

As an organisation, Keystone Solutions takes great pride in its typical American culture—its informal atmosphere and lack of hierarchy. However, when it comes to celebration time, the culture is as Indian as can be. Because a major Indian festival comes along almost every month, the office often wears a festive look complete with festoons, streamers and flowers. Employees come to office wearing traditional clothes suited to the occasion, and celebrate with their extended family in the office. The joie de vivre of the day makes them keenly await the momentous occasion of the next month.

Keystone is a fully-owned subsidiary of the US-based Systems Task Group (STG). "Our company operates high up the value chain in the IT services industry, and is driven and recognised by the intellectual property that we own—Renaissance, a P&C

"We pick people with various competencies and form teams. There is close networking within the teams, which are also flexible," informs Sandra Vijayendran, Keystone's vice-president of HR. This flexibility is also apparent in other areas. At Keystone the work is a typical mix of onsite and offshore, with as many as 80 of its 360

GAIC (Great American Insurance Company), and the Ford Motor Company's insurance division. One of the most notable success stories is that almost the entire fleet of taxis in New York runs its products. These clients provide the company revenue year after year through the annual maintenance contract. The company operates in a

it work-related or attitudinal or work-culture based. It's all about holistic mentoring," adds Dongre.

Career tracks

The organisation offers a clear-cut career path to its staff. The two streams are project management and the functional domain. Flexibility is allowed for cross movement from functional to project management and visa versa. Informs Dongre, "A functional resource could build his career path across competencies such as billing, policy and claims, and later graduate to more holistic and macro-level functional competencies in the insurance domain. Besides, one can opt for a bi-continental career path and acquire skills such as customer-facing as well as back-office delivery skills."

Training focus

The training sessions range from advanced technical training to high-end insurance domain knowledge, Renaissance product training, and soft skills programmes. "Since ours is a niche product for the Property & Casualty Insurance vertical, knowledge of the domain becomes important. Soft skills training grooms Keystoneians to work in overseas markets with the focus being on etiquette, communication, personal grooming and ethnic alignment," states Vijayendran.

Unique HR initiatives

One of the highlights at Keystone is the month-end bash. Interactive events are organised at these gatherings which are attended by all Keystoneians. The aim is to get newcomers into the thick of things by breaking the ice, bridging hierarchies and bringing talent into the limelight.

Cultural events are celebrated in the organisation with great fanfare. "During festivals such as Onam, the South Indians had decorated the office with the traditional flower rangolis and wore their traditional outfits. During the recent Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations, the office looked a lively place full of colour and joy," says Dongre. The men wore traditional turbans and kurtas, and the ladies came decked up in beautiful sarees. A Keystoneian couple performed aarti of Lord Ganesh.

Clearly, while the company is quite American in its working style, at heart it remains Indian. ■

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WORK CULTURE

Keystone: *dil hai Hindustani*

Keystone Solutions is proud of its American working style, but Sudipta Dev finds it still has an Indian heart

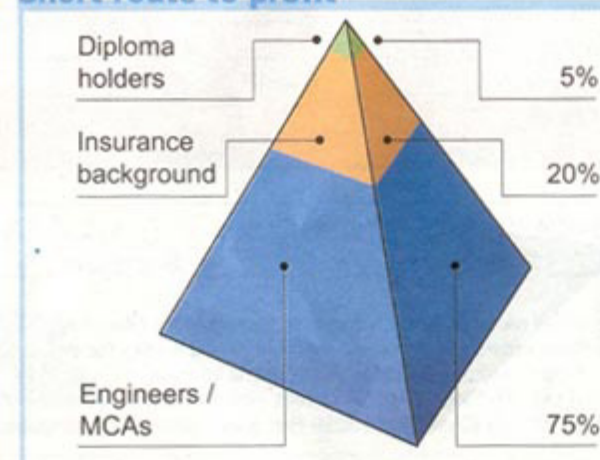
Insurance ERP product," says Dilip Dongre, executive vice-president of the company. He adds that unlike a generic IT services company, STG/Keystone is recognised by the value and insurance expertise that it brings to the table, not by low-cost technical skills or the CMM quality tag.

Clear value system

Keystone has its value system clearly spelled out, and takes great pride in it. The main features are:

- Respecting the individual
- Cohesive teamwork
- Integrity and honesty
- Knowledge sharing
- Enduring relationships

Short route to profit



employees working in the US at any given point of time. However, the company makes an effort to ensure that people are not away from their homes for long so that they get the best of both worlds. Then there is the flexible working-hours policy—as long as the work gets done.

The salaries offered by the organisation are high by industry standards. The company has a major market in the US (24 clients), and is now targeting Europe. Some of the big names of the American insurance sector use the Renaissance product, including GMAC (General Motors Acceptance Corp),

product-led, technology-driven and customer-focused paradigm.

Key group

The attrition rate in the company hovers around the industry average of 18-20 percent, but this is mostly at the junior level, with people who have not completed a year in the organisation, or those who are not yet sure whether they want a career in the insurance space. As far as the key human resources in the company are concerned, the attrition level is very low. "We allocate our people to specific groups based on their experience and expertise. We classify the insurance/functional skills into categories such as 'black belts' and 'brown belts' based on criteria like domain knowledge, customer-facing ability, gap analysis and estimation, ability to deliver with the least supervision, teamwork and communication skills," says Dongre. The company currently has 11 'black belts' and 20 'brown belts.'

This apart, a number of high-potential candidates are assigned to the 'black belts' as understudies. This shadow level gets on-the-job training while working with the crème de la crème in the organisation. "We encourage the concept of mentoring, and it takes place across all parameters, be