Dialog Enterprise: Driving Digital Transformation in Sri Lanka

Dialog Enterprise, the business arm of Dialog Axiata Group, is a premier ICT Business Solutions Provider in Sri Lanka, leading the charge in digital transformation. In a recent conversation with Business Today, Navin Pieris, Group Chief Officer at Dialog Enterprise, outlined the company's commitment to empowering businesses through innovative, tailor-made solutions. Focusing on organizations of all sizes, Dialog Enterprise offers a broad spectrum of services backed by a team of experts dedicated to customer success.

At the heart of Dialog Enterprise's mission is customer engagement, emphasizing a collaborative approach to guide businesses on their digital journeys. This customer-driven strategy enhances the overall experience and fosters loyalty through thoughtful and practical solutions. By cultivating a strong internal team, Dialog helps bridge the skills gap for its customers, ensuring they have access to essential expertise.

A commitment to innovation drives Dialog's comprehensive approach to making digital solutions accessible to SMEs in Sri Lanka. The company recognizes that connectivity is vital for growth and opportunity in a fast-evolving technological landscape. Their mission to bring future technologies to the present empowers individuals and businesses alike to thrive. By staying ahead of technological trends, Dialog Enterprise positions Sri Lankan businesses to compete globally.

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Navin Pieris, Group Chief Officer, Dialog Enterprise, Dialog Axiata.

How does Dialog Enterprise help businesses in Sri Lanka adopt digital transformation effectively?

Our approach emphasizes awareness, tailored solutions, and partnerships, which are all crucial for effective digital transformation. The rapid changes in the tech landscape over the past few years have created a unique opportunity for businesses to adapt and thrive. The COVID-19 pandemic added to the urgency and accelerated this transformation.

Webinars, printed material, SME-centered events in the provinces, and showcasing our successful projects are key to creating awareness. The pace of technology change is so rapid that we have to step up our awareness efforts in line with the

enthusiasm that small business owners show for adopting digital technologies.

Our tailor-made solutions ensure that they are relevant to the customer, an end achieved through customer engagement, delivered by skilled teams of personnel committed to fulfilling customer needs. By focusing on customer engagement and understanding their specific needs, we provide solutions and foster long-term partnerships that can lead to sustainable growth.

Dialog Enterprise’s digital transformation journey is also a collaborative effort. Our collaboration with various service providers under the Axiata Group umbrella strengthens our ability to offer a comprehensive suite of solutions, leveraging their expertise in data, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and telecommunications. This collaborative approach enhances our offerings and empowers our customers to navigate their digital transformation journeys more effectively.

How does your company tailor its solutions to meet the specific needs of industries?

At Dialog, we view connectivity as the backbone of any business operation. Recognizing that basic connectivity is essential, we adapt our offerings to suit the specialized needs of different sectors, such as manufacturing, retail, and more.

Historically, connectivity was limited and physical, but technological advancements now allow for seamless connections globally. Our ability to offer mobile, fixed, and satellite solutions ensures businesses can choose what best suits their operational requirements. Understanding that each industry has unique challenges, we provide tailored end-to-end solutions. For example, manufacturing focuses on monitoring efficiency, productivity, and workforce management, delivering solutions that directly address these operational needs.

Partnering with specialized companies can enhance our connectivity offerings with industry-specific expertise. This collaboration ensures that we provide comprehensive solutions that integrate technology and industry knowledge.

Structuring our internal teams into industry verticals allows for a focused approach to developing and delivering solutions. That ensures that our teams are knowledgeable about the technology and understand the specific challenges and requirements of the sectors they serve.

What are some of the biggest challenges businesses face when integrating digital solutions in Sri Lanka, and how do you help overcome them?

The COVID-19 pandemic and economic crisis have led to a brain drain in the tech sector, with skilled professionals seeking opportunities abroad. That has created a need for more expertise, particularly in the fields of data security and Internet of Things (IoT). We have focused on retaining skilled professionals within the company and providing them with growth opportunities. By building a robust internal team, we help bridge the skills gap for our customers, offering them access to necessary expertise.

