

## Notes from Vietnam

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It wasn't too many years ago that I was the skeptical IT executive. Unconvinced of offshoring—its value and its feasibility. I was extremely skeptical that IT professionals—no matter how talented or experienced—in far off countries and from exotic cultures could manage IT services and projects quickly and effectively for U.S. companies.

Outsourcing I knew and understood well. For nearly two decades, I have managed effective BPO solutions for Fortune 500 and small- and mid-size businesses alike. I have seen countless ways businesses benefit from handing over certain IT functions to expert service providers who offer the right skills and methodologies and adhere to aggressive service level agreements in order to drive significant business improvements.

However, I readily admit that though I consider myself a forward-thinking technology professional, it took time for me to see the grand vision of offshoring. I love the talented IT teams I have worked with across the U.S. and did not like the idea of taking work away from them. I believe strongly that IT can be a powerful business advantage and wondered if sending IT functions overseas was simply a way of trading that advantage for a good discount on technology services.

In addition, the IT world had seen several high-profile offshore deals in India (Dell customer support for example) fail miserably. And there were also the horror stories of offshore projects quickly getting off track, taking twice as long as they should and hitting upon tough communication barriers. These early challenges were enough to keep me extremely cautious as I searched for today's most effective offshoring opportunities and locations.

Over the last several years my skepticism has turned to rampant enthusiasm as offshoring has matured into a highly competitive global sourcing strategy that allows businesses to find the best IT services and talent worldwide for the best price. Offshoring has allowed IT teams at home to focus on more strategic business objectives and innovations as administrative and routine functions are handled by extremely skilled offshore teams.

Offshoring has also exploited remote communications and collaboration technologies, demonstrating how well work can be done and managed ANYWHERE and ANYTIME. The key to offshoring success as I see it is much like the key to outsourcing success: You must select a partner that is capable of mirroring your operations, one that follows best practice methodologies for delivery and one that creates a viable communication model for project deliverables.

I knew how well offshore was working but never had the full picture until quite recently. This April I had the pleasure, as well as the adventure, of spending time in what is quickly becoming one of the world's premier offshoring locations: Vietnam. Harvey Nash has three highly successful offshore development centers operating in Vietnam and I traveled 22 hours across the globe to see how world-class offshore solutions are managed and delivered.

I would like to share with you some of my Vietnamese adventure—from culture shock to the comfort of world-class IT excellence—so you can see one aspect of how a skeptical IT professional becomes a cheerleader for IT change and global sourcing. Please enjoy these brief notes on Vietnam and feel free to contact your local Harvey Nash office or me directly, with any offshoring questions or insights you may have.

### Touching Down on Unfamiliar Ground

They say that all airports look the same if you travel enough. The Hanoi airport was modern and bustling like the majority of the airports you run into here in the U.S. However, it was bigger and newer. I was surprised to hear English everywhere. As I quickly learned, most Vietnamese citizens are multilingual and English is widely spoken throughout the country.

While I am sometimes greeted by a driver at airports who will escort me to the hotel, in Hanoi I am greeted by one of my Vietnamese Harvey Nash counterparts who welcomed me in full traditional dress (long silk dress with white pants underneath) and with a bouquet of enormous flowers. This is how all Harvey Nash guests are greeted in Vietnam.

### A New, Busy World

The flowers and the escorted drive to the hotel made me feel right at home. However, the drive to the hotel reminded me how far from home I really am. On one side of the car I saw towering modern offices while on the other side were endless, perfect rows of rice fields. Once at the hotel, I decided to take a map and a short walk around the city. The traffic was congested beyond recognition and unlike anything I have ever seen, even in New York City. There were motorcycles, cars and bicycles all driving in the same crowded streets but not obeying any discernable traffic rules. These marvelous city streets were thrilling, but I was very glad I would not be driving them those first few days.

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## A Hardworking Place

The next day was Sunday, which meant a bit of sightseeing for me. As I set out to visit the nearby countryside where world-famous ceramics are made and ancient temples stand, it seemed that all of Vietnam was hard at work. It was a beautiful Sunday morning but from the work going on around me, it felt like a Tuesday morning in Chicago.

## Getting Down to Business

Monday morning came and it was time for me to get to work with the rest of Vietnam. I began with my first visit to the Harvey Nash Hanoi offshore development center. It is a high-tech, highly secure facility that could be placed in any Silicon Valley or Alley around the world. Both Microsoft and Intel have R&D facilities in Vietnam. The Harvey Nash development center was designed and built by many of the same experts who contributed to Microsoft's thriving R&D center.

The development center is CMM Level 5, TMM Level 4, ISO 9001:2000 and British Standard 7799 certified and you know why from the minute you walk in. The work environment is friendly but focused with teams clearly concentrated on meeting deadlines in hemispheres and time zones far away.

## Meeting the Staff

In the development center hundreds of highly skilled technologists (all with degrees and many of them advanced) work on development and quality assurance projects for businesses worldwide. Approximately 40,000 people graduate with IT degrees in Vietnam annually and that number continues to grow. Harvey Nash strives to recruit the cream of the crop from that crowd and is proud to be an employer of choice for skilled IT experts in Vietnam.

The Harvey Nash Vietnam team utilizes cutting-edge technologies. Again and again, I had to remind myself that I was thousands of miles from home in a far-off country. With the high-tech tools in front of me and English spoken all around me, it was too easy to forget that this was not the IT department of a Fortune 500 company back home.

## Tracking and Measurement

Next I had the chance to witness how projects were managed on the Vietnam side of the equation. I have delivered Harvey Nash offshore solutions working from the U.S. and was excited to see how delivery looked from the other side. Once again, the processes were all too familiar. Every project is tracked and measured according to a rigorous

internal measurement system. For example, we track lines of code, defects per line, defects per project, defects per developer, defects when turned over to client, number of change requests and on and on. The list is almost endless.

I admired how each developer and tester takes great pride in her or his work. Across the development center, technologists compete amongst each other to achieve the next level of quality measurement. It makes for a fun, competitive and highly effective work environment. So fun and effective, in fact, that the Harvey Nash development centers see less than 1 percent turnover annually.

## Long, Successful Days

The Vietnam development centers are staffed and operated to support clients from Asia to the U.S. That means hours of operations are long and teams are taking calls and meetings as early as 5 a.m. and as late as 11 p.m. By the time I was tired and ready to go home each night, developers and project managers were preparing for their next client call. It was amazing to see teams speaking in Vietnamese and code quickly switch to English and begin discussing projects with colleagues and clients across the globe. I meanwhile was struggling to perfect small Vietnamese phrases like "thank you" and "I would like to order..."

I also saw how the Harvey Nash development center was a microcosm of Vietnam itself. Just as our offshore teams bend over backwards to serve and support clients, Vietnam as a country is bending over backwards to welcome and integrate Western businesses into its stable and rapidly growing economy. In the Harvey Nash development centers and throughout Vietnam, the quality of responsive, attentive customer service is unparalleled in the world today. Customers are treated with the utmost respect, making it once again a great pleasure to be a customer.

## World-class Service the World Over

Over the next week, I dove into the development center and saw firsthand what IT leaders everywhere know well: World-class development and QA is world-class no matter where in the world it is happening. While cultural differences in Vietnam will continue to surprise and awe me—whether it's the spicy food, how ancient customs mix so beautifully with modern life or the tricky language—I am not at all surprised that Vietnam is the next great frontier for innovation and the world's premier source for conscientious, reliable and cost-effective IT solutions and support.

To learn more about Harvey Nash, call 800.286.9574 or visit [www.harveynashusa.com](http://www.harveynashusa.com).