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JVS WITH INDIAN FIRMS WILL HELP US CREATE FOOTPRINTS ACROSS THE GLOBE

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The article is an interview with Geoff Barnes,
CEO and President Baker Tilly International

'JVs with Indian Firms Will Help us Create Footprints Across the Globe'

ET Q&A

At a time when Indian auditing firms are going through a consolidation phase fol-

lowing the new Companies Act, international players are increasingly betting big on the domestic market. In an exclusive interview with ET's Sachin Dave and M Sabarinath, Geoff Barnes, CEO and president of business advisory and accountancy network Baker Tilly International, says India will be one of the largest markets in the world for auditing. He also describes how the firm plans to take on the Big Four by launching a global skill centre in India in alliance with home-grown firm Desai Haribhakti. Edited excerpts.

Can you share your India plans? You are entering at a time when there are a few established global players here already.

Most economists see India as one of the top three economies globally in the next 25 years. So, anyone who is looking to grow internationally has to be represented in the country. Therefore, setting up partnerships and joint ventures here would help us to create footprints across the globe.

The country ranks very high in technical and intellectual levels, not only in the organisational aspect, but with its ambition to



Geoff Barnes, CEO, Baker Tilly International

provide high quality services as well. We provide a wide range of consultancy services, including litigation support, forensic services, corporate recovery and corporate reconstruction. We are present in 140 nations and we are in the top 10 in all countries, and top six in some countries. A high intellectual base, coupled with a young and ambitious population, makes India the place to be in. Today, services like auditing can be outsourced, but only to high-quality organisations. The scenario (in auditing) is extremely sensitive and

one has to be cautious that work is given to like-minded individuals.

Which are the verticals where you see growth in the next five years in India?

Tax consulting is particularly growing fast. Apart from that, I also see internal audit, corporate and risk assessment, litigation support and forensic accounting also growing in the coming years. The stock markets are also waking up, and after 2008, we are seeing more activity in IPOs and M&As, just like the secondary market in London. So, I see IT and integrated reporting as something that our colleagues here (in India) would be interested in looking at, from a global perspective.

With the Companies Act's rotation clause coming into play, do you see yourself at a disadvantage?

In London, the first 100 companies are all audited by the Big Four. The top 250 is a wider market. I have had meetings with many senior officials recently and they think this is a terrible mistake (rotation of auditors). This is not the Big Four talking, but corporate houses. So, there are both positives and negatives to the rotation clause. We will be able to evaluate it in the next two to three years, whether it's been good or otherwise, and why so.