



NOTES FROM THE GARAGE



CP Madhusudan, sales head, & KM Reddy, co-founder, Lucid

TECH THAT PROMISES SAFER ROADS

ON THE FACE OF IT, KRISHNA Mohan Reddy's research interests might seem like good thesis material, with little practical use. But, his conviction about the uses of non-destructive technology or NDT kept Reddy's research in the area going for more than a decade. During this period, the IIT alumnus made ends meet by providing consulting in the area for select firms abroad. Finally, when he was convinced about the area and the products he could build in this space, he created Lucid Software in 2000.

"It is a very challenging area but it's a precious technology that can help save lives and prevent disasters," says Mr Reddy on his interest in NDT. Lucid Software, started by a team of researchers in IIT Madras, builds software to check structural defects and helps in the maintenance of large structures.

Suppose you have to test dams, a bridge, aircraft wings, nuclear installations or even a rotor blade of a helicopter without causing any physical damage, what Lucid Software would do is build simulation software to map everything and then use parameters to test the strength and efficiency of these struc-

tures. "The software could help rectify the faults in a bridge even while it is being constructed," said Lucid Software sales and marketing head CP Madhusudan, about the software's application in the civil engineering space.

Mr Madhusudan, who joined the company three years back, says, "We became more focused as a pure NDT technology player from 2005 because we found that NDT-centric opportunities were increasing. This is usually an area where you have more of proprietary software built by manufacturing firms and in some cases the software is outdated. But, it is opening up now."

In terms of the players already operating in this segment, Mr Madhusudan said the space comprises companies that offered integrated services rather than NDT services alone. "There are big players such as GE and Oreva who operate in this sector. We would collaborate with them rather than compete," Mr Madhusudan said.

The company is also banking on its research expertise to attract more customers. "We have filed seven patents so far and launched our products in the US last year," Mr Reddy said.

So far, its clients are mostly based in Europe and US, but the company hopes to tap the domestic market through agencies such as ISRO and HAL. Mercatus Capital, a Singapore-based angel fund, recently funded the company.

The company will use the funds to open a new facility at the IIT Madras research park and to strengthen its marketing muscle. Lucid Software first pitched its plans to VCs at Proto.in, an event for startups, in July 2007.

Apart from funding, Mercatus also said it would help Lucid get more business. "We got them a project in Singapore that deals with testing the integrity of roads and tunnels there," Mr Sukumaran added.

CHANDRA RANGANATHAN IN CHENNAI