

KESDEE: Opportunities off-the-shelf

By Poonam Bhattacharya

Swarna Jessica Srinivas is President of KESDEE Inc. She leads the corporate strategy team.

Her other primary responsibilities include: developing partnerships, managing global client relationships, and expanding the company's network of subject matter experts.

Swarna graduated from Harvard University in 2005, and previously worked in strategy consulting and the media and entertainment industry.



Swarna Jessica Srinivas

During recent discussions with the Federal Reserve System, Swarna Srinivas, the President of the financial e-learning company KESDEE, once again demonstrated her ability to understand the needs of her clients and her company's ability to provide a customized solution. KESDEE has a long list of leading blue-chip clients including Citigroup, Standard Chartered, Genworth, IBM, and CIBC. Now, add to that list the Federal Reserve System.

San Diego, CA based KESDEE (www.kesdee.com) is the largest financial e-learning company in the world. Srinivas states "I want KESDEE to provide eLearning, not eReading." Thus, KESDEE offers courses with engaging graphics and

interactive simulations. KESDEE was able to provide the Federal Reserve with a comprehensive, customized and branded e-learning portal that met their specific needs. In order to accomplish this, KESDEE supplied the Federal Reserve with its content library of over 700 off-the-shelf courses, and developed new courses covering topics such as Trading Operation Controls and Commodity and Energy Markets. In addition to content, KESDEE also offers competency mapping and provides personalized curriculum paths for various target audiences.

That, in effect, is what separates KESDEE from other e-learning solution providers. Srinivas believes in imbuing KESDEE with entrepreneurial energy and keeping the company at

the cutting edge of technology, finance, and education. KESDEE is unique and focuses on off-the-shelf content licensing. But more importantly customizes its course content for various clients.

For instance, in the case that the client is an India-based company, KESDEE includes case studies from the region, tunes the course material keeping in mind the regulation prevalent in the country, and localizes content keeping in mind the relevance in the country.

There is another feature, Srinivas points out, that separates KESDEE from other e-learning solutions providers: It focuses solely on courses for the financial sector. Srinivas aims to turn KESDEE into a "dominant niche player". That way, clients don't have to "turn to vendor A for 10 courses, vendor B for 20 and vendor C for another 5". KESDEE provides a

comprehensive portfolio of more than 700 e-Learning courses.

B2B and B2C

KESDEE originally was a B2B that focused solely on enterprise clients. Srinivas led the company's entry into the B2C markets and has since started a new division that focuses on eCoaches (web based certification tutorials) and retail sales. This has opened many doors for KESDEE and Srinivas is excited about leading the company into new opportunities

Course Quality

There is no question that the quality of KESDEE courses stands out. In order to maintain the high level of quality for all its products, Srinivas created the KESDEE Subject Matter Expert Network—a group of leading experts from a broad range of backgrounds and experiences that includes professors, practitioners, consultants, bankers, regulators, writers, and researchers. When developing a new course, KESDEE uses the network to ensure the material is conceptually sound yet practical.

In this fast paced work environment, employees are hard pressed for time and constantly multi-tasking. That is why KESDEE courses are designed to be modular in structure. Srinivas says, "These courses are developed to be embedded into work flow to give learning at the point of need."

Strategic Partnerships

Click on a site (for example, www.prmia.org) offering KESDEE's online course material, and you'll see that the look and feel of the site is not of KESDEE, but that of the partner. It constitutes an important marketing strategy for the e-learning solutions company. It is what Srinivas calls the "power of partnerships". Srinivas has been championing the idea of partnerships since seeing the incredible reach

they provide. She leads KESDEE's partnerships with the New York Institute of Finance, Professional Risk Manager's International Association and many others.

Spanish Translation

The company is presently working on translation of its repertoire of over 700 courses into Spanish. KESDEE has thus far translated around 150 courses. By March 2009, they plan to make all courses available in Spanish.

“E-learning is moving up the corporate value chain. Therein lies an opportunity for KESDEE.”

Srinivas had the vision to expand KESDEE's global presence by taking a strategic entry into Spanish speaking countries. She established the regionalization and Spanish translation centre in Latin America. After identifying a team of professionals with expertise in translation and subject matter, Srinivas put the translation project in high gear. Srinivas says "I believe in providing global perspectives and local execution. KESDEE provides content within the broader context of case studies and best practices."

Latin American companies constitute a large chunk of KESDEE's clientele, and it only makes sense to reach out to companies in the region in a language closer to them. Also, it will help garner many more new clients in the region.

Crisis time?

It's a bad time for the financial companies the world over. Many have been bailed out, many have declared themselves bankrupt and yet others are offering themselves up for sale at rates unimaginable a few weeks ago.

How does KESDEE face this particularly gloomy time, given its focus

Top 10 Internet Company

KESDEE

San Diego, CA

kesdee.com

President: Swarna Jessica Srinivas

Founded: 2000



on financial courses and the fact that its clients are mostly players in the financial sector?

"Of course it is a difficult time in the financial markets, but it is also an opportunity," says Srinivas. She continues "There is a downside and an upside. The downside is that sales cycles get longer, but the upside is that clients are looking to obtain greater value for money and high quality education". The global financial crisis has compelled companies at ways of finding value; they are cutting down on classroom training and adopting a proactive attitude toward web-based training. As Srinivas says, "E-learning is moving up the corporate value chain. Therein lies an opportunity for KESDEE." This was the major theme of several presentations she recently made to global audiences. In March 2008, she was invited to speak at the International Center for Leadership in Finance in Malaysia. She illustrated this concept with the use of five actual case studies of e-learning implementation by KESDEE. She also led a panel discussion at the Global E-learning Users conference recently held in Arizona. She has been busy trotting the globe to win over new customers, speak at industry events, and share her passion for the opportunities in e-learning. 