



## OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUSINESS PROCESS OUTSOURCING AND KNOWLEDGE PROCESS OUTSOURCING IN UZBEKISTAN

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### **Abstract**

This article is prepared for a better understanding of business process outsourcing (BPO) and knowledge process outsourcing (KPO) and its potential opportunities. An explicit distinction has been made between Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) and Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) by analyzing its market overview. This study also examines the potential development of BPO and KPO in Uzbekistan and their desired role in its economic scenario and in light of these findings, the study suggests imperative factors for their success.

**Keywords:** business process outsourcing, knowledge process outsourcing, market research, opportunities of these processes in Uzbekistan.

### **Аннотация**

Эта статья подготовлена для лучшего понимания аутсорсинга бизнес-процессов (BPO) и аутсорсинга процессов знаний (KPO) и их потенциальных возможностей. Было проведено явное различие между аутсорсингом бизнес-процессов (BPO) и аутсорсингом процессов знаний (KPO) путем анализа их обзора рынка. В этом исследовании также рассматривается потенциальное развитие аутсорсинга бизнес-процессов и аутсорсингом процессов знаний (KPO) в Узбекистане и их желаемая роль в экономическом сценарии, и в свете этих выводов исследование предлагает важные факторы для их успешного развития.

**Ключевые слова:** аутсорсинг бизнес-процессов, аутсорсинг процессов знаний, исследование рынка, возможности этих процессов в Узбекистане.

### **Introduction**

Today, in the wake of COVID-19 there is a tendency of an accelerated development of technologies in the global digital ecosystem. For instance, business process outsourcing (BPO) and knowledge outsourcing (KPO) in the field of social networks, blockchain technologies, and artificial intelligence technologies.

Supporting the development of digital government, ensuring public trust and transparency, and participating in the development of the digital economy play an important role in providing efficient, effective public services to all on an equitable basis. The continuous development of information and communication technologies is fundamentally transforming society, the cultural environment, and the economy as a whole<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Available from: <https://www.uzdaily.uz/en/post/72248>

There is an accelerated development of technologies in the global digital ecosystem. An example is business process outsourcing (BPO) and knowledge outsourcing (KPO) in the field of social networks, blockchain technologies, and artificial intelligence technologies (Uzdaily, 2009).

In the last decade, there has been a lot of research done on the outsourcing industry. BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) has been the subject of numerous studies. In the 1980s, outsourcing made its debut in the IT business. This was the era when businesses realized the value of working with IT service providers to construct sophisticated systems and improve the way a business process or service is managed (Schumacher, 2005). Since then, the outsourcing industry has progressed through its introduction and growth stages, with growth rates of approximately 50%, and is now in the transformation stage. Product and service life cycles have been significantly shortened as a result of increased globalization and intense demand to innovate. As a result, industry life cycles are getting shorter and shorter, and outsourcing is no exception.

The next phase in the outsourcing value chain is knowledge process outsourcing (KPO). Unlike BPO, which focuses on process expertise, KPO focuses on business expertise. KPO denotes a significant movement in the industry, from the execution of standardized processes to the execution of extremely complex and customized processes that necessitate extensive analytical and technical abilities, as well as decisive judgment (Aggarwal and Pandey, 2004). The main strength of this approach is the value that these services give, not the cost-cutting component. They provide market and industry research, data and statistical analysis, competitive analysis, and support in legal and administrative processes to give their customers a long-term competitive advantage in all knowledge-intensive businesses. This and other types of outsourcing have prompted businesses to adapt their organizational and operational structures to the global trend, as well as consider outsourcing as part of their overall company strategy. Diagram 1 below shows some of the areas that are covered by BPO and KPO.

