



Press Release

Customer Care Separates Estuate from the Competition

By RICHARD SPRINGER
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SUNNYVALE, Calif.-Estuate co-founder and chief executive officer Prakash Balebail worked for over 20 years in the software industry, including 16 years at Oracle developing solutions, culminating in leading the sales and consulting division.

Estuate co-founder and vice president of operations Nagaraja Kini spent more than 18 years in software development and implementation, including 10 years at Oracle, culminating as director of the application and industry solutions group in Oracle's global sale and support unit.

The itch of the entrepreneurs to start their own company and the fact that they saw a need to fill in helping enterprises navigate smoothly through the minefields of application integration led to launching Sunnyvale, Calif.-based Estuate in February 2005. "We understood how projects go wrong, and we could see how to make them right," Balebail explained to India-West.

Estuate was self-funded from the get-go and its business strength is "execution" and "customer care," he said. "Customers come back again and again." They include Mercury Interactive (now part of Hewlett-Packard), Wells Fargo, salesforce.com, WbEx (now part of Cisco Systems), Citric, Berry Petroleum and Fox Interactive. "There are also many smaller companies who are our customers," he added.

The three focus areas are, "custom development of software," "service-oriented architecture," and "implementation of industry leading solutions," said Balebail "Custom developments is #1 and integration is #2," he added. The company has almost 100 employees and a development center in Bangalore. Asked about attrition in India's high-tech hub, Balebail said job hopping doesn't have a major impact on Estuate. "We offer a dream job for software engineers. It is very challenging work." Good pay, open communications and the "nature of the work" keeps workers on board, he emphasized. "We nourish (the workers) very well." Asked about India's problems with brownouts and other infrastructure problems, Balebail said the company plans for possible failures. Backup systems are in place and customers have confidence that the work will get done without interruptions..

Born in kadaba, a small town near Subrahmanya in Karnataka, Balebail attended St.Aloysius College in Mangalore for the 11th and 12th grades and SDM College in Dharwad. He said he never saw a television until he left his home town. "I knew there were a lot of things that I would have to learn and that I could not know everything, but that you have to be good in what you know."

He worked as a consultant in Boston and took management and technology courses at the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford, before working in the software industry.

Estuate has several big deals soon to be announced and recently hired a new vice president of sales. Some slowness in new sales has been a byproduct of the two founders being focused very strongly on "customer satisfaction," Kini and Balebail admitted to India-West. "All our customers are in the U.S., but we are thinking about going global," Balebail added.

Kini, who received his electrical engineering degree from KREC In Surathkal, worked at India's Kirioskar Group in the computer services unit. A "hare-core technical person," he also was an engineer at Inventa before joining Oracle.

He launched a company in India, but it was too early. "The Concept was there but it ended up not working," he said.

When Balebail and Kini launched Estuate they initially envisioned a product-oriented company, but that changed to a services firm when they saw the problems companies face in application integration. Balebail concluded, "We have a strong client base and they tell their friends. We have increased our profit margin four times over the past years.



Estuate co-founders Prakash Balebail (Left) and Nagaraja Kini. (Richard Springer photo)