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Today's recession might look familiar to Sonu Ratna and Amar Panchal. They started their IT consulting and staffing business during the dot-com bust in 2002.

"We had the urge to start something of our own," Ratna said. "We are both risk-takers."

Risk-taking paid off. Now the company employs 250 people and has offices in Sunnyvale, New Jersey and Pune, India. Last year, it made \$28 million in revenue.

Part of the struggle when starting was to maintain credibility in the tech staffing world. "We didn't want it to come across as a mom-and-pop shop just because a husband and wife are co-owners and running it together," Panchal explained. They try to find balance as well: "We both tend to know our responsibilities and don't step on each other's toes," Panchal said. "At least, as far as I know."

And who wins in a fight?

"We never fight," Ratna quipped.

The idea behind Akraya was to bridge Panchal's experience as a software engineer with Ratna's experience in human relations, international recruiting and staffing. "Having been on the other side of the table where I was responsible for hiring software engineers, I could see that there is a gap between what the buyer as a hiring manager wants and what agencies are able to deliver," Panchal said.

Hiring managers want to talk to someone who understands their needs, he said.

Akraya's clients include Cisco Systems Inc., eBay Inc., Genentech Inc., Yahoo Inc., EMC Corp., Amazon.com Inc. and several startups. In a normal year, the company places between 30 and 40 people each month, although the couple said that the recession has affected their numbers.

Still, Ratna and Panchal each independently offered the same five-year goal: to build Akraya into a \$100 million company. For the past two years, the company has grown revenue by 40 per cent, Panchal said. If the trend continues, they could be at \$100 million in five years. To reach that goal, the company has invested in its management team and technology.

"We're fairly optimistic that we're going to get there," Panchal said. "This year is definitely a speed bump. At the same time, it's a doable goal in my mind."

Outside work, the couple spends time outdoors hiking, biking and skiing, and spends time with their daughter, Ananya.

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