

Rose International

opens new doors in IT consulting

By Shanna Boals

Throughout her career, Himanshu Bhatia saw a need for improvement in software services that companies were providing and yearned to start her own business based on that opportunity.

That yearning was the impetus for Rose International, which has become a leader in information technology consulting. The company's specialty is delivering rapid, practical and customized solutions to network, database or application-based problems. Software development and web development can be customized to fit a client's individual needs.

Based in St. Louis, Mo., Rose International builds Internet and e-commerce solutions that are delivered through a nationwide network of branch offices in Chicago, Ill.; Jefferson City, Mo.; Irvine, Calif.; San Ramon, Calif.; Washington, D.C.; and central Illinois. These Solutions Centers, as they are called, serve as the local portal to the company's corporate capabilities and can be tapped for specific technology or business expertise.

Commercial on-site projects, as well as federal and state projects, are underway in other cities across the country.

The company's impressive client list includes Anheuser-Busch, the U.S. Department of Defense, Southwestern Bell, the State of Missouri, the State of Illinois, Chevron and Toyota.

Bhatia grew up near Delhi, India, in a family of educators who had no business background. Her mother was an elementary school teacher and principal. Her father was a high school principal. Because both worked long hours, their daughter developed an independent nature at an early age.

By the time Bhatia had moved to the United States at age 24, she had finished a five-year bachelor's degree and had obtained her certificate in architecture. It didn't take her long, however, to discover that the field of architecture was not for her. She returned to school, earning a master's degree in management information systems from the University of Missouri, St. Louis, then began a career in the information technology field, which ultimately led to her entrepreneurial activities.

Initially, Bhatia and her husband Gulab, who is also from India, obtained several Small Business Innovative Research Grants from the federal government in 1993.

These grants are awarded to small businesses with new, impressive ideas. The success rate for such companies is usually 20 to 30 percent.

The company's first projects were government related, but for the sake of survival, the Bhatias decided to add commercial projects to its portfolio in 1995.

The couple committed the St. Louis-based company to becoming a world-class IT provider. A period of rapid growth ensued as a result of building solid partnerships with clients, providing high-

quality service at a reasonable price and the Bhatia's ability to retain top-notch employees.

Indeed, integrity and tenacity seems to be just two of the company's strong suits. Employee retention remains at 86 to 88 percent, and the company has a strong track record of repeat business from its clients. The firm's leadership team, with Himanshu Bhatia as CEO and Gulab Bhatia as president, has over 100 years of combined technology services experience with such companies as EDS, IBM, DEC, and Boeing.

In November, in place of its annual holiday party and gifts, Rose International and its 300 employees donated \$18,000 to the American Red Cross and the New York Firefighters 9-11 Fund, with Rose matching employee donations dollar-for-dollar.

Although the shrinking economy has made the past year tough for Rose International, the company was able to add five new clients and maintain its size. The company's goal is to keep growing, which it is well poised to do as the economy turns around. Bhatia believes that process will begin around the middle of this year.

Other goals include streamlining internal processes, continuing to be more efficient, offering a broader range of services and expanding geographically into other states.

"We're still in the process of getting there," Bhatia said. "We're not where we

want to be. We want to keep expanding and providing more opportunities for our customers and employees."

She said that although a lot of adjustment is necessary, the Internet is here to stay, and there are more and more applications and uses for it every day. That will be a major factor in the future of Rose International.

Bhatia, who has a 10-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter, is on the board of directors of the Southern California Regional Purchasing Council, the advisory board for the University of Missouri, St. Louis, and several NMSDC committees for the organization's next national convention.

In 2001, she was selected for Working Woman 500, was named SBA Small Business Person of the Year for 2001 by the State of Missouri and was a regional winner of the Working Woman Entrepreneurial Excellence Award. Rose International ranked first in the St. Louis Regional Technology Fast 50, ranked 21st among the Inc. 500, and ranked 90th in the Deloitte & Touche Technology Fast 500, all in the year 2000.

According to Bhatia, "great employees and great customers" have provided a lot of help along the way. "I would hate to take all the credit for myself and call it my achievements," she said. "It's a combination. A lot of things have to fall in place - the economy, the industry you're in, the demand, the trust of the clients, getting good people on board. On a day-to-day basis, how you handle situations as they come up. All of that contributes to the success of the company." ■



Himanshu Bhatia
CEO, Rose International