

Regional expertise with a global perspective resolves client challenges



Case study

Client name:
InterCall Australia Pty Ltd

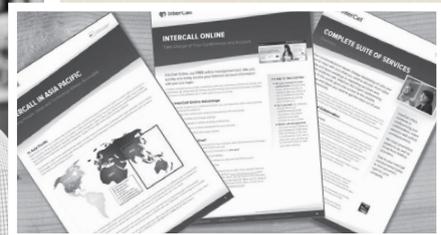
Sector:
Technology

Annual turnover:
US\$ 164 million in APAC,
US\$ 1.2 billion globally

Client challenge:
Disparate financial and accounting processes across the Asia Pacific (APAC) region

Grant Thornton services:
International tax services and compliance, statutory accounting, transfer pricing, IP planning, establishment of regional entrepreneurial centre, SharePoint client extranet

Geographies served:
Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, India, Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines



Left: Paul Bell co-ordinating regional strategy
Above: InterCall marketing collateral

InterCall, a subsidiary of West Corporation based in the United States, is the world's largest independent provider of audio, video and web-conferencing facilities. In the Asia Pacific (APAC) region InterCall's annual revenue has grown from US\$32 million in 2008 to US\$164 million. In early 2013 Grant Thornton Australia secured the account against strong competition from three of the Big 4 firms on the basis of providing a central relationship built on regional expertise but with a global perspective, and managed, crucially, from within APAC.

“Grant Thornton, with its strong and efficient regional service offering, knowledge of our business and personal approach, is the right provider to have by our side as we look to grow further in Asia Pacific.”

Paul Bell, Head of strategy and development InterCall APAC

Client challenge:

Consolidation across the region

In recent years, InterCall has enjoyed exceptionally strong organic growth in the APAC region, but, in the pursuit of growth, financial and legal processes were left behind. "When I joined InterCall Australia in 2008, there was great disparity in the finance and accounting processes and structures, and legal and regulatory arrangements were problematic in some countries, including China and India," explains Paul Bell, Head of strategy and development InterCall APAC. Concerns about these back office functions led the US parent company to issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) in 2012. Three of the Big 4 were in the running, as were Grant Thornton Australia, who secured the work on the basis of a very different approach from the competition.

The Grant Thornton solution

Early in 2013, Grant Thornton won the pitch on the strength of a strong, integrated regional offering run centrally from within APAC, with customer engagement at its heart. The service to InterCall now draws extensively on the Sydney-based engagement team and their in-depth understanding of the business and ability to access the expertise of Grant Thornton partners in 11 member firms across the region. "In every APAC country, we can now rely on a Grant Thornton team on the ground that truly understands our business, but has global perspective on crucial matters like tax," explains Paul.

The outcome

InterCall's APAC processes have now been harmonised, and previously loss-making operations in Japan and Singapore turned around. Internal finance teams have been strengthened across the region and are supported by Grant Thornton member firms with proactive guidance and advice as and when challenges arise.

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Paul Bell, Head of strategy and development InterCall APAC

Client challenge:

Managing a crisis in India

In mid-2014, InterCall's India operation was in crisis. There were legal complications around licensing and local regulations, and an urgent and potentially damaging tax issue had arisen.

The Grant Thornton solution

Though the India operation had not yet transitioned to Grant Thornton India following the relatively recent new regional service agreement, "they parachuted people in to get to grips with the problems and work out what to do," says Paul. "They were on site within a few days and did an excellent, very thorough job, much to the delight of both regional and US management. I don't know how many other providers could have mustered those resources in such a short time frame."

The outcome

Grant Thornton Australia's responsive attitude, diligence and tenacity to deliver have helped put InterCall's India operation back on track. Excellent communication firstly with the client – but also with other member firms – meant that Grant Thornton Australia could leverage Grant Thornton member firm expertise across the region to resolve a potentially business critical situation in a very short space of time.

Client challenge:

Setting up in China

InterCall's presence in China is currently through a joint venture with a local provider, based in Shanghai. "The Chinese government considers conferencing as just another form of telecommunications," says Paul, "and, therefore, a matter of national security, so in the past it hasn't allowed any sole foreign ownership and limited foreign market participation in the sector. However, at the end of 2013 China suddenly announced that foreign entities could obtain a full license to operate teleconferencing in China. Something that I'd been advised many times wouldn't happen. We are now very actively working towards obtaining a full licence and forming our own new entity in Shanghai."

The Grant Thornton solution

"As soon as that opportunity opened up, we began discussing it with Grant Thornton. We told them: 'We need your best contacts in China who're able to stay ahead of the game and help make this happen, in what we perceive will be a short window of opportunity'. Grant Thornton is already delivering: not only have they made the necessary introductions for what I need in terms of accountancy support in China but they are actively monitoring and managing what is a very fluid situation."

The outcome

Excellent support from Grant Thornton China, facilitated by the engagement team in Sydney, looks set to enable InterCall to operate as a solely owned entity in arguably the largest market in the world.

Global reach, regional service, personal touch

"In our business, there is a regional and global perspective to be considered," says Paul. "Grant Thornton brings that global reach, but operates in the region with access to local member firm expertise in every APAC country we have a presence in. Grant Thornton understands the challenges that come with the region's cultural diversity, but also knows our business inside out."

"Grant Thornton brings a personal touch to a highly professional business relationship. The partners are always happy to meet in person, even at short notice, and they are always thinking one step ahead, anticipating what needs to be done."

"We're confident Grant Thornton, with its strong and efficient regional service offering, knowledge of our business and personal approach, is the right provider to have by our side as we look to grow further in Asia Pacific."

Do you have similar challenges?

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