first task and challenge, on hindsight, was to talk about e-books to publishers. "Convincing them was tough, as they did not understand the concept of reading on a device," he recalls. It took about three meetings before he managed to get 50 percent of them to understand e-books. The bigger challenges lay in getting them to see that it was a commercially viable business with revenue model. Plus, copyright protection and rate of content were some of the common doubts publishers had. "We told them before another player comes into the market, it's better



publishers diversify themselves; and we had to assure them that we are coming in as distributors, not publishers," mentions Deece.

He also knew what else he needed to do. Apart from generating content, he developed a device called wink. "It was developed to convince customers and publishers that content can be read on a device and, in future, there will be many more devices and our content can be read across them as well," he says. Wink was launched between August-September 2010 as a delivery mechanism, custom-made for EC Media by manufacturers in China and Taiwan. It is sold for Rs.7,999. Wink supports 15 Indian languages in e-book format. It is the only device to support non-Roman scripts.

EC Media today runs as a content aggregator distributed to service providers across the globe, both B2B and B2C channels. Its business model has evolved in the last two years as an ecosystem around digital content with five broad verticals. Wink Apps has developed e-book applications for iPad, Android and the PC version will be ready soon. It has signed up

with Amazon and delivers e-books to them. "Now we are working on developing apps for playbook by BlackBerry," explains Deece.

The firm sources books from publishers, brings in value-additions with animation, sound and other features and then sells it as apps. "We have had more than 3,500 downloads for enhanced content alone and about 10,000 for wink apps as a whole," claims Deece. Till date, it has 44 e-books in this category launched in May 2011. EC Media's Wink Store launched in August 2010 and has over 5 lakh e-book titles. Plus, there are 4 million titles of books and print versions which can be bought as an online bookstore.

EC Media also continues to work as a publisher with its third vertical Wink Publish that publishes Winklets, small 3,000-8,000 word e-books, which are not otherwise published in print formats. Additionally, this vertical has sub-categories: Wink Classics which are custom editions/critical studies of classics with analyses from experts; and Wink Specials that publish any work of poetry or prose written by independent, upcoming or new authors. EC Media earns on copies sold, and these e-books are sold through other service providers across globe like Amazon. So far, Wink Publish has published over 100 books.

The fourth vertical, Wink Books and Magazines, is an online magazine store for Indian publications with over 150 magazines as an app on iPad. Android and PC versions are slated to be ready soon. "This vertical is targeted at the Indian diaspora and readers can either subscribe or buy one issue at a time," points out Deece. The startup's revenue model is based on earnings from distribution costs and revenue sharing with publishers. It expects Wink Apps and Magazine store to generate major portion of revenues in the near future.

All in all, the last two years have given EC media a significant place in the space of e-books. "We have ventured into multiple areas within the e-industry, attracting several publishers on board," says Deece. Considering this is a new area, one can safely say that the firm has redefined its self from just a pure publisher into the business of content generation and delivery. ■