



US' Databazaar to make films in India

9 Mar, 2009, 0224 hrs IST, Ashoke Nag,ET Bureau

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KOLKATA: US-based IT company Databazaar has forayed into filmmaking business. Led by Bengali NRI Oney Seal, the company is focusing on producing Indian films and taking them to a global audience, not confining them merely to the Indian Diaspora.

To start with, Databazaar is funding a Bengali movie Dwando (Conflict) under a US-registered outfit Suman Ghosh Productions. Interestingly, Dwando will be distributed by one of Hollywood's biggest distribution companies LongTale.

"The Databazaar Group has multiple lines of business — internet retail, wholesale distribution, software development, LPO and other BPO. In each, we are a boutique/niche player. And, our success in each of these verticals is based on business model," Databazaar CEO Oney Seal told ET in an email from Miami.

"We are attempting to do the same in Indian regional filmmaking. We want to bring efficiencies in production, corporate control mechanisms, global distribution and other elements to Bengali films. Our goal is to make a Bengali film for a global audience. The success of these films would validate that Tollywood can be a good investment destination for the US investors," said Mr Seal.

Dwelling on the movie venture's first film Dwando, Mr Seal said, "Dwando is actually a pilot of a business concept the US institutional investors wanted as proof that Indian regional films can be an investment not just for the one-off NRIs, but also for them. The elements we plan to bring in are geared to provide corporate control mechanisms, a global appeal, distribution by LongTale and many other factors. We, in fact, have cross-border CPA and law firms sitting on production sets monitoring activity, something that has blown the local production controllers' minds."

He said that Databazaar ventured into films after National Award-winning director Suman Ghosh approached him and suggested embarking on a production house.

"Director Suman Ghosh, a good friend of mine here in Miami, approached me after winning National Award for Padokkhep (Step), to brainstorm about going into production from pure directing. We literally went to a drawing board to map the various components and processes to see how best to structure this. From this formed the business model we talked about. We approached the US institutional investors, who liked the model, but needed validation based on a pilot. Mr Ghosh felt he had a perfect script for it and I felt it was surely worth trying our hand at it," said Mr Seal.

According to him, the immense success of Slumdog Millionaire is likely to boost the fortunes of films of this category.

"When we were conceiving Dwando, we, of course, had no idea of the upcoming Slumdog. We only felt that such a genre of movie and such a business concept might succeed. These are films of the same genre — Indian in flavour and content, but global in appeal — technically a foreign production with Indian talent, not just for the Indian audience, but for the global one and so on. Our business goal was to attract the US institutional investments to Indian regional filmmaking. So, what the success of Slumdog essentially does for us is that it validates our concept to a great extent. And, that we hope will have commercial ramifications for our venture."

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