Misunderstanding digitization is another challenge. Many businesses attempt to digitize existing processes without first evaluating their effectiveness. That often leads to inefficiencies, as they automate processes that may not even be necessary. We emphasize the importance of understanding the objectives behind digitization. We guide businesses toward meaningful transformation by encouraging them to identify and eliminate redundant processes before automating. This approach helps them realize the actual benefits of digitization. There needs to be more understanding of the nature of digitization as a revolutionary step rather than a simple evolution of existing processes. Dialog shares its digital transformation journey to illustrate that digitization is a gradual process involving continuous innovation and refinement over time. Setting realistic expectations, we help clients understand that it’s a multi-year journey requiring commitment and patience. By addressing these challenges with thoughtful strategies, Dialog Enterprise is assisting businesses in Sri Lanka in navigating their digital transformation and contributing to the overall growth of the country’s tech ecosystem.

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How do you ensure that your digital solutions enhance business customer experience and business clients' engagement with their customers digitally while building loyalty?

Our customer-driven approach to enhancing customer experience and building loyalty is thoughtful and practical. Instead of creating generic solutions and seeking a market, Dialog Enterprise prioritizes direct customer engagement. Understanding their specific requirements allows us to develop tailored solutions that genuinely address their challenges. Regular meetings and consultations help us remain attuned to evolving customer needs, enabling us to adapt and innovate accordingly.

As part of the Axiata Group, Dialog Enterprise benefits from insights from various Asian markets. By analyzing successful strategies implemented in countries like Indonesia, Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Malaysia, where the Axiata Group operates, we can apply proven solutions to local challenges. This cross-regional collaboration allows us to identify best practices and avoid pitfalls, enhancing the effectiveness of our offerings. Prioritizing the quality of our solutions ensures that they are reliable and robust. This commitment builds trust and loyalty among clients who depend on our services. Acknowledging that issues can arise, our focus on quickly and effectively addressing problems reinforces our reliability. Customers appreciate responsive support, which enhances their overall experience.

By equipping businesses with tailored digital solutions, we enable them to enhance their customer engagement. That, in turn, fosters loyalty as businesses can provide better services and experiences. Our approach emphasizes collaboration, positioning Dialog Enterprise as a partner in our client's success rather than just a vendor. This relationship builds trust and loyalty over time. Gathering feedback from clients helps refine solutions and adapt to changing market conditions. This frequentative process ensures that our offerings remain relevant and practical.

What is your approach to making digital solutions accessible to SMEs in Sri Lanka, and how receptive are they to adopting digital solutions for their businesses?

Our approach to making digital solutions accessible to SMEs in Sri Lanka is both comprehensive and thoughtful. Recognizing that SMEs vary significantly in terms of their technological maturity, we tailor our solutions to meet businesses where they

are—whether they are just starting, struggling, or actively innovating. We focus on developing a diverse range of products that cater to different needs and budgets. That allows SMEs to adopt solutions in manageable, bite-sized increments, aligning with their growth trajectories. By providing affordable options, we ensure that even smaller businesses can access digital tools without overwhelming financial pressure. This accessibility encourages more comprehensive adoption of digital solutions.

We adapt our engagement strategies based on the scale of the business. While large enterprises might require formal meetings and presentations, SMEs benefit from more direct, relatable communication through traditional media and social platforms. Recognizing the country's wide range of

SMEs and their spread, we employ a variety of channels—such as newspapers, social media, and local partnerships—to build awareness and drive adoption.

Partnering with NGOs and aid agencies to provide funding and training helps build capacity within the SME sector. These collaborations ensure that SMEs have access to the resources and knowledge they need to adopt digital solutions. Focusing on ecosystems, like tourism in Dambulla, for example, allows us to engage multiple SMEs that support larger businesses, such as food suppliers, safari jeep drivers, and spa services, to name a few, thereby creating a ripple effect of digital adoption.

Dialog's extensive network ensures that solutions and support are available to SMEs across Sri Lanka, regardless of location. This broad reach is crucial for fostering trust and accessibility. Structuring teams specifically for SME engagement ensures businesses can easily connect with experts who understand their unique challenges and requirements.

Sri Lankans are generally very receptive to technology, as illustrated by vendors' quick adoption of digital solutions at the Dambulla wholesale market. This openness to technology is a strong foundation for increasing digital adoption among SMEs. What positions Dialog Enterprise as a strong facilitator in the digital transformation of the SME sector is a combination of a technologically savvy population, our customized solutions that meet diverse needs, and robust support mechanisms. Our comprehensive approach helps SMEs adopt digital solutions effectively and strengthens the overall business ecosystem in Sri Lanka.

