

ARTICLE IN FINANSAVISEN

Can outsourcing of legal services to India be the next big thing?

Routine work or not - while outsourcing of legal services is big business in the USA, it seems that sending case documents to India is a rather far-fetched thought in Norway.

Rohit Kochhar - founder of one of India's largest law firms - would like to do something about this.

"There is no reason why we should not be able to take cases from Norwegian law firms", says Kochhar, and adds: "Internationalisation is coming whether you like it or not, and more international clients means that more of the work is done in English. The past years we have received more cases from countries which do not have English as a working language."

Interlex

Kochhar was recently in Norway at the Annual Meeting for the international network, The Interlex Group. The meeting - which brings together lawyers from all over the world - was this year hosted by Advokatfirmaet Steenstrup Stordrange.

Kochhar & Co. is one of three firms that cover all of India, with offices in all of the largest cities. The company has several Fortune 500 companies on their client list, and Rohit Kochhar has received the Indian Bar Association's Special Award for "Excellence in Corporate Law." But now it is outsourcing that occupies him.

Confidentiality

"1 ½ years ago I established a new company, Kochhar Lexserve. Because of the favourable Indian tax regulations for IT-companies, we established the company as purely a software company. Initially, I envisioned traditional outsourcing, but fate wanted something else", says Kochhar.

In addition to "regular" outsourcing services such as registration and filing, he has developed a database system for handling confidentiality (Non-Disclosure Agreements).

"We represent many companies for whom we have electronically filed agreements for the past 20 years", he says.

No time difference

"The company can now send an employee to France, for example, to negotiate an agreement. There you agree on terms, before you log on to our server in India. You answer some questions, and in a couple of hours you receive an automatically generated ready-to-sign Non-Disclosure Agreement."

There are several advantages with electronic systems.

You eliminate the time difference - which otherwise would have meant that you first had to wait until the American head office was open, and thereafter the Americans would have to wait until it was daytime in France, before you could receive a signed agreement.

One third

Another aspect is that the labour cost in India is lower.

"In Atlanta, we represent a company named Church's Chicken. The company has filed for protection of trade marks in 52 countries, and we administer all the applications for them. Everything is organised and done manually at Kochhar & Co. in India." According to Kochhar, Church's Chicken is of the opinion that it costs 1/3 of what it would have in the USA.

"We do all the work necessary with the registration and updates, and receive a nominal amount for maintenance of the database", he says.

Ambitious

Thus far, Kochhar Lexserve has concentrated on the American market, but earlier this year they entered their first contract with a major European company.

And in good entrepreneurial style, Kochhar is everything but modest.

"In five years, the business will be worth at least a half a billion dollars. Believe me", says Kochhar.

When will the first contract with a Norwegian law firm come?

"We will see, we will see", says the entrepreneur.
