



“SQS India BFSI Limited Q2 FY15 Earnings Conference Call”

October 31, 2014



MANAGEMENT: **Dr. Martin Müller, Managing Director & CEO, SQS India BFSI**
Mr. René Gawron, Director, SQS India BFSI (& CFO of SQS)
Mr. N. Vaidyanathan, CFO, SQS India BFSI

MODERATOR: **Diwakar Pingle, Christensen**

Moderator Ladies and gentlemen good evening and welcome to the SQS India BFSI Limited Q2 FY15 Earnings Conference Call. As a remainder all participant lines will be in the listen-only mode. There will be an opportunity for you to ask questions after the presentation concludes. Should you need assistance during the conference call, please signal an operator by pressing ‘*’ and then ‘0’ on your touchtone phone.



Please note that this conference is being recorded. I now hand the conference over to Mr. Diwkar Pingle. Thank you and over to you.

Diwkar Pingle:

Thank you Mohsin. Good evening, good morning to everyone wherever, which ever geography you are from. Welcome everyone and thank you for joining us for the Q2 FY15, ended September 30, 2014 Earnings Call. For SQS India BFSI Limited. Please note the results and the presentation has been mailed to you and you can also view this on our website which is www.sqs-bfsi.com. To take us through the results and to answer your questions we have with us today Dr. Martin Müller Managing Director & CEO, SQS India BFSI Limited, Mr. René Gawron, Director SQS India BFSI and Mr. N. Vaidyanathan CFO of SQS India BFSI. We will be starting the call with a brief presentation providing an overview with the company's performance which will be given by Dr. Martin Müller, which will be followed by brief business as well outlook on the business overview by Mr. René Gawron, followed by the Financials given by Mr. N. Vaidyanathan.

I would like to remind you that everything said on this call that reflect any outlook for the future or which can be construed as a forward looking statement must but be viewed in conjunction with uncertainties and risk we face. These uncertainties and risk are included but not limited to what we have mentioned in our prospectus filed with SEBI and subsequent annual report which you can find on our website. With that said, I would now turn the call over to Dr. Martin Müller – Managing Director and CEO, SQS India BFSI Limited. Over to you Martin.

Dr. Martin Müller:

Thank you very much. I am very happy and pleased to report a very good quarter for SQS India BFSI Limited. So what do I mean when we say we had a good quarter? I will give you some key parameters and key figures on a Q-on-Q basis as I have already learned in my time here in India that the Indian analyst community is more comfortable with a Q-on-Q reporting. Having said that, we will also give some figures on a year-on-year and half year basis. We are continuing our growth path and this is shown by our revenue growth of around 10% in last quarter, so we grew from Q1 to Q2 from 51 crores to 56.5 crores. This was mainly driven by the North American geography and the Banking practice. We are also happy to report that PBT before exchange gain and loss also increased by 23% and this in absolute numbers



translates to a growth from 8.8 crores to 10.8 crores. And this was mainly driven by the revenue growth which I already alluded to earlier.

I would like to report on the EBIT numbers on a QoQ basis. We were able to increase the EBIT by almost 25% from 8.8 crores to 10.9 crores and this is mainly driven as I said for the PBT, by our revenue growth as also the parameters below the line of revenue. This gives a good indication that we are managing our utilizations well which improved this quarter; we will give the exact numbers later. We also efficiently managed our cost parameters to keep them under strict observation and control. So we see that the combined effect of the revenue growth, utilization uptick and cost control were key parameters as to why we achieved a good EBIT result. Our net cash position increased from 53.6 crores to 60.3 crores which is another positive development. The EPS grew from Rs.6.09 in the June ending quarter to Rs.6.9 for this quarter. The above was basically the quarter-on-quarter numbers and if you would like to have a second view, we would also like to report our year-on-year numbers to give you a quick understanding of how we are going on our growth path from last year to this year.

So as far as revenue goes, we grew by 17% in dollar terms and 12% in rupee terms on a corresponding quarter basis while for the half year comparison we grew by 15% in rupee terms and 16% in dollar terms. This shows that we have grown whichever way you look at the numbers. What is the reason behind this? How were we able to achieve this sales number? If you look into the segmental reporting on a geographical basis, our North America practice grew from 22% to 24%. Europe also grew in absolute numbers in dollar terms from 4.3\$ to 4.4\$ million, however the relative contribution fell from 50% to 47%. Asia has been largely stable at around 28% or 29% mark. From a domain perspective, the main driver was the banking practice. Banking grew from 47% to 51% while other practices were more or less at the same levels as last quarter. All the practices had an absolute growth with banking showing the highest growth rate.

