

# Making the right connections

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## INTERVIEW

As a company catering to the needs of cellular operators and OEMs, GTL has been in tune with evolving technologies and trends and is now looking forward to be counted as one of the best in the world

## GTL

# Making The Right Connections

GTL, part of the Global Group, is a leading network services company, offering services and solutions to address the network life cycle requirements of telecom carriers and technology providers (OEMs). Today GTL executes projects in over 36 countries, has built over 45 cellular networks, installed and commissioned over 36,000 cell sites, and connects over 36 million subscribers. Excerpts from the interview with **Manoj G Tirodkar**, CMD, GTL:

**Manoj G Tirodkar**  
CMD  
GTL



**“Over the next five years GTL would have achieved its vision of becoming the world's largest network service provider.**

### What factors have helped you to register consistent performance over the years?

As a network services company, GTL is catering to the needs of the cellular operators and OEMs. Our defining mission is to help the telecom users enjoy unhindered and seamless connectivity. The approach towards our business has been to meet and exceed customers' expectations. We have streamlined our business processes to be more customer-centric. We have also refined our product offerings in the network services space to include network planning and design, network deployment, network operations and maintenance, infrastructure management, energy management and professional services. We have also taken a

quantum leap in the delivery capability in the telecom infrastructure space. Through our service offerings and positioning we are today in a position to be a strategic partner for our customer.

### What have been the thrust areas for GTL in recent times?

Some of the areas that GTL has worked on in recent times are:

- **Increasing Recurring Revenue And Improving Profitability:** A majority of our revenue is from network deployment activity. We have focused on increasing our share of revenue from other service offerings like network planning and design, operations and maintenance, and professional services.
- **Changing Geographic Mix:** We are actively pursuing strategies to increase our revenue contribution from international operations to over 50 per cent over a period of three years.
- **Innovation In Delivery:** We are making innovations in our delivery model in order to address the various customer needs. These innovations are aimed at controlling costs and reducing delivery time.
- **Strategic Partnerships And Alliances:** We have had significant success in globalising our OEM relationships. We have entered into a strategic alliance with Ericsson UK to address the managed network infrastructure services opportunity in the UK market. Our relationship with Nokia Siemens Networks, ZTE and Huawei are also progressing well.



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**What kind of impact is GTL witnessing due to the global economic slowdown? What strategies have you adopted to overcome this problem?**

In response to the ongoing global credit crisis and financial downturn, the telecom operators, who are our customers, have become more cautious in terms of capex plans. They are focusing mainly on measures to reduce costs and maintaining operating margins. They may also defer rollouts. As a customer-centric organisation, we have adopted certain procedures to remain competitive and continue addressing the requirements of our customers. We are doing this in two ways. One, we are helping operators lower their operational expenditure and use their capital expenditure judiciously and two, we are also taking steps to improve our competitiveness and bring down our own cost structures.

Some of the steps that are being contemplated include restructuring the internal cost framework, adopting new structures of functioning, improving operational efficiency and concentrating on improving productivity. We are also focusing on introducing new services that will help our customers reduce their operational expenses. For example, we are actively focusing on energy management which is a big area of concern.

**What about your plans to set up a hub in Kolkata? What kind of investments are you planning to make in this venture?**

We have recently created a new facility in Kolkata which will serve as the circle office and will take care of our operations in West Bengal and the North East. With the new operators and rolling out of new technologies, the operations should only increase.

**What kind of business are you looking at with your first ever software radio-based solution in association with Vanu Inc?**

GTL Limited and Vanu Inc have entered into a strategic alliance to address the shared active infrastructure services market in India. As part of the partnership, the two companies will conduct field trials in India for the industry's first software radio-based solution. This will allow multiple operators on a shared common network to maintain independence, gain cost benefits and lower cost of entry through a combined active/passive wireless infrastructure. The solu-



**Manoj G Tirodkar**  
CMD  
GTL

## GTL Vision

» To be the world's largest Network Services Provider

## GTL Values

- » Integrity
- » Proactively manage change
- » Delight customers through superior services
- » Develop entrepreneurs through an achievement-oriented culture
- » Build a technology-savvy organisation
- » Share knowledge and focus on end result

tion will also allow carriers to serve new markets, saving the time and expense of a traditional network build. The operators can look forward to new revenue streams from the explosive subscriber demand in emerging markets. However, since the commercial deployment is subject to necessary government and regulatory approvals in India, it is still premature to attach any business plan from this segment at this stage.

**Which are the newer countries you have tapped in the last financial year?**

In 2008, we established a significant market presence in Africa. By the end of this financial year, our presence will be evident in five to six countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Panama, Honduras, Guinea etc.

**What initiatives have you taken to increase your revenues coming from the international market?**

We have a very focused strategy to increase international revenues. This includes:

- Taking the help of our relationships with OEMs to increase revenues from international markets as also through the presence of acquired companies in the US, Europe and Asia Pacific regions.
- Increasing our geographical presence, especially in emerging markets like Africa.
- Building capabilities to address the managed services and operations and maintenance activities that are in demand in matured markets.
- Investing in training and capability in emerging technologies like WiMAX, 3G etc.