<b>Business Process Outsourcing = &gt; Knowledge Process Outsourcing</b>		
<i>Established Opportunities</i>	<i>Evolving Opportunities</i>	<i>Latent Opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer interaction services;</li> <li>• Finance and accounting services;</li> <li>• Engineering and design services</li> <li>• HR services;</li> <li>• Animation;</li> <li>• Translation, transcription, and localization.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network consulting and management;</li> <li>• Data search, integration and analysis;</li> <li>• Market research services;</li> <li>• Website services;</li> <li>• Remote education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logistics management; Consulting services; Monitoring services; Legal advice;</li> <li>• Medical advice; Distributed product development;</li> <li>• Secretarial services.</li> </ul>

**Diagram 1: Opportunities for BPO and KPO**

The maturation and evolution of BPOs have resulted in the emergence of a new business model: Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO). A KPO is when a corporation outsources its knowledge-enabled operations to a third-party verification service provider in order to benefit from their workers’ subject understanding and analytical skills. This is one of the primary reasons for the transformation of the classic BPO framework into modern risk management and compliance platform.

Most of the finest offshore initiatives, according to industry experts, are centered on intellectual arbitrage rather than financial benefits from labor arbitrage. This paradigm change is aimed at ensuring the best resource allocation possible; otherwise, businesses risk internalizing their existing inefficiencies. The following factors are mostly responsible for the company’s success:

The success of a knowledge-driven landscape is primarily influenced by the following factors:

1. KPO companies give end-to-end solutions to businesses with platforms that cover procedures ranging from simple to complicated.
2. The old BPO and information technology outsourcing (ITO) models are being replaced by knowledge-enabled goods and services.
3. To expand the depth and breadth of their knowledge, KPO service providers are revitalizing their portfolios through merger and acquisition activity (Go for customer blog, 2022).

Furthermore, because of their easy access to vital resources, firms are driven to subcontract their knowledge-intensive jobs to dependable KPO units. As a result, KPOs have shown to be a viable business model, and an increasing number of firms are capitalizing on the advantages of a knowledge process outsourcing unit.

### **Literature review**

Our review of scholarly literature suggests there have been at least three major waves in the outsourcing industry: Information Technology outsourcing ITO, Business Process Outsourcing or BPO, and Knowledge Process Outsourcing KPO (Mudambi & Tallman, 2010). However, we find that most of the available research seems to focus only on BPO and KPO.

#### *Business Process Outsourcing*

BPO stands for "business process outsourcing," which includes "financial and accounting, human resource management, procurement, research and development, and legal services" (Lacity & Willcocks, 2012). BPO services were in their infancy in the mid-1990s, according to KMPG (2008), and researchers recall BPO deals as early as 1993. (Lacity & Willcocks, 2012). The first empirical publications on BPO were published in 1996. (Lacity et al, 2011).

According to research discovered in 87 empirical publications in 67 journals examined from 1996 to 2011, the major reasons behind BPO decisions are comparable to the major causes driving ITO decisions, as follows: Cost-cutting and a concentration on the firm's core competencies, but with a twist: instead of attempting to increase client IT performance (as in ITO), the third driving focuses on improving the customer's business processes. Research reveals that organizations are less inclined to outsource business operations that are perceived to have high degrees of 'uncertainty and criticality,' similar to the findings on ITO procedures (Lacity et al, 2011).

Furthermore, while BPO is a less established business than ITO, it is reported to be growing at a quicker rate (Lacity & Willcocks, 2012). As previously stated, BPO is predicted to gradually eclipse ITO (Lacity et al, 2008), but as enterprises move up the value chain, KPO is expected to rise as well (Evalueserve, 2004; Lacity et al, 2008; KPMG, 2008).

Scholars have identified nine prospective research paths: *innovation effects, retained capabilities, environmental influences, global destinations, supplier capabilities, pricing models, business analytics, emerging models, and grounded theory development* (see Lacity et al, 2011 for an extended discussion).

#### *Knowledge Process Outsourcing*

Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) has been named the "next step up the outsourcing value chain" (Mudambi & Tallman, 2010) and the "next industry trend" (Evalueserve, 2004). According to the study, KPO began in India (Devi & Devi, 2010), but it is now gaining traction in other countries such as Eastern Europe (BPM Watch, 2012). Industry reports predict a CAGR of 23.12% from 2013 to 2018 (CNBC.Com Press Release) (2014).

Furthermore, the prospect of a diverse and available future workforce is anticipated by the plethora of international students, primarily from the Asian-pacific countries of China, South Korea, and India, who are preparing in elite destinations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada (Choudaha et al., 2012), suggests that other destinations are also likely to become KPO hotspots, with only a few of those students remaining in the host country. Only 17 percent of students who acquired a bachelor's degree are believed to have stayed in the country with a working visa (calculated based on official numbers in the USA market).

