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**T**HE LONG PLATES atop the wings of an aircraft may be called spoilers, for they disrupt the airflow over the wings. But far from spoiling a flight, these flaps ensure that an aircraft lands and takes off smoothly. The plates need to be resilient to high wind speeds and, at the same time, be light-weight. It is a tricky proposition for aircraft manufacturers.

Over the years, they have turned to offshore service providers to analyse and test parts such as wing spoilers—virtually—before redesigning them. This is a more efficient way to reduce costs of producing and testing than spending on several physical prototypes.

Bangalore-based QuEST (Quality Engineering and Software Technologies) is one such independent service provider in the large aerospace engineering design community in India, which has been the preserve of major IT companies such as Wipro, TCS and Infosys.

## Garage-To-Riches Story

QuEST, a \$50 million engineering services provider today, was founded by two friends, Ajit Prabhu and Aravind Melligeri. Both were graduates from Karnataka Regional Engineering College and were working in the US with Ford and General Electric, respectively. In 1997, they started QuEST in New York. The company focused on engineering consulting services, and bagged its first contract worth \$20,000 from GE Power System. In a year, they set up its India base in Bangalore.

In 1999, the company acquired Detroit-based Lexel Engineering to develop its automotive expertise in computer-aided engineering. The case for engineering services offshoring (ESO) was gaining currency among IT services players at the same time, and QuEST found itself in the company of giants like Infosys and TCS to pick the bones of ESO. Infosys today has 5,500 engineers globally, with engineering contributing 10% of its revenues. By comparison, niche players like QuEST have teams that are less than a quarter the size of the Infosys'

# The Quest Goes On

How much should an air-bag inflate? QuEST makes money by answering such queries—virtually

**RICH SPREAD:**  
QuEST COO Ajit Prabhu says they have diversified across sectors in the last three years



