

India is also the front office

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Hubert Giraud first came to India in 1976, when he spent three months discovering the country and even helped to dig a well in Trichy in Tamil Nadu as part of a developmental initiative. Now, as the CEO of the global BPO business of French IT major Capgemini, he comes 3-4 times a year to this country. And still loves it as you can see from this interview he gave to Sujit John on a visit to Bangalore on Tuesday.

How important is India in your global BPO operations

India is core. About 50% of our activities are delivered from India and that share is growing. In the past three years, we have tripled our headcount here to 3,500 people (Capgemini has a total of 8,500 employees in BPO) and I expect this will be 5,000 by December this year.

What makes it so important

The beauty of this country is the number of talented people. Some countries have bright people, but the numbers are small. In one country, somebody said they put out 10,000 engineers a year. But I said that my centres need at least 1,000 people each, and I can't be taking away one-tenth of their engineers. India's educational system, universities are great. We are able to provide high quality BPO services. Our finance & accounting team is recognized as amongst the best in the world.

How happy are customers with the work done out of India

Over 95% of our customers are overwhelmed by the quality of the work done here. And India is now managing some of our operations globally, for clients that have operations in different geographies. It's possible that some of our people in say, Brazil, Guatemala, Poland, etc are reporting to the India lead. So, for us, India is not just a back office, its driving things, it's also the front office.

Are you spreading your Indian operations to multiple locations

We have grown in Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata. About one-and-a half years ago, we decided to take advantage of smaller cities and did a pilot in Salem. It's turned out to be a fantastic centre in terms of talent, motivation, efficiency, sometimes better than in bigger cities. We have about 150 people there and plan to take it to 300-400 soon. We are also looking at other smaller cities, mostly in south India because of its rich accounting talent.

What changes are happening in the nature of offerings being made by Capgemini



A new genre in BPO is the move to combine technology and processes, and make outcome-based deliveries. Customers are asking us to manage their entire IT and BPO so that they can focus on their core business. So now we have people doing application management, infrastructure management and BPO all working together. It's not easy, considering that software engineers and accountants for instance have little in common. But we have to do it.

Europe has been slow to offshore. Do you see any changes in that attitude

Innovations happen in the US and then the rest of the world moves. So it is in outsourcing and offshoring. The UK started a while ago; the Nordic countries have become comfortable with it. Germany, France, Italy have been conservative. But the trend is clear: the market is always moving to more outsourcing, more offshoring.