**What programmes have you initiated as a socially responsive corporate?**

We have a culture that institutionalizes good governance, corporate social responsibility and green environment practices as a way of life. We believe that being a good corporate citizen means much more than extending commitment to all the stakeholders, including the society. It is an integrated approach towards operating in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner.

The focus is more of an inclusive approach that takes care of the interests of investors, employees, business partners, customers, local communities, the environment and society at large. Every year, GTL Limited contributes up to 1 per cent of its profit to GTL Foundation for continuing the CSR programme. We support over 18 social causes with emphasis on bridging the digital divide, helping the disabled and community initiatives.

**Which HR practices set you apart from other organisations?**

HR plays a very important role in organisation building. We have an excellent HR team that follows world class practices. We follow a 'people first' strategy that puts the welfare and well-being of the employees at the core of its operations. It is our endeavor to enhance all aspects of the 'employment experience' to attract and retain quality manpower. We place great importance in having the right people doing the right job. Our HR practices ensure that the senior management takes the initiative in building the organisation by focusing on building the leadership pipeline.

The group also offers excellent working conditions and provides for social benefits like medical care and insurance for its employees and their families. The group also



## Know Your Leader



**Manoj G Tirodkar**  
CMD  
GTL

**The books that changed my life ...** There are lots of books that have influenced me but I have been particularly influenced by the writings of Peter Drucker.

**My role models in life are...** Mahatma Gandhi and achievers in corporate India who have excelled and impacted our society.

**As a Child I wanted to be...** From early on I have always been fascinated about creating/building things. Whether it is a building, a barren landscape or a new business, I love the part in which I am able to build things from scratch

**My favourite quote is...** "Success is what other people do to you."

**I want to be remembered as...** An entrepreneur with a social conscience.

**I regret...** That we have so much poverty and corruption in India and the fact that we don't do much about it.

**I get angry when...** People work without putting their heart and soul into what they do.

**My advice to my team...** Success to my mind is what other people do to you. If you are prepared to respect your team and deliver your best to your customers and shareholders, you are bound to succeed..

**Every Sunday I...** Relax and read.

## CSR-GTL Way For Making A Better World

GTL believes that it is an integrated approach towards operating in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner. The focus is more of an inclusive approach taking care of the interests of investors, employees, business partners, customers, local communities, the environment and society at large.



**Computer Education**  
Project Gyan IT  
Project VKC  
Project Know

**Differently Aabled**  
Project Netra  
Project Swayam  
Project Asha  
Project Samman

**Natural Disaster**  
Project Idaya  
Project Pralay

**Employee Volunteers**  
Art of Giving  
Positron

**Others**  
Cancer Patients  
Thane Police Welfare  
Fund  
ICT Support  
Standard Chartered  
Mumbai Marathon

provides challenging assignments across the world. Today people of more than 22 nationalities work for us. We have launched several unique initiatives like the talent management system, retention system, and training modules etc which I think go a long way in building the sort of organisation that can stand the test of time.

### Where do you see GTL in the next five years?

Over the next five years GTL would have achieved its vision of becoming the world's largest network service provider. We would also be playing a dominant role in shaping the network services industry and in building the competitiveness of our customers i.e. OEMs and telecom operators.

### How are you progressing towards your vision of becoming the world's largest network services provider?

We are looking at both, the organic and inorganic opportunities. From an organic growth perspective, our strategy includes having a strong presence in all the emerging markets, building expertise and scale in the mature markets, building strong relationships with all the OEMs and telecom operators, staying ahead of the technology curve by investing in the centers of excellence and training of the engineers, offering innovative service packages and building a strong talent pool well versed with the customers' needs and solutions to fulfill them. From an inorganic growth perspective, we are evalu-

ating a couple of companies but are waiting for better valuations and visibility considering the current global turmoil and financial downturn across the world.

### How are you creating value for your investors?

I believe that the best value that we can create for our investors is to ensure that their investments keep appreciating. Our core principles of trust, transparency and accountability have come a long way in helping us develop and nurture long term relationships with our key stakeholders. Some of the initiatives that we have taken over the past two to three years include streamlining the business with a strong focus on network services, hiving off GTL Infra into a separate company as part of a focused approach to address the emerging passive infrastructure sharing opportunity, sale of enterprise networks and managed service business, and hiving off or divesting non-core businesses.

We have returned to our investors up to US \$220 million in the last two to three years by way of buy-backs, dividends and acquisitions. Investors in GTL have received one share of GTL Infra for every share of GTL. They have also participated in the rights issue of GTL Infra which was issued at par to gain further advantage. Further, to demonstrate my commitment to the business and confidence in the business model, I have invested over Rs 400 crore since March 2006.