Given all the buzz and upbeat predictions about this new 'trend' in outsourcing as well as global workforce and demographic trends, one might wonder what the state of academic research on the subject is, which perspectives or industries scholars have looked into, and if there is any gap that could be explored for future research.

According to the research, there have been at least three official attempts to define KPO since then (the first one by an industry report and the two latter by scholars). First, there is the definition provided by TPI in their industry study from 2007, which emphasizes the necessity to define KPO in light of the fact that the term 'KPO' had been used as a 'catch-all' buzzword. Their attempt to define KPO takes into account a number of factors, including the process's complexity, the level of talents necessary, and the process's type.

Currie et al. (2008) define KPO as "the transfer to a third party of complicated and highly variable activities that require intellectual decision making," building on Davenport, 1993 and the findings of an earlier qualitative pilot study.

Finally, Mudambi and Tallman (2010) describe KPO as "the outsourcing of firm operations that directly involve the generation of knowledge and innovation, and that include some degree of firm-specific capabilities," drawing on the knowledge and innovation literature.

Interestingly, Davenport, 2010 did not use any of the above categories to refer to KPO in a book chapter in the Handbook on Business Process Management (Vonn Brocke & Rosemann, 2010), instead classifying it as a sort of 'process-oriented intervention' of knowledge work.

### **Research methodology**

The methodological basis of the research is the theoretical approach to discussing the potential opportunities of business and knowledge process outsourcing, including comparative analysis and practical generalization of the essence. An analysis and a synthesis method were used, with the help of which the potential opportunities of both outsourcings have been analyzed, as well as its major role in the context of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

### **Analysis and results**

#### *Global market analysis*

The global BPO market was valued at USD 232,282.38 million in 2020, and it is predicted to grow at an annual rate of 8.50 percent to USD 435,338.30 million by 2027. (2020 - 2027).

A business process outsourcing (BPO) is a contracted business support function performed by an outside service provider. Human resources, payroll, and call centers are among the services provided by BPOs. Companies are increasingly turning to business outsourcing as they recognize that it is a cost-effective, long-term strategy. Many countries see BPO as a way to create jobs, which helps to promote developing markets. The market is expected to gain from businesses' increased attention on enhancing company agility in order

to withstand shifting business dynamics, as well as approaches to increase efficiency while lowering operational expenses and focusing on core capabilities.

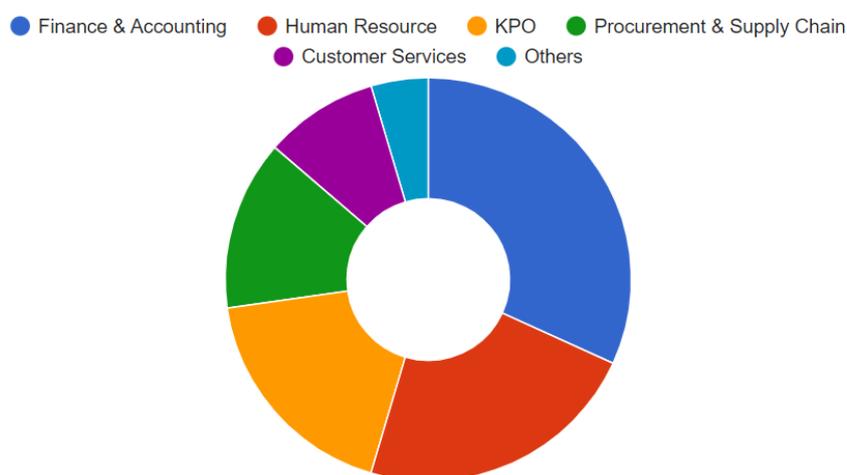
BPO services are used in a variety of end-use industries, including banking, financial services, healthcare, and manufacturing, bolstering the market growth. Outsourcing business operations has a number of advantages, including lower operating costs and improved efficiency in support tasks such as customer service. A BPO service provides firms with not just enhanced interconnection, but also reliable, relevant, and round-the-clock help for critical business activities. The surge in demand for business process outsourcing is being fueled by a shift in business strategy from monopolistic to shared workload cultures<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Segmental analysis*

