

Gautam Billa began his telecom career at Reliance Communications (RCOM) where testing various new products and solutions and evaluating field deployment scenarios gave him a hands-on experience and a strong foundation. He moved on from RCOM to take up technical support roles with companies like Nortel and Cisco. These roles gave him visibility into actual network deployments and challenges. “Troubleshooting and solving these challenges in pressure situations pushes one to come up with innovative solutions involving scripting and automation,” he notes.

His current responsibilities include running the pre-sales and business development functions for Ciena in India. “India is a unique market with unique challenges. My role is to understand these challenges, communicate them to our R&D teams, and then formulate the right set of solutions to solve the challenges and meet the needs of this market,” he says.

Billa believes that with consolidation, the battle for subscriber share will continue for the next 12-18 months, with three large players serving 1.3 billion people, after which it will stabilise. The other visible trend is the entry and growth of internet content providers. “The game is shifting from being able to provide bandwidth to being able to provide content via different consumption models. Service providers certainly see this shift and have started a journey to gear up for content play,” he says. Data prices have plummeted to a tenth of what they used to be, as a result of which data consumption has grown tenfold. “This pace of growth brings consolidation and disruption in the market, but it also creates new opportunities, new ideas and innovative solutions that enable the survival of the fittest,” he says.

As a manager, Billa believes in making sure that his team has an open work environment, which gives them the freedom to do what they do best. According to him, his biggest strength is his team and the people he works with.

Billa has a bachelor’s degree in electronics engineering from Mumbai University. He has also done a course on negotiations and deal-making from Harvard Business School, USA. When he is not at work, he likes to play squash to unwind and keep fit. He also enjoys spending time with his family, which comprises his wife and their seven-year-old daughter. His wife is a marketing and corporate communications’ professional.

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