



Entrepreneur Bharat Kanodia, CEO at Veristrat Inc. - On their latest offering Shaadi-e-Khas, the first of its kind online wedding management software application for Indians!

Tell us about Shaadi-e-Khas?

Shaadi-e-Khas

Wedding Management Software

Shaadi-e-Khas is a comprehensive online wedding management software. The application comes packed with a personalized wedding website, and a customized management and organizing software. You can use the application for sending invites, tracking RSVPs, tracking arrival departure, managing to-do lists, book-keeping, vendor management, track hotel accommodation, providing direction to the venues, sending reminders, etc. You can use the system to create a personalized website for your wedding. The application is mobile compatible and comes integrated with Facebook, image and video galleries.

Are there other players in the market doing something similar?

Nope. Not in India. We are the first ones here, though there are similar ones outside India, but they offer only 40-50 percent of the features that we offer, and they are not customized solutions.



Its surprising that, though wedding is such a huge industry in India, nobody came up with this earlier. How did you come up with the idea?

It is a cliché, but I came up with the idea of Shaadi-e-Khas while taking a shower. In India, the IT industry and wedding industry are so big! And, the funny part is nobody has thought about bridging the gap between the two. We are the first company that is building an IT product for the wedding industry. And, surprisingly when we talk to wedding planners and event planners, they are always very surprised, that something like this was created for them!

Can you tell us a little bit about your background?



I am a finance geek. I started out as an engineer. I have a degree in mechanical engineering. I got bored of engineering, then I switched to finance, I have been working in finance from the past 16 years. I have a degree in International Finance. I used to work in the Silicon Valley, got bored of the job, wanted to do something different, Got funding from some investor friends in Silicon Valley, put some of my own money and moved to India.

When did you launch this product?

We started working on the product last year, and we launched the product this year on January 1st.

And a few things that I want to highlight - We are both a product and a project company. In most IT companies that you come across, they do either products or they do projects. For example, there are companies like Wipro or HCL, which get outsourcing projects and they deliver the projects to the company, they get paid for it. So they are project companies.

And then there are project companies like Naukri.com or Google or Yahoo. They all have their own products and make money based on different business models. We on the other hand do projects for our clients and we also do our own products, and we do so to keep stability and hedge our risk. The first product we introduced into the market, was last year, on August 15th, it is called eChunav.com and the second product we launched is Shaadi-e-Khas. We are working on our third product, which is scheduled for launch end 2011. We already launched two products in the first year of inception itself, so we are very very happy with ourselves!

If you look at the Indian wedding market, it is not very software/internet savvy yet. How comfortable are people when it comes to accepting your product?

Right now, if you talk to event planners or families or individuals, who are organizing weddings and budget, they all use notepads generally. Or in some cases, they keep a track of the expenses by using Microsoft excel. That is where our job comes in. We convince people that there is something

that does organize this process. For example, 15 years ago when Shaadi.com was floated in the market, they had a really tough time. Did you ever imagine, that a father will be putting his daughter's pictures on the internet and telling details of his family and his family background and his daughter's background details to the entire world! Did you ever imagine that? No. But, today Shaadi.com is the biggest matrimonial site in the world! So they did the job of convincing people that one didn't have to go to pundits, one didn't have to go to Church to look for a suitable bride or groom, you just have to go on the worldwide web. We are in the same battle, we are telling people that, you don't have to use notepads or Microsoft excel. Instead you can organize your wedding, using your blackberry. Its that simple with Shaadi-e-Khas!

What were the challenges that you faced while selling the product?

The biggest challenge is people don't respect software in India. Nobody wants to pay money for software. For example in Nehru Place, in Delhi, which was recently featured in ET as the largest piracy market in world, because of such places, software is not valued. So people, when they see our software, they believe that they can buy it someplace for 20 Rs, which is probably true. For example, in case of Microsoft excel, you don't even have to pay for it, you get it for free. So people don't have that 'respect' for software. However, in India, people still respect hardware. People pay for things that they can touch and feel. People can touch and feel hardware, but people can't touch and feel software. That is why they are a little more reluctant while buying software. That's the tough job and that's where our job comes in. We try to find people who appreciate the value of software. We have kept the usability and interface of Shaadi-e-Khas at the same level as Facebook.



What have been the acceptance levels for the product so far?

We have been in talks with event planners, individuals and families. We have two sides to our business, the family edition and the enterprise edition. In the enterprise edition, we have three event planners that already signed up. This is a great source of business for us as they are recurring customers. Individuals and families are good business too, and the margin

is a little higher, because of the retailer vs the wholesale thing, but the problem with family edition is, you have got to hunt for a new customer everyday.

Where are you based out of? How big is your team?

We are based out of New Delhi and we are a team of 15 people in Delhi. We have a small team of 3 in San Francisco. We are looking to open up an office in Mumbai by this Fall.

What your joys as an entrepreneur?

I really enjoy training people. I love spending time with my team. My job is to provide infrastructure and guidance to my people. My job is to be a coach. It actually is a lot of fun!

Let us know your expansion plans.

Right now, we are in talks with a couple of partners, one in Hong Kong and one in Singapore. Because, in addition to Indians who spend a lot of money in weddings, Non Indian Asians in general, spend big money on weddings. An average Asian, might spend anything in between 40 - 70 thousand dollars on a wedding, which does not sound like a lot of money in India, because here people spend 400 - 700 hundred thousand dollars on a wedding. Our next target market is Singapore and Hong Kong, those guys spend decent amount of money on weddings, and since event management in this space has not taken off at such a high level, people are more willing to buy the product on an individual or family basis. So in those markets the family edition will be a big hit. This fall, we are already opening up an office in Mumbai. Though people in Mumbai are not that ostentatious, but then they tend to be a little more organized.

We at YourStory appreciate Bharat's efforts in tapping into a new market at the cross sections of IT and wedding markets in India! We shall keep you posted about all the latest happenings at their end! Meanwhile, if you are planning to get married or if any of your family members/friends are, then you know where to go! [Shaadi-e-Khas](#)

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