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Stamp of approval

BLS gains global recognition

When Spain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Co-operation wanted to open visa application centres across the globe, it did not look within Spain or even towards the European Union for that matter to find an expert to do the job. It zeroed in on the India-based, Rs24.09 crore, BLS International Services Ltd, a specialist provider for outsourcing of visa, passport and attestation, which has operations in more than 51 countries and is providing services through 96 offices worldwide. One of the conditions Spain had was that the company should have at least offices in the 56 countries in which Spain has consulates. Though it was the second largest company visa, passport and attestation, after Visa International, BLS pipped Visa to the post with its economic offer made, which was €15.45 per visa, while VFS increased its price from €20 to €22. In addition, by the time the 10-year contract of VFS had expired, BLS had set up 125 offices abroad.

Today, BLS has gone from 56 initial operative centres to 105 the world over; and it plans to open 22 more offices. "The year 2016 is turning out to be a most successful one for BLS International," says Shikhar Aggarwal, joint managing director & additional director, BLS International Services Limited. "The continuous positive momentum of BLS International has brought huge success for the company. We are delighted to announce that BLS International has got renewal order for outsourcing services from Russia and Singapore for four more years. The company is reaching beyond its initial goals by

successfully managing the administrative and non-judgmental tasks of processing visa applications in Russia and in Singapore for managing the administrative function of passport, visa application process, OCI and PIO."

BLS got its first project in 2005, when the Portuguese embassy in New Delhi, India, outsourced the visa pro-



cessing. Here, the company processed about 10,000 visa applications in one year. "BLS' endeavour is to offer quality services to our customers with maximum customer retention," says Aggarwal. BLS believes in customer loyalty, which is helping it gain rapid recognition and be known as an innovative visa outsourcing company, because of its staff experts, well-structured teams, strong control systems, real-time information systems and quick problem resolution. The company's practice is to experiment with innovative ways has led them to quantity infinite potential business opportunities that have been the driving force behind the recent expansion of the company.

"The renewal order for four years covers outsourcing services to Russia's and Singapore's embassies or

consulates. With the constant growth in the visa outsourcing industry, BLS International aims to enhance their global foot print. In 2017, it aims to expand its foreign mission category by bagging global contracts, particularly from Thailand and Canada governments, via a competitive process."

Visa: main concern

Today, BLS processes over 3 million applications annually, while operating in 47 countries. "The main concern of the people who are planning to travel is getting the visa," says Victor M. Albuquerque, honorary consul general for Russia in Goa. "And, if there is a reliable company handling it, more than half the worry is over and done with." The company has seen exponential growth, with its clients ranging from diplomatic missions, ministries of external affairs, embassies and consulates, which have shown confidence in BLS's visa pro to provide high-quality service with innovative delivery modules, by creating new trends and benchmarks in the industry and being the only listed visa processing company across the world, with the aim to achieve highest customer satisfaction.

To make the entire process smooth, BLS has dedicated visa application centres (VACs), which are set up as an initiative by the ministry for foreign affairs. They are part of the effort to ensure easy access and a wide network of centres, where prospective visitors can obtain information and apply for visa. The checklists for the desired visa category are available on the company's website and also in the applications that are provided by the mission. Based on the checklist, the applicant prepares his papers and once the application is processed at the VAC, BLS provides high-end security logistics arrangement for the same at the mission. Then, it's the



Aggarwal signing the contract with Spain ministry of foreign affairs for visa processing

sole prerogative of the mission to issue the visa. BLS cannot influence the outcome of the visa application status and any verification or judgmental task pertaining to the application is done by the mission itself.

"The visa application process can be quite easy, if the applicant takes care to prepare his documents as per the pre-approved checklist given by the mission for his desired visa category and the country he intends to travel," says Aggarwal. Also, the vacs are set up to cater to the needs of the applicants and BLS charges the applicant only a nominal fee for the word-class services given in return to them.

Also, it offers various other value-added services to its customers, such as SMS service alert, photocopy service, form filling, premium lounge and convenient courier services to the applicants. BLS offers 100 per cent genuine attestation and apostille services that simplify the entire process of attestation and apostille activities like translation services, state attestation services, etc, which has been approved by the Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi. Verification services were initiated as a separate vertical to standardise the identity

management services division in BLS, providing the services like checks on education, past employment, address check, professional reference and many more to it. "If the latest IT systems are in place and people are satisfied that their personal information is safe, the company is bound to be respected," concurs Murtuja Bharmal, co-founder, NULL, an open security company.

Enhancing the experience

BLS International's operations revolve around enhancing applicants experience in the visa processing cycle. It has standard operating procedures to handle any anomalies that may arise during the visa application process, which are performed through the effective medium of verbal and written communication from the applicant. Each and every VAC prominently displays the feedback IDs and information e-mail IDs for the customer to get in touch with our team for any clarification/assistance or grievance. And the highest number of visa applications comes for Russia, the UAE, China, and Canada, followed by Morocco and Algeria. One of the few visa processing companies that has gone public, BLS got listed in

the National Stock Exchange in June 2016 and the Bombay Stock Exchange in September 2016.

BLS International has been witnessing a growth of 30-40 per cent year on year, recording an organic growth of 30.34 per cent at Rs16.67 crore, as per its Q3 results. As in the case of any other business, tenders are released here too by the missions for the companies to apply for the process of bidding. The responses to the tenders are to be submitted within a stipulated time. Further to this, the missions decide on the many parameters and select the best company, which wins the contract above the other competitors.

Though BLS has been present in the US for some time, it is looking at avenues to explore and tie up with the US government for better relations in the future. "BLS aims to spread its wings across the continents and be present everywhere required," says Aggarwal. "We are bidding for a couple of tenders for global visa outsourcing, primarily Thailand and Myanmar, as they are among the most preferred destinations for Indian tourists."

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