

Hire1 On Demand Delivery

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Speed, transparency and on demand; these are the words that govern the modern economy. In Sri Lanka, as in most South Asian countries, where traffic is an impediment to efficiency there is a need for delivery and courier services. It is a need Hire1 strives to cater to.

By Keshini de Silva | Photographs Menaka Aravinda

Hire1 is a technology-centric online and app based platform that provides logistics and courier services. Offering a completely digitally driven service, the company leverages on Sri Lanka's existing private transport sector to provide organisations, retailers, stores and even individuals delivery and courier services. Established in 2015, Hire1 was founded by Yeshanth Gunewardena, Director and CEO and Indika Tantrigoda, Director and Chief Technology Officer.

“Through Our Platform Multiple Users Can Simultaneously Place Their Order And Track The Delivery In Real Time. Recently We Launched The Service To Customers, Who Can Now Through An App Place Orders And Track. Customer Response Has Been Great Because Of The Speed And Transparency In Delivery.”

Initiated with the vision of being a platform that simplifies the logistical process, Hire1 connects private vehicle owners with businesses and individuals that require the transportation of various goods, thus empowering the private owners while providing an efficient service.

“Through our platform multiple users can simultaneously place their order and track the delivery in real time. Having worked initially with businesses, we recently extended the service to the general public, who can now through our App place orders and track. Overall customer response has been great because of the speed and transparency in delivery,” says Yeshanth Gunewardena.

They identified that while Sri Lanka was starting to embrace the Uber formula of the West, it was only focused on individuals, creating a gap in the delivery and courier sector. Set up with a unique strategy, Hire1 operates on-demand as opposed to using a scheduled delivery route and services each order separately to maintain priority of order and the quickest delivery time. The firm also focuses on a partnership model and is even providing its platform to traditional courier companies that are attempting to move into the online space.

Indika Tantrigoda explains, “Many e-commerce businesses are challenged with the last step of delivery. That is one of the key areas where we come in. They can use our online service to place the order for delivery. We are also providing business solutions to brick and mortar companies. All they have to do is plug into our platform.”

Gunewardena, who received his formative education at St Joseph’s College and holds an MBA from Harvard University, first formed the idea of Hire1. He was later joined by Tantrigoda a Royalist and graduate of SLIIT. The initial team of two at Hire1 has now grown to 12 fulltime employees and a large base of transporters who connect through the online platform.

Fostering an open and companionable environment in a technology-based industry that requires constant innovation is important to both. Tantrigoda points out that the Engineering team strives to release weekly updates to ensure end-user experience is both easy and modern. He adds, “The team is small but we are not a traditional courier company. We are able to push new features and product ideas to the market as a result.”

A start-up itself, Hire1 understood the need to continuously redefine its model to ensure it does not compete in the same manner as traditional businesses. Gunewardena said, “We saw a lot of opportunity and through various programmes received exposure and advice from both international and local experts. Although Sri Lanka offers a small market compared to China or India, on the other hand it is an easier place set up operations and test. You could start in popular areas in Colombo and then expand.”

Especially in industries driven by technology, start-ups are emerging as the preferred option as opposed to traditional businesses. On their experience as a startup, Gunewardena says, “The start-up landscape is evolving. If you look five years back the economy was still dominated by traditional large players and large companies. Now, given the interest and focus in this area there is more liquidity in the market and many support systems to gain business and legal advice.”

Due to its novel approach of on-demand delivery and wide conceptual impact on the market, Hire1 was selected as the Overall Winner from 200+ entrants at Venture Engine 2016 in addition to receiving the inaugural Impact Entrepreneurship Award.

The future of Hire1 will continue to involve much innovation and calculated risks. Already the firm has tested the waters in the online taxi service after creating the technology and have so far made a strategic decision to find the right opportunity. Immediate plans for their online courier service involve taking Hire1 to Kandy and Galle where there is a need for the service.

