



## India native left promising career to move to the U.S.

**Gagan Ahluwalia, GlobalStep, Dallas**

by Joy Tipping, Correspondent

Gagan Ahluwalia arrived in the United States from his native Delhi, India, in 1989 with \$1,500. He's now forming a Dallas-based company that he hopes will have \$100 million in revenue by 2010.

He's confident he'll make that goal, he said, because, "In America, ambitions are not held down by anything. If something has good economic value, America will embrace it."

Ahluwalia's company, GlobalStep, will provide offshore core professional services to accounting, law and financial services firms -- an upscale extension of the already-strong outsourcing trend.

Before moving here, Ahluwalia, 41, was a chartered accountant in India, akin to being a certified public accountant in the United States.

He had visited San Diego and met the woman who would become his wife and decided to move to San Diego. "It's always a love story, right?" he says with a laugh -- despite "leaving a very promising career in India, and coming here with no credentials, no recognition, no anything."

He and his wife Amy moved to New York, where he eventually got into corporate consulting. Then he crossed the country again for a job in Vancouver, Wash., which also gave him the chance to study at the University of Washington, where he earned an executive MBA in strategy.

He moved to Dallas in 1998 to work for PricewaterhouseCoopers, and stayed there as a corporate finance partner "until Enron happened, and audit and consulting did not go together anymore."

He moved to FTI consulting and will remain a senior managing director there until the end of August, when his employment contract terminates and he will devote himself full-time to GlobalStep.

GlobalStep, up and running just this summer, already has about 15 employees in India and two in the states -- one in Philadelphia and one in Las Vegas, in addition to Ahluwalia, he said.

He believes his formidable goal of \$100 million in revenue by 2010 is quite attainable.

"If you look at outsourcing from the U.S. to India in 2002, it was \$1.8 billion," he said. "Now it's \$7 billion, and expected to be \$32 billion by 2010."

And the need for professional services is high, he added. "Our resources are constrained in the U.S. We're not putting out enough accountants, for instance, for small- and medium-sized firms," he said. "I want to break that resource constraint, to allow every small and medium firm to act like a global firm. They'll be able to maintain their local focus, but have access to a global service delivery pool."

As for criticism that outsourcing hurts U.S. workers, he said, "If you look at it from a purely macroeconomic perspective, over \$1.20 comes into the U.S. for every \$1 outsourced.

"Too, in a global economy, the competition isn't between countries, it's between firms, and every firm has a responsibility to be cost-effective in providing services to its clients. That's what we're doing."