India is a challenging market, but it is here that the fun is," says K.C. Narendran, circle business head, Uttar Pradesh (West), Uninor. Despite being a relatively new player, he says the company has managed to hold its own in a 10-operator market and grow at a steady pace to occupy fourth position in terms of revenue market share in the circle in less than two and a half years of operations.

"The telecom industry stands at a crossroads today," says Narendran. "While the subscriber base has increased steadily, the ARPU has declined as steadily." Going forward, he says the market will continue to be dominated by the prepaid segment and data services will play a major role. "Currently, 95 per cent of India's customer base is prepaid and the market is going to be at that level for a few more years. Also, the data market is growing consistently, as consumers are more internet savvy these days and are demanding a variety of services."

Uninor's gameplan in the Uttar Pradesh (West) circle, he says, is to provide convenient and affordable services to all customers. "In the circle, 50-55 per cent of the population use mobile services, this leaves 45 per cent of the market untapped. All operators will focus on offering the best and the most affordable tariffs to customers as they are very price and product sensitive." His role in this, he says, is formulating strategies to ensure that the company is able to drive and maintain its operations in the circle. To achieve this, he is relying on a "break even" plan. That apart, he is also relying on his extensive experience in the telecom space to keep him afloat.

Narendran started his career in 1991 with Blow Plast Limited and soon after, moved to the telecom sector just when mobile telephony was taking off in the country. In the past, he has worked with organisations such as Escotel, Bharti Airtel and Reliance Communications with expertise in marketing planning, sales execution and business development.

He considers his current stint at Uninor as his most memorable. "I have been associated with Uninor since even before it launched its Indian operations and have focused on strategy formulation and execution," he says.

He counts his management skills and ability to build people-led partnerships as his key strengths. However, one weakness, he says, is that he sometimes gets impatient and wants to

do a number of things at one time. As a leader, Narendran believes in encouraging employee participation and promoting transparency.

In his spare time, he reads business magazines. He likes travelling with his family – his wife, a fitness trainer, and his young daughter – and spending time with his two-year-old pug Hugo.

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