

# SAN DIEGO BUSINESS JOURNAL

## INNOVATION

### Online Educator Building a List of Top-Drawer Business Clients

**TECHNOLOGY:** KESDEE Wins Leadership Honors From The World Trade Center

■ By RICHARD GINCEL

In the marketplace for online education, a rapidly growing outfit called **KESDEE** is staking its claim as a front-runner.

Its roster of blue chip clients includes Citigroup Inc., Standard Chartered Bank, IBM Corp. and the Federal Reserve System, to name a few.



Its strategic partners span from the New York Institute of Finance to the Luxembourg Association of Corporate Treasurers to the Institute of

Banking and Finance, Singapore — a testament to the company's global reach.

Leading the corporate strategy team at KESDEE is President Swarna Srinivas, a 2005 Harvard University graduate and former media strategy consultant, whose ambition clearly doesn't rest with her organization's gold-standard list of clients or exhaustive curricula of more than 1,000 courses in finance, banking, accounting, insurance and risk management.

Nor does her ambition rest with the numerous awards she's received for innovation and entrepreneurial success.

Her latest came Nov. 4 when she accepted on behalf of KESDEE (which stands for Knowledge Economy, Skill Development, E-Learning Excellence) the 2009 International Business Leadership Award bestowed by the World Trade Center San Diego, which fosters international trade and services.

"KESDEE has had a global focus from day one," Srinivas said. "Because of the great creative and technology teams in place, it allows us to customize our courses to clients here in San Diego or Latin America or Asia. We're able to regionalize, and integrate regulations and guidelines specific to each place."

#### Dynamic Course Work

The company employs 100 people. Seventy-five work in Bangalore, India, as instructional designers, graphic designers and technology professionals.



Michael S. Domine

Swarna Srinivas is president of KESDEE, an online education company that offers more than 1,000 business-related courses.

The combination of disciplines is essential to maintain the dynamic curricula that can be customized to the varied needs of individuals and corporations alike.

"One of our value propositions is that we offer e-learning, not e-reading. We want our courses to be very interactive. For example, we intersperse reading with graphics and quizzes and simulations," she said. "Using technology we can improve the quality of the user experience. We don't want page-turners. We want the courses to be very engaging."

Jodi Lundell, training and education director at the Professional Risk Managers' International Association, said her group relies on KESDEE's up-to-date content to meet its training needs.

"They have a team of people who are continually updating their content, and that's important to us," Lundell said. "Especially in a struggling economy, when more traditional styles of learning, such as classroom learning or in-house training, are viewed as very costly, KESDEE provides a means of education that's affordable."

Indeed, Srinivas spends an enormous amount of time ensuring that her company's subject matter experts work diligently to keep the course

work relevant. These experts are paid a flat fee upfront and continuing fees for updates.

#### Leveraging Technology

Staying up with the latest technology also consumes a good deal of her time.

"We're always looking at new technology platforms such as mobile," Srinivas said. "Every day we're looking at what new technologies can improve and expand what we have to offer."

On the horizon, prospects are bright. The privately held company doesn't disclose revenue, but a company spokesman did say that it has doubled in the past four years.

Srinivas counts among her accomplishments the swift ramping up of not just business-to-business practices but business-to-consumer offerings as well, so as to more efficiently work with professional organizations and educational institutions and regulators of a myriad of financial services. Here at home, those include the CFA (Certified Financial Analysts) Society of San Diego, the World Trade Center and the Corporate Directors Forum of San Diego.

"Overall, our goal is to be beneficial to the providers, users and regulators of financial services, and to meet the needs of our clients in these challenging economic times," she said.