
FT.com site : Rapid response for research.

Tom Groenfeldt

489 words

30 November 2004

Financial Times (FT.Com)

English

(c) 2004 The Financial Times Limited. All rights reserved

Indian outsourcing companies have moved well beyond call centres and document formatting to providing sophisticated research to investment banks, pharmaceutical companies and consulting firms.

Bridge Strategy Group in Chicago is a good example of this new type of customer for the offshore outsourcers. "We are a five-plus year old consultancy with a very different model," says Patrick Leemputte, a partner at the company. "We are very low leverage, not the school bus type of consultancy. We have 35 people and just nine partners (called members), who average 18-20 years of experience."

Bridge can operate with few support employees because it outsources its research to Pipal Research, which has offices in Chicago, New York, and London to provide liaison between US and European clients and its researchers in New Delhi.

Relying on Pipal speeds the work, says Mr Leemputte. "They have a rapid response team in India working overnight so when we come to work in the morning we have the research we need." Outsourcing the research to India saves money, but Pipal also offers a deep array of research tools and databases that a small consulting firm could not afford on its own.

Turning to Indian partners is thus a practical way to compete with the majors in response time and price. As Manoj Jain, chief executive of Pipal, puts it: "Because of our onshore/offshore model [Bridge] can fulfil almost all its research requirements at a commercially effective price."

In India, Pipal has three full-time equivalent employees assigned to Bridge, plus a relationship manager based in Chicago.

If Bridge were conducting research in the US, it would rely on staff right out of college, explains Mr Leemputte. With Pipal, it uses researchers who have masters degrees or higher, and it can draw on a wide range of expertise as needed without maintaining a research staff of its own.

In addition, Pipal has developed a knowledge management base for its own researchers that it offers to clients. Bridge, for example, had tried for three years to build its own intellectual repository from the thousands of documents and reports it has created for clients, along with links to information sources such as American Banker for the finance industry.

Mr Leemputte says Pipal got it done in the first six months. The result is BridgeNet, a portal that company employees can use to search for previous work that might help in a new assignment.

39327162

Document FTCOM00020041201e0bu0002n