

KPO of a different kind

Tapping India's vast pool of CAs and trainee accountants, QX Global Services has drawn up extensive plans for expanding in the US, Canada and Australia



Frank and Chris Robinson: best-in-class services

In India, even today, several small businesses share a common accountant who keeps accounts and ensures that balance sheets and profit & loss accounts are duly kept ready at the end of the year. He may or may not file the actual accounts with the tax authorities or deal with tallying GST work. Payroll accounting, raising bills are all taken care of by this person. Another part-time chartered accountant may well take over after the final accounts are presented. This type of outsourcing has been in vogue for several decades in India.

Chris Robinson, a CA holding a ICAEW degree was with KPMG UK briefly before he set out his own firm in North Yorkshire. For 20 years the firm provided accounting and financial services, largely to owner managed businesses. Getting talent was a big problem and did not allow him to scale up. During the dotcom boom he joined a AIM listed company as a CEO

that he was awed by the abundance of talent in the country. Even today there are more than 1.5 lakh trainees in India compared to the 1.5 lakh professional CAs in the UK. Starting with a five-member strong team, Robinson started a company in North Yorkshire, in 2003, for outsourcing accounting services to chartered accountants. The company was named QX Global Services, QX standing for quality and excellence. This was the time when Knowledge Process Outsourcing, or KPO and Business Process Outsourcing were all equated with call centres. And little attention was paid to the delivery of quality services. He set up a centre in Ahmedabad. "Accounting has not changed in the last 80 years. Chartered accountants across the globe spoke the same language. My aim was to provide the best-in-class services on par with any global services, be they in the US or UK" claims Robinson, founder chair-

thoroughly trained to provide services across any geographies. QX Academy provides a four-month training course to professionals to get insights into bookkeeping, accounts finalisation and GST as practised in the UK, Ireland, Scotland and USA. Some services like social accounting can be provided uniformly from anywhere and professionals are being trained in this sector.

Higher productivity

"The young generation are tech savvy and have a lot of flexibility and can work equally well from home as they can from office," says Frank Robin (Chris's brother), group CEO, who joined the company in 2019. "Productivity from WFH is much higher," he says. Robinson, who is looking to expand the US business says: "The compliance factor in the USA is a big factor. In many cases experts from Europe and US are hired." He points out that the Big 4 firms do not normally serve MSMEs and hence they are not the competition.

The company is looking to expand its M&A advisory services in the US and Canada. It is focussing on its own business and does not plan to enter into related services like legal advice. "Every successful businessman knows what to do and

what not to do. We do not plan to enter into legal advisory," says Robinson. By 2023, the company plans to invest £1 million (₹100 crore) in employing freshers and building stringent processes and delivery platforms. The company's aim is to maintain quality and it plans to train 500 graduates a year even as it draws plans to expand its presence in Canada and Australia.

As a part of its CSR activity, the company, through its non-profit trust, provides education to children in Ahmedabad from disadvantaged backgrounds to enable them to break out of the trap of poverty. QX's primary social responsibility program focuses on education where QX believes it can add the most value and make a significant impact.

The company plans to grow from the current levels to become a ₹1,000 crore company by 2023.

