



AIS PLAYGROUND GIVES STARTUPS A HELPING HAND >> 3B

AIS Playground gives startups helping hand

PROVIDING SPACE AND RESOURCES FOR TEST RUNS OF PRODUCTS, OPERATORS WILL ALSO BENEFIT FROM MENTORING

ASINA PORNWASIN
 THE NATION

ADVANCED Info Services (AIS) is providing space and resources to nurture technology startups under an initiative aimed at swelling their ranks.

The telecommunications company launched the operation, AIS Playground, to provide a range of support services and facilities.

The centre enables the operators of startups to run simulations of their applications on more than 1,000 mobile devices as part of trial runs for the products.

They can connect with 12 of AIS' application programming interfaces (APIs) as well as receive coaching from mentors on aspects of business and technology. They can also benefit from workshops. All services, except the workshops, are free for participants.

Arakin Rakchittapoke, vice president for service, application and network development for AIS, said that AIS Playground provides the facilities and services required by startups to enable them to quickly execute their applications and product development.

The support facilities also include API Sandbox and network (Next G, 4g, Super Wifi, and NB-IoT) device

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farms (physical and digital).

“For now, there are 20 mentors who can provide suggestions on technology and business, with five mentors a day available,” Arakin said.

“AIS Playground has been open for 40 days, since July, and so far we have had a total of around 30 to 40 groups walking in to use the provided facilities and services.

“Right now, we do not need to set a target for how many total startups come in to use the facilities. But by the end of this year, we expect that around 10 per cent of those using the facilities will become potential startups and move on to commercial

product launches with us. Soon, around four services will potentially be launched.”

He said the beauty of AIS Playground is that it brings AIS' APIs to anyone who wants to use them, for free. Initially, the 12 APIs are being offered, and these comprise: Redeem Point, Exchange Point, Check Point, User Segment, Privilege Location, One-Time Password, Notification, SMS, mPay, Billing Plus, Check Fibre Broadband ID, and Check Prepaid Identity.

“With these APIs, startups will be benefit from the value-added dimensions they provide to their products and services, as well as help them to lure big numbers of potential users instantly,” said Arakin.

At the end of the second quarter of 2017, AIS had 6.99 million post-paid users, 33.48 million prepaid users and 445,900 Fibre broadband users.

Ruchvuth Pichayapan, co-founder and chief marketing officer of Fizzy and a member of a team that joined AIS The Startup, said that APIs help startups not only by allowing them to do test runs but also by drawing the large organic users and, crucially, in a shortened timeframe. “This really helps startups, with their limited resources, to speed up their product and service development for



Operators of startups use the facilities at AIS Playground, at AIS Design Centre in The Emporium. The centre was officially launched last month.

eventual release on to the market," Ruchvuth said.

Teera Sirijaroen, co-founder and chief operations officer of Golfdigg, had also joined AIS The Startup. Teera said the device farm service, which offers 1,000 of both physical and digital mobile devices, "really helps startups by making it easier to trial-test their products and services on a range of mobile phone models".

Arakin said AIS Playground could also play a role in helping AIS

to screen teams for recruitment to AIS The Startup.

"Through the AIS startup programmes that have been arranged since 2011 we have recruited potential startup teams for incubation and coaching. We have let them integrate their developments into AIS' APIs," Arakin said.

"With this model, in around five years we have had 48 startups that are now doing business as partners with AIS. Therefore, we have switched over to make APIs an offer-

ing for startup operators who walk in to use the services at AIS Playground. With AIS Playground, the 12 APIs are available for now and a lot more will be available later. In the digital era, we need to be partner to do co-creation, and open innovation is the strategic way to do it." The potential business model and revenue stream from AIS Playground come from revenue sharing, so-called freemium and other options on a case-by-case basis, AIS says.