

Business

City Seeks Software Action

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Why go to Calcutta when you can get all your software outsourcing requirements filled in St. Petersburg, the cultural capital of Russia?

The question, put at the Technology Leadership Forum held in St. Petersburg on Wednesday by Andrei Narvsky, co-chair of the American Chamber of Commerce Information Technology Committee, revealed the competitive nature of the outsourcing market.

Russia is second to India as a supplier of offshore software programs. In 2001 it was third in terms of quality of software outsourcing, according to a study cited by Valentin Makarov, president of the Fort Ross Consortium.

In 2003, Russia exported software products worth \$475 million, and this figure is growing, Makarov said.

The forum, held by software outsourcer DataArt and the CIO Collective, a U.S. group with 75 members, gathered St. Petersburg programmers and representatives of high technology firms.

The chief hurdle to making Russia the world software outsourcing leader is lack of government support. But, with lobbying, the situation is changing, Makarov of Fort Ross said.

St. Petersburg offers more than scenery to potential outsourcing clients.

Among the advantages for chief information officers of engaging the services of St. Petersburg firms Narvsky, of eVelopers, listed historical and cultural ties with Europe and the United States, and its educated workforce.

As Narvsky pointed out, about 1,500 engineers in software development graduate from St. Petersburg universities every year. The city's universities produce an additional 12,000 IT-related specialists per year.

Teams of programmers from St. Petersburg's universities consistently either top the the annual ACM International Collegiate Programming Contest or place among medalists.

As a result of these factors, between 30 percent and 35 percent of all income from offshore programmers in Russia is generated by St. Petersburg companies, according to data from Outsourcing-Russia.com.