

Posted date: 9/21/2009

IT Firm Seeks to Bridge Defense-Engineering Gaps Globally

TECHNOLOGY: Fast-Growing Small Company Has Big Designs on Developing Software

By BRAD GRAVES

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Driving the streets of the Philippine capital of Manila, red lights are more of a suggestion than anything else, says Eric Basu.

Basu's home base is San Diego, but he's spending a lot of time in the Philippines, consulting with political and military leaders about command and control systems.

Between stops in the lurching traffic he conducts an interview on his BlackBerry.

In the past 18 months, Basu has made eight trips to the island nation. His small business is working to design software that rivals a big defense contractor's wares, but saves on costs by using commercially available components.

Basu is founder and chief executive of Sentek Global, an information technology firm that just changed its name from Sentek Consulting. The new name, Sentek representatives say, better reflects the company's reach around the world, putting people and technology on the ground in the places they're needed.

Basu names a dozen countries, most in Asia and Africa, where he's done business.

Sentek ranks as No. 20 on the Business Journal's 2009 list of 100 Fastest-Growing Privately Held Companies, which appears in a supplement to this issue. It captured that spot by growing its revenue 117 percent to \$9.1 million between 2006 and 2008.

Sentek serves commercial clients on top of military and government clients. It offers software and services for their

sprawling information technology systems. IT security comprises 30 percent of Sentek's work.

Basu says his goal is to grow revenue to \$100 million in eight years, splitting that among Department of Defense work, other government work and commercial pursuits.

It's a sizable goal, but Basu is used to those.

From 1988 to 1997, he was a Navy SEAL. He entered as part of Basic Underwater Demoli-

tion/SEAL Class 164. He is now in the Reserves.

Training to be a SEAL and building a business both take tenacity. And in both situations, Basu says, a person has to be willing to learn new things.

Prior to becoming a SEAL, Basu said he had never swam more than 200 yards. A year of running and swimming honed his skills.

Prior to starting his business, Basu said he had plenty of



Eric Basu, founder and chief executive of Sentek Global, is spending a lot of time in the Philippines these days, consulting with political and military leaders there. | Photo courtesy of Sentek Global

leadership skills but needed more business know-how. He enrolled in the UCLA executive M.B.A. program, and spent hundreds of hours learning the fine points of federal contracting rules.

The regimen continues. Basu says he takes weekly lessons in French and Japanese.

In the middle of the decade, Basu had another job: partner and president of Global Entertainment Security, a Los Angeles-based company that offers physical protection for people as well as anti-piracy protection for entertainment properties.

Candidates Interviewed

CEO Ben Barbosa interviewed several potential partners for the firm. He chose Basu. "I liked his organization and preparation for the initial meeting," Barbosa said. "He struck me pretty much as a no-B.S. guy, a person who would live up to his word."

Basu was fully involved in the company for a year, and today is an adviser to the firm.

Sentek has done work on Pentagon projects such as the Joint Tactical Radio System and Navy Marine Corps Intranet, as well as C4ISR systems (that's command, control, communications, computers, intelligence,

surveillance and reconnaissance).

Basu says the company attempts to bridge the gap between soldier and engineer.

Now with 50 employees, Sentek is a Small Business Administration-certified, small disadvantaged business as well as a California-certified disabled veteran business enterprise.

While in Manila, Basu describes the culture, with its Polynesian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and American influences. Eventually he sees Sentek opening an office there.