

To make it big, we had to get two things right—great trainers and great accommodation—and we got both

Today, Koenig Solutions is an established training organisation serving customers in over 50 countries. Koenig specialises in providing state-of-the-art technical training on all the popular IT certifications and the company's customers include many Fortune 500 companies and governments across the world. Koenig is an authorised training partner of companies such as Microsoft, Cisco, Oracle, VMware, Adobe, EMC, Citrix, Android, Symantec, etc, and is also an authorised testing centre for Prometric, VUE and Novell. Having a team of 300-plus full-time corporate trainers, Koenig has centres in Delhi, Dehradun, Shimla, Goa and Dubai. In fact, the Delhi centre is the world's largest IT training centre. "We were not always this big. We started as a routine training centre located in Patel Nagar, Delhi. In fact, when the dot-com bust happened, we were about to shut down, but an 'idea' saved us and took us to where we stand today," says Rohit Aggarwal, CEO & Founder, Koenig Solutions. In an interaction with FE's Vikram Chaudhary, he narrates the story further. "When we were downsizing, I couldn't ignore the fact that in almost every class we had 1-2 students from Europe. We thought why not give a training package including hotel accommodation to these students. It seemed a win-win proposition for both Koenig and them. This was born a concept called the 'education tourism'." Among the many things that defines Koenig today is that Edward Snowden, the NSA whistle-blower, trained at the Patel Nagar centre in 2010. Excerpts:

You have come a long way from the first offshore student you trained...

Andy Sau, an IT professional from UK, was our first student for



the Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE) package. Happy with the training he received, he agreed to be our referral. Soon enough, we started receiving students regularly and our business grew. We kept on improving infrastructure and services, and expanded by establishing centres in cities such as Shimla, Goa and Dehradun. Initially, we thought that if we could get 10 students every month, it would be a great achievement. That target was achieved in 2004. Then the real potential of offshore training dawned upon us. We set a target of training 100 students a month, which we achieved in 2009. Now, we are now looking at training thousands of students. To make it really big, we knew had to get two things right—great

trainers and great accommodation—and we got both.

So, today, what do you offer students who plan to train with Koenig?

We offer a pre-course technical evaluation and training, hands-on classroom training, in-house testing, single occupancy accommodation and three meals, free wi-fi internet facility in the training centre, three-month after-course technical support, airport pick-up and drop, daily transport to the training centre and hospitality desk support (arranging mobile phones, laptops, tours to nearby places and more). Our aim is that a student who comes to us keeps his focus only on the training part, rest everything we will take care of. In fact,

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that's what 'education tourism' is all about—an end-to-end solution from the time a student arrives in India till the time he flies back; we take full responsibility for their hassle-free experience.

Apart from affordability, what defines you?

Affordability is just one of our many aspects. Students who come to us appreciate the quality of training they receive, then they like small batch sizes, convenient start dates, holiday experience and the flexibility we offer.

What is the nature of your tie-ups with companies such as Microsoft, EMC, Adobe, etc?

We are their authorised training partners. In fact, our training meets their quality standards, and we use their curriculum. Further, our trainers are approved by those companies and we issue course attendance certificates on their behalf.

What made you open a campus in Dubai?

The primary reason we set up a campus in Dubai was because some of our students found it difficult to get the Indian visa. But when we started our campus in Dubai, we discovered that Dubai is another major market, especially considering the fact that a

lot of students from the Gulf countries prefer Dubai; and some don't even need a visa to go to Dubai. Then, Dubai has its own charm factor and we found that even some students from non-Gulf countries wanted to train in our campus in Dubai. That's how Dubai happened and became big.

A lot of training, today, can happen online. So why does anyone need to come to a Koenig campus and train...

Some habits change slowly. Although we also prove online learning solutions, we have found that a lot of people prefer a classroom environment. Online learning will still take many, many years, perhaps decades to match up to a classroom environment. But because it exists in today's world, we offer online learning solutions.

What is the difference between your different campuses in the country?

Delhi is a very accessible, cosmopolitan city. Shimla is for people who want a cooler environment; for many from the Gulf countries, Shimla is a unique experience and some students even saw snowfall for the first time in their life while training at the Shimla centre. Goa is another exotic location both for training and recreation. But training in all our campuses is similar.

Lastly, what is the NSA whistle-blower Edward Snowden connection?

Yes, he came to train with us and learned core Java programming and advanced ethical hacking skills. He learned how to protect your network from hackers and how to know whether it is secured enough. But all we knew was that he was a US citizen. That was in 2010.