



A Kidswear Brand

Incorporates IT Into Its Designs

Giny and Jony, one of India's leading kidswear retail brands, weaves in technology to spin off more profits.

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Giny and Jony started out 30 years back targeting kids aged between six months and 14 years. Today, the retail chain is one of India's leading kids brands, employing about 2,100 people and manufacturing 3,00,000 pieces each month. It has also launched three other brands—Freedom Wear (a premium range); GJ Jeans Unltd (casual wear); and Palmtree (a competitively-priced range). The firm has around 107 franchises, 116 retail outlets, 32 factory outlets, and is available in another 600 multi-brand outlets. The brand has grown by leaps and bounds, but this wouldn't have been possible without the powerful

engine of technology that fuelled its growth since 2002.

Those comprising the team at *Giny and Jony* perceived technology as a dynamic phenomenon, wherein what is relevant today is obsolete tomorrow and what is impossible today becomes possible. This offered the company tremendous opportunities that could give it tangible business benefits. "*Giny and Jony* has grown 40 per cent annually for the past five years and technology has been both a catalyst and a necessity to maintain this pace. Our willingness to embrace new technology gave our business a competitive advantage. IT helped us get a complete 360 degree view of the organisation," says Gaganjit Kahlon, head of IT, *Giny and Jony*.

The initial nudge

Way back in the 1990s, an in-house team of developers managed the IT needs of *Giny and Jony*. Some of the in-house IT solutions included a DOS-based system to manage and co-ordinate resources, information, and functions. However, with growth came the need for elastic IT solutions that could cater to and foster growth. In 2002, the firm implemented an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution, Logic.

"In kids wear, we release a lot of qualification strategies (SQs). Each style has 11 sizes and with every season new styles are introduced. There is tremendous complexity. Back then, we were dealing with 500-600 styles that had to be given out to 500-600 locations. The number of transactions generated was huge. Our in-house DOS-based system could no longer handle our requirements and thus we went in for ERP Logic," says Kahlon. ERP Logic was initially implemented on the supply chain

system but later extended to cover raw materials, production and finance. Today, the transactions generated at *Giny and Jony* are 20 times more than what went on in 2002. "Logic helped us make quick decisions, for instance, we could even start work at a new location in two days or open a warehouse within 10 days," says Kahlon.

Further, *Giny and Jony* adopted



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simple technology like the SMS-based sale automation module that enhanced ERP Logic, giving the top management a daily sales update on-the-fly. "The SMS-based sales automation module was simple technology that created a huge impact. Earlier, by the time the management got the previous day's secondary sales information, it was too late to act. The SMS-based sale automation modules allowed those in charge of the stores to feed in the sales report at the end of the day in a format that could be instantly compiled and uploaded on the B2B site. It is like an FIR report that allows

GJ's Techno Gear

- ERP Logic and BIRetail business intelligence quickened decision making
- PLM cut short the time spent on new ranges by 50 per cent
- An SMS-based sales automation module gave the daily sales picture on-the-fly
- A B2B site contributed 25-30 per cent to sales order bookings
- Mobile scanners, IP-based cameras and a biometric attendance marking system helped GJ keep a sharp eye on operations
- Webex improved online service to over 200 sales locations
- Skype enhanced internal communication

anyone to see and act on it the next morning," says Kahlon. The firm also implemented a real-time online customer relationship management (CRM) program – Wonder World—that allowed the customer to earn/redeem points immediately, from purchases made at any *Giny and Jony* exclusive brand outlet (EBO).

A tech reboot for product lifecycle management

After savouring the success of ERP Logic, CRM, etc, *Giny and Jony* experimented with a Web-based product lifecycle management (PLM) tool from Lawson in order to reduce by 50 per cent the time spent by the product design and development teams on new ranges.

With *Giny and Jony* churning out more than 5,000 designs annually and introducing new samples every week, the PLM tool allowed them archiving, cataloguing and restrictive sharing of designs by making available a uniform tech pack retrievable on the Net. Prior to PLM, every detail of a style was recorded manually. "At the end of each season, the team spent up to 35 days sifting through paperwork, documenting each piece of information. It was an extremely

inefficient way of working. With PLM, we were able to complete the same tasks, 50 per cent faster. It also allowed us to use common item codes throughout the design and production cycle helping the system communicate quickly and accurately,” says Kahlon. The firm also extended the use of the PLM tool to vendors, further hastening the production cycles. “Change is the only thing constant in our industry. By extending this tool to the vendors, we allowed them to track changes instantly, enabling them to alter production schedules faster,” explains Kahlon.

Tech intelligence to business

Following the tech trail to accelerate growth, in July 2009, *Giny and Jony* adopted a business intelligence solution from BIRetail to generate smart reports to improve decision making and thereby, the bottom line. The solution helped *Giny and Jony* reduce operational costs. “BIRetail provided a complete cost-effective solution and not just a business intelligence platform,” says Kahlon. Further, the solution added both to the top line and bottom line by reducing the ‘shelf life’ of the product. “We used BIRetail to manage our stocks. The idea was to get fast moving items off the shelves in seven weeks. Using the stock reports of our outlets we could find out the fast-moving items three weeks after the launch of the style. After identification, all merchandising was designed to clear out the style in the following four weeks. By week seven, the style is sold out,” explains Kahlon.

Earlier, such analysis happened at the end of the season but was of little use, as despite the style being fast moving, stocks weren’t channelled appropriately, forcing the company to eventually sell it at a discounted price.

Apart from being easy



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on the pocket, the BI solution helped *Giny and Jony* speed up decision-making through the quick generation of reports. “Earlier, to create a sale report, one had to go through a multi-layer process of creating reports from the ERP data instances (about 8 of them), consolidating the reports in Excel format, make changes for uniformity, then create a desktop-based report format, and so on. With the BI solution, browser-based reports on sales, etc, can be generated in seconds. The exit, transfer and load (ETL) process has been defined, which consolidated information in the data warehouse,” says Kahlon.

Managing the techno-tree: A four-man army

However, the deeper the technology roots, the more cumbersome it becomes to manage them. So how did *Giny and Jony* manage

such a vast technology infrastructure alongside the retail business?

If you think the firm hired a huge IT battalion to handle things, you’re wrong. A four-man army of IT and vendor support professionals ensured smooth sailing for *Giny and Jony*. “We believe that if you are good

at making air conditioners, don’t try making software. Following that, we rectified our past mistakes, where our mammoth IT team of 18 developers, was replaced by a tight team of just four IT professionals, none of whom are developers. But we are very careful about the vendors we choose, making implementation and maintenance of the solutions the vendors’ priority,” says Kahlon.

Charting out the way ahead

With implementation and maintenance taken care of, *Giny and Jony* hopes to use more technology to leverage growth. “Looking ahead, we plan to invest in storage and back-up infrastructure, collaboration tools, online training programmes for our sales staff, social networking sites, mobile marketing, etc,” says Kahlon. Certainly, *Giny and Jony’s* early adoption of technology proves that IT not only accelerates growth, but also ensures you maintain your growth pace. ■