The global BPO market is divided into four categories: service type, end-user, geography, and region. Finance & Accounting, Human resources, KPO, Procurement & Supply Chain, Customer Services, and Others are the different types of services. It is divided into five categories based on the end-user: BFSI, Healthcare, Manufacturing, IT & Telecommunication, Retail, and Others. It is divided into three categories according to on its location: onsite, offsite, and offshore. It is divided into five regions: North America, Europe, Asia-Pacific, South America, and the Middle East and Africa.

#### *Service-based analysis*

Over the projection period, finance and accounting BPO (see Diagram 2), which entails entrusting third-party specialists with the oversight and management of finance and accounting business processes, is predicted to dominate the market. Clients pick outsourcing services for F&A operations primarily to save money, streamline F&A operations, and comply with regulatory requirements. Complicated procedures such as external reporting, budgeting, accounting, planning, and forecasting continue to be outsourced in the Finance & Accounting field due to the growing standardization of these operations (Advanced Business Intelligence, Research & Analysis Wing, 2022).



**Diagram 2<sup>3</sup>: Global business process outsourcing market by type in percentage rate, 2020**  
*Analysis by End-User*

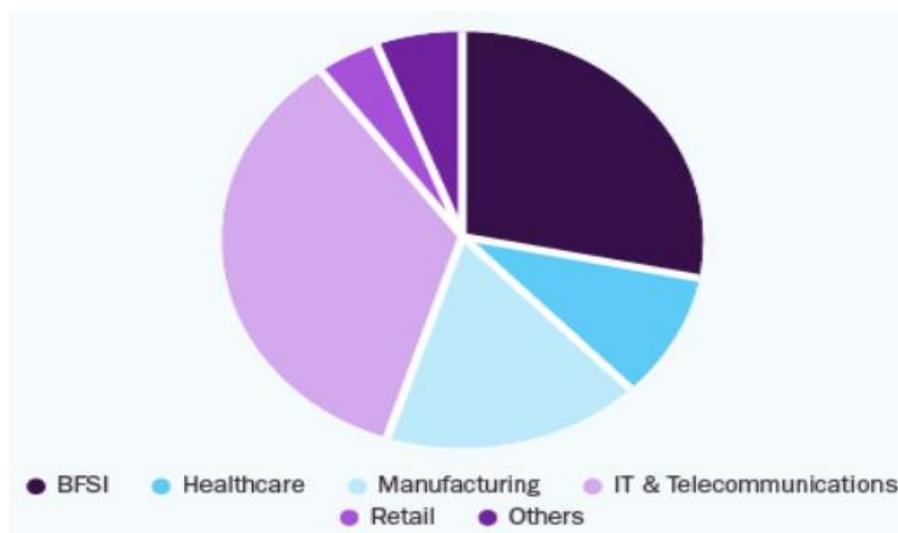
One of the major factors impacting the expansion of BPO services is the growing use of cloud computing in business process outsourcing. Cloud computing aids BPO providers in shortening time to market, enhancing quality control, and lowering expenses. Furthermore,

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://skyquestt.com/report/bpo-market>

<sup>3</sup> Source: <https://skyquestt.com/report/bpo-market>

cloud computing in BPO enables immediate computing support and system access, flexible provisioning, and universal access whenever needed to satisfy corporate requirements. During the forecast period, these advantages are expected to have a beneficial impact on cloud computing adoption in the business process outsourcing market (Grand view research, 2022).

In 2021, the IT & telecommunications segment had the highest revenue share, accounting for around 34 percent of the total market (see below Diagram 2). Some of the primary factors boosting demand for BPO services across IT and communications firms include the increase in the number of IT organizations and the rising industrialization of the world. IT and telecom BPO services meet the growing demand for connection, handle security concerns, and develop new products and services for the latest gadgets and technology standards. Various business tasks, ranging from call center outsourcing to billing operations to finance and accounting, are outsourced by telecom businesses. Outsourcing allows telecom firms to cut costs, develop a flexible strategy for recruiting and retaining more consumers, gain access to specialist personnel, optimize current expenditures, and manage cost pressures.



