



Press Photo/Adam BirdLeaders online: Prashant Ranade, right, and Ken Bogard are working together on Learning Leadership, a new Web site to give business leaders the tools they need.

ADA TOWNSHIP -- After nine relocations and a top job leading 5,000 Siemens Dematic employees, former CEO Prashant Ranade has set a new course onto the World Wide Web.

But he's grounded in West Michigan.

Ranade, 56, is launching the first of four or five entrepreneurial projects next month, with a coach-led leadership course to help managers and business owners grow more skillful.

Learning-Leadership.com, developed by Ranade and business partner Hemant Karandikar, uses four tracks of training, based on the user's experience and expertise.

"We wanted it to have meaningful content, and second, to make it useful," Ranade said.

Those who enroll work through eight to 12 subjects, each with an "action item" that draws review and comment from an online coach.

At the end of the program, participants get a "leadership agenda," a personalized road map to employ the skills learned.

Fostering strong leaders is a lifelong passion for Ranade.

Leadership online

Learning-Leadership.com will have these levels:
\$800 for emotional leadership, emerging leaders
\$3,900 for core leadership, mid-level
\$4,500 for corporate, enhanced leaders
\$5,500 for leadership for business owners and entrepreneurs.
Later levels also give access to earlier ones.

Connect: learning-leadership.com

He came to Grand Rapids in 2003 with Siemens, to lead the U.S. headquarters for what was then Siemens Dematic.

But his first job back in 1977 was as a mechanical engineering trainee with Siemens in Cincinnati.

"I found the U.S. to be a great place. I had \$7 in my pocket, and I ended up president and CEO of a \$1.5 billion company," Ranade said.

In 2006, when Siemens spun off its conveyor business, Ranade resigned a few months later from the downsized Dematic.

"I could have stayed, but the group was one-third the size. It has a different focus, a smaller scale," Ranade said.

He praises the crew he left behind.

"When I left Siemens, I had the opportunity to be CEO of a couple of companies," Ranade said. "But I left because I was going to pursue a couple of things.

"I want to develop two or three different businesses, and a couple of medical products."

Now out of the corporate suite, Ranade decided to base his new ventures at his Ada home. After working in cities ranging from Atlanta to Raleigh, N.C., to Southern California, Ranade said he prefers Grand Rapids -- most of the time.

"For 6.5 months of the year, it is California without the pollution," he said.

In the winter months, he travels.

In fact, there's just one downside to Ranade's West Michigan base.

"The only thing I find inconvenient is that it's necessary to always take connecting flights," he said.

Near the end of his Siemens career, Ranade taught master's business students at Grand Valley State University. The CEO turned professor led one GVSU graduate student to join the fledgling business.

Ken Bogard, 26, is business development manager for two of Ranade's Web-based efforts: the leadership development site and a consulting business at indus-ventures.com.

If anyone thinks a recession is the wrong time to launch such a Web venture, they would be wrong, Ranade said.

"Organizations are downsizing, so those left are covering a wider area," he said. "Leadership issues are critical."

"Our vision is for it to become bigger. Online is powerful," Ranade said.