If you look at our clients – there is not much change in the number of clients we are serving, so the active clients for the last 12 months continue to be around 83. There was some churn as some smaller clients came in as new accounts for the quarter on a fixed project basis which is quite normal. If you look at the number of million dollar



clients, we have shown three types of segmentation between half a million and one million, one and three, and three to six million dollars. You might see some change in numbers there but those were more due to clients from a border line case in one segment moving over to the other segment and vice versa. So in the case of three to six million you can see the number changing from 2 to 1, but the effect is that some client at 3.1 million has moved to say 2.9 million and hence the net effect is not much.

We have also managed to bring down our receivable days in this quarter. So compared to last quarters number of 110 days, we had a strong focus in this quarter on that and we managed to bring the number to 101 days and we continue to work as a Company to get that number still down. It is always a work in progress as far as we are concerned. Earlier, I also used the utilization as an argument for our good result, and we will give you the exact numbers now. So we were able to increase the utilization number from 62% to 67%. So this is a really good development and we are hopeful that we will continue this trend and try and push the utilization up to the 70% levels. A similar trend is also seen in the attrition rate. So for the same period last year we were at an attrition rate of 19.1% and step by step we have brought that down now to 15.75%. This also shows that we are hiring good staff and there is continuity and we are able to bind the people in our company. Attrition is nothing bad as we believe it is necessary to bring fresh blood in our company. So this was my short overview of the quarter. I would like now to handover to René Gawron, he is sitting in Germany so that he can give us the view on SQS Group side.

René Gawron:

Yes, thank you Martin. Actually I just returned from India this morning. Just a few words from the SQS overall environment. We are seeing positive development at SQS India BFSI. We also see that at SQS group level, we are on a solid growth path this year. This is just a reminder that we have reported about 20% topline growth which was about 10% organic growth rates in the topline in the first half and we are seeing similar growth rates from the second half and we are expecting or the market expectation is that we are hitting close to \$350 million in revenue with much improved profitability. SQS as a group is the only software testing specialist, which is among top 10/11 providers for software testing services globally, all the others are large system integrators, we are the only specialist and we are seeing that our specialist position coupled with a strong domain knowledge is one of the key growth



drivers. But if I look closer at BFSI for SQS's group, BFSI is a segment which represents more than 50% of our revenues. So this year if I talk in US dollar it means we are going to do something like \$175 million in BFSI. Of course SQS India BFSI is part of that with its number. We have three major verticals in our global organization who are led by strong industry leaders in the company to further grow and win long term engagements with long term managed services deals. The three verticals are BFSI, Manufacturing and Retail/Logistics and I am very proud and very happy that our Senior Manager Mr. Srinivasan from SQS India BFSI is also heading the global BFSI practice of the SQS group. So I think this is the best opportunity also for him to win new business and additional business going forward and a lot of that will flow through the Chennai operation which is actually the intent we have. Because that is the kind of deals we want to win. So while we are seeing wobbly economies for this year, the economies in the US or in Europe were a little bit wobbly and we are also seeing softening in the Chinese parts which is not a market for us. While this is not a good sign for global market we continue to see strong and good demand for our kind of services. So we are very confident for the year.

Diwakar Pingle: Thank you René in the interest of time I think given that Dr. Martin already did talk about the financials, I think we have large number of participants so we will straight away dive into the Q&A and any specific financial questions can be answered by Vaidyanathan N. Mohsin you can now open it for Q&A.

Moderator: Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, we will now begin the question and answer session. Our first question is from Manik Taneja of Emkay Global. Please go ahead.

Manik Taneja: Just wanted to understand a couple of things. If you could talk about what particular areas are driving strong traction in North America which is question number one. The second question was with regarding to the fact that SQS has certain large global accounts and if I understand correctly your strategy was to pitch Thinksoft offshore capabilities in some of the large accounts; if you could talk about progress on that front.

