Hum Bhi Online

Covid the disrupter

Covid has been a great disrupter for entire humanity. I have seen farmers learning to sell grapes and mangoes using messaging apps. Some of my friends at our apartment complex started making food for people falling sick with covid. There were people volunteering with procuring medicines for the sick patients, volunteering to walk people's dogs and what not. Watching communities come together to support each other in such trying times has been emotionaly touching for me.

Rise of online shopping (boon or bane?)

It was during these times, Online shopping also increased several folds with lockdown etc playing their part. While this has been a boon to the buyers in these trying times, it had also created a huge disruption in business for local small sellers. Many shops closed down (some temporarily, some permanently) , Our ironing man who used to iron clothes lost his livelihood as people started working from home and were not ironing clothes as frequently.

Restoring livelyhood of local communities

I tried asking some of the sellers who were fighting to survive, how are they managing?

1. Many sellers selling essential commodities/services had turned to messaging apps to take orders and keep business afloat.
2. Some started doing batched deliveries.
3. Tied up with hyperlocal delivery folks to do deliveries.
4. They wanted tools that would make their order capture , delivery booking etc easier to manage. since messaging apps was difficult to do manage manually.

Thats when I thought, Is there any thing I could put my supply chain knowledge and software expertise to better use and put our local seller community back on their feet and have our community thrive again?

Current options available with local Sellers.

1. Create your own digital store
   - Using tools like shopify/magento/woocommerce/wix/ bigcommerce/mydukaan/storehippo.., you can create your digital presence easily.
   - Then you need to attract customers to your sites requiring reasonable marketing spend in ads and SEO.
   - This spend needed to be done for each shop wanting to go online.
2. Join a market place.
   - Joining established market places reduces your marketing spend.
   - High cost of returns and high commissions reducing the margins making it not attractive for small sellers.
3. Do your business by messaging platforms.
   - Whatsapp and messaging platforms have helped the small sellers in being a float but fundamentally it is not very convinient to
     - Share catalog (Sharing products, their price and photo is too tedious and doing the same for each buyer wastes a lot of time for the seller.)
     - Make invoices (You need to manually create totals)
     - Take payments. (you need to share upi with each buyer each time or have your delivery boy collect Cash.)

HumbhiOnline - Mandi

An affordable and inclusive, refreshingly Indian, market place, that buyers and sellers love.

How are we different?

1. Users of the platform can be buyer, seller or delivery agent based on their role on a transaction. This makes it easy for retailer to buy from wholesalers or for home enterprenurs who normally buy from retailers to also sell their craft on the platform.
2. Direct payment between parties.
3. Prepaid Credits purchased by sellers (@ rate of 1 Re per credit) are deducted on order bookings @ very nomimal rate of 1 Credit/Ordered Item.
4. Buyer or Seller can organize delivery by themselves or through humbhionline registered delivery agents or through 3rd party courier partners.
5. HumbhiOnline is a social venture with intention to rejuvenate livelihood of people in local communities by making it easy for sellers to go online and retain their local customers, it's pricing is cost based rather than value based. We continously work on keeping the cost of running the platform low.

How do we keep our costs low.

1. Run the service from home computer till it gets to point where revenue will support moving to the cloud.
   1. Reduced operation cost.
2. We are a two volunteer engineering team who have donated their time to build and are continuing to donate our time to enhance this platform.
   1. This reduces cost to build the software and give salaries.
3. We are working closely with Beckn Protocol and ONDC teams to evolve the digital commerce networks so that cost of customer acquisition will be low for sellers on our platform.
   1. This reduces buyer acquisition cost for sellers and hence reduces seller acquisition costs for humbhionline.
4. Sellers are being acquired word of mouth by volunteers who are are motiviated by this social movement.
   1. This reduces seller accquisition cost.
5. Sellers are being encouraged to inform their current customers about their online presence @ humbhionline. "Slogan - humbhionline hai" (We are also available online).
   1. This reduces buyer accquisition cost for humbhionline as sellers are bringing in their buyers.
6. Open sourced our code so that we can receive comments and contributions from the community.

Traction

We are an early stage startup. We have an mvp and 8 pilot sellers with whom we are working to get them off the feet.

Team

The Humbhionline platform was conceived and founded by a 2 member Team. It is conceived to be run by volunteers.

1. Venkatraman Mahadevan (Primary contributor / CTO) is a passionate technology enthusiast and has been part of the founding team in several successful supply chain startups after completing his MSc Statistics degree from IIT Kanpur. He is also the author of Succinct Web Framework (an opensource web application framework), that he has used effectively in several large scale production applications. Post retirement at 37, his favourite past time has been building applications on the Succinct Framework for enterpreneur friends and family. During covid 19 pandemeic, seeing small sellers and farmers struggling to make a living taking orders on phone and text messages, he decided to put his technology and supply chain skills to use for his local seller friends and came up with this refreshingly inclusive market place, where, any one can start selling online and proudly feel HumBhiOnline!

2. Prashant Thakar (UI UX Developer) has had a rich experience of designing and building User interaction for several projects as a UI/Ux architect. Some of the more recent projects were with Venky having Succinct framework as the backend.

3. UnNamed (Yet to find)- A market development officer-volunteer. Whose role is to find ways to take the platform to sellers with volunteers who are feet on street evalgenizing this social movement..

Short-Medium Term Plans

1. Social media ads/seo for enroling volunteers to drive Seller engagement.
2. Training a core-team to hand hold volunteers who are onboarding sellers.
3. Design volunteer incentives to onboard sellers and their catalog.
4. Consulting to companies who wish create a market place with our open sourced code.
5. Help Small Food Operators to get Gov fssai registrations.
6. Auto Rate products , sellers and buyers based on frequent purchases.

Long Term Plans

1. Non Local Sales enabled by integrating with beckn enabled long-haul carriers.
2. Connect market places created on humbhionline to increase value for sellers and buyers in these marketplaces.
3. Shards on distributed commodity hardware for scaling.

Vision

Humbhionline, A friendly social platform for commerce.

-By Venky-

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The author is the founder of humbhionline (an open source ecommerce platform) and volunter with beckn foundation.