Interview with Ron Friedmann, SVP Marketing, Integreon

Integreon is one of the leading companies in the domain of outsourcing services in India. The Company has featured amongst top outsourcing provider by the Black Book Survey.

Pankaj Parnami, Founder and Director, KPO Consultants, got up one-on-one with Ron Friedmann, SVP, Marketing, Integreon KPO to unveil his thoughts on outsourcing prospects in India.

1. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What is Integreon – KPO / LPO?**

   Ron: Integreon wants to be among few companies that have a dual presence in KPO and LPO. Integreon provides a complete range of integrated legal support services to worldwide legal community and helps law firms and financial institutions receive value for money in the areas of research, drafting, litigation support and administrative services. We also provide business research services to various clients in the industry. The sophisticated law firms want the LPO partner to serve as the single provider for every thing. Thus the distinction between LPO and KPO would be overviewed from our service perspective, suiting the client's demand.

2. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What is the precise role you play with Integreon?**

   Ron: I as an Attorney have more than 20 years of legal and marketing experience, prior to joining Integreon; I was the founder and principal at Prism Legal Consulting, Inc. a firm that assisted law firms and law departments with practice technology and legal market vendors with marketing. Currently I work as the SVP for marketing with Integreon. I am here to manage the marketing of Integreon services globally. Marketing means different things to different companies; I would say that it is not a close word to sale. It is more of a part of team that helps decide what services / products we should offer to which customer, it's positioning, explaining the market trends, indeed – fulfilling the client needs at all levels. We also help our customers and our prospects understand where market is heading.

3. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **Integreon is emerging as a leader in E-discovery services. How do you foresee the market for these services?**

   Ron: Integreon recently announced an acquisition with Datum Legal, Inc. Datum Legal is New York's trusted leader in electronic discovery and litigation support solutions since 1994. Law firms and corporate legal departments want a single provider to efficiently handle all their litigation support needs at a lower, more predictable cost. The acquisition of Datum Legal means Integreon now offers a single discovery management solution that includes best of breed processing, hosting and review tools and world-class document review teams in the US, India and the Philippines to deliver faster review at a predictable per-document price.

The market is booming and we foresee it to be one of the hot products in the LPO sphere.

4. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What kind of people do you look for Integreon and what is the strength of employees in Integreon?**

   Ron: We believe that our people are our greatest strength. We refer to each other at Integreon as 'Associates' rather than 'employees'. We have lawyers and non-lawyers both working for us. Our Associates have exceptional communication skills; they are well experienced in their respective fields. We prefer Associates who are well skilled, believe in teamwork and have leadership qualities. At present, we have a strong Associate base of 3000 people spread across our centers in India, United States and Philippines.

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5. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **Who are your prime target segments in United States?**

   Ron: The prime target markets are – Law firms, Corporations, and Financial institutions. We offer number of services to our clients in the KPO industry. Depending on the need analysis, we offer business research, administrative services, legal drafting, e-discovery, legal/non-legal and other services. Client needs are the prime focus for us. We indeed at some stages help clients realize their requirements and offer our solutions to get their jobs done at far lesser costs, while ensuring the best possible quality.

6. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **As per your understanding of the business, what are the pivotal aspects the buyers look for in the Indian LPOs?**

   Ron: The Indian legal process outsourcing industry is rising with a fast pace because of its vast talent pool and cost effectiveness. The pivotal aspects the buyers look for in the Indian LPOs include – the required talent, scalability advantage, lesser costs, business continuity arrangements, US presence, sound management team, security of their data, ethical business practices and others. I think, it's more of building up strong relations with the clients offering your trust worthy services.

7. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What is the Economics you propose to your prospects to convert them into buyers?**

   Ron: Reducing cost parameter is indisputably the driving force for outsourcing of knowledge services. Our offerings from India help the clients getting things done at lesser costs – be it direct costs or indirect costs. We make investments in the

infrastructure which is world-class, in training the manpower, in seamless integration of business, in evolving relations with people associated and also in continuous improvement program such as six sigma, to provide the same quality as expected.

8. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **Why did you choose Philippines over India as the offshore location?**

   Ron: We didn't choose Philippines over India. We are well established in India for quiet some time and we are expanding. We already have our back-end support offices in Mumbai and Gurgaon, India. We chose Philippines for the purpose of business continuity - if something happens to the office in India, the work can be moved to Philippines and vice versa without making any kind of delay. To some extent, we were pushed by customers so that we have a kind of onshore preference. Philippines offers our customers and us more flexibility. Philippines also offers great working environment and no barriers to the working of the company. The government is ready to support there also. We have deployed several professionals working with us in Philippines too. We, therefore, are able to offer our services with similar unique proposition as we do from India office.

9. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What difference do you find in the working of the Indian people with that of the Philippines people?**

   Ron: There are not huge but some differences between the Indian people and the Philippines people in cultural respect. India tends to align to the British legal system; Philippines tend to align to US legal system. There is a history of British colonialism in India and US colonialism in Philippines. The growth of LPO is fueled in Philippines also because of other offshored services such as call centers; high-end quality contact centers offering different services such as medical transcription, software development, financial services, animation, and other shared services have provided effective results to international market.

10. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What remains your proposition – getting things done from Philippines or India – and why?**

    Ron: We now have offices at both the places, they are equally important to the company. The proposition of getting things done from Philippines or India is derived from the client's preferences of the location, such as onshore or offshore, kind of the project and our capacity to perform the work efficiently from that location. The other factors include flexibility, comfort level, talent availability and delivery mechanism.

11. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **How do you ensure the seamless integration of LPO business process?**

    Ron: We have *transition planning* and *program management* team; it's an integrated team of people who have worked in law firms and investment banks in

overseas markets. They now work with the clients as a part of our team and check our delivery standards to understand how the business works. Transition planning involves a lot of quality checking whether it's a legal work processing or financial offshore processing or business research. The program management system includes regular meetings, allocating projects and making sure that we are able to meet the targets in time and to live up to the customer's expectations.

12. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **To cope up with the quality standards, what kind of various international certifications you have acquired?**

    Ron: Quality remains the top priority in the company. We guarantee quality through a stringent quality control process that involves constant review of the quality of information being exchanged using online resources, practical expertise and other legal resources in the United States. The quality control arrangements also include mandatory conflict checking and cleansing of proprietary information. There is a dedicated quality department responsible for developing and deploying the organization's quality policies and undertake periodic reviews of its quality processes. Over and above, Integreon is proud to be ISO 9001:2000 certified, the international benchmark for quality management and quality assurance.

13. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What measures are taken by Integreon to check data security?**

    Ron: Security is very crucial to our business. We have been continuously upgrading security measures. These include complying with international standards and tighter physical and network security. We have installed numeric key pads and biometric meter to allow access to only authorized persons. We have the video monitoring facility through out the company and also have security guards to stop people from carrying cameras or other USB devices in to the company. The use of internet, CDs and floppies is strictly prohibited in the office for the purpose of maintaining confidentiality of the clients. To alleviate concerns related to inadvertent or unintentional disclosure of confidential information, we require that our employees and contractors sign confidentiality agreements and agree to only pass confidential data over secure network.

14. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **In your opinion, whether off shoring legal work constitutes waiving attorney-client privilege, since the US government can conduct surveillance of communications between US residents and foreign nationals.**

    Ron: Yes, the allegation is true. That applies equally to the LPO, law firms and other kind of offshoring. It has nothing to do particularly with the LPO industry.

15. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What kind of training do you offer to the employees at Integreon?**

Ron: At high level, one of the core competencies for Integreon is ability to find high quality delivery Associates. The process includes selecting them, train them, motivate them and to retain them for higher growth. However, in the entire process the objective is to identify the right candidate. We talk to a lot of people but hire very few of them. Training is the foundation of our operational quality. Our training is standards-based, meaning that trainees must demonstrate mastery of skills before graduating to live delivery.

16. ***KPO CONSULTANTS:*** **What do you see the impact of the ensuing Presidentship of Barak Obama on the LPO sector?**

Ron: We don't think fundamentally it will have any change in the long run. We don't see any evidences, significant changes in the framework that will have any direct impact on our business.