René Gawron: Let's take the last question on the large global accounts. Yes SQS has those large global accounts and the three biggest ones are actually the BFSI accounts. But we have always said that this will take longer than probably many people hope, it will



take time to really leverage those accounts because in all of the three large accounts where we are in engagement requires very strongly German language capability and has a very high onsite exposure, onsite delivery that is delivered out of Europe. There are multi-language skill requirements as the programs are rolled out in various non-English speaking geographies which make it hard to at least quickly off shore work to India. We are working on this. I have always said that it takes at least a year. I am expecting some positive results by next calendar year and not this year. So it will take that much time but given the verticalized nature of business that I have explained and which is driven by a very senior head of sales and marketing of the Chennai operation at the group level, I am very confident there will be business coming through. But nevertheless we have already had two wins recently in North America, two new financial services clients for SQS India BFSI which were won together with SQS USA which traditionally has been only focused on the manufacturing segment. And so we are seeing that the synergies are starting to work and directing the sales team the coordinated way wins us deals. These were not very large deals like \$300, 000 each but it's a good start and we already are seeing them providing us additional business in the current year.

Dr. Martin Müller: Adding to what Rene said, approximately one third of the growth is coming from synergies in the last quarter. So if you look at the numbers, we grew from 8.6 million to 9.3 million and there has been an absolute change of about \$ 700 k in growth. So one third revenue has already come from our synergies between the clients of SQS and SQS India BFSI.

Manik Taneja: And just got a clarification question. Have you rolled out wage hike for the staff in the current quarter?

N Vaidyanathan: During the current quarter we had the pay revision in the month of July as per the practice.

Manik Taneja: Okay. And any quantum on what was the impact from wage hikes on the margins?

N Vaidyanathan: In fact this is one of the reasons why despite a very good utilization, margins were a little bit offset on account of the wage hike, otherwise the margin would have been even better.



Manik Taneja: Sure. And one final question from my side. SQS had announced large deals about three to four months back and after that SQS has announced some more deals if you could talk about if Thinksoft or SQS BFSI has now has played a key role in any of those engagement.

René Gawron: Actually not. Those deals were mostly time wise extensions of existing large deals, one was a new win also but also, some of them were not in the BFSI field, one was in telecommunications and one was in energy and utilities, so in fact our SQS BFSI has not played a role in those deals. But we are hoping that by next year that we make inroads into a retail banking client which is all German speaking right now and we are now working to get into the investment banking side of the business which is English speaking and as you know SQS India BFSI has strong application knowledge in that part. Therefore I am saying I think it will take time till next year. By 2015, we are hoping to see more material effects of winning new deals all coming through the Chennai based operation.

Moderator: Thank you. Our next question is from Krunal Shah from Amideep. Please go ahead.

Krunal Shah: Sir my question is pertaining to the employee strength that we have currently. What is our plan going forward say two-three years down the line or probably even two-three quarter down the line?

Dr. Martin Müller: So we worked on utilization this quarter. We added a large number of freshers in the last quarter into new projects and they are now fully on board after their training period and this has led to increase in our utilization to 67%. Given that we are on a growth path, we would add additional billable people in the various practices and we will also add more employees in the sales and marketing functions. From the Company perspective our effort is to ensure that we have sufficient skilled and trained resources that can be immediately deployed onto a project that we can onboard quickly. We have now a total employee base of 915 and hopefully we should end the year with about 1000.

Krunal Shah: Okay. Presentation mentions that we just have 842 employees.

