

TRANSFORMING TALENT TO ENSURE GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT

ARJUNA SIRINANDA
CEO-FORTUDE (PVT) LTD



COMPANY NAME:
FORTUDE (PVT) LTD.



HEADQUARTERS:
146 KYNSEY ROAD,
COLOMBO 7, SRI LANKA



BRANDS / SERVICES :
• INFOR APPLICATION SERVICES,
• ACCELLAR APPAREL ERP,
• MORTALITY REVIEW SYSTEMS



NO OF EMPLOYEES:
270

Please give us a little introduction about how Fortude came into being and where you are today?

The idea of Fortude came up in 2010 when I was at Brandix. They hired me to sort out the problems they were having with the ERP systems they were implementing. So, I helped them sort out all those problems but wanted to take something commercial from the knowledge that you have in the group. And then 2 years later when everyone felt that

I was overseas where I had all of my education and lived there and then I came back to Sri Lanka with the hope of giving something back and also to find out who I really was. I found an opportunity to leverage the talent we have and take that talent out to the world. So that's what I did for the first 13 years of my life.

the problems were all solved, I spun off Brandix i3, which was the precursor which we renamed as Fortude, 2 years ago.

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take it out to the world. What I have seen for the last 23 years in Sri Lanka is that we have lots of bright kids, we have got people who can do anything they want in the world, but they need to be coached on behavioral training and technical training. I saw that opportunity within Brandix and said to the board, 'let me do this!', and that was the start of a beautiful journey. We started building this with 60 people and now it has grown to 260. We initiated in Sri Lanka and now our biggest revenue earning comes from Australia, we have expanded to India as a center for excellence for info ERP environment. We are different in that sense from Virtusa and all the other IT companies in Sri Lanka but our competitors here are Attune and a few small companies. ERP is different because, you use your knowledge about a product, and you analyze their users to create paradigm shifts in businesses with ERP. By having those businesses adopt their processes to the ERP. In the ERP world, the customer typically adopts, to your solution. So that's what Fortude is about and what we do.

Can you tell us how you expanded to other countries as a Multinational company?

The first overseas excursion was to the US in 2012. But we had a project established in Russia but then Russia was not an option with the language barrier and the propensity to invest in technology is not there. The US seemed like an opportunity because there was a large customer base. First we positioned Brandix as a global alliance partner. Because of our unique story of a customer to a partner approach they felt that we would have success. As we were establishing our business in the US, we were hearing of opportunities in Australia. So again, we probed and because one of our key people here



was migrating to Australia, we took it as an opportunity to keep them with the company eco system and thus, expanding there was the best way. There was always a motive to open up in another country because first of all there is opportunity for business, getting Sri Lankans the exposure of working with global customers which gives them more confidence. Hence opening those entities is a channel for business but also as an

opportunity to build good consultants. So currently we have one of the largest resource pools of info consultants and we are proud that we stand among the top three in the world.

We have got a long way to go with keeping our values as caring, humility, integrity and passion.

In this multinational trade there are giants in the country and Fortude is an emerging brand who has a focused goal. So where would you see your self in another ten years?

That's a very interesting question. I take a very pragmatic view. Basically, I have three goals; financial improvement, business trajectory improvement, and technology improvement. When I talk about the first goal, we want to become the number one in our field, that is the INFO Focused Area. Even though we are under the Brandix group, we know that Fortude will do that one day. When we talk about the second goal, it's all about revenue size and I obviously think of being exceeded of hundred million dollars. That growth will basically come through with mergers and acquisitions outside of Sri Lanka and blending new technology to our current product. When we talk about the third goal it's about searching new pathways that we can enhance our product that Fortude is working on. Currently ERP has become an old news because almost all are aware and using an Enterprise Resource Planning System; in-house built legacy ERP or off the shelf system like SAP or ORACLE. ERP is all about maintaining a repository of transactions and data. But a lot of companies in the world are not leveraging that data. For example, we can power up our data repository with Business Intelligence (BI) but a lot of companies use BI only for reporting, and slicing and dicing data. What Fortude wants to do is to leverage BI to drive from reporting to dashboarding to predictive applications. Actually, our plan is to find out how Artificial Intelligence can sit on top of ERP supporting the predictions in the strategic planning in the organization. Other than that, we are researching on how we can make ERP that is something cheaper

. As a Sri Lankan company when you try to establish overseas it's a little bit difficult to get visas form other countries. The second constraint is what kind of resources that you should have in your company. When you grow to a multinational level in the Sri Lankan context you must have enough resources with you, in other words resourcing challenges.

to run because currently implementing an ERP at a new organization is about more than a one-million-dollar investment.

