

Export Training Lands Contracts for Aviation Services Firm

Like any successful entrepreneur, Zaheer Faruqi is a quick study. Unfortunately, some of the earliest business lessons he learned were from the school of hard knocks, when he moved from a company that went out of business to another that soon began struggling to stay afloat. “I got experience in what not to do,” he says. “The company expanded rapidly and was taking out large bank loans. When business wasn’t good, they weren’t able to repay the loans.”

Faruqi decided that rather than taking another job, he would start a home-based aviation services business. He also found new “instructors:” the business consultants of the Georgia SBDC Network. Since its opening in 2002, Aventure International Aviation Services has become a successful company with 11 full time staff, two advisors and a new facility in Peachtree City.



Zaheer Faruqi

Aventure provides aircraft parts and component repair, airport ground support equipment and aircraft leasing, and consulting and parts consignment management to more than 50 airlines and aircraft operators around the globe. As much as 90 percent of its revenues are generated from export sales.

In 2003 Faruqi attended ExportGA. Charles Boyanton, head of the Georgia SBDC Network’s International Trade Center, helped him identify markets and set up operational plans. After the course, he would call for information or advice as needed. They worked together on financing to build his new facility. “Zaheer did the final loan package,” says Boyanton. “We met, discussed financial projections, and he went out and got it.” Faruqi says the ExportGA

course was beneficial in many ways, not least of which was his exposure to the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD), the Small Business Administration, and others involved.

“Businesses should definitely take advantage of the SBDC courses,” says Faruqi, who attended FastTrac® Growth Venture in early 2009. “In FastTrac® they tell you everything from A-to-Z about running a business: everything you need to know but might be afraid to ask.” Consultant Bob Thiele and Area Director Sharon Macaluso of the DeKalb office of the SBDC followed up with sessions on long-term strategic planning. “They’ve got some fantastic tools for business,” he says.

Faruqi learned early on how important it is for a company to maintain control of its finances. “You can’t just go out and spend. You need to be cautious,” he warns. But the lessons don’t stop there.

“Diversify your customer base,” he says. “If you export, consider going on trade missions. Three years ago we went on a mission to Canada with Governor Sonny Perdue and the GDEcD. A Canadian company we met then is now one of our largest customers. Don’t treat the trip like a tourism experience; use it as an opportunity to talk to other businesses.

“You have to be visible. This year we’ll be attending, exhibiting and often speaking at various aviation events, conferences or air shows in Dubai, London, Warsaw, Montreal and Orlando. When we go out to these events, people see us. Our competitors are pulling back and they’re hurting, but we’re doing very well. Be aggressive.”

Boyanton gives Faruqi “99 percent of the credit” for his company’s success. “He is very much a self-starter. Since he attended ExportGA, he has been a featured speaker at almost all subsequent programs. His company is also a nominee for the SBA Exporter of the Year award,” he says.