

FOCUS: OUTSOURCING

SmartAnalyst puts analytic spin on outsourcing

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IndUS Business Journal

NEW YORK — The words "outsourcing to India" may conjure up thoughts of business process outsourcing or software design or customer call centers, but Manu Bammi is doing his best to add research analytics to this word association game.



Bammi

Bammi's SmartAnalyst Inc., which he started in New York in 2001, has been steadily gaining ground as an India-dependent company that provides research and analytics services to predominantly U.S. companies in various industries, including life sciences, consumer goods, finance and marketing.

In short, what SmartAnalyst does is provide the information that companies use to make their business decisions in areas such as research and development, marketing, business development and investment. It is the kind of services that companies like McKinsey & Co. have ridden to the top of the consulting world.

Only with SmartAnalyst, Bammi decided to take on these top-of-the-line consulting companies and offer some of the similar services, without charging an arm and a leg. He also aimed to clear some of the ambiguity out of research analytics with a methodology that clearly let his clients know what was getting done and how they could benefit from it.

"The idea was to try and reinvent the way people use research information and research analytics in the way people did business," said Bammi, SmartAnalyst's chief executive officer.

"We don't want to be in the business of telling you what to do," he added. "Everybody has a dif-

ferent idea of what research and analysis means. We are just trying to make it clear and give outputs at each step."

SmartAnalyst accomplishes this through an in-depth methodology that follows a typical process and numbered steps toward addressing certain types of questions.

"The goal was to take the mystery out of research and make it a scientific process and a very tangible process to the customer," Bammi said.

And the five-year-old company doesn't just talk a good show — the clients are lining up. According to Bammi, SmartAnalyst has about 50 clients, including a half-a-dozen of the top pharmaceutical companies, top-five advertising and marketing firms and four of the top 15 investment banks. Some of the big names are John Deere, Converse Inc. and Maybelline. Eighty percent of the company's clients are from the United States, with the remaining 20 percent coming from Europe.

SmartAnalyst, which is self-funded, currently has over 100 employees, with most of those working in its Gurgaon, India, office. The staff in Gurgaon includes business analysts, financial analysts, scientific analysts, editors and technical workers. The company said it plans to double its research staff this year.

The "front end" of SmartAnalyst's business, as Bammi calls it, is in New York where about 10 employees focus on business development.

However, SmartAnalyst's Indian end allows the company to offer drastic cost savings, and, in doing so, effectively swim in the ocean of big-name consulting sharks like McKinsey.

Bammi said his company has taken special care to ensure that its Indian workers are up to speed on the cultural significance of the information and analysis they are providing.

"(Our employees have to be able to say) I can sit in your shoes and look at the world the same way

as you do and give a reasonable interpretation of the facts," he said.

When selling India to customers, Bammi said he also emphasizes that it allows SmartAnalyst to provide a shorter time frame for completing work.

The company has recently put its Indian strategy for success on display to future business leaders when it hosted a group of 20 students from Yale University's School of Management. The visit was part of Yale's "Business on the Indian Subcontinent Study Trip 2006," a new initiative combining a six-week course and a two-week trip to India.

Bammi said he was pleased to be part of the program and help show business students how companies can "really be part of the global world."

"One of our program's goals is to find out more about global opportunities for collaboration, outsourcing and offshoring and SmartAnalyst is a great fit for this goal," Yale graduate business student Lauren Skryzowski said in a statement. "Any graduating MBA from this point forward, should try to develop a firsthand understanding of both India's and China's business environment, in preparation for their future as a global leader, especially considering the flat world in which we live."

Bammi, who came to the United States from Delhi in 1980 when he was 18, graduated from Yale in 1984 with a bachelor's degree in economics.

After graduation, he worked for five years at the New York-based management consulting firm APM. In 1989, he founded PSi, a consulting and advisory firm based in New York and New Delhi. He ran PSi until starting SmartAnalyst.

Despite being a clear outsourcing success story, Bammi insists that SmartAnalyst's success isn't just about its India connection, but about its approach toward research analytics.

"This is an innovation — even if it was only a U.S. company," he said.