

SPECIALISATION CASE STUDY

When Kshitij Patel FCPA started a specialised Knowledge Process Outsourcing division at Manubhai & Shah LLP two decades ago, sending accounting compliance work offshore to India was almost unheard of. However, Patel saw an opportunity.

"At the time, a lot of work was being outsourced to India in the field of software," says Patel, Co-managing Partner at Manubhai & Shah LLP in Ahmedabad, India and manager its Knowledge Process Outsourcing Division. "I thought that if software was being outsourced, why not accounting processes?"

"The skills required for preparing things like tax returns is the same across the world; the only difference is the systems and the tax laws within various countries," adds Patel. "I believed that if we underwent training and got people acquainted with the various international systems, we could have a division that specialised in outsourcing."

Filling a gap

Today, Manubhai & Shah's Knowledge Process Outsourcing division employs more than 1400 people across 8 offices. Patel explains that growth was gradual, with an initial focus on the US market, before moving to countries like the UK, Australia, New Zealand and others.

For clients in Australia, apart from providing accounting and taxation, services include other compliance work like preparation of Business Activity Statements and financial statements for all types of entities. Most recently, the Division has also started helping clients with audit support services.

Patel says most of the firm's outsourcing clients are accounting practices. He adds that training is vital to the Knowledge Process Outsourcing division's success.

"India has lots of graduates available for employment, so we take youngsters into our practise, and train them for a period of one or two months on the various international practises before they move into the operations."

Staff are also well-versed with cloud accounting packages to ensure they meet the needs of clients.

"MYOB or QuickBooks or Xero - you name it, we can use it," says Patel.

Growing the business

Patel has spoken on the topic of Knowledge Process Outsourcing at conferences in countries like the UK, US and Australia to help raise awareness of the opportunities it presented.

"The concept was new at the time, so speaking at international conferences helped me penetrate the market," says Patel. "Ultimately, one client led to the other, and that's how we got our business going."

High-quality service has also been central to the division's growth. It has ISO certification in both quality and information security.

"This is one of our methods for ensuring quality," says Patel. "We also have a group of managers with us who are responsible for the quality control of the organisation."

The value of specialisation

Patel says Partner specialisation ensures that they can concentrate on the particular areas or verticals of the business that they are handling.

"Specialisation is a must for accounting practises today, and certainly for partners," he adds. "However, it's also wise to provide a range of services so that a client becomes dedicated to the firm, rather than dedicated to a person or to multiple firms for different services. I've always liked the concept of a one-stop shop solution. This is helpful to the growth of the firm."

For other firms looking to specialise, Patel advises to look for gaps in the market, or at a specialisation with a potential demand. In addition, he says it is vital to focus on service excellence.

"ALWAYS AIM TO DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY AND TIMELY SERVICE," HE SAYS. "THESE ARE THE TWO ASPECTS WILL KEEP YOUR CUSTOMERS HAPPY AND WILL HELP YOUR FIRM TO GROW."