

RUNNING DEPENDABLY WITH TEN YEARS ON THE CLOCK

INFOMATE HAS TODAY BECOME A PIPELINE OF TALENT FOR THE JOHN KEELLS GROUP.

OUR THIRD PARTY BUSINESS HAS GROWN EXPONENTIALLY AND OUR PIONEERING

RURAL BPO INITIATIVE HAS BECOME A CASE STUDY IN THE IT/BPM INDUSTRY.

Sri Lanka's first ever Shared Services centre, InfoMate (Pvt) Ltd is celebrating its tenth anniversary. Over the

decade it has overcome the challenges of providing world-class excellence at an affordable cost through a combination of pioneering innovation and rigorous focus on continuous improvement. CEO Jehan Perinpanayagam explains how they did it and keep on doing it.

What does InfoMate do?

We provide outsourced accounting and payroll services, specialising in ERP-based accounts payable and bank reconciliation solutions. We have ten years' experience on the SAP platform and also have experience on Microsoft Dynamics, SAGE and multiple other platforms. We have a very strong payroll team. Our payroll team is probably the most experienced payroll team in the country. We were the first shared services centre in Sri Lanka and we pioneered the unique rural BPO concept (with centres in Mahavillachchiya, Seenigama and Jaffna).

In our first year we developed BPOMate, a web-based document Management System for electronic transmission of



accounting source documents, which are scanned and uploaded by clients. It has several unique features, including email, ERP and workflow integration, together with knowledge management capability, whereby clients are given online real time visibility on their processing status. Having ironed out the initial glitches, BPOMate now provides the capabilities of global best-of-breed document management applications, at a fraction of their cost.

John Keells Holdings PLC (JKH), of which we are a subsidiary, remains our biggest client but our third party, or non-JKH work is

growing. We currently provide accounting solutions to companies in Norway, Australia, USA and Thailand together with payroll services to some of Sri Lanka's leading companies. Our services span diverse industries, including retail, manufacturing, leisure, transportation, property and professional services.

How have you ensured excellence over the past ten years?

Quality is paramount, especially when handling sensitive accounting and payroll processes. It is a combination of right hiring, training and processes. We have been

able to draw on the literacy and skill from Sri Lanka's large talent pool, which boasts the highest number of CIMA accountants in the world outside UK. To quote Madu Ratnayake, Chairman Emeritus of SLASSCOM: "Sri Lankans are intrinsically endowed with exceptional numerical and analytical skills. These attributes together with a highly literate population and a large pool of professionally qualified finance and accounting professionals have given the opportunity to position Sri Lanka as a niche in the financial accounting outsourcing market."

We maintain close relations with the Accounting Bodies, ensuring we get the best talent. We have a unique finance apprentice programme, which envisions recruiting and grooming the best accountants, together with a rigorous training process and documented standard operating procedures. We have a dedicated quality team which monitors the work done by agents and new recruits would have their documents checked 100%. We have dashboards to measure productivity minute to minute. Agents have daily targets and we keep raising the bar. We can also tap into the centres of excellence in the JKH support network in order to obtain specialised expertise and we have access to JKH's world-class processes.

How have you dealt with data security and prevented loss of business data?

We realised early that data security is vital, so in 2008 we became the first Accounting services company in Sri Lanka to be ISO 27001 certified – the world's premier standard on security and confidentiality. TÜV SÜD, a leading global Certification Body audits us annually, not only verifying our status, but also advising on continuous improvements. We have 25

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processes relating to information security and we have a security forum which meets monthly to review all aspects of information security. Every staff member is trained in information security and sign non-disclosure agreements; email access is limited and USB drives are disabled so that information is protected; we have a clean desk policy, physical access control and CCTV. In order to deal with natural disaster or other disruptions, we have a business continuity plan which includes "hot sites" geared to be operational within a specified time; servers have automatic mirroring to ensure no data loss. These are tested and improved continuously.

What have been your greatest achievements over the past ten years?

We have been able to harmonise processes across the large diversified John Keells Group. Research has proved that Shared Services is the best way to standardise processes across a large group and improve governance and controls. We have introduced several SAP based process automation initiatives. Having one centre in a single location facilitates technology investments and training time to be focused and sharing of best practices across

Group companies. Customer, Vendor, Material and GL Master data too has been harmonised across the Group facilitating Group-wide MIS. The same rigour, methodologies and technology platforms are applied for non-JKH clients as well – and every solution is tailored to client's requirements. We have brought about cost efficiencies by focusing on productivity and automation. Over the past five years, we have kept our charge out to the John Keells Group static, despite inflation. By bringing all staff under one roof, we were able to redeploy 50 full-time equivalents to more value-added functions.

There remains much to be done and we have to keep improving continuously. We are working currently on an exciting project which would revolutionise supplier payments. We are proud of our people and the careers that InfoMate has built, with many of our alumni going on to hold important finance posts in the Group. InfoMate has today become a pipeline of talent for the John Keells Group. Our third party business has grown exponentially and our pioneering rural BPO initiative has become a case study in the IT/BPM Industry.

Where do you expect to be in 2020?

Over the past ten years, we have achieved year-on-year growth. We expect this trend to continue. By 2020 we forecast that our third party business will exceed "captive" Group business, and we will see many more global clients. InfoMate staff will occupy key finance positions across the JKH Group; our delivery centres will span the length and breadth of Sri Lanka and our clients will span the globe. ■

INFOMATE