

BSNL Director Rajesh Wadhwa

An indecisive & sluggish top manager

He is indecisive and woefully slow. In the age of supersonic speed soft-switches, he is still in the slow connecting cross-bar exchange era. Any important file that goes to him is bound to take at least 2-3 months before it comes out of his room. And whenever it comes out, he tosses it for a long journey with complete uncertainty. The man so described is Rajesh Wadhwa, a Director in Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL) looking after fixed network and broadband services.

He joined BSNL on August 1, 2008. It is not that he has become slow in BSNL. He performed in a similar fashion in his previous positions in MTNL Delhi as well, where he was the Chief General Manager (North). The people who have worked with him know his working well. And when they send a file to him, they know the file will not come back soon.

There is no fault with his CV, though. He is an MBA from the Faculty of Management Studies, University of Delhi. He is B.Tech in Electrical Engineering from IIT Delhi. He has 35 years of experience in telecom. He should understand the kind of competition BSNL is facing from the private telcos. But, nothing will deter him from being sluggish. Here are few instances:

Broadband CPEs

The tender for the procurement of 80 lakh customer premises equipment (CPEs) used for providing broadband services was invited exactly a year ago. The tender evaluation committee of BSNL has submitted its report. After that there have been complaints from various quarters on the method of evaluation of the tender. The Central Vigilance Commissions (CVC) is aware of the matter. On the other hand, there is going to be acute shortage of the CPEs in near future. But, the final decision is pending.

Telecom Live has studied the tender conditions and found it to be self-destructive. Conflicting tender specifications have been prepared by BSNL. It has stated



Rajesh Wadhwa
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Tender conditions

Section IV Part A: Eligibility & Special Terms & Conditions of the Contract

1. The special terms and conditions of the contract shall supplement the 'Instructions to the Bidders' (Section II) and "General Conditions of the Contract" (Section III) and wherever there is a conflict, the provisions herein shall prevail over those in Section II and Section III.
- 10.6 The tender will be evaluated as a package of all the items in price schedule (Schedule VII parts I & II) including Optional items, AMC charges, spares.

Section IV Part B: Functional & Technical Specifications

- 9.5 The bidder of Package B needs to quote 300,000 DSL CPEs as VDSL2, Type 2 (100,000 CPEs in each Phase) as an optional item which will be evaluated separately. The above quantity will be over and above the projected requirement of CPEs.

Clarifications dated October 31, 2008 issued by BSNL to the above clause

- 9.5 The quote for the VDSL CPE is mandatory. It is optional for BSNL to procure the VDSL CPEs.

entirely the opposite things at two different places in the same tender document. At one place it has stated, "The tender will be evaluated as a package of all the items in price schedule (Schedule VII parts I & II) including Optional items, AMC charges, spares". At the other place it has stated, "The bidder of Package B needs to quote 300,000 DSL CPEs as VDSL2, Type 2 (100,000 CPEs in each Phase) as an optional item which will be evaluated separately".

These kinds of ambiguities result in delays. The above has resulted in change of bidder ranking in the financial bid evaluation. Even though there is discrepancy or dispute, BSNL cannot keep the decision hanging for long.

Implications: BSNL is adding 1.5 lakh new broadband connections every month. The current capacity can sustain only for the next four months. The CPE constraint may crop up from the third month, starting from few cities and slowly engulf the entire country. So far BSNL has received 50.32 lakh CPEs under different orders and it has placed additional orders for over 5 lakh CPEs to ITI. It has over 44 lakh broadband connections already working. Then there has to be a provision of 10 per cent CPEs for replacement, etc. In near future, there will be severe complaints regarding non-availability of BSNL broadband connections like it has happened earlier for SIM cards.

Deployment of NGN soft-switches

This is yet another example of lethargy. There is no dispute whatsoever. Moreover a decision was taken by the Management Committee of BSNL on July 1, 2009, Rajesh Wadhwa has kept the file pending for no reasons for the last 2 months. The Management Committee had decided to optimally utilize the soft-switches that BSNL had already long ago under IP-TAX tender.

It was agreed to deploy the soft-switches at the Zonal level (4 zones) instead of at the Circle level (22 circles). This would not only save Capex but also result in substantial saving on recurring Opex. This re-arrangement of network would have also resulted

in some spare soft-switches, which the Management Committee had decided to utilize for class-V functionality for providing VoIP type of services to about 3 million broadband users.

Implications: The delivery against the first order of IP-TAX has already started arriving at the sites in every circle as per the sites specified in the purchase order. When Mr Wadhwa clears the file, by that time the equipment would have been delivered to all the sites. Inordinate delay in handling technical issues not only lead to delay in the execution of the project but may also result in reaching a situation of no-return whereby BSNL has to live with the additional Capex and Opex with no tangible benefits reaped.

Contrast: BSNL 2009 award winners for their work