Dialog Enterprise is well-equipped to help businesses of all sizes navigate the complexities of digital transformation and thrive in a rapidly evolving market.

What role does innovation play in the digital solutions you provide to businesses?

Innovation is the backbone of effective digital solutions, especially in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Innovation allows you to be responsive to the ever-changing market dynamics. By staying ahead of trends and anticipating customer needs, we can develop solutions that are timely and relevant. For Dialog, our commitment to being “The Future Today” company showcases a proactive approach to harnessing innovation for real-world impact.

Innovation enables businesses to rethink their processes and operations. In our

quest to introduce cutting-edge technologies like 5G, we are enhancing connectivity and enabling new business models, improving efficiency, and fostering creative solutions that weren't possible before.

As I pointed out, innovation is not just about technology; it's about cultivating the right skills. As we experiment with 5G before its rollout, we are collaborating with universities and industries in R&D that will ultimately help build a talent pool that can leverage new technologies effectively, ensuring that we have a prepared workforce to meet future challenges. Our focus on testing and experimenting with new technologies creates a culture of exploration. This encourages businesses to innovate, adapt, and find unique solutions tailored to their specific needs. The aim of innovation ultimately must be to create value for businesses and consumers where innovative solutions help companies improve their service delivery, enhance customer experiences, and reduce operational costs. Moreover, innovative technologies often lead to more sustainable practices. We contribute to a more sustainable future for businesses and the community by prioritizing advancements that support efficiency and reduce environmental impact. We, at Dialog Enterprise have a long-term vision which allows us to strategically position ourselves as a leader in digital transformation, preparing both the market and the workforce for the changes ahead.

What emerging technologies do you believe will be vital in transforming businesses in Sri Lanka in the future?

The rollout of 5G will enhance connectivity, enabling IoT devices and real-time applications across various sectors. Businesses can leverage AI for predictive analytics, customer service automation, and operational efficiencies. In industries like finance and retail, AI can help analyze consumer behavior and improve service delivery. However, addressing the affordability and accessibility of these technologies will be crucial for widespread adoption.

What is your vision for the future of digital solutions in Sri Lanka, and how do you see Dialog Enterprise contributing to it?

Our vision for Sri Lanka's digital future is bold and transformative, with Dialog Enterprise at the forefront of connecting, empowering, and elevating individuals and businesses nationwide. We recognize that connectivity is the backbone of economic growth, and our goal is to make advanced digital solutions affordable and accessible, empowering Sri Lankan enterprises to compete globally.

As SMEs drive over half of Sri Lanka’s GDP, they are pivotal to the nation’s economy. We are committed to fortifying their growth with tailored solutions, helping them recover and expand following recent economic challenges. Our approach goes beyond connectivity; we focus on building SMEs’ digital competencies, facilitating market expansion, and enabling seamless online payment solutions. By empowering SMEs with knowledge and skills, we’re supporting their growth, creating jobs, and enhancing livelihoods across the country.

Our partnership with the government on data security and privacy is part of our broader mission to foster a robust regulatory environment. With an expansive reach, Dialog Enterprise ensures that even the most remote businesses can access digital tools and training, making digital transformation accessible.

At the heart of our mission is a commitment to resilience, collaboration, and economic impact. By prioritizing affordability, skill-building, and alignment with national initiatives, we have positioned Dialog Enterprise to drive sustainable progress in the SME sector and the larger business landscape and contribute meaningfully to Sri Lanka’s economic recovery and future growth.

In today’s fast-paced digital economy, partnering with a trusted digital solutions provider like Dialog Enterprise is essential for companies looking to stay competitive, agile, and innovative. Whether you’re a small business striving to expand your online presence, a mid-sized enterprise seeking efficiency, or a large organization focused on cybersecurity and data-driven insights, the right partner can make all the difference. Dialog Enterprise provides a suite of tailored digital solutions that streamline operations and empower businesses to reach new markets and engage customers like never before. With a deep understanding of the local landscape and a commitment to delivering global-standard technology, Dialog Enterprise is well-equipped to help businesses of all sizes navigate the complexities of digital transformation and thrive in a rapidly evolving market. Now is the time to unlock your company’s potential with a solutions provider that prioritizes your growth and success.

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