OPTIMA SYSTEMS CASE STUDY

Optima Systems specialises in software development and is the largest UK-based vendor using the APL programming language. Over the past 25 years, the company has been writing business systems for clients that include large multi-national companies in industries such as finance, pharmaceuticals and gas.

When Optima started out in 1990, the original aim was to provide specialist programming and consulting skills to the IT sector, but it wasn’t long before they were being asked to provide software solutions to clients across a wide range of sectors. It was in 2000 that the company first started to explore the idea of overseas trade, but it was only after receiving support from UK Trade and Investment that this side of the business really started to take off. A trade mission to Boston secured Optima exposure to the American market and they were soon to purchase a stake in a US partner company, Galileo Analytics, which helped them to break into the US Clinical and Pharmaceutical markets. Later, they opened up a subsidiary company in Sweden - Data Analytics - where much of their Research & Development is now undertaken. By working closely and openly with partners, Optima has found that it can share the load, resource the gaps and work together as a ‘super team’.

In its silver anniversary year of operation, it was therefore fitting that Optima Systems was named as a finalist for ‘International Business of the Year 2015’ at the prestigious Gatwick Diamond Business Awards. The business has grown its international turnover 18-fold since 2013, from £50k to over £900k, and the outlook is for international trade to become a significant percentage (around 50%) of total turnover over the next couple of years.

Speaking of his nomination for the Gatwick Diamond Award, Paul Grosvenor, Managing Director of Optima Systems said: “I am honoured that our company was recognised for this important award. In our 25th year, I am immensely proud of what we have achieved as a small, privately-owned company. Four years ago, we would never have considered anything so bold as to enter into an award for international trade, but 2015 will see us signing a number of major contracts and this will enable us to take on more staff in the UK and to expand our offices in the US and Sweden.”

“Overseas trade is not without its challenges. International means being willing and able to provide support across multiple time zones and languages. The legal aspects of trading overseas is also a major consideration and falls outside of our natural comfort zone. Hitting this head on at an early stage, and bringing in external advisors, has allowed us to get the legal basis right – something which is essential before committing large amounts of money to international relationships.”

He continued: “With the help of UK Trade and Investment, our partner company in the US and our subsidiary in Sweden, we have generated a valuable sales stream and a scalable and
export-earning product. I am very proud of the hard work and professionalism of every member of the Optima Systems team who have helped to make this happen.”

Rosemary French, Executive Director of the Gatwick Diamond Initiative and member of the Gatwick Diamond Business Awards Judging Panel, congratulated Optima Systems on being a finalist, saying: “Optima serves as a shining example of how it is possible, with a skilled team, determination and good advice, to succeed in international trade. My fellow judges and I were particularly impressed by Optima’s strategic approach to international business development and with their commitment to providing the very best in customer service.”

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