

IT CERTIFICATES FROM INDIA

Because IT certificates from well known vendors are expensive, the Indian training provider Koenig Solutions managed to build a lucrative outsourcing business.

From: Tanja Henz

IT outsourcing to India is very common today. Still unknown is the idea to also outsource training for certification to India. But why would you pay a lot of money for IT training in Europe, if you can get the same service in India for a much lower price. One of the providers of offshore IT training is Koenig Solutions. Originally the company was founded in 1993 to train IT specialists. After the dotcom bubble burst in 2000, the founder and CEO of Koenig Solutions Mr. Rohit Aggarwal decided to focus on a profitable niche, as he described in a discussion with Swiss-IT-Magazine that had the opportunity to check out the training facilities locally. A few backpack tourists, who combined their visit to India with certification training, gave Aggarwal the idea to offer his trainings to Western IT professionals. With the lower cost-level in India it became possible to offer training for these

internationally identical certificates at a much lower price than usual in the Western world. Koenig Solutions attracts students from all over the world. About 50% students come from the UK. Second and third are (both with about 10%) the Benelux countries and Germany. For Americans the journey

is too long, but military who are stationed in Afghanistan use the service. And also more and more Swiss are choosing for training at Koenig. "The experience in India was extraordinary. I used my time only to reach my target and nothing has kept me from it, because Koenig Solutions was constantly working to make my life in India as easy as possible," says Jose Tapia, who is now a Microsoft Certified System Engineer.

Different cultures

Tapia puts his finger on what Aggarwal is consciously trying to do: taking away the fears of people to take such a journey. "Lower quality standards, possible language problems or cultural differences are reasons that keep people to not take the trip," says Aggarwal. That's why the package not only consists of training, certification exam and flights, but also a complete 'no-worries' service. Students are picked up at the airport by Koenig staff and receive a welcome pack with information and a bit of money. For transport, Koenig provides its own vans and drivers. They drive the students not only from their accommodation to the training centre and back, but also to sights in the city.

Nevertheless, the travel also entails some inconveniences.



If it goes according to founder and CEO Rohit Aggarwal, soon the whole world would be trained and certified by Koenig Solutions

"The travel to India, getting accustomed to the country and the weather... it was over 30°C," says Jeen Thomas Pallickaparampil, who took a course for his employer Swiss Life. But apart from that the Swiss only see advantages: "I like to travel and like to use opportunities to get out the day-by-day routine. I also like the international and intercultural meetings with other Koenig students who come from all over the world, with the purpose of learning something. And finally, I also come here because of the price, which (including flight, overnights and services) is still much better than any offer in Switzerland," says Christian Voigt, now-among others- certified ethical hacker. The students stay either in Koenig's own hostel, Koenig managed apartments, or in a hotel of their choice. The options are appreciated by the participants. "For my stay I chose the more budget friendly apartments. This created some extra synergy because you can exchange experiences and do some networking with other students, from Europe, the USA and South Africa," says Pallickaparampil. Voigt adds: "Of course these accommodations are modest, compared to Swiss standards. But so far everything was tip-top when

Some Facts.

- . IT Training and Certification in this part of the world is very costly.
- . Koenig Solutions offers training including flight and certification and accommodation in India.
- . If travel and new culture is not a problem, one can save money and explore India.

when it comes to cleanliness and infrastructure TV, air-conditioning, WLAN, laundry service.

One-to-one training

During the training, the difference with courses in Europe becomes apparent. With the Indian prices you can afford one-to-one training. This way trainings - which are completely in English - can be tailored to the individual needs of the student. "In fact, for a third of the Swiss market price, you do not just get group training, but a personal trainer who will focus on specific subjects or questions. This does not only increase the efficiency, but also the effectiveness because you can focus on personal weaknesses and quickly recap the subjects you already know well," says Pallickaparampil.



Group Training is rare at Koenig Solutions. Most IT Professionals prefer 1-on-1™ training to prepare for certification exams.

Also Voigt mentioned the one-to-one training because it gave him "a substantially better learning experience."

Need to expand

In the beginning, Aggarwal considered 10 students per month a success, and then the target became 100 per month. Today there are about 200 IT Professionals per month, of which 98% come from abroad. But the growth ambition of Aggarwal has no limits.

In next two years the 500-mark would be made, and at some point the whole world would be trained and certified by Koenig, Aggarwal tells with a smile on his face. Apart from that Koenig has different training centers in four exotic locations of India and later this year a new centre should open in Dubai. On top of that, future courses will also become available in Japanese, Spanish, French and German.

SCHOOL AFTER SCHOOL - KOENIG SOLUTION'S CSR PROJECT

Youngsters between 15 and 16 years of age sit on the ground and listen attentively to the teacher, who's explaining English grammar. They're all here on the advice of their schoolteacher and get additional education six times per week - in India Saturday is also a normal working day - . This education is free of charge, and the children also get the books for the course for free.

The opportunity was given by Koenig Solutions. "We wanted to give society back some of the goodwill we got ourselves," explains CEO Rohit Aggarwal as the motive behind this Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project. At first they had the idea to support poor families in Delhi. Because that would not yield any long term effects they decided to support the education of the

children of poorer families. "Unfortunately, there's usually a part of these education investments that is used for administrative purposes," says Aggarwal. That's why Koenig decided to launch their own initiative. After meetings with the schools it became clear that the 'dropout rate' was highest in the 8th and 9th grade. Often it is not because the students cannot afford the school, but because they can no longer understand what is being taught. So Koenig found some excellent teachers to educate the children in Locations that are being put

At their disposal by local community leaders. The groups of about 30 to 35 students are being taught Mathematics, English and sciences. The youngsters are motivated. They want to become doctors, pilots, teachers and engineers and are prepared to walk to school for miles, often in very hot weather. The project exists since spring 2007. At the moment about 500 children are getting the extra education. Of course Aggarwal also has a



growth Plan for this project: by 2014 there would be ten times as many students. "5,000 or 10,000 students we can educate, but we don't have the capacity for 5 or 10 million youngsters." That's why he hopes competitors will be inspired to set up similar projects. Meanwhile the CSR project has had reverberations in the field of Koenig's business. In 2009, the company was selected by Microsoft as their "Worldwide Best Citizenship Partner of the Year."