



The reception areas in Suntec Tower One, Singapore, and BNP Paribas Centre, Sydney (shown), both have an Egyptian theme

## GOOD HELP ISN'T HARD TO FIND

Once little more than glorified call centres for travelling salesmen, today's serviced offices are becoming the permanent home of an increasing number of law firms

**W**hen in 2005 Indian law firm Nisith Desai decided it was time to open a practice in Singapore, it did not want to waste valuable time shopping for office space in an increasingly tight and expensive commercial real estate market. Nor did it relish the hassle of furnishing and equipping its space, filling an office supply cabinet or spending money on secretarial services that would only be utilised by a small team.

Instead, it chose to go down the same route as an increasing number of other law firms and companies whose small staffs and management teams wish to spend their working hours growing their business – not arguing over whose turn it is to clean the kitchen.

In short, it took space in a serviced office facility; in particular, one on the

30th floor of an office tower at Battery Road in Singapore, in the heart of Raffles Place.

"We were looking at various infrastructure solutions and when we came across the serviced office concept, we were immediately sold," says Nisith Desai partner Vivek Kathpalia, who has been managing the firm's Singapore office since its inception.

"This was a great option for us as we were starting off with just a few people, and they take care [of everything] from secretarial services to food and beverage catering, which is really quite good," he explains.

Desai and his associates also have access to a number of conference and boardrooms in the facility, giving them a range of meeting space options that they would not have enjoyed had they decided to rent a traditional bare-bones suite in an office tower.

Servcorp, which was started in 1978 in Sydney by the father of Taine Moufarrige, the company's executive director, has 78 "floors" of office space spread across 30 cities in 17 countries, and has just opened its first offices in Qatar.

Servcorp maintains five complete floors in properties spread across

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Singapore alone. In Singapore, in addition to the Battery Road offices Nisith Desai calls home, Servcorp also has facilities at Suntec City and in the Prudential Tower.

Moufarrige agrees that the convenience of a serviced office is one of his product's key selling points. If time, after all, is money, then anything that leaves an entrepreneur, executive or managing partner free to pursue their core business is by nature cost effective.

"We give our clients peace of mind to focus on their business," he says.

"They get everything they need to run their business, all set up and in place, and they get all the solutions they need to run their business," Mourfarrige details.

"They don't need to hire an administrative assistant; they don't need to deal with setting up telephony or internet services; they don't need to bring in a conference organiser, a caterer or a cleaner," he details.

Nor do they have to worry about stocking a kitchen or office supply cabinet – and as Moufarrige is quick to point out, his tenants get a far better deal because they can leverage the buying power of 11,000 fellow Servcorp clients.

"For us, this makes so much more sense than wasting time hiring support staff for a small office", says Kathpalia, who says that he would not hesitate to advise others to embrace the serviced office concept. Especially in Singapore, where rents are so high to begin with, unless you have a large number of people it does not make sense to take your own space," he states. ALB