What are the challenges that you have faced when you are coming this way to a multinational company?

Well, when comparing to other multinational companies in Sri Lanka such as Virtusa, Fonterra, Unilever etc. we still have been as an MNC for a small period, only six years. When getting into MNC any company has several basic constraints. The first constraint is getting Visa. As a Sri Lankan company when you try to establish overseas it's a little bit difficult to get visas form other countries. The second constraint is what kind of resources that you should have in your company. When you grow to a multinational level in the Sri Lankan context you must have enough resources with you, in other words resourcing challenges. For

example, how many employees do you have and how are you planning to hire new resources to work in the new regions. Third constraint is the financial considerations. For example, how are you planning to find financial support. After breaking all these barriers, you must plan for the business case. That means identifying all your requirements, what is your target market, where you can get the best rates for your products, where you get best margins, who are the best suppliers, where they are located, etc. and start working on your business case. If we take our case, we started building our business in the US and then we found that Australia has a fantastic market and we were growing rapidly. In Australia for the last few years we have doubled our revenues. In Sri Lanka there are several giants in MNCs who have led the way. For example, Virtusa, MIT, and IFS have led the way and all of us are learning from each other. Also, as a CEO you have to have a passion of dealing with the complex organizational structure of an MNC; a combination of partners, suppliers, customers, employees from different regions of the world; and also, you should have luck. Now our business model is quite agile, but we've also got processes in place that can handle the change. When I look back to where we started, it's a mind boggling journey to build an MNC but it's one that requires planning, structuring and then once you are at a certain point you can start growing it.

It was you who was behind this MNC, bring it to where it is today. How did you start your journey, and would you like to share it with our readers?

My father was a professor, he was in Malaysia and he was one key figure in the initiation of the Brunai University and now he is retired. Although he



was a professor, he had a little entrepreneur in him. So, we have moved from place to place accompanying him and I had to adopt cultural changes because of this. Then once again, I moved to UK to go to boarding school for my higher education. While I was in University, I wanted to earn some cash for my little expenses, I started doing DJ-ing and coordinating events, where I made a lot of money. I have always enjoyed planning, building, concluding and moving on. The way I see Fortude is that I love the opportunity to be a part of its growth and potentially even sell it. Because in Sri Lanka we don't think like that, we believe we must create roots and live on. So that's one of the other permutations that is always possible, start another company and then grow it again. I really like that sort of approach. When I decided to come back to Sri Lanka, I worked with LOLC with business process reengineering, and then was head hunted by MAS where I learned a lot about business. Slowly but surely, I learned working with people, how to convince people, how to sell, and

how to guide my mind to achieve what I want. I'm an optimist, I can facilitate people and guide them to achieve their goals. I should thank Brandix for creating the opportunity for me to be an entrepreneur and with the hunger to succeed which is a personal trait I believe this became a reality. Most people in Sri Lanka are still driven by physiological needs than self-actualization. You need to feel that you are doing an impactful thing.

This magazine would be mainly read by the undergraduates of NSBM. Do you have any last words that you need to share with them?

No. 1 would be the language. I can't stress on the importance of their ability to speak English. Its critical and you need to be able to communicate with anyone with this business language. Sadly, the standard of our English has dropped over the time. I

stress on the fact that English is a must when we select them to join this company, with the hope of representing the company and country at the global level. Focusing on the language is crucial.

No. 2 is if you are willing to work hard, focus, persevere and develop a skill, you will be successful. Especially, because having a core skill is critical. You need to identify your key capabilities in a few years may be, and then focus on achieving the goal, because it is essential to harness a core in whatever you do.

The third thing really, is setting yourself a goal. I set a goal earlier on to become a CEO of a company and I achieved it at the age of 38. If you can set incremental targets, that would be the best way to commence. Life is so short, and you need to maximize what you do in this life. So, if you don't have a plan how can you maximize? If you have a career plan match it with your life plan and focus on it.

Chalani Oruthotarachchi & Lakruwani Wimalaratne