

Charting a New Course

An Oracle veteran helps transform his native India into an IT hot spot. / *By Blair Campbell*

In 1994, when Ramesh Gopalaswamy was asked to help launch a development center for Oracle in his native India, there was a lot of uncertainty. People questioned what could be accomplished by a team 10,000 miles away, and some seemed to regard the undertaking as little more than a work site for low-priority projects, Ramesh recalls.

Eight years later, much has changed. In a recent address at an annual employee meeting, Oracle CEO Larry Ellison heaped praise on India's technology workforce nearly a dozen times, and the India Development Center (IDC) deserves ample credit for the transformation. For Ramesh, now the IDC's senior director, nothing could be more gratifying.

"Today people say, 'India is a very strategic part of my organization, and I'm going to move key products there,'" he says. "When I see that everybody wants to be involved here, it's a great feeling. We started this operation in 1994, and ever since it's grown by leaps and bounds." Located in Bangalore, the IDC now boasts 380 employees, all of whom Ramesh oversees. A second development center, located 350 miles away in Hyderabad, was launched in 1998.

Even at the time of the IDC's inception, breaking new ground was nothing new to Ramesh. As an employee of a Singapore-based distributor of Oracle products from 1982 to 1988, he introduced Oracle Database to customers in China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and other Asian nations, handling pre- and post-sales support.



Ramesh Gopalaswamy, senior director of Oracle's India Development Center

"Since I was customer-facing," he says, "I had a lot of opportunity to get input on what customers thought of the product." That knowledge aided him greatly when he came to Oracle's Silicon Valley headquarters for a one-year assignment in 1987; soon thereafter he was asked to join the company as a permanent hire.

Initially charged with creating a quality-assurance environment for the database on mainframes, Ramesh also worked on mainframe development during his time at headquarters. And, despite a busy schedule, he found time to earn a master's degree in technology management from Stanford University.

Today Ramesh finds himself at the other end of the classroom, teaching software project management, documentation, and communication at Anna University's School of Computer

Science in Chennai. He has also authored a book, *Managing Global Software Projects*, that captures his global experience, and his second book on software quality will be published later this year.

Assembling a strong team is a huge part of Ramesh's role at Oracle, and because teaching affords him daily contact with future engineers, he frequently hires his best students. Given his fond words for his employer, Ramesh's success at bringing new recruits on board comes as no surprise. He cites the freedom he's been given to chart his own course as a major factor in his loyalty.

"Oracle's top management is very open," he says. "But the best thing about Oracle is that new challenges are always coming. I've never seen this company slow down." ♦