**Diagram 3<sup>4</sup>: Global business process outsourcing market, 2021**

In accordance with Diagram 3 by 2030, the BFSI sector is expected to develop at the quickest rate, with a CAGR of over 9 percent. BPO has long been explored by financial organizations as a means of reducing costs. To improve customer service, BFSI organizations are outsourcing procedures in numerous areas of the sector, including asset management and investment management.

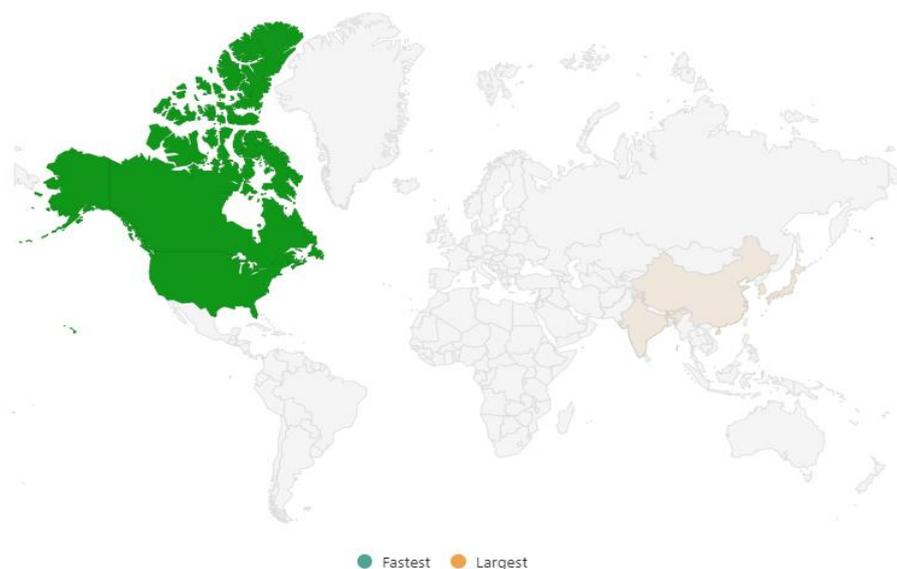
#### *Regional insights*

In 2020, North America was the most important regional market, accounting for approximately 35% of total sales (see Diagram 4). This expansion can be ascribed in part to the growing use of cloud technologies and digital services that necessitate constant help and maintenance. Because of the presence of tech giants and legislative & regulatory pressures in the region, the North American BPO market will maintain its leadership position during the projection years. Cloud computing is projected to contribute to regional growth in

<sup>4</sup> Source: <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/business-process-outsourcing-bpo-market>

addition to customized service offerings to better fit individual demands (Advanced Business Intelligence, Research & Analysis Wing, 2022).

In the year 2022, the US BPO industry is expected to be worth \$69.2 billion. China, the world's second-largest economy, is expected to reach a market size of US\$6.8 billion by 2026, representing a 6.1 percent CAGR throughout the analyzed period. Japan and Canada are two other important geographic markets, with forecasted growth rates of 3.5 percent and 3.9 percent, respectively, over the analysis period. Germany is expected to expand at a CAGR of around 5.4 percent in Europe. Outsourcing, like other commercial company operations, was first envisaged and implemented in industrialized countries, which continue to wield enormous power in the global BPO market, even after it has matured significantly (PR News Wire, 2022).



**Diagram 4<sup>5</sup>: Global business process outsourcing market by geography, 2021-2027**

As a cost-, time-, and resource-saving strategy, the outsourcing model is widely used across many corporate areas such as accounting, HR, production, customer relations, logistics, and warehouse management. The United States is currently the leading customer of BPO services. The presence of a large number of enterprises in Latin America and Asia with geographically distributed business operations/units and workers would increase the demand for outsourcing services. In these regions, the financial services and telecom industries are likely to present prospective prospects for service providers<sup>6</sup>.

