

Nishith Desai Associates: Unique Research-based Firm Proffering Highest Possible Value in Shortest Possible Time

By Susila Govindaraj

Law is a complex field, where every new technology, financial instrument, business model or development in politics/society brings upon a new legal, regulatory or tax problem; thereby requiring dynamic and rapid processes. However, processes are decelerated by the traditional model, where the more time law firms spent and the more people they put on job, the more they were rewarded. Having the culture of innovation on product and process at the core, Nishith Desai Associates (NDA), a research-based international law-firm, created a paradigm shift in the legal world by delivering highest value in shortest possible time with fewer people.

The constructively contrarian firm glimmers at the top as 'North Star' and a benchmark firm for its research, innovations, creativity and service delivery by leveraging technology. Mumbai-based NDA is the only India-centric global law-firm licensed to practice Indian law and work with law-firms and in-house legal counsels in California, Singapore and Munich. Hence, NDA is the first port of call for people seeking to instigate business in India and to Indians who wish to spread out globally.

After meticulously studying management styles of top global law-firms, Nishith Desai founded NDA in 1989. He nurtured the company to be the role model and dream firm that

is being invited by professional firms and organizations to learn creativity, harnessing technologies to augment service experience, developing new legal theories and jurisprudence, and in transforming the world for better. NDA's quest for innovation has been rewarded with coveted Financial Times Award recently and recognized as topper in Client Satisfaction survey by RSG Consulting consistently along with 38 other awards. International publishing house John Wiley has also honored the company by publishing a case study on NDA's organizational excellence.

Anticipate-Prepare-Deliver

Unlike other firms that learn at the cost of client's time, NDA leverages its professional firm management model to systematically anticipate future trends and critical areas and is constantly prepared for very complex and new legal & regulatory issues. NDA undertakes research by meeting industry players, academics, professionals and regulators to develop deep insight into new developments; thus delivering services at almost the speed of thought. The firm not only invests 40 percent of time in research and academics, but also acts

as internal venture capitalists investing huge amount of monies.

The strategy-focused firm aids clients to achieve strategic objectives, and takes up highly-complex and innovative transactions/litigations. NDA's niche focus in tax, corporate,



IP and cross-border litigation raised it to top quartile in those areas. With integrated industry expertise the firm acquired large clientele across IP, Technology, Pharma & Life Sciences, Telecom, Media & Entertainment, and Financial Services particularly PE & VC Funds.


Counting Brains not Heads

Having better understanding of legal, regulatory and political environment allows NDA to undertake complex transactions and litigation, while being relatively smaller. For instance, NDA closed a \$2.7 billion Cognizant deal with such small team. This endowed the company with a stellar reputation as ‘Nano-Firm’ – a small firm that thinks BIG and does BIG – and a ‘distinctly different’ professional firm globally. Initially, people took time to grasp NDA’s ability in consistently delivering such transactions while staying right sized.

The company magnetizes skilled talents with its organizational behavior and collaborative, learning-based



and non-hierarchical culture with freedom to think and act. Having adopted ‘One Firm’ model, NDA discourages silo-working and encourages multi-disciplinary development that is bound by shared passion for NDA’s philosophy, mission, vision, culture, and values. With firm management training, they learn to be both leaders and followers. While NDA’s continuing education inculcates a learning discipline, their policies like not head hunting and expecting designations enable building discipline and creativity through practices.

Encouraged with success of their research-based approach, NDA is currently setting up a Research and Blue Sky Thinking Campus near Mumbai. NDA heedfully calibrates the opportunities with sheer focus that ensures client’s success. To enable clients to drive future, NDA drives innovations and re-engineers current business models and processes, while working on disruptive areas including privatization of space, Internet of Things (IoT), Nano technology, social business/businesses with multiple bottom lines, convergence of technology and new financial instruments. Anticipating India’s dire need, NDA participates in public policy with their Research modules, Knowledge Sites, Nishith.tv, Nishith Mobile and Continuous Education. NDA aims to maintain its position as a market leader by keeping on working with select clients and staying highly focused. “In all that we do on the path of being trusted advisors to our clients, we first look at ‘Happiness Quotient’, then ‘Happiness Billing’, and then ROI,” concludes Nishith Desai, Founder & Managing Partner, Nishith Desai Associates. 



Nishith Desai,
Founder & Managing Partner