

Background

Reliance World organises the video-based National Digital Elocution Competition (NDEC) every year. In 2008, the organisers wanted to take the competition to the next level by increasing participation and interest levels, while making it easier to manage.

Challenges

Part of the competition process was manual. Preliminary screening of videos in an offline process was proving to be a daunting task. Only the organisers had access to the video entries and participants had no way of comparing their performance with that of others.

Solution

A breakthrough software solution (Ilaza VDO Contest) was leveraged to build a website on the fly that enabled online registration, web-based video recording and viewing, Internet voting and censorship.

Outcome

More than 5000 students from over 1000 schools across the country participated by recording their videos on the NDEC website. Internet voting was a huge hit with the participants and the total number of video views exceeded 1.8 million in the one month period of the competition.

About Reliance World

Reliance World is a world-class nationwide chain of retail outlets for products and services of the Reliance-Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group. All Reliance World outlets are connected to Reliance's countrywide optic fibre network. The Broadband Centre at Reliance World leverages this broadband network to offer Broadband Surfing, Online Gaming, Video Conferencing, Digital Electronic News Gathering, Digital Services, eLearning, Virtual Office and many more services. Currently, there are 242 Reliance World outlets across 105 cities in India and the network continues to expand to more locations and cities. For more information on Reliance World, visit www.relianceworld.in

Talent Scouting in the Digital Age Reliance World's National Digital Elocution Competition

- 1000 schools from 100 cities □ 5000 participants web video recordings
- 1.8 million video viewing and □ 7 lakh Internet votes, all in 1 month

The National Digital Elocution Competition (NDEC) is a unique annual competition organised by Reliance World for school-going children in classes V to X.



The competition consists of three rounds-prelims, semifinals & finals. Since the competition is "digital", participants do not have to travel out of their cities for any of the rounds. Participation is through various forms of video communication at Reliance World. It gives school students across India an opportunity to showcase their elocution skills, besides winning prizes and scholarships.

NDEC in the past

2008 was NDEC's third year. In the first year (2006), participants had to visit Reliance World, register for the event and record their elocution video at Reliance World. These videos were recorded locally by Reliance World staff, sorted, labelled and then sent to the national headquarters at Navi Mumbai for screening. For the semifinals and finals, shortlisted participants were invited to Reliance World in their cities. Using the Video Conference infrastructure at Reliance World, the judges in Mumbai evaluated them live.

In its second year (2007), NDEC took a step forward. A technology solution called VDO Messaging was used in the preliminary screening rounds to upload the videos on a central server with automatic sorting and filtering. This eliminated the need to manually sort the videos, and then send them to the screening committee. The screening committee accessed these videos and shortlisted the candidates for the semifinals. There was no change in the process of conducting semifinals and finals. Like the previous year, Video Conferencing was used in the final stages of the event.

Since the competition elicited very enthusiastic response from school students every year, the screening process in the preliminary rounds was proving to be a daunting task. Besides making the competition management process simpler, Reliance World also wanted to take the competition to the next level by attracting greater pan India participation and by giving the participants the ability to view each other's videos.

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NDEC 2008: Taking a Leap

NDEC took a big leap in 2008. A breakthrough software solution (*Ilaza VDO Contest*) which offered for the 1st time in India direct web video recording & playback even on low bandwidths which enabled the creation of the NDEC Website almost on the fly. This gave NDEC several new features:

1. Registration for the competition was now completely online.
2. Participants could record videos directly on the website using even a dial-up connection without any loss of audio or video quality.
3. The competition screening committee could filter out unsuitable videos before they got published on the website.
4. People anywhere in the world could view the videos on the website.
5. Participants could promote their videos using their unique Video Reference Number and viewers could vote online for their favourite videos.

The screenshot displays the 'Senior Category' section of the NDEC website, titled 'Last 10 videos posted'. It features a grid of 10 video thumbnails, each with associated metadata and a 'Vote' button.

Participant Name	School	Video Ref. No.	Views	Internet Votes
NAVEEN KUMAR	OXFORD FOUNDATION SCHOOL	15068	57	0
MARUTHAM VISHALI	CMS	47949	39	0
HEENA SEN	OXFORD FOUNDATION SCHOOL	57029	158	104
simranjeet singh	Cambridge Public School	77875	33	0
shruti dutt	THE LAWRENCE PUBLIC SCHOOL	66483	24	1
SHUBHNEET KAUR	ST. KABIR	84443	38	0
NOHIL THAKUR	SDA ENGLISH SCHOOL	31234	16	0
ISHITA MATHUR	NATIONAL VICTOR PUBLIC SCHOOL	86566	40	0
MANOJ KUMAR	CMS	36589	30	0
PRASANTH S	CMS	22605	33	0

The live tally of most-viewed videos and most-voted videos were displayed dynamically on the website's homepage. A Search Box on the NDEC website made it easy for all categories of users-participants, visitors, Internet voters and evaluators-to locate any video easily by using search parameters such as Participant's Name, Participant's School Name, Video Reference Number and State.

