

Process: Accounting and administrative support for a real estate property management firm. An auxiliary service was management of personal finances for the head of the company

Client

A mid sized real estate property management firm in New York providing property buy, sell, lease, and management of properties for individual and residential properties. Most of the accountancy services were on the QuickBooks accounting package. Personal financial services were performed in Quicken.

Challenge

A major challenge in this project was the diverse range of activities to be performed for the client. These include accounting for business and personal investment transactions, managing digital images of source documents, receivables follow-up, call bank to resolve discrepancies, maintenance of real-estate database (Quickbase) and tracking key calendar dates for events like renewal of insurance policies, reminder calls to tenants for collections, returns submission dates etc.

The process requirement required a resource that would be not only proficient in accounting and database packages, but also fluent in spoken and written English. Additionally the inter-linked administrative tasks required the resource to learn minute details of the processes. So it required a diligent and detail oriented person, who could perform accounting and administrative roles efficiently.

Since the processes also required working on personal financial data, there were concerns over data-security and the possibility of fraud. The other concern was the retention period of the offshore resource, as loss of the resource would mean extensive process-related training.

Solution

We started with directly addressing every query of the client regarding data security. We explained the various data security measures undertaken at our premises and during the data transfer process. Our measures like encrypted transfer of data between client and us use of firewalls in our server, and the regular data backups assuaged client concerns regarding data security. Our use of encrypted technology during data transfer, similar to the one used during online credit card transactions gave additional credibility to our claims.

However concerns about fraud prevention still remained. Questions raised included- “*what if the offshore resource forged his signature and faxed a wire-transfer instruction to his bank*”. We explained our comprehensive approach to fraud protection through preventive measures and right hiring practices. The latter include extensive background checks, include meeting family members, direct client interview of staff working on their projects, mandatory registration of staff at the local police station and coverage of penal provisions of IT Act 2000. We also suggested procedural changes to prevent frauds.

So for the earlier query- we suggested an encryption of a unique code in wire transfer sheet (known only to banker and client), total ban of all faxes (domestic and international), and installation of close circuit cameras. A new IT solution involving remote access of accounting application and a ASP based document management system were selected to ensure no data-movement(only un downloadable images and keystrokes allowed) between India and US occurs. Additionally the client was apprised of privacy policy of the company and penal provisions of IT laws in India

Our proposed candidate underwent two rounds of interviews with client to ensure right person was hired for the job. A comprehensive migration plan including detailed questionnaires, multiple checklists and a training schedule was prepared to ensure smooth transition to India.

Impact

We helped client achieve savings of about 40% in bookkeeping processes during the trial phase lasting three months. We have also met the deadlines set for the individual processes. The full project has been implemented over the last three months. Initial results have confirmed the savings achieved during the trial phase. No downsizing in staff levels at US level, but they have been retrained for more on-site work.