

ALL IT TAKES IS AN OFFICE, A PC AND INSURANCE

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Body

From his one-room office in Little India, Harish Pandya, a former motel clerk, runs a "body shop" of high-tech workers.

He finds young people in India and brings them to the United States with H-1B temporary visas. He then finds corporations in need of contract employees for software assignments and leases out his H-1B visa holders to them.

It does not take much to set up a small H-1B business, about \$40,000 to \$50,000, Pandya said.

This includes rent for an office - his was the size of a doctor's office - and a PC and business insurance.

Pandya said he had brought in 10 visa holders from India in the last three years, telling the U.S. Labor Department he would pay them \$45,000 a year. This year, Pandya expects to bring another 10.

Upon arrival, the Indian employees initially are dependent on Pandya for lodging and food. With their own salaries, they eventually find their own places to live.

Sometimes, though, this is discouraged. Because of the itinerant nature of their assignments, employers such as Pandya do not want their H-1B employees locked into long-term housing contracts. Pandya uses a guest house, typically an apartment or home, to board employees.

But it can get crowded. "If there are 10 people in one house, then it looks like junk," Pandya said. "That's why we like to bring two or three people [from India] at one time," he said. "We also have to keep relations with the motels if one of our guys does not want to stay in the guest house because he is a senior employee."

One problem is keeping his H-1B employees. An H-1B worker, once inside the United States, can move between companies, seeking higher salary, better benefits, or more favorable working conditions. Pandya said the workers mostly move between companies with connections to India.

Pandya complained loudly about the "morality" of six who recently quit on short notice when they found a new corporate sponsor. The employees told him they were underpaid, Pandya said.

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But Pandya, smoking a cigarette, quickly calmed down. "I made mistakes. . . . I have decided this year that I will give a raise [to new H-1B employees] after three months," he said.

The computer consulting business has been lucrative enough that Pandya expects to invest his profits into buying a motel in two years. He is a former manager of a Rodeway Inn. "If I have a motel, I can have an office there," Pandya said. "If I have a motel, I can house my people there. I don't need a guest house."

He sees no limits to his body shop. "There is nothing like a cap on this business," Pandya said. "You can file for five people or you can file for 500 people. It has to do with your capacity. . . . All the expenses are taken on by us."

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