

Technology Production for Advertising Agencies



Rukmal Fernando
President

About Breeze Design Studio

Breeze Design Studio is full-service new technology production company located in Birmingham, Michigan. Breeze provides production assistance with emerging and innovative technologies to its clients worldwide. As technology continues to evolve at a staggering rate, the demand for emerging technology-based skillsets has raised to an all time high. Since its inception, Breeze DS has been driving through the notion of "Not just designing, but defining the creative and technology desires of our clients", which reminds us, that within every client there exists an opportunity to explore new innovative potentials.

Interview conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine

CEOCFO: Mr. Fernando, would you tell us the concept at Breeze Design?

Mr. Fernando: The core concept is that we are a technology production company for advertising agencies. Advertising agencies come to us to fill a technological void that they may have internally. We service mostly small to medium sized advertising agencies around the world. We are a heavy technology-driven company, most advertising agencies do not have the same level skill sets we have internally and they come to us to get some of their work done.

CEOCFO: What would be a typical project?

Mr. Fernando: We do a great deal of highly advanced web and mobile development projects utilizing different technologies such as Ruby on Rails, PHP/Cake PHP and Ajax. The type of web development projects that we have recently done for some of our agency partners has a great deal of technology backend functionality. It is not your typical website. The sites might have very complex CMS (Content Management System) and heavy database backend functionality or components like incorporating Augmented Reality into the websites or developing Facebook Apps. We mostly provide advanced web and emerging technology solutions. Some of the new technologies we provide are solutions such as reflection/holo technology and touch/motion/gesture technology. Some of these are technologies relatively new and not many companies that provide them are available in the US market yet.

CEOCFO: When an agency comes to you, do they know what they want or do they come to you with an idea and ask you how you can make it happen?

Mr. Fernando: It is both. Sometimes the agencies have an existing client, so their internal team will have already spoken to the client and will have an idea of what they want and the technology they want to use to meet the client's needs. On occasion, however, they might have the concept but do not know how to execute the idea using an emerging technology. In these instances, they will come to us and ask if we can help them bring their concept to fruition and we will say yes, and then explain the technology that we can use.

CEOCFO: How do you evaluate new technology?

Mr. Fernando: We have a dedicated R&D team of about ten people and their primary goal day in and day out to do research on the internet and find these technologies. Then we internally test those technologies and try to bring it to the market.

CEOCFO: That seems like many people for that function?

Mr. Fernando: Many of these team members are interns from a very prominent university in my country, where I have a production office. These interns are usually fresh out of university and are technologically

talented and always familiar with the newest technologies. In addition to doing the research, this group also handles the internal testing models that we have in place for new technologies.

CEO CFO: *Would you tell us about the geographic reach?*

Mr. Fernando: The global head office is located here in Birmingham Michigan. Majority of the production work is done out of our production office in Sri Lanka and we have a sales office in Australia.

CEO CFO: *That is a wide range. How did you get to Birmingham?*

Mr. Fernando: I live here in SE Michigan, and when I started the company in 2007 many wanted me to leave Michigan and move to a larger city. I decided to stay, however, and based the operations here. I am originally from Sri Lanka and given the high local literacy rate, I decided to base our production and technology center in Sri Lanka.

CEO CFO: *What type of projects do you like to work with personally?*

Mr. Fernando: We like to work on any project that is fun and interesting. We always look for a challenge. For us, an ideal project is one that allows our staff to push the envelope both technologically and creatively. Of course, any project that lets us “play” with a new technology is also a favorite.

CEO CFO: *How do agencies find Breeze?*

Mr. Fernando: We prospect agencies, so we do a ton of business development reaching out to new agencies and highlighting our capabilities. We also get some referral business from our satisfied clients. Breeze is a member of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, and uses that affiliation to build business relationships.

“The core concept is that we are a technology production company for advertising agencies.” - Rukmal Fernando

CEO CFO: *Do you have many long-term clients?*

Mr. Fernando: I would say eighty percent of my agencies have been clients for many years and do repeat business. Once we do a project and they understand our capabilities and the quality of work we do, they normally keep coming back. Our current agency clients also refer us to other agencies.

CEO CFO: *What is your competitive advantage?*

Mr. Fernando: There are many sub-contract companies that offer either web, mobile or a few components of what the service agencies require. We are a full service production company that can service the majority of the agency’s requirements. With our Onshore/Offshore model, we are able to deliver solutions to our agency partners at a much lower rate, which has become a very attractive model to the agencies. When we have long-term client agencies that send us continuous work, we setup a dedicated team for that agency spearheaded by a dedicated project manager. The agencies will have direct access to our staff and that team becomes like an extension of that agency. When an agency looks for a partner to provide them with heavy technology or custom solutions, which is where we have an advantage. Given the time difference, our offshore office work parallel hours in the US and it gives us an added advantage of not only being able to communicate with our agency clients during their work hours, but work sent to us by the end of their work day is usually complete by the next morning. Most of the projects that we undertake are completed faster when compared to a traditional sub-contracted partner due to our almost 24-hour work cycle. More importantly, given our onshore/offshore model, we are able to pass all the cost savings to our agency clients rather than charging them standard US market rates.

CEO CFO: *Are many of the projects time sensitive?*

Mr. Fernando: Generally yes. Once a client’s needs are identified, they usually go to the advertising agency with the project and a launch date in mind. It may be a specific date or it may be a more general time span. With every project, once the scope is defined we give the client a detailed timeline and project milestones. There are instances where the client may want the project done sooner than it was originally scoped and we will always try to accommodate the clients’ request. If we are unable to complete the entire project in the

shorter requested timeframe, we will talk to the client, approach the project in multiple phases, and deliver the main components in the first phase of the project within the shorter timeframe.

CEO CFO: *What are some of the changing trends that you are seeing?*

Mr. Fernando: We see changes on the interactive side. The new reflection technology is similar to the hologram, but at a fraction of the price. Holographic technology uses laser lighting and projects 3D images in the air. The technology that we use produces a similar effect but projects the images onto a clear medium, like glass. The newest technology these days is interactive. There is a lot of interest in technologies that allow the user to interact with the technology. Touch and gesture technology is a good example. What we have done with the reflection technology is incorporated the gesture technology so we can control the reflection hologram by using hand gestures and make the holographic reflection do multiple things.

CEO CFO: *Once you have created the technology, does the end client of the agency control it?*

Mr. Fernando: Once a project is completed, we one hand over the project and all code and assets to the agency. We do not retain anything or tell them they have to use us going forward. If they choose to continue working with us on the technology, we will sign a maintenance agreement with the agencies. Regardless of the scenario, all of the code is given to the agency and they can choose how to handle the process going forward.

CEO CFO: *How is business?*

Mr. Fernando: We have been expanding and are planning to open new offices in Europe and UAE. We have doubled in capacity in the last 12 months and plan to add more staff this year. We are based in Detroit. The local Michigan economy has improved significantly in the past two years, which has helped us to gain more local clients.

CEO CFO: *Why does Breeze Design Studios standout?*

Mr. Fernando: Breeze Design Studios is an emerging technology company. We always try to be on the cutting-edge of new technology. Companies use us because of the heavy technology we bring to the game that most companies do not have. We also like to have fun with our projects and our clients. We like to put forth a project that not only meets but also exceeds our clients' expectations, not only technologically, but also creatively.



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