N. Vaidyanathan: That is delivery people alone. The total 915 includes the sales and marketing and support staff also.



- Krunal Shah:** Okay. So that will reach to 1,000 per year end.
- Dr. Martin Müller:** We will go in that direction.
- Krunal Shah:** Okay. Even in terms of salary structure that we were offering before you guys SQS took over. So will there be any change with respect to that?
- Dr. Martin Müller:** BFSI structure?
- Krunal Shah:** No. Before SQS took over it the salary structure level being offered to employees has there been drastic change?
- N. Vaidyanathan:** There has not been any change in the salary structure because we go with what is the industry practice. The salary structure is defined by the level of experience, the qualification, and also the functional speciality which people have got, there has not been any change on account of the acquisition by SQS Group.
- Krunal Shah:** Okay. And in terms of the 2015, we said that we expect more deals to come in from our established partners from Germany. Can you put a number to that?
- Dr. Martin Müller:** No, we do not give those numbers and it is also to be seen from a broader view. It is not only Germany, we would also see growth coming in from UK and from US.
- Krunal Shah:** Okay. And one last question sir. Specifically if I say 26th June SQS parent has released a statement regarding acquisition of €60 million worth of orders. Now if I go through that press release there is an order from a European bank worth €10 million which was a specific testing services order and converted to managed-testing services order and was supposed to be handled by Thinksoft. Would that mean it would come to India services business?
- René Gawron:** We never said that it will be handled by Thinksoft. This is actually on German language retail banking application, which must be handled by German speakers and we also did not make a statement that it would be handled by Thinksoft or SQS India BFSI Resources. I think this is one of the clients where we are working on to get into what I said answering the earlier question into the investment banking vertical of that client and this works out by next year, this is then the realistic potential to bring in



the SQS India BFSI because this is English speaking and they also have the kind of domain or application knowledge.

Moderator: Thank you. We have the next question from Parin Gala from Gandhi Securities. Please go ahead.

Parin Gala: It is heartening to see that you have declared the interim dividend so taking that forward I would like to understand what is the dividend policy that the Board has decided over a period of time?

N. Vaidyanathan: Generally, the management looks at distribution of around 30% of the profit after tax towards dividend. That has been the practice all along. It might just be rounded off. That has been the practice so far.

Parin Gala: So you will continue the same as of now there is no change right?

N. Vaidyanathan: So far we have been continuing with the same thing.

Parin Gala: And one last question. The SQS office in Pune I think is under SQS Global so are they going to indulged in any work that SQS India BFSI is going to do or something they are also going to be beneficial from that building or it will be only SQS India BFSI, Chennai operation?

Dr. Martin Müller: We have the division of work wherein we say that BFSI is predominantly served from SQS India BFSI which means from Chennai and from Mumbai and manufacturing and retail projects are predominantly served from Pune.

Parin Gala: Okay. So they will not do anything in BFSI but other work in other vertical might be done by Pune also which is under SQS Global right?

Dr. Martin Müller: Yes.

Moderator: Thank you. The next question is from Sabyasachi Paul from Krudent Research. Please go ahead.



Sabyasachi Paul: Sir my question was largely with your employee cost. If we see that it has gone up substantially over the last year and if we see the income has not really moved up accordingly. So is there any specific reason for that?

N. Vaidyanathan: The employee cost as we have been mentioning in the past also has got more than one component. One, it varies with the onsite-offshore component. Normally onsite employee costs are about 2.5-3 times higher than the offshore cost. As far as current period is concerned, when it is compared with the previous year or with the previous quarter there was salary hike from July 2014, which is the industry practice. That has got factored into this. That is the reason why there has been an increase in the salary line.

Sabyasachi Paul: Okay. Sales have not really moved in line with the income?

N. Vaidyanathan: The sales again are a factor of how the onsite and offshore component pan out. Different geographies have different billing rates, so that affects the net figure. Unless we break it down project wise and client wise it will not be comparable. Hence on a consolidated basis the sales and proportionate costs against those sales may not be reflecting completely. That is one point, and another point is that during the quarter we had a wholtime director who has been appointed in the last annual general meeting with effect from 1st July and the salary of the wholtime director has got added from this quarter onwards.

Moderator: Thank you. We have next question from the line of Dipen Kapadia from B&K Securities. Please go ahead.

Dipen Kapadia: Sir tell me what are the drivers of the testing business going ahead in the next couple of years considering that the India business would help for the next at least two to three years or how is the vision you plan to see the India business in the next two to three years?

Dr. Martin Müller: So there are a lot of technical developments going on in this industry especially in the banking area. So if you look at cloud testing, mobile testing, technology gives us the push for our testing business. We are not an initiator of new project engagement for implementing those technologies but we are the testing partner of our clients in order to make their project a success. So therefore it is mainly driven by the



development we have in those areas and as I mentioned in the banking part, we also have a quite strong presence in our cards and payment business. Also there is lots of powerful technical development ongoing in this industry and this is also the reason why we strongly focus on Europe and in US. Predominantly, the projects are starting there and we have setup a new team or an improved team for our US sales and presales and we are looking forward to bring additional business especially from those regions.

