

Pramath Sinha on Cloud 9.9

Pramath Raj Sinha is literally on Cloud 9 after leaving media conglomerate ABP, where he was managing director and chief executive officer. Sinha, who grew up in Patna around his family's publishing business, has teamed up with three of his ex-colleagues at ABP, Vikas Gupta (he ran sales and marketing for the ABP Group), Anuradha Das Mathur (she headed Businessworld and launched a series of business intelligence services for the magazine) and Asheesh Gupta, to start a diversified media enterprise called 9.9 Media.

"We believe there is an opportunity to shape the Indian media and entertainment industry because the Indian media industry is in its infancy and there are huge opportunities both in traditional and new media which are yet to be exploited. At 9.9 Media, we believe the 'who' will drive success rather than the 'what'. This has inspired our choice of 9.9, one of the most enduring symbols of leadership, in our name. And, indeed, this has inspired our mission and vision for 9.9 Media," says Sinha, talking about the objectives he and his team have set out to achieve.

Sinha believes that media is a "high-beta" business where a diverse portfolio approach is key and that's probably the reason why at its very birth, 9.9 Media has been programmed into five businesses. Sinha explains, "We'll start off with 9.9 Insights and 9.9 Digital; in the meantime, we'll keep working on 9.9 Print. 9.9 Ventures will be our acquisition vehicle, while 9.9 Studio will come at a much later stage."

9.9 Insights will offer relevant content to select communities of professionals and organisations through multiple formats – reports, briefings, conferences, expos, publications and online.

"For example, some of the horizontal communities we work with are CFOs and CEOs of mid-sized and high-growth Indian companies. Similarly, our vertical communities are aligned with an industry specialisation such as environment, media and health care. 9.9 Insights has an exclusive media partnership with NDTV Profit for all its activities," explains Sinha.

9.9 Digital will house all the online initiatives of 9.9 Media and is at the top of Sinha's priority list. "It not only builds and manages online platforms for all the other 9.9 businesses, but will also use a 'specialist attacker' strategy to launch online businesses that exploit profitable niche segments or services drawing inspiration from other successful models from abroad or in India," he says.

The group's print vehicle, 9.9 Print, will launch print publications in new genres and formats to capture value from the ongoing growth in this industry. "We have a pipeline of special interest, business and news periodicals that will be launched over the next few months. This division will take time to come into full steam," Sinha explains.

The group's acquisitions arm will be called 9.9 Ventures. It will serve as a vehicle to invest in and acquire media related businesses. "Given our collective capabilities, we see 9.9 Ventures playing the role of pure advisory to a complete owner-manager with a view to add and create value to media properties outside of the existing 9.9 portfolio," he says.

9.9 Studio will ensure the group's foray into filmed entertainment – TV and films for traditional and new forms of distribution. "Initially, we will stick to the production part of the value chain. Our aspiration is to build a professionally driven production house that works with other independent producers in a studio-like relationship, adding value in concept development, financing, marketing, rights management, and distribution," he says.

9.9 Media, which took shape in September, has already managed to rope in some high profile clients. "We are already up and away with certain banks, educational institutes and mid-sized companies as our core clients, which will only grow from here," says Sinha.

The company is currently looking for some private equity, but has plans to go public some day. "Right now, we are using our own funds, but are looking for some private equity. Some day, we would love to go public, but it's too early to talk about it as we have just started," he concludes.