

Forging ahead as boutique IT firm

Soltrix plans move, targets government contracts

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GRAFTON, Mass. — Raghu Nandan is out to buck the reality that many small- to medium-sized businesses close their doors within their first five years of existence.

But Nandan seems to possess one of the best indicators of commercial viability: optimism. "We have the keys to success," said Nandan, who is founder and chief executive officer of Soltrix Technology Solutions Inc. "Flexibility, competency, integrity and honesty are always what counts in the end."

Soltrix, which was launched in 2005, bills itself as offering a broad spectrum of technology services for small- to medium-sized businesses. "In essence, we can function as their IT department," said Nandan. "We are flexible enough to provide the highest quality services on time and within budget for these companies." The company currently features three full-time staff while also working with several consultants.

Originally focusing on the manufacturing industry, Soltrix broadened the scope of its services in February to include businesses across many industries. "I've long felt that there were too few options for small- to medium-sized businesses when it came to meeting IT needs," said Nandan about his motivation for changing Soltrix's focus. "Instead, we offer one-stop shopping for firms seeking to answer technology concerns."

Some of Soltrix's most recent projects demonstrate its versatility. In particular, the company developed data collection software for a cable firm seeking to determine the quality and reliability of its transmission wires. Another software initiative helped a defense contractor ensure that it continued to meet federal regulations as it moved forward with a weapons system proposal for the U.S. Air Force.

The company also offers system and hardware expertise, including computer networking through its official designation as a reseller of Hewlett-Packard Co. products.

Soltrix's offshoring capabilities, made possible through its partnership with India-based Span Systems Corp., help provide it with a distinct edge among its competitors, according to Nandan. Clients that decide to go the offshore route are typically assigned at least one business analyst and project manager. The analyst serves as a liaison between the client and programmers in India. Meanwhile, the project manager helps ensure successful project implementation.

Nandan believes clients are attracted to the cost effective-

ness of Soltrix's offshore services. "Let's say 25 programmers are assigned to a project for one year. But, after six months, only 25 percent of the project is complete," said Nandan. "Instead of hiring another professional to catch up, companies can choose to use our services at significantly less expense to their bottom line." In real numbers, this can often mean a 25- to 45-percent savings for clients.

In implementing these services, Nandan places a great deal of emphasis on integrity.

"Working honestly with our clients is paramount — it is the only way to operate any business," he said. "This includes being frank with them about whether we can do a project or not. If we can't, then we make it a point to find someone who can help them."

At present, Soltrix is working with three clients while looking forward to more business in the near future. "It is a gradual process," said Nandan. "Right now, we are focusing on making inroads into the government market by offering our services as subcontractors to businesses that do major work on the local or federal level."

As part of this effort, the Grafton firm is actively pursuing U.S. Small Business Administration certification. "This designation will make it easier for us to acquire government business," said Nandan.

Looking ahead, Nandan hopes to soon reach several benchmarks for Soltrix. Among these is a pending

relocation from their Grafton location. "We're looking at properties in Framingham and Worcester, partly because many government agencies prefer contractors to be located within officially designated technology zones," said Nandan.

Overall, the company is striving to obtain a strong mix of government and private sector projects.

"This year, in particular, we'd like to acquire at least one more government contract and, by the end of next year, we hope to see 150 percent growth," said Nandan. "Within five years, we'd like to realize two to three million dollars in revenues annually."

At the same time, however, Nandan is realistic about the challenges facing his company. "It is tough going for small companies," he said. "However, given our strong expertise and the fact that we've aligned ourselves with some very competent people, I'm confident about our prospects for success."

A native of Bangalore, Nandan came to the United States in 1989. He has a bachelor's degree in computer science from Bangalore University, a master's degree in industrial engineering from Central Connecticut State University and a master's degree in computer science from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.



Nandan