

N.Y. firm finds room to grow

Company may add 100 jobs by 2008

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It's been a busy year at the Austin office of consulting firm Gerson Lehrman Group. Since establishing a local presence in August 2005, the local office of the New York-based company has grown from eight employees to 86.

Anticipating further expansion, GLG recently relocated its downtown offices, doubling its space.

Gerson Lehrman engages councils — groups of expert professionals in specific industries — to serve its clients. GLG's services and Web-based software help organizations, from financial services firms to nonprofits, build and manage their proprietary knowledge networks. The company says revenues have climbed more than 30 percent since 1999.

"We were considering several different cities for our council management operations, and Austin was an easy decision for us to invest in," says GLG CEO Alexander Saint-Amand. He says factors such as a skilled local workforce, central location and high quality of life contributed to the decision.

But the company wasn't expecting to grow its local operation so quickly.

"We anticipated that we would have a very strong workforce, but I don't think anyone expected we would find the depth and breadth of the talent that we have here," says Loraine Brown, GLG's vice president of process management and operational leader in Austin.

The company started off with a 5,800-

square-foot lease at Austin Centre on Brazos Street and had to quickly take another 3,900 square feet to accommodate staff expansion.

Now, GLG has leased nearly 20,000 square feet at 301 Congress Ave. The company occupies the entire ninth floor of that office building.

Bill Gump and Trish McQueen with Crescent Real Estate Equities Ltd. handled negotiations on the landlord side and Merit Texas Properties' Tim Jarvis represented Gerson Lehrman.

Saint-Amand says the expansion is ambitious, but he's confident that the local team will continue to build on an already strong base. With seven domestic and five international offices, GLG's Austin office is already the company's second-largest, next to its New York headquarters. Saint-Amand anticipates the company will add another 100 employees here during the next 18 to 24 months. Collectively, GLG has about 490 employees in offices from London to Shanghai.

Beyond handling the company's council management operations for the North, South and Central American regions, the Austin office is beginning to incorporate other functions such as accounting and legal, Brown says.



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Loraine Brown is Gerson Lehrman Group's vice president of process management and operational leader in Austin.

The company is also looking to beef up its software development and information technology operations, relying on Austin's reputation as a technology center to lure high-quality candidates, she says.

"We're finding a lot of interest among people from places like Houston and Dallas that maybe went to school in Austin and really want to come back," Brown says. "It's been a pretty interesting year."

With regard to office space, Brown says the new lease will satisfy the company's needs — at least for a while. She says the company already anticipates it will need an even bigger space by 2008 if its current growth rate continues.