

KESDEE A GLOBAL E-LEARNING PORTAL FOR THE FINANCIAL SECTOR

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By Zoya Anna Thomas



Swarna Srinivas

“The new wave that the world is witnessing is that of women entrepreneurs. Twenty-six year old, Swarna Srinivas, the President of KESDEE belongs to this new breed of entrepreneurs. A Harvard graduate, she is a go-getter who believes in striving for the best. She has received several awards including the ‘Young Entrepreneur Award’ given by the U.S. government. From overseeing the company’s 75 member Bangalore office to further expanding KESDEE’s global presence, Swarna has done it all. In other words, KESDEE couldn’t have asked for a better leader.”

In 2006, Standard Chartered Bank (SCB) signed a multi-year contract with KESDEE for licensing KESDEE’s e-learning solutions for the training of its globally spread staff. The reason for making this choice was clear – KESDEE is the largest financial e-learning company in the world that provides courses customized to customer needs. Today, the SCB employees access its e-learning courses through a private label e-learning portal developed by KESDEE, which incorporates the Standard Chartered logo, look, and feel on every screen. All 700 e-learning courses of KESDEE are mapped to the competencies that are needed for different employee groups within SCB and have been repackaged accordingly.

The San Diego, CA based KESDEE’s off-the-shelf e-learning catalog consists of a comprehensive portfolio of e-learning courses on finance, accounting, insurance, and risk management. Moreover, the company also provides Web based tutorials for certification exams in risk management and financial analysis (ePRM, eFRM, eAPRM, and eCFA among others).

What makes this firm a frontrunner is its customized course offerings. For instance, in a case when the client is an India-based company, KESDEE

includes case studies from the region and tunes the course material keeping in mind the regulations prevalent in India and localizes the content to make it relevant to the country.

The very fact that the Board of Governors of the U.S. Federal Reserve System uses KESDEE’s e-learning portal speaks volumes for the firm. Also, among its clients are prestigious organizations like, J.P. Morgan Chase, the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Deloitte, and Citigroup.

Leading its highly innovative and specialized team is Swarna Srinivas, a graduate from Harvard University, whose vision is to further expand KESDEE’s global presence. Originally the firm focused only on the B2B market that comprises of enterprise clients. But Swarna 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. A regular face at international business forums, Swarna has had the distinction of being invited to address global conferences. In fact, early this year Swarna was invited to speak at ICELW (International Conference on E-learning in the Workplace) held at Columbia University in New York, where she elaborated on e-learning as a source of value. She has been in-

vited to present a paper titled ‘E-learning: Moving up the Corporate value chain’ at the prestigious Online Educa Berlin 2009.

Value Proposition

“I want KESDEE to provide e-learning, not e-reading,” states Swarna. The firm’s state-of-the-art development center in Bangalore has a talented 75-member team that consists of instructional design experts, graphic designers, and technical professionals. This team has put together a variety of courses with engaging graphics and interactive simulations. Interactive exercises, quizzes, simulations, graphics, and practical exercises are all key features of the courses, and enhance learning and retention. After all, if the first experience is not positive, the delegate is unlikely to willingly return to e-learning again. According to Swarna, a positive experience will make the learner want more e-learning for future skill development.

The quality of KESDEE courses always makes it stand out from the rest. In order to maintain high quality in all its products, Swarna created KESDEE’s Global Network of Experts - 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, the company uses the network to ensure the material is conceptually sound and yet practical.

In the fast paced work environment, employees are hard pressed for time and are constantly multi-tasking. That is why the courses are designed to be modular in structure. Swarna says, “These courses are developed to be embedded into work flow to give learning at the point of need.” Delegates may complete a small nugget that takes only 15 minutes. The bottom line is: it can be done as and when needed.

Power of Partnerships

Another unique thing about KESDEE is

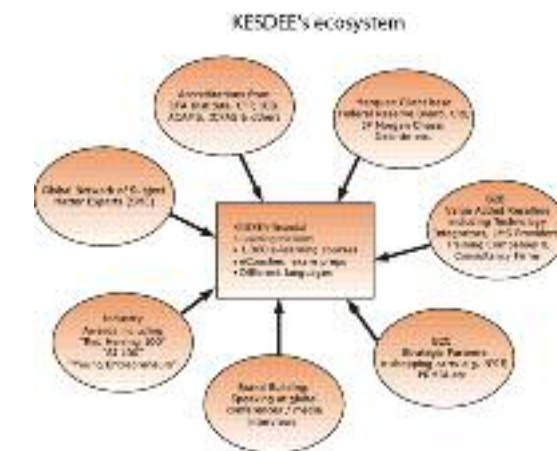
that it also develops customized and branded e-learning portals for professional associations. Institutes of banking, finance, and accountancy and treasury management associations are among its strategic partners.

Branded portals, customized content, and personalized learning provide together an engaging learning experience

Click on a site that offers KESDEE’s online course material (for example, www.prmia.org), and you’ll see that the look and feel of the site is not that of KESDEE but that of the partner. It constitutes an important marketing strategy for the e-learning solutions company. Swarna calls this the ‘power of partnerships’. She has been championing the idea of partnerships since seeing the incredible reach they provide, and leads the company’s partnerships with the New York Institute of Finance, Professional Risk Managers’ International Association, and many others. Also recognizing the need for delivering e-learning solutions that require regional orientation, the firm has formed important alliances with value-added resellers for financial e-learning solutions.

Differentiating Factor

Its sharp focus on financial competency enables KESDEE serve not only the financial service verticals, but also ‘finance horizontals’. A dominant niche player in this space, this vendor is exceptional not just due to its large catalog of comprehensive curriculum and



blue chip clients, but also because it ensures through its services that each of its clients becomes the mouthpiece of the company and brings in the next prospect.

Social Initiatives

But, KESDEE is not just about business. Apart from providing monetary support to many philanthropic initiatives, Swarna has also initiated many promotional programs to assist and empower people in transition. For three years in a row, KESDEE is a proud sponsor of the annual entrepreneurship conference organized by the Harvard Business School Association of Orange County.

Future Roadmap

To expand KESDEE’s global presence, the company already has a Spanish translation center in Mexico, and many of its e-learning solutions have already been made available in Spanish.

Understanding the need for a clear vision for the future, Swarna has prepared a strategy document titled ‘Scaling Up KESDEE’. The aim is to have more financial e-learning content, both in terms of topics and levels, increase technology platforms (including mobile delivery), and more strategic business alliances for greater global reach as well as translation into more languages. In other words, Swarna is all set to make KESDEE the market leader.