

IT training in India professional and value for money



Nowadays, the IT industry is an integral part of the Indian economy. IT started with call centers and then IT companies developed in Delhi. Also, in the IT training industry Delhi has started to claim an important role. From all over the world, IT professionals come here to get 'offshore training'. Telekom Presse had the opportunity to visit one such training center in Delhi.

(09.05.2011, 10:45 a.m.) India, the land of contradictions, has the poor and rich living side by side. The border between Old and New Delhi is fluid. This is clearly visible in the IT parks, where large companies such as Microsoft or Oracle built their tall office buildings.

These shiny palaces are contrasted by the poor people and the many (holy) cows you see in the streets. But nobody is really bothered with this. This is just how Delhi is- the old and the new fit seamlessly together.

The IT industry, which is -with its 25 billion turnover worldwide- even bigger than the music industry, brought a lot of this change to the country. It started with call centers. Then came the outsourced technical support centers, until finally Indian IT companies themselves settled in the city. The offshore training programs of Koenig Solutions are part of this newest evolution in the market. The subject of their offering is training programs geared towards IT certification. The courses are aimed at a global audience and held in English.

Koenig Solutions

Koenig Solutions has been offering offshore training since 2002. They started out with a single student and five trainers. Now, they have more than 200 students per month and employ 140 people as trainers. The initial courses were for Microsoft certificates, but in the mean time other software vendors such as Oracle, Cisco, Red Hat, VMware and others have been added. In order to get certified, the students first get a designated course, followed by an online test.

Cost and quality are key factors for a training program in India. For example, the cost of an MCSE course is about 2.400 euro, including the training fee, airline tickets, accommodation and catering for 14 days. The exact same certification training in Europe would cost twice as much, without flights or accommodation. For many, this low price could be associated with low quality, but it is quite the contrary. The training facilities are equipped with state-of-the-art technology and the trainers are highly educated.

Besides the activities the IT industry (needs rephrasing), the company also has an important CSR project. They started a school project in poor neighborhoods of Delhi in order to give local children the opportunity to learn. The aim is to give the children, through education, the opportunity to better themselves and have better prospects in life.

Education

The vision behind the offering is that education will make the world a better place. It is because of better education that more people will get better jobs. To all the students this vision becomes very clear during their training. In the different training centers you will find posters with motivational quotes that urge people to study. They convey that you need to try to become a better person or you won't, and that education is the way forward if you want to make something out of life. Walking through the corridors of the training centre you really get motivated to just start a course and make the most out of yourself.

In order to provide better education, a number of innovations have been implemented. One of these is the option for 1-on-1 training, which means one trainer and one student for a course. Normally, trainings are held in groups of up to 5 people.

The good thing that many students mentioned in conversations is that trainings are held, even if the groups are not complete. One British student I met booked group training but got 1-on-1 training. Another example is the career enabler program. It is designed to provide IT training to inexperienced newcomers over a period of 3 months. Compared to the profession of, say, a physician, which takes multiple years of training, IT professionals can be schooled very rapidly, provided they engage with the subject intensively.

Developing the offer

At first, there was only one training centre in Delhi, but in the mean time three more, in different Indian cities, have been added. To improve the experience of the students, the program, the comfort and the subject matter continues to develop. In Delhi, for example, the company is building a new training centre that will be used both for education as for accommodation. At the moment, accommodations are situated in other parts of the city and students need to be shuttled to and fro. This costs a lot of 'study time'. Students are picked up in the morning with a car and brought back to their accommodation in the evening.

Yet another training centre will be opened in Dubai later this year. This means students will need less travel time to get to the centre and problems with visa are bypassed as these are issued on arrival. This option does not exist in India. Those who do not have a valid visum(visa?) will not be allowed to enter the country. It has happened before that students could not attend their training and had to return home. Interestingly, it is mostly Europeans who forget about visa. Probably, they are so used to travelling within the Schengen that they forget that outside the EU they need documents such as visa. In Dubai, the focus will be on courses of shorter duration. Subjects will be taught over a limited period of time and in an intensive way.

Over the next few years more training centers will follow. Locations could be Africa, the EU or the USA, in order to make travel for students even easier. Besides English, the company will also be trying to teach courses in German and French.

The students

Most of the students come from the UK, followed closely by Belgium and Germany. Now and then there's an Austrian amongst the students, but not so many Austrians travel to India for the moment. Perhaps the concept is not known in our country, or the benefits have not yet been recognized.

About one fifth of the students are redirecting their careers. They are people who previously did not work in IT. On average, they are between 30 and 40 years of age. Many are sent by their employers to improve their skills, but the students I spoke to were all there on their own expense. They were all convinced that the investment would be pay off in the near future, as it would bring better jobs and better pay.

All the people I met were on a course in Delhi for the first time. They all told me that they would be interested in returning for other courses. What they particularly appreciated was the hospitality. An IT professional from the UK told me: "They organize everything. That's great, because so you can fully concentrate on studying." And studying is the most important part of the training, so said the students, because every week they had tests to pass. In cases where a student subscribed for a course on a software product that (between subscribing and the actual course) was upgraded, the student gets the opportunity to choose which version he would like to train in. This possibility was greatly appreciated by the students.

Because of the huge amounts of studying, most of the students get to see very little of India. Some of them do try to add a few days of travel after finishing a course, in order to discover a bit of the country. The staff at Koenig also takes care of sightseeing, so that the students can relax and have a better overall experience.

An important reason about the decision to take training in India is that students can decide when to start courses. In Europe, courses are usually planned at set times and not at the specific moments when someone needs them. When IT professionals are asked to start working with any new technology they want to start training for it as soon as possible. That's why they choose to go to India, because Koenig Solutions can start training sessions at any given time

Trainers

The students I met were very happy with their trainers. They are very knowledgeable and have specific IT-degrees such as Master in Computer Applications or Master in Electronics. Apart from academic education they often also have hands-on prior experience from jobs in the IT industry. They continue to study their subject matter in the time between courses or even on evenings after work. They consider continued education important, also for themselves.

They state that teaching to them is some kind of a mission rather than a job. They genuinely enjoy working on subject matter with their students. I met a trainer who teaches JAVA. Such a certification course takes up to 25 days, during which he spends more time at the training centre than with his wife. But he's not too bothered by that, because he loves to teach. In his opinion, JAVA expertise will continue to grow in demand because of the continuous growth of Oracle.

Most of the students are male, but about 50% of the trainers are female. Nevertheless, subject matter such as JAVA or information security remains 99.9% a field of men. In other fields such as SQL technology for servers the male/female split is much better, but still about 70% of the participants of these trainings are men, and 30% women.