

WT PARTNERSHIP MAKES RAPID INROADS INTO INDIA

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Australian cost management advisory services firm WT Partnership's success in India is built around its market entry strategy and careful targeting of customers. In just three years, the company has almost 100 staff and associations with India's leading businesses.

WT Partnership (WTP) is a 70-year-old organisation providing advisory and risk management services, infrastructure and construction cost management, quantity surveying, and building and engineering cost management for real estate, construction and infrastructure projects. The company employs 1,800 people in Australia, New Zealand, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America.

Most infrastructure, construction and real estate projects operate on thin margins. Fifty per cent of projects fail to meet their cost targets, resulting in cost overruns and margin compression. WTP has developed systems and processes designed to assist project developers to complete projects within specified costs. These processes are customised based on the unique requirements of each project.

In emerging markets, many project developers believe they have the necessary management systems and processes. Only when confronted with project challenges or when exposed to international partners do they see a gap in their practices and the need for specialist risk management expertise. Project developers value the blended experience and expertise of WTP's international and domestic staff, and draw on its international network, knowledge, insights, best practices and emerging trends across different markets.



WTP is providing complete cost management services for Tata Realty's mixed-use real estate project in Bangalore.

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Peter Cox, Additional Director, WT Partnership

A new frontier in India

India was a new market with rich opportunities for WTP. In 2015, WTP approached Peter Cox, an India market specialist, to conduct market research, and prepare a market entry strategy and a financial plan for its entry into India. Cox has developed and run consulting businesses in India for 20 years.

India is perceived as a price-sensitive market and a key part of Cox's research was to understand the market and prioritise customers that would see value in WTP's services, to justify WTP's premium pricing compared to domestically available alternatives.



Australian Government

Australian Trade and Investment Commission



Many international firms adopt a fly-in and fly-out model for developing business in markets like India before they set up their own operations. WTP made a decision early on that it had to have a presence in the market. The company evaluated various market entry models including partnerships with Indian companies or acquiring Indian startups. After considering various options, WTP set up a wholly owned subsidiary in India headquartered in Chennai. WTP also decided to recruit local managers and staff to serve customers in India.

WTP's original market research included one-on-one meetings with Austrade's India team. Within a short period, the WTP board made the decision to enter the market. Austrade's assistance and feedback contributed to the success of the market research and provided WTP's board the confidence to expand into India.

Understand and cater to the local market

Setting up and maintaining an overseas subsidiary requires commitment to financial and human resources, as well as significant senior management investment in market development. WTP decided to engage Cox to set up the Indian operations and oversee the business. He joined WTP as a part-time Director in 2015 and continues to support WTP in identifying clients and developing its business.

In the three years since it established operations in India, WTP has grown to almost 100 staff spanning three regional and multiple site offices.

'There are significant opportunities in India given the size of the market, demographic trends and scale of projects,' said Cox. 'But to be successful offshore, Australian companies need to have a strong brand and successful reputation at home before considering their expansion into places like India. Careful selection of customers and market regions were keys to the success of WTP in India along with an understanding of business practices and cultures within the market.'

'Some companies make the mistake of transplanting their products and services from a mature market like Australia to a developing market like India,' he added. 'Products and or services need to be re-engineered to meet local requirements and pricing. There can be a huge variation between the pricing in Australia and India. Australian companies need to reverse engineer their products and services for the Indian market to make it affordable, relevant and sustainable.'

WTP has been growing at 60 per cent year-on-year in India since 2015. The company is associated with India's leading infrastructure, construction and real estate companies including TATA Realty, Ascendas-Singbridge, Emami Realty, Piramal Developers, Puravankara Limited, Shapoorji Realty and GMR Hyderabad Airport, as well as multinational corporations such as JPMorgan, DBS Bank, Broadcomm, Oracle, Amazon and Cisco. WTP's projects are spread across India, including in Amaravati, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Pune, New Delhi and Vijayawada.

According to Munish Sharma, Austrade's Trade Commissioner in Chennai: 'The success of WTP in India is strong testimony to their localised approach and market entry strategy for India. The key to succeeding in India depends on 'how' you engage with the market. The market in India is huge but the opportunity for Australia is generally in niche areas so it is really important to understand the market segments and position your product or service based on gap within that segment. WTP has invested time and resources to understand buyer behaviour, sales process and continually localised their strategy and offering as per the requirements of their customers.'

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- › develop international markets
- › win productive foreign direct investment
- › promote international education
- › strengthen Australia's tourism industry
- › seek consular and passport services.

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