Dipen Kapadia: Sir going ahead how do you plan to use the SQS platform for the same?

Dr. Martin Müller: As you know that we have an overlap of presence in those two regions. We have no overlap of clients when we came together but we have an overlap of just the presence. So we make use of those synergies. We make use of our existing sales team to cross sell our services and door openers and the effort is on to capitalize on the opportunity.

Moderator: Thank you. The next question is from the line of Paras Adenwala from Capital Portfolio Advisors. Please go ahead.

Paras Adenwala: I think while you did take some efforts to explain the road map for SQS, I am yet not clear about three years down the line how do we see the company from what it is today. Do you have some kind of a target set in that you should be growing to a particular level by the next three years or five years?

René Gawron: Let me take this from SQS Group point of level. We have stated number of times that over the next three years we are seeking to almost double the size of the company from a revenue point of view to getting to some like €500 million which would be like US\$600-650 million which will be almost doubling the size of the business. This will be partly organic, but also partly through further acquisitions; we are not planning acquisitions in India. It is more acquisitions in certain local markets to give us a better exposure to certain client engagements. From a content point of view we are focusing on two or three main things; to drive the market and to be better than many of the system integrators and their testing parts. This is very much focused on having reusable assets. Reusable assets are having the test case repositories for applications and bringing them with us and so actually being able to tell the client that if you do this that is the likely outcome. This is going to be the cost



for testing but also this will remove what amount of risk from your application, so we will be knowing what the outcome is going to be because clients want to understand what happens if they invest something, what is the outcome of that and not just saying we put on a test team and yes we will find a way or else we find this which is the old way. There are a lot of talks since years about test automation but it is not very effective in many client engagements and I think we have cracked the code. We are seeing that we really apply very successful form of test automation which allows us to test them with much higher scope because it is done by tools and not by people to a large extent. So with these kind of test automation, test assets from a content point of view predictability of the outcome, these are the key sweet spots we are pushing forward to win market share on the organic side.

Paras Adenwala: So would you have the same kind or target for SQS BFSI India?

René Gawron: SQS BFSI India is a key part of our company and they will have similar targets because if they will not grow in the same way we work, we also would not get there.

Paras Adenwala: And this is without compromising on your profitability.

René Gawron: We expect this will be at a higher profit level from the profit margin point of view as we are focusing more on larger long term deals and the larger long term deals are actually the ones which are more profitable, because they have a higher share of global delivery, they have a better predictability and thus lead to better utilization and in the end they have lower overhead costs because to manage a large \$30-40 million deal a year requires as a percentage of revenue low overheads than having to juggle with winning another 20 small clients. So actually it is those deals are beneficial for profitability.

Paras Adenwala: How is SQS done in the last three years, has it really grown, has the revenue really multiplied or doubled?

René Gawron: Yes, absolutely. From SQS Group if I give you the last five years because I just got the number in my head from 2009 we were about this is in euros €135 million. This year market expects us to do about €270 million so we have more than doubled the company in the last five years and we have only done one acquisition in those five years. This was Thinksoft a year ago, so this year we also have roughly 30 million or



so from what used to be Thinksoft in there. So a lot of strong organic growth kind of by deploying the strategy I just laid out.

Moderator: Thank you. We have the next question from the line of Parin Gala from Gandhi Securities. Please go ahead.

Parin Gala: I just wanted to ask this because I heard the repetitive comments that if you have the German client who needs German speaking people and those are significant big accounts so that will be catered by SQS Global. My point is this when the work is significant and you can save on cost, how difficult is it find people in SQS India BFSI who might know to speak German or recruit somebody who knows German you have a training for a quarter and then get a significant revenue if Germany and other geographies are going to be the focal point of revenue.

Dr. Martin Müller: We are investing in training people to be competent in the linguistic capabilities. For instance we are training our people here. We have started the training for 30 people to learn German language. So this should help us in order to bring down the language barriers which exist currently as far as client from German speaking countries like Germany, Austria, and Switzerland is concerned. We are also impressing upon clients to use English language where possible and so the effort is on in both directions.

Parin Gala: Three years down the line we can expect significant work even from these German speaking kind of geographies and that a lot of work will be done by SQS India over the next three years?

