

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

A PC for a song in Hong Kong User Must Be From Low Income Group, Business Segment

Our Bangalore Bureau
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THE constant fall in the prices of personal computers (PCs) may also see a day when these machines are offered for free with services bundled along with it. These free machines may serve the needs of the business as well as take up social responsibility (read bridging digital divide).

Asiatotal.net, a Hong Kong-based technology company, is offering its own brand of PC called "IT" for free and expects to make this a successful business venture.

Under its business model, Asiatotal.net will scout for sponsors or partners whose logos or information will be instantly available on the PC at the touch of the designated key on the keypad.

However, industry observers do not see any lock-in value for the sponsor as the user may not use these keys at all. Coupled with this, the PC is connected to the internet through dial-up modems, when most internet connections now are on the broadband route.

Without divulging the price of the PC, Asiatotal.net chief executive officer Judy Chen said its business would work on a revenue-sharing model, with the sponsoring entities on every PC given free.

The people who will get the PC free will be screened by Asiatotal.net. Its requirements are simple: the user should have a telephone connection, should not own a PC and be from the lower income level.

Asiatotal.net has already made a foray into Brazil where it plans to ship around 1

million PCs with the first 2 lakh units ready to be despatched with sponsorship from the postal and telecom departments.

The company also claimed to have entered China.

Ms Chen said the company was still looking for sponsoring partners. The participating companies could be from education, medical, financial and entertainment sectors and added that it had not undertaken any kind of market research. Asiatotal.net has got the personal computers designed by Taiwan-based companies and the manufacturing has been done out of China.

Ms Chen pointed out that the personal computers is designed for internet connectivity and comes with a five-year warranty period.