VDO Contest's censorship filter enabled the organisers to filter out any offensive or unsuitable videos before publishing them on the website. Using the censorship filter, it was also possible to give a second chance to participants whose videos were defective for no fault of theirs (e.g.,

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insufficient light, background noise, etc.). The *VDO Contest* application automatically sent an email to such participants with instructions to re-record their video. Participants were shortlisted for the semifinals using a weighted total of scores assigned by evaluators and Internet votes.

The option of leveraging online media space by offering online sponsorship opportunities was also available and Reliance World roped in Chandamama as the Associate Online Sponsor for NDEC.

Impact

The participation and engagement levels grew manifold as the new *VDO Contest* platform offered the convenience of registering and recording videos directly on the website from anywhere. This aligned perfectly with the Reliance World philosophy of experiencing and enjoying "Life without Boundaries".

The technology was simple enough for school students to understand and use. Students across the country participated on a level playing field, irrespective of their location and the kind of Internet access. More than 5000 students from over 1000 schools across the country participated by recording their videos on the NDEC website.

The Internet Voting feature opened up a window of opportunity for participants to share, showcase and promote their videos (read elocution skill) amongst friends, family, relatives and schoolmates. Expectedly proud of their eloquent children, parents actively 'campaigned' in order to gather more online votes for their children.

The NDEC website, where the elocution videos were hosted, witnessed huge traffic. The engagement levels of participants and their well-wishers were clearly manifested in the 18,00,000+ video views and 7,00,000+ Internet votes in the one month period of the competition.

For the organisers, the *VDO Contest* application afforded a wide reach and easy manageability. An inbuilt MIS system provided comprehensive daily reports. Using the intuitive web interface, the evaluators were able to score and shortlist videos online.

Key Benefits

Location Independence: Irrespective of their location, students could register and participate on a level playing field.

Bandwidth Independence: The *VDO Contest* application facilitated recording of videos directly on the NDEC website-without any loss of audio or video quality-even on a dial-up Internet connection.

Worldwide Talent Showcasing: Internet Voting gave participants the chance to promote their videos amongst their friends and relatives across the globe. The live tally of most-viewed videos and most-voted videos on the website's dynamic homepage gave impetus to the competition and added to the excitement.

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Enhanced Competitiveness & Transparency: The ability to view and compare video entries added to the competitive spirit and offered participants the comfort of fairness & transparency.

Usability: The Search feature on the NDEC website enabled users to locate any video easily using various search parameters.

Censorship Filter: Evaluators used this feature to filter out videos with unsuitable content and prevented them from being published on the website.

Online Media Opportunity: The NDEC website offered a compelling opportunity of online advertising to a qualified audience and was effectively utilised by the online sponsor Chandamama to maximise brand visibility.

Single communication point: The fully-integrated NDEC website with its comprehensive database and automated e-mail response system served as a single communication point for all participants.

Other Potential Uses of *VDO Contest*

The functionality and features of *VDO Contest* make it ideal for digital talent scouting. This application can offer great width and engagement levels to television reality shows (such as singing competitions, stand-up comedy contests, etc.) that need to select talent from geographically dispersed locations for the final studio rounds. Since the entries are in video format, the contests could be in any language. Video contests can also be designed to gather consumer opinion about brands, products or services for market survey initiatives.

In Conclusion

Ilaza VDO Contest provided a ready-to-use web-based platform that enabled Reliance World to take its annual **National Digital Elocution Competition** to the next level by making it completely online, offering a level playing field to students in virtually every corner of the country and significantly improving engagement levels. The competition elicited an overwhelming response with participation by over 1000 schools from 100 cities, over 5000 video entries, 18,00,000+ video views and 7,00,000+ Internet votes.

Talent scouts looking for skills that can be showcased on video can greatly benefit from the *VDO Contest* application. They can tap into talent anywhere in the world. Anybody with a computer equipped with a webcam, headset and any kind of Internet connection is now accessible talent pool.

For more information Email: subir.ghosh@relianceada.com