



Sameer Gupta
Executive Vice President, Infoline

Infoline eyeing global markets, sets its

By Hasan Kamoonpuri

The rise of Infoline LLC to the forefront of the business process outsourcing (BPO) and customer contact centre industry in the Middle East has been impressively swift.

Having emerged as a world-class contact centre platform and BPO service provider since its inception in 2004, Infoline LLC now looks to expanding its current portfolio of services to other geographies worldwide. With a deep-rooted presence in GCC, "our immediate expansion plan is currently to focus on the US geography and India", says Executive Vice President Sameer Gupta.

"As a part of expansion plans, Infoline is working towards shaping a sound foundation as a service provider in US markets and tapping into the booming culture of off-shoring business processes", says Sameer Gupta.

In recent times, one of the first ventures undertaken by Infoline was for a reputed U.S. based market research company, wherein as an outsourcing partner Infoline conducted a market survey on the end consumers on behalf of three giant pharmaceutical companies.

In order to compliment the current expansion plans, Infoline looks to expanding its current product/service offering, he adds.

Currently, Infoline's portfolio of services includes: Electronic Document Management Services (EDMS), IT support and help desk services across verticals, 'Turnkey training solutions', Contact centre services, Business Process Outsourcing and IT Managed Services.
Diversification

Infoline has now set its sights on diversification in value added services and aims to develop specialisation in Knowledge Process Outsourcing and Business Transformation Outsourcing and is currently establishing service offerings for markets beyond Oman. With diversifications in value added BPO (business process outsourcing) services, Infoline seeks to change the way companies function and respond to the market place, thus enabling their business process to move up the value chain

In line with its social responsibilities, Infoline has launched the concept of Infoline Knowledge Academy that is dedicated to advancing the creation of a knowledge-based society. One of its initiatives for the training of local youths has been providing call centre training in association with Bahwan CyberTek. With three years of operation in Oman, Infoline's staff strength has crossed over 150 with an Omanisation of 70 per cent.

More recently, Infoline has added Document Management Services to its basket of outsourcing services. With this, Infoline has enabled organisations to harness the benefits of Electronic Document Management Services (EDMS) in their respective enterprises.

Infoline is determined to inculcate the BPO culture and practise in other sectors like banking, finance and retail. Some of the local banking giants have benefited from the professional services of Infoline in the field of Back Office Processing, HR outsourcing and staff training and development.

Infoline's niche in the area of sales and marketing was also well explored by automobile retailers and a new aspect to CRM was initiated. A large chunk of the market was targeted through aggressive tele marketing and direct sale activities for promoting new products and other exciting offers during some of the peak periods.

Infoline doesn't just provide customers with cost effective services; instead it plays the role of a strategic partner who can share their business vision and understand their quality goals. ***"We follow a continuous improvement model wherein we along with our clients analyse the existing process flows and suggest various value added inputs or process modifications to try and achieve the unstated goals of our client's business"***. Infoline LLC, which offers IT Enabled Services (ITES) with specialisation in Contact Centre and business process outsourcing (BPO) services, provides services in the areas of airline, banking, finance, telecom, human resource, insurance and retail, Infoline began its journey in the Outsourcing spectrum by building a world-class centralised Contact centre. This was followed by the next major project of Omantel 1318 directory inquiry services, says Sameer Gupta.

Apart from a list of clients in the airline and telecom vertical, Infoline today handles the outsourcing services of some of the leading local banking giants in the areas of back office processing, HR outsourcing and staff and training and development.

"Our key clients spanning across various verticals worldwide today take advantage of our robust infrastructure facility, strong technology partnerships, competent and skilled staff resource and most importantly our innovative product and service offerings", says Gupta.

ICT SECTOR

Gupta says Oman is attaching a high priority to building a sound and diverse ICT sector base by encouraging private, public participation, inviting global ICT players to set up centres of excellence and developing local entrepreneurs. E-Government and e-business activities are also boosting such developments.

As per IT Strategy, initially the focus will be to set up routine call centres, assembly type operations and application development for domestic requirements. Gradually it will move to more sophistication in Hardware and Software developments. There is a large potential for developing software for sectors like banking, telecom, e-government services, IT enabled services, call centres, e-business applications. Eventually it will lead to export-orientation because of tie-ups and presence of global players.

The customer contact centre industry across the Middle East is to a large extent at the developing stage. The trend has been towards emergence of captive call centres as against a very minor population of the non-captive call centres. These captive call centres are mostly limited to prominent industries like airlines, telecom and banking and finance. With regards to industry size the maximum would be approx 500-600 seating capacity spanning across captive and non-captive call centres.

One of the latest regulatory developments in the Middle East has been the initiative driven towards opening of VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol), which will lay the foundation for Middle East Contact centres standing up in par with the global standards. One of the key components of the goal of Oman's vision 2020 is the emphasis on a digital society and developing ICT sector for the all round economic development and establishing Oman's information society.

Today the progress is rapid and the government has provided a strategic approach and an action plan to cover all facets of IT spectrum such as e-government architect, applications and government services delivery system, national telecom and e-payment infrastructure, issues of digital divide, legal framework and e-legislation, security, audit and business continuity, national learning initiatives, Omanisation drive, development of ICT sector, e-government implementation structures are some of the many initiatives which is given a immediate focus. The spurt in the transactions in relation to B 2 B and B 2 C segments in Oman is a strong testimony to the progress of the government's e-commerce sector. As a direct extension, today one is able to witness new initiatives in sectors like banking, insurance, education, commerce and business.

Today most progressive countries are aiming to take advantages of e-government and knowledge based industries. Ireland had virtually no IT sector 15 years ago, now it exports over \$30 billion per year, equivalent to \$10,000 per capita. With the futuristic vision of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, Oman will make dramatic gains and similar progress towards