

## CXO Today\_ "AV-only cos like NOD will die a slow death" \_June 22'09

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### **"AV-only cos like NOD will die a slow death"**

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In a space dominated by the likes of McAfee, Symantec, NOD and a host of popular 'foreign' brands, MicroWorld is attempting to carve a niche for itself. In a no holds barred interaction with Abhinna Shreshtha, MicroWorld MD & CEO - Govind Rammurthy, talks about the company's plans, what the security industry has learnt from recent malware epidemics, and why big names like Microsoft and McAfee are no longer intimidating to upcoming players

### **With players like McAfee, Symantec, Trend Micro, AVG, NOD, etc. isn't the security space becoming overcrowded?**

In the security space what is needed is focus and this where the bigger players have met their downfall. Companies like Symantec and McAfee have been around for ages and at this point of time they have become too huge to understand a lot of things or to drive innovation easily. They have both acquired a number of different types of companies in recent years. Symantec, for example, has now reached a stage where you don't know whether to call it a security company or a storage company.

### **Same with McAfee, it has lost its foothold in a number of countries because they tried to do too many things.**

There is of course a balance that has to be maintained. When you look at companies like NOD that offer only anti-virus, they are going to die a slow death, because today security has moved to much more than virus detection.

### **What of Microsoft and its upcoming security product 'Morro'?**

The case with Microsoft is that security is not their primary focus. Morro seems to be more like a case of same product in a different package. You cannot be a leader in this space unless you are completely focused on what you are offering.

### **How far is MicroWorld from being a leader in the security space?**

Currently, we are the number two security solutions vendor in India behind Symantec, with about 25-30% market share. Being a leader is having a good product, good branding, and good technical support. We still have a lot of things to do and we are working towards it, not only in India but also in other countries. In about a couple of years we could see ourselves reach the pinnacle, I am confident about that. The biggest problem for us will be to sustain ourselves when we reach that position.

### **Aren't you counting too much on the 'Home ground Advantage'?**

The advantage that we have in India as compared to other players is that we understand the market much better than them. For example, if we go to Russia and try competing with Kaspersky, we will find the going tough, it is the same with other companies that come to India.

In India, enterprises are practical, they are not much concerned with what innovations we (security vendors) are working on. What they want at the end of the day is that their system should be functioning properly and there is no malware or unwanted agents hiding behind the systems. Most important is technical support, in case some problem crops up. This is where our advantage lies.

### **Let us take the Conficker epidemic. What was the single most important thing that security companies learnt from it?**

Conficker exploited a Windows OS vulnerability, hence most people affected were those who used pirated version of the OS. SMBs and enterprises were also affected to a large extent. The reason being that there is a general tendency among organizations that a firewall at the periphery is enough to protect the network. However, the Conficker epidemic taught system administrators that this was enough.

Once the Conficker worm infected a machine, it spread to other machines through the LAN, which is not generally protected by firewalls. Conficker proved that one needs firewalls at every individual machine and endpoint device.

### **You talked about the home advantage, but won't it work against you when you try to penetrate markets like the US, which is the home turf of McAfee, Symantec, etc.?**

We have given it some thought and yes it will be very difficult. A straight-on entry might not work, we will have to make a back-door entry in such markets. We will need the right kind of partners and strategy which will give us the penetration and understanding of the market. For example, we could tie up with a storage solutions provider who wants to compete with Symantec and offer a bundled storage and security solution.

### **What about India, do bundled solutions work in India?**

The general trend seems to be that enterprises do not prefer mixing different solutions, they want separate vendors for different types of solutions. Of course, we do work at pre-bundling our solutions with PCs, but we have not seen any real necessity to offer pre-bundled solutions in India.