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With focus on enterprise outsourcing, QAT Global expands into Costa Rica

by Michelle Leach

A year ago, President Ken Bass and Vice President Rollie Stephens said QAT Global set out to double the Omaha-based firm's size in five years — equating to 20 percent annual growth — a goal they're well on their way to achieving with a focus on enterprise outsourcing, represented notably by a Costa Rica office that opened in September.

"Enterprise outsourcing is about 80 percent of our work right now," Bass said.

In 2013, the Midlands Business Journal reported the software development, IT consulting, technology and distributed development services company's enterprise outsourcing work accounted for around 40 percent of its business.

"Over the past five years we have had significant growth in enterprise outsourcing," Stephens said. "Most are long-term clients versus single project work."

Technical IT staffing accounts for the balance at 20 percent of its business.

"This is where we use our technical expertise to qualify technical resources that temporarily increase our clients' staff," Stephens said.

Bass and Stephens founded then-QA Technologies in 1995. Since that time, the business has expanded to a larger corporate headquarters in Omaha and globally in Brazil and Costa Rica.

Its roughly 120-employee team boasts around 20 employees at the 222 South 15th St. headquarters, around 30 employees in Brazil and



From left, Vice President Rollie Stephens and President Ken Bass ... Omaha-based firm on track to double its size in five years.

another 15 in Costa Rica.

Plans are in the works to hire another 15 employees at the newest office by the end of the first quarter.

As telecommuting has gained acceptance, Stephens and Bass noted the number of telecommuter team members has also grown.

They said the Costa Rica office is modeled identically after the Brazil office, and that they work hand-in-hand with each other.

"We've got a deep bench in Brazil," Stephens said. "And the folks in Costa Rica that are coming up, they've got some things that they can teach ... they are connected in a strategic way."

Risk mitigation, based on the economies of foreign markets, was among those drivers that Bass noted

led to their expansion in Costa Rica.

"We've seen the Brazil currency bounce around by up to 35 percent," he said.

Bass indicated pinpointing another country for physical expansion minimizes the risks with focusing on just one country, and also helps to widen the net for diverse IT talent who are educated on particular products in the IT world.

Leadership also noted that various clients have particular feelings about doing business with Brazil at present, and may be more comfortable with its new office in San Antonio de Belén.

While they referenced offshoring as a necessity in today's world, every time there is growth from afar, it positively impacts the local administrative office.

"We can bring on delivery managers and architects, and we've also significantly expanded our marketing department in the last year," Stephens said. "We're competing with larger firms that are offshore. We'd like for

that to all be local, but it's not reasonable today."

Leadership report QAT Global hired five additional sales and marketing positions to what was a two-member team.

The company, which went "fairly national fairly fast," is also focusing more on growing the market in the Midwest.

Regardless of "where" team members may reside, Stephens said the team member can expect the same results with offshoring services.

"Our clients hardly ever go away," he said. "Our teams know our products and business. Clients may come to us for a one-year project and it turns into an ongoing project—years and years ..."

Stephens added: "Most of our sales targets are North American customers, but as a side benefit, we've been [in Brazil] for so long, that we're becoming a part of the community."

Bass noted that QAT has leaned on the Brazil office very heavily for leadership.

Clients also avoid the issue of "vendor lock-in."

"QAT hasn't created complex solutions," Stephens said. "We follow good industry standards, and can take over and manage it on their own."

It's common, he said, for clients to encounter such complex solutions industrywide that they feel "locked in."

Based on current contracts, Bass and Stephens anticipate more than 20 percent growth this year — in line with its goals for the next four years.

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