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India has more execution challenges than other markets



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Quest global engineers smooth landings for Boeing and Airbus

Anirvan Ghosh, ET Bureau Nov 17, 2008, 12.00am IST

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While flying is a relaxing experience for most people, the landing stage is where many people send up a prayer. A malfunction here could mean serious consequences. It's not surprising that companies like Boeing and Airbus, who have the largest number of commercial aircraft worldwide, give utmost importance to this stage. There is zero scope for error and quality has to be top notch. Interestingly, components that go into landing gears of these aircraft are now being made by a Bangalore-based company, Quest Global.

This outsourced engineering services company has leading aircraft engine manufacturers like General Electric and Rolls Royce as clients working with them on design and manufacture of aerospace components. A clear shortage of trained hands had been building up in this sector in the US and Europe. Ajit Prabhu and Aravind Melligeri spotted the opportunity, and launched the company in 1997, a time when everyone else in India was chanting the IT mantra.

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By 2004, the company had won India's Golden Peacock award for innovation. "We were convinced from the beginning that following a global-local strategy, unlike others who follow a local-global model, will help us stand out in the market place," says Melligeri.

The current generation in the western world is mostly going into knowledge sectors, which has left a yawning manpower shortage in the basic engineering sectors. This is an opportunity that Quest has been addressing. "We are at a level where domain expertise is not involved—it's a combination of engineering and tools," says Bejoy George, chief marketing officer at Quest. The company works through global partnerships with Fortune 500 companies across the globe. "We enable customers to focus on core product development activities while we take care of the non-core activities," explains Prabhu.

But Quest could not remain just a design or a manufacturing outfit—it had to evolve into a design-and-build player, which meant moving up the value chain into designing and producing larger parts. This required convincing clients that it could do cutting edge and globally acceptable work out of Bangalore. The company strengthened its team of project leads and engineers who were able to design and build precision engineering components.

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