

business today



Asiatotal.net's Chen: Free for all

iT's Free

COMPANIES HAVE TRIED SEVERAL innovations to get around the problem of low PC penetration. However, even the Rs 10,000 that some such devices cost could be too much for people at the wrong end of the digital divide. Asiatotal.net, a Hong Kong-based IT solutions company, has an answer: a free computer simply called iT, with users having to pay just the telephone charges for accessing the internet. "Our business model will solve this problem," says Judy S. Chen, President and CEO, Asiatotal.net. So, how will Asiatotal make its money: iT's keyboard will feature several hotkeys that can take users directly to the websites of the company's partners in areas such as financial services, healthcare and education. These firms, reasons Chen, will pay to have hotkeys dedicated to them, in the hope that at least a few of the people who visit their sites will transact some business with them. The original flaw in this model seems to be that it assumes people who cannot afford a PC can do that. Chen will also have to battle India's low tele-density (below 10 per cent). That may well explain why Asiatotal has chosen to test the product (200,000 of them, actually) in Brazil, not India or even China.

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