

Here to stay

The Amsterdam office of Infosys Technologies has been surprisingly quick to mature. When the Indian IT and consultancy group arrived here eight years ago, it was a 'pioneer' organisation: housed in a temporary office space, with a minimal staff. Specialists flew in from India on a project basis.

Now, Hans Witsenboer and some of his 200 or so colleagues at Infosys can look out from their 'own' 23rd floor in the WTC building, over the bustling heart of the Zuidas business district. Nearby are some of their earliest clients, such as ABN AMRO and ING. The needs of such clients for closer contact with their major IT service provider were one reason for choosing a base in this part of Western Europe. But now there's another important dimension. "Because we're now physically present in our core European markets, we have

branched out into the service chain," says Associate Vice President Witsenboer. "While in the past we were mainly called in to do the so-called first generation outsourcing work, such as the development of relatively simple applications and systems maintenance, now we also take over critical business processes in their entirety from our clients. This requires that you build up mutual trust, and that you have enough local people and brainpower at your disposal. We were only able to take this step because we are now physically present, and can draw on a specific knowledge of the requirements of European organisations for this sort of close co-operation.

Not only are we doing this higher value, and therefore better rewarded work, but thanks to our presence here, we have also become active in other

sectors where we see growth opportunities in Europe. We can tap into a number of niches, through which we can grow even faster and spread our activities more widely. So we're testing the handsets for a local producer of navigation equipment before it goes on sale. This is a win-win situation. They don't have to build up an organisation of their own, and we use the capacity of our existing outsourcing centres better. In India too, as well as in our own European network of project organisations."

FASTEST GROWING MULTINATIONAL

The evolution of Infosys Technologies is not an isolated phenomenon. In the wake of what is still regarded as the fastest growing multinational in the world, recent years have seen a remark-





ably large number of Indian companies opting for an office in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area. The Zuidas alone houses branches of four out of the five largest IT companies in India (next to Infosys, Wipro Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services and Cognizant), and in the immediate environment location mediator amsterdam inbusiness lists 30 other companies of Indian origin. They include a producer of wind energy (Suzlon Energy) and Tata Steel, the new owner of Corus. Although their reasons for choosing a location here may vary in details, there is a common thread. "It's a logical step towards maturity for an economy well on its way to being a world leader," says Yogen Singh, who is responsible for the India desk of business services provider Pricewaterhouse Coopers. "Indian companies want to expand, and given the low state of the dollar at the moment, it is also more attractive to focus on the European market. But to be successful, you have to be here. And in continental Europe, having a branch in the internationally oriented and easily accessible Amsterdam Metropolitan Area is an obvious choice." Especially because the region has a lot to offer for both the companies themselves and their knowledge workers, adds Jolanda van der Aart, Asia Specialist of amsterdam inbusiness. "The well known benefits are still there - Amsterdam Schiphol Airport with its several daily flights to India and direct connections to all major European business centres, an interesting taxation arrangement between the two countries, an English-speaking workforce, stable Internet connections and the

presence of many multinationals and potential customers," she says. "But now there's the additional factor of a large Indian presence in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, and new developments are arising from that."

"In Amstelveen, there's an Indian community of over 900 people, for whom amsterdam inbusiness organises a popular cricket tournament every year," she adds. "There are also plans for an Indian Society, which will help people settle into their new home and bridge the cultural differences. Throughout the region, over 3,000 Indian knowledge workers are already employed by Indian and local companies. This is a direct result of the knowledge migrant ruling introduced several years ago, which makes it much easier to obtain a residence permit."

ONE-STOP SHOP

While Infosys has a mix of local and Indian management, it is crucial that hard-to-find domain specialists can be flown in from the parent company and used on a project basis. "Initially, we had problems with that, and we spent a lot of time on all the accompanying bureaucracy," says Witsenboer. "But since the Expatcenter opened - in our own WTC Building - it's become a highly flexible procedure. You can use this one-stop shop for everything, and our people can get started as soon as they arrive here."

Witsenboer is convinced that optimum accessibility will only increase the role of Infosys's Amsterdam branch in the coming years. "Last year, as a group we said goodbye to geographical organisation," he explains. "The break-

down into national offices no longer works - our projects are simply too complex. So we switched to a vertical organisation, whereby we in our various offices are responsible for the services to certain sectors in the area. We have a great starting point: from Schiphol you're only a few hours from any European destination, we work for internationally oriented customers and the Dutch business culture fits well with most European countries. That means our other businesses are happy to co-operate with us."

While Infosys is well on the way to a permanent leading role in the wide-ranging network of business service providers in the Amsterdam Metropolitan Area, Hans Witsenboer thinks it's at least as important that the outside world now sees our company as a 'stayer'. "Our brand is established now," he says. "You see that in everything. We're quicker to be shortlisted, we get open applications from European IT specialists, and we're increasingly invited for partnerships or special development projects. Together with an institute affiliated with the Technical University of Delft, for example, we developed simulation software for crash tests on cars. Once again, we've come a long way from our origins."

INFOSYS TECHNOLOGIES
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INDIA
ESTABLISHED IN THE AMSTERDAM
METROPOLITAN AREA SINCE 2006
EMPLOYEES 200
INDUSTRY IT AND BUSINESS PROCESS
SERVICES AND CONSULTING
ACTIVITY NETHERLANDS OFFICE