

Manufacturing

By Paul Holmes
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Technology firm looking for more employees

A Jonesboro based firm is helping information technology executives meet the challenge of finding software development expertise at competitive rates, and creating local jobs in rural areas at an even faster rate than company leaders anticipated.

While using an offshore company offers the lure of low rates, it has the disadvantage of having distant resources, making project management and communication difficult, said Ingrid Miller, director of operations for Rural Sourcing, Inc., the company founded in Jonesboro in 2003 by Arkansas State University alumna Kathy Brittain White. In 2007, Clarkson Consulting became an investor in the firm. Miller brings her expertise and experience with Clarkson to RSI.

"We're finding that companies in this economic climate (have) chief information officers who don't want to travel," particularly given the recent hotel bombing in Mumbai, India, where a great deal of IT work is outsourced, she said.

As a result Rural Sourcing is capitalizing on the opportunity to attract more clients for what it calls domestic sourcing offers the advantage of proximity, flexibility, highly skilled project management and communication, along with attractive rates. Hourly rates are about twice what an offshore company might charge, Miller

said, but RSI's software developers and quality assurance personnel consult with their client companies "in the same language and in the same time zone." When clients ask offshore firms with troubleshooting help, she said, there is customarily a "48-hour turnaround" because of the time difference, a hurdle that doesn't exist when dealing with a domestic IT firm

such as Rural Sourcing.

RSI recently landed contact with RJ Reynolds and a number of other U.S. companies, Miller said. The company planned to expand staff to 25 by mid-year and 50 by the end of 2009, "but were looking to accelerate" those goals, she said.

When White founded RSI, she did so with the idea of locating offices of the

company in rural areas near regional universities that graduate a number of computer science majors, allowing those graduates to stay at home and earn good livings, Miller said. The company, located at 5501 Kreuger Drive, is recruiting software developers and quality assurance personnel.

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Ingrid Miller of Rural Sourcing Inc. said the Jonesboro company is expanding rapidly and seeking additional IT professionals.

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