

manifold. Samsung also recently announced a one-terabit flash chip, composed of eight layers of silicon.

Thanks to flash memory, you can go around with several gigabytes of data literally in your pocket (or dangling around your neck, depending on your preference). Sharing data was never easier. You can work on any computer in the world, while retaining your settings, applications and even the operating system. Tools like Mojopac take full advantage of the portability and size of flash memory, allowing users to work on any machine, carrying their shortcuts, wallpapers and preferences with them. There are even USB-based operating systems (generally Linux), which offer everything from IMs to browsers to office suites, without compromising on privacy or security.

Flash memory is also a part of today's high-end gaming consoles like the Xbox 360 and PS3. Users can save games in a flash memory module and then continue it on another console.

## A 'flash'y future

Microsoft has acknowledged the potential of flash memory by incorporating ReadyBoost and ReadyDrive, flash-enabled performance boosters and energy savers in its new operating system, Windows Vista. ReadyBoost will let Vista users plug in a compatible USB flash key that will be used by the system as a RAM cache. ReadyDrive does much the same thing—only the cache is located on 'hybrid' hard drives.

All of which seems to indicate that flash memory is very much here to stay. The day is not far off when almost every electronic gadget that needs to store information will come with the tag 'flash inside'!

### Rajjat Ojha, PMP

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# A Dais For Innovators

**The Proto.in event provided a rare opportunity for Indian innovators to share their vision and to showcase their technologies and products to venture capitalists. Here's an overview of the event.**

**t**he first Proto.in event took place in Chennai recently.

Organised by The Knowledge Foundation (a non-profit body formed by a team of technology enthusiasts), the event was aimed at promoting the entrepreneurial spirit in the country. The participants included 28 start-ups from across the country that demonstrated their products to an audience of technologists, venture capitalists (VCs) and technology enthusiasts. Apart from the on-stage demos, there were in-depth product reviews and a number of interesting analyses by industry experts.

## The Proto experience

According to Vijay Anand, a technology entrepreneur and one of the key visionaries behind Proto.in, "The aim of the event was to provide a platform for start-up companies here in India, so that they could showcase their technology to VCs and get their attention and receive feedback. Most entrepreneurs are never given a



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platform to share their vision and a lot of good ideas die away. It is important because the next big growth in the Indian economy is going to come from start-ups and technological innovation, and not from outsourcing. I am often asked the question, 'Show me one company in India that is working on products'. Proto was organised to provide an answer to that."

Hosted in the IC&SR Auditorium in IIT Madras, the event witnessed panel discussions and networking sessions between selected start-ups, VCs and panellists. Numerous challenges that innovators in India face, and their solutions were discussed in detail. Mobile phone technologies emerged as the most promising area in India. Other important aspects of the event were the on-stage demos of the selected

28 start-ups. Each of them was given eight to ten minutes to showcase their products and technologies. These companies were categorised into six different areas—telecom, infrastructure and development platforms, Internet and Web 2.0, consumer electronics, business and productivity tools, and mobile technologies. Most of the companies were not well known, but they definitely had some promising products and ideas.

There were around 325 paid participants in all, which the organisers said was more than what they had expected. Professionals, fellow entrepreneurs and industrialists, who, at the end of the day, are going to be the users of these products, judged the products displayed.

## Not just about the money

While the event was about obtaining funding, not everyone was there for the money. Many participants felt that the event gave them something that was far more valuable.

“I don’t think the VCs’ presence or funding was or should have been the primary motive for organising or attending Proto—it certainly wasn’t for us. Our objective was simply to share what we were doing, and hopefully, get some more bright minds to join us!” said Lakshmanan Narayan, VP-marketing, and co-founder of Chennai-based Vembu Technologies.

According to Vijay Anand, Proto.in was about capturing mind-share, attracting talent and showing the world what your product can do, and in the process, getting an idea validated. Neither he nor the start-ups want to rate the success of the event by the number of companies that got funded.

“This country is the hottest destination in the world today. If you have the right product and technology and the ability to solve problems, then VCs are waiting to fund you. Proto.in

is a place to show them that you have everything right, and in place,” felt R.L. Narayan, founder and CEO, 360 Degree Interactive, Chennai.

## Looking to capitalise on a good start

For a first-time event, Proto.in went off rather well. “We are in the process of planning the next edition of Proto, sometime around August, this year. It is being planned on a much bigger scale and will be in Chennai. We already have confirmed interest from a lot of international VC firms, and quite a few from Silicon Valley itself,” said Anand. The importance of events like Proto.in lies in the fact that India has become one of the hottest targets for global VCs. Though the country has a number of talented entrepreneurs and technologists, there were, till now, no common platforms where they could gather and share ideas. This is where Proto hopes to make a difference. Lakshmanan Narayan explained the importance of events like Proto: “I’d imagine this cross-pollination of ideas and experiences is the fundamental role of such events—at least at these initial stages. These events should serve to provide an impetus to the ecosystem that still needs to develop to support the growth of IT product companies in India.” According to Anand, events like Proto are essential, not just for entrepreneurs but also for the nation as a whole. He said, “Hopefully, this will be the beginning of looking at entrepreneurship as a lifestyle choice, and it will create the mentality among consumers to expect more from within India itself and to gain confidence as a nation. A confident nation, as they say, can accomplish a great deal.” There can be no arguing with that logic. **It**


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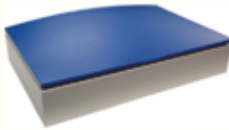
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