



Interview with Suresh Ramanathan, President & CEO, www.koryak.com

Could you please provide a brief overview of KORYAK?

KORYAK is a high caliber management consulting, information technology consulting and a software development firm. We essentially solve complex problems by leveraging technology for clients from a wide range of industries ranging from manufacturing to health care and from state government to local government. Ever since our inception in 2000, we have had our headquarters right here in Pittsburgh and we have offices in Michigan and Delaware. In 2007, we were fortunate enough to be awarded the Supplier of the Year award for PA, NJ and DE and the Minority Business of the Year award.

Who are some of your clients?

Our clients include private sector entities such as PPG, Eaton Corporation, Marconi, MARC USA, HIGHMARK, Gateway Health, 3 Rivers Wet Weather and public sector entities such as Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PENNDOT), Pennsylvania Department of Health, Pittsburgh Parking Authority, ALCOSAN, Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, Delaware Department of Transportation, Pennsylvania Department of Treasury and Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

As you know, the DBRC is focused on public sector opportunities, especially government contracts. Let's talk more about that. Could you talk about your failures and successes with government contracts?

About five years ago, we began focusing on public sector and health care industries to help us weather economic cycles. Specifically within the public sector, we focused on the federal government, local and state government. Let us discuss each of these sub-sectors.

Federal Government: We have not been successful with the Federal Government though we are 8(a) certified and actually held a Federal IDIQ (Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity) award. We made numerous trips to Washington, D.C. for over a year and met with no success. We alone are responsible for not being able to take advantage of this program, as there are a lot of other companies that are very successful with the 8(a) Program. *[Editor's note: To participate in the 8(a) Program, an enterprise must be 51 percent or more owned, controlled and managed by either an individual (or, some individuals) who is a socially and economically disadvantaged citizen of the U.S., or an economically disadvantaged Indian tribe.]* One of the lessons we learned is that we need to have a local presence in D.C. We did not have the relationships or presence -- or the patience -- for that business, and the fault is all ours in not being able to crack that market.

State Government: When we approached the state government business, we had some knowledge about the public sector. We initially spent time understanding the state government procurement process. After numerous meetings, attending a few seminars and poring over their websites we learned about the certification process, the ITQ process and the RFQ process. We began with the state MBE/WBE certification process. Once we completed that and obtained that certification process, we began working on the Invitation to Qualify (ITQ) process.

By the way, the MBE/WBE certification process is a lot more streamlined now than it used to be when we did it as a result of the leadership of Mr. Peter Speaks and his team. The ITQ process is a relatively easy to complete on-line process, though it requires significant time commitment from your clients and customers. Only after you complete both the certification and the ITQ process are you truly ready to market to the state government.

We made numerous trips to Harrisburg, Pa. to meet with various state agencies. We finally landed a small contract that we leveraged to demonstrate to the state the superior capabilities of KORYAK.

We leveraged that initial engagement with PennDOT to subsequent engagements with PA Department of Health and PA Department of Environmental Protection. In the last two years, we have beaten larger organizations to win significant contracts at the PA Department of Treasury and PA Department of Community and Economic Development.

KORYAK built the “Right to Know” portal in four months in keeping with the requirements of Senate Bill 1. All contracts from the various state agencies are to be uploaded into the portal. This sophisticated portal incorporates document management, workflow, redaction, and search mechanisms.

Local Government

KORYAK has completed a few projects locally in Pittsburgh for the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh and for Pittsburgh Parking Authority. In only 8 weeks, we helped transition the Parking Court from the City of Pittsburgh to the Pittsburgh Parking Authority as required by Act 47 a few years ago. We received a lot of support from the City of Pittsburgh, the Courts and the Pittsburgh Parking Authority to make this happen. We have also developed a barcode-driven safety inspection, security tracking and operations maintenance application for the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN).

What are your lessons learned from your efforts in the public sector?

Here are some of our lessons learned.

1. Do not depend on the public sector alone for your business, especially early in the life of the company.
2. Build strong relationships with frequent visits and contacts.
3. Complete all the prerequisites before beginning to market to the federal, state or local agencies.
4. Depending on your industry, federal business may require a permanent presence in Washington DC, including a local hire with federal experience.
5. Understand the procurement process in its entirety.
6. Proposal requirements and evaluations are not standardized across the various agencies of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
7. Continue to refine your company’s proposal-writing skills and understand the variations between the agencies.
8. Bid as a prime whenever you can. Understand certain agencies are not ready to consider a diverse business as a prime.
9. True reciprocal partnerships with larger or similar-sized companies are better than transactional dealings.
10. Patience and persistence does pay off eventually.

How do you expect to weather the prevailing economic conditions?

KORYAK began in 2000 during the dot-com bust, and we have learned a few lessons since then. We cannot do anything about the macroeconomics of our nation but we can focus on the microeconomics that impacts us. There is still money being spent with consulting companies all over our nation -- why not with KORYAK? After all, we are of a higher caliber than most of the firms out there.

We definitely provide a higher value for every dollar that our clients spend with us. Our existing clients know this, and it results in repeat business. Our clients also know that we are good at helping them decrease costs and increase efficiency, allowing them to weather the travails of these economic times.



A dynamically generated map on the 3RWW portal created by KORYAK leveraging Google maps

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