Dr. Martin Müller: We working to develop our clients in that direction of course. As Germany is still a strong country around 35% of the revenue we are driving in the SQS Group from German. Of course this is the main part we are looking but we can't give you any numbers how much it would be in the near future.

Diwakar Pingle: May be Dr. Martin would just give an update on the integration process and where it stands so participants can understand that.

Dr. Martin Müller: So the integration in all areas and functions and process has been completed successfully. So we setup at the beginning of the year a plan for 10 different



integration streams. So we have subdivided the whole integration into IT, HR and finance and operation and all those processes which are affected by companies which come together. We are now happy to work in a state of continuous improvement. So of course there are always some differences but if you look especially which is quite important to the client's market side, we have put a lot of effort in coming together of the methodology so we find there very good alignment of both methodologies and put them into one. And also in the operational part from finance and operations, we look into which process are really best practices and continue the same across the group. So as I said we continue to make sufficient progress on all of those processes and structures.

Moderator: Thank you. The next question is from the line of Krunal Shah from Amideep. Please go ahead.

Krunal Shah: My question is related to the automated testing, is SQS as a group involved in the automated testing and does SQS India BFSI also helps in automated testing?

Dr. Martin Müller: Automated testing as René Gawron already pointed out is one of our key drivers in our business because there is a lot of pressure from clients to improve and to make things easier, quicker and also from a cost perspective it is more attractive for them. SQS as a group has invested heavily to develop a very good automation framework and this will continue to be the focus point of the Company to move from manual testing to automated testing. And from a client perspective such innovations around automated testing will be noticed by clients and we believe this will enable us to keep our competitors behind us.

Krunal Shah: Okay. So does SQS India also do automated testing?

Dr. Martin Müller: In SQS India yes we do that. As I said we have also developed in the past our own automation framework and it has been used also for project here of course but as I pointed this is one of our specialized consulting service which we are pushing.

Krunal Shah: And my figure is related to the US market as in what kind of clients are we aiming for and how has the takeover of Thinksoft by SQS helped Thinksoft to gain business in USA?



Dr. Martin Müller: As I said North America is key for us because of the type of the market and the growth potential we have there is more compared to the whole market at the moment. So what are the main drivers there? The main drivers as I said is of course banking, you have a lot of banking clients there and also tier two players who are very interested in us and also the cards and payment development area. There is a lot of technology work going on in that companies and they are predominately based in US, so therefore these two practices would drive us in the US and the main change we are now under the umbrella of SQS Group also helps us very much because we are now a company of over 4000 employees and size matters when you are pitching to a new prospect. So if you are too small and it becomes a handicap as Thinksoft was and you will not be the partner of first choice and especially in a country like US. So it helps us to be under the umbrella of the SQS group and also from a marketing perspective it is much easier to be a part of such a big group.

Krunal Shah: Okay. One follow up question, are we even looking at markets in Southeast Asia like Singapore where we do not face a language barrier I think?

Dr. Martin Müller: Yes. When we point out that we focus on North America and Europe that does not mean that we do not continue with our other regions. So we need them also for further growth in order to stabilize our business and therefore we go on to service our clients there. If you look from the margin point of view, it makes sense to put more effort and more sales and presales and delivery support to America and Europe.

Moderator: Thank you. As there are no further question. I now hand the floor back to Mr. Dr. Martin Müller. Over to you.

Dr. Martin Müller: Thank you very much for attending the call. So it is always a pleasure for us to hear how interested you are in our company and our development. And I am really happy about those questions which came up to us because they really reflect that you are quite informed about our numbers and our development and we are really enjoying to have such a good conversation in our quarterly call. So also if there are upcoming questions in the next days, we have not answered and that we have not touched today so do not hesitate to contact Diwakar and he will put that through to us to me, René Gawron and from the Group side or from the finance part here in India we have Mr. Vaidyanathan and we are quite happy to answer them. So these were my closing



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words and we now would like to hand over again to Diwakar. Thank you very much all.

Diwakar Pingle: Thanks Martin and thanks for everyone who has joined this call and have a good evening. Bye.

Moderator Thank you. On behalf of SQS India BFSI Limited. That concludes this conference. Thank you for joining us and now you may now disconnect your lines.