

How we survived: S Chand, adapting to digital education

S Chand altered its business model—by increasing learning focus on Learnflix and Mylestone applications—to adapt to the new future of digital education

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Saurabh Mittal (left), CFO, S Chand Group, and Vinay Sharma, who is business head of digital and services
Image: Madhu Kapparath

One of India’s biggest challenges in 2020 was getting students to adapt to a new way of learning. Online education, for most of the country, and especially in the interiors, was an unexplored territory. As students and teachers got accustomed to it, various stakeholders continued to find ways to stay relevant.

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“What do you do when the primary source of education—books—are hard to get? Increasing our online presence was the only way we could have reached the masses in these unprecedented times,” says Saurabh Mittal, CFO, S Chand Group, an educational content company that prints learning material, provides smart class solutions, curriculum management systems, test preparation platforms, STEM learning and e-books.

During the pandemic, S Chand came up with Learnflix, a personalised learning application that offers comprehensive learning in math and science for class six to 10 students of CBSE and ICSE boards.

Learnflix has been designed with a ‘Spiral Learning Pedagogy’ that enables concepts to be understood, revised, practised and assessed. “The lockdown helped us scale in ways we didn’t perceive... our online platforms cater to the school staff, students and parents,” says Mittal. Learnflix is currently being used in more than 600 towns and cities across 86 countries. In India, it is being used in over 250 cities and towns.

Mylestone is another application that is a smart curriculum solution for students and teachers. Started in 2015, the app primarily focussed on on-ground utilisation was taken online due to Covid-19. “One of the most challenging pivots was when we took Mylestone completely online to further enable digital learning for students,” says Mittal.

The app reached over 1.5 lakh students across India during the lockdown. It offers curriculum assistance for teachers, interactive learning experiences for students, and has a ‘MyStudyGear’ feature that lets parents monitor their child’s development. “During the lockdown, we saw a 500 percent increase in app downloads. The app’s usage by parents also increased by 70 percent. We expect these figures to grow at a much faster pace in the coming years,” says Vinay Sharma, digital and services head, S Chand Group.

The company’s focus is to provide affordable education, particularly in Tier II and Tier III cities. “Our goal is to make education accessible to the masses. Keeping that in mind, we charge ₹2,000 per annum as course fee for classes six to eight and ₹2,500 annually for classes nine and 10... it’s a lot affordable compared to other apps that charge ₹15,000 to ₹20,000 per annum,” says Mittal.

The publication has also conducted around 2,000 sessions for teachers. “A lot of teachers didn’t have much technical expertise, especially the ones from smaller cities, so to help them adapt to the change, we conducted multiple workshops from June to August to get them accustomed to Zoom and other online platforms,” says Mittal.

The company believes the Indian education system will see a hybrid model—physical and digital classrooms. “We are moving from being providers of content used in class for teaching to content being used for learning. The aim is to provide education at scale where students don’t suffer due to any such crisis in the future,” says Sharma.

NAME AND GAME

S Chand

Founder: Shyam Lal Gupta

Started: 1937

Original Business Model: Publishing house that prints books for primary, secondary and higher education sectors

The Model After Pivot: Two mobile learning apps for classes six to 10; Learnflix and Mylestone

Growth Post Pivot: Learnflix is being used in over **600 towns** and cities across **86 countries**. In India, it is being used in more than **250 towns**. Mylestone reached over **1.5 lakh students** and saw a **500 percent increase in downloads**