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New Social Network Offers Solutions

By Roman Shishov

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Personal computer manufacturer Lenovo has launched a new social network in Russia that focuses on proposing solutions to real-life problems and building communities to help implement them.

Called the Do Network, the project is being rolled out simultaneously in India and Indonesia. The company admits that it wants brand recognition in exchange for its efforts, but it is funding a quarterly $25,000 prize for each region to be awarded to the best projects.

"We want to support young enthusiasts in different fields of activity so that their inventions could take shape," said Lenovo spokeswoman Tatyana Timofeeva.

The network encourages all kinds of projects, primarily new technical inventions or solutions to social problems by technical means. Participants have to include a description of how their idea could be implemented and what resources are necessary. Uploading images, presentations and videos of how the project's progress is mandatory.

Participants can register on the site, or just login using a Facebook account, open a project and work on its realization. It is possible to look through other projects and join them.

The first round of project proposals began in early December. As of this week, 70 projects are in the works on the Russian site. For example, one of the projects is "Cars Can Touch." It proposes the installation of pressure plates at intersections. Depending on the number of cars detected, the system automatically regulates the duration of traffic lights.

Contestants are offered four challenges and related questions — created by Lenovo marketing experts and the independent mentors they have included as project judges — that address issues that are not unique to any one particular region. One challenge, for example, is to design "a classroom in a box" that can be sent to remote places where education infrastructure is lacking.

The other three challenge areas are: "Traffic Jam," "Products = Progress: Invent a consumer product designed to make a positive impact on the world around you" and an unlimited category to allow for any type of proposal.

Projects will be evaluated based on number of votes received via the network, response to challenges and questions, and judgment by the contest's mentors.

Though the challenges and questions are the same for all three countries, the competitions and prizes are separate for each of them.

Arkady Moreynis, one of the mentors of Do Network for Russia and general director of Glavstart — a company that specializes in investing in startups — sees the project not only as a marketing opportunity for its sponsor, but as a place to identify worthy potential entrepreneurial opportunities.

"I am ready to take on winning projects, find investors and try to promote them, since the $25,000 might not be enough for an idea to make it to fruition," Moreynis said.

The first round of submissions ends Jan. 25, and the winner will be announced Feb. 29.

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