Finance and accounting BPO (or FAO) entail entrusting third-party professionals with the oversight and administration of finance and accounting business processes. Clients choose outsourcing services for F&A operations largely to save money, simplify operations for the F&A department, and meet regulatory requirements. Due to the increased standardization of these operations, complicated processes such as external reporting, budgeting, accounting, planning, and forecasting continue to be outsourced in the Finance

<sup>5</sup> Source: <https://skyquestt.com/report/bpo-market>

<sup>6</sup> Available from: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/global-business-process-outsourcing-bpo-market-to-reach-215-9-billion-by-2026--301505565.html>

& Accounting area. The United States, Canada, Japan, China, and Europe are expected to fuel the worldwide Finance & Accounting segment's 5.6 percent CAGR. By the end of the analysis period, these regional markets, with combined market size of US\$33.7 billion, will have grown to US\$49.4 billion.

In this group of regional markets, China will continue to be one of the fastest expanding. The Asia-Pacific market is expected to reach US\$5 billion by 2026, led by countries like Australia, India, and South Korea, while Latin America will grow at a 5.1 percent CAGR over the same time<sup>7</sup>.

#### *Analysis of opportunities for BPO and KPO in Uzbekistan*

Recognizing the important role of digital development in the economic growth of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Government of Uzbekistan has set digital transformation as a top strategic agenda. Among them is the approval of the Strategy "Digital Uzbekistan - 2030" and drawing attention to the issues of digitalization in the framework of the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026.

Based on this, the Government of Uzbekistan is implementing consistent measures to strengthen digital skills and create digital jobs in Uzbekistan, in particular, in order to increase the potential of young people - measures to expand the provision of business process outsourcing (BPO) and knowledge outsourcing (KPO) services. By demonstrating the potential of IT outsourcing by the government of Uzbekistan, in order to improve the digital skills of the population, especially young people in all regions and districts, specialized educational BPO institutions are being organized and their capabilities are expanding.

Uzbekistan has a valuable asset in form of human capital. Currently, there are 35 million people in the Republic of Uzbekistan, of which 18 million (or more than 60 percent) are young people under the age of 30. According to preliminary forecasts, by 2030 the population of Uzbekistan will already amount to 40 million people, of which, if the trend continues, 24 million will be young people. This is the so-called stage demographic dividend: when the majority of citizens are of working age, also competent, and owns at least two foreign languages (English and Russian). Considerable attention is paid to attracting youth in the field of ICT. So, if in the 2000s there were several hundred IT specialists in Uzbekistan, today there are 50 thousand. By 2030, the goal is to bring their number to one million people. The export of IT products and services is consistently growing. So, at the end of 2021, the volume of IT exports reached \$46 million, particularly, more than doubled compared to 2020 indicators (\$16 million). It is expected that by the end of this year will be 100 million dollars, and by the end of 2028, it is planned to bring this figure to a billion<sup>8</sup>.

Key IT export markets are the USA (83.3 percent), UK (5.2 percent), Russia (3.2 percent), Republic of Korea (2.1 percent), and UAE (1.1 percent). Other important benefits include incentives for IT businesses. IT companies in Uzbekistan are provided with a number of tax and customs benefits. In particular, residents of IT Park are provided with tax and customs benefits until 2028. Also, IT exporters have the ability to conduct settlements with employees, non-citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in foreign currency when implementing the export activity. Thanks to the extraterritorial principle, residents can carry out their activities throughout the country, regardless of location. Also abolished the procedure for obtaining a work permit.

<sup>7</sup> Available from: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/global-business-process-outsourcing-bpo-market-to-reach-215-9-billion-by-2026--301505565.html>

<sup>8</sup> Available from: <https://yuz.uz/file/newspaper/c2b9cdb85cd5b9155c8244ec510a3883.pdf>

In order to create even more convenience for foreign IT companies located in Uzbekistan and specialists approved the procedure for issuing IT-Visa - a simplified procedure for obtaining a residence permit, coupled with access to social services. This requires a minimum number of documents, the process takes three days. IT companies planning to relocate to our country, the necessary infrastructure will be provided.

It should also be noted the favorable geographical position of Uzbekistan in the region. Thanks to this advantage of geographical position, the republic can become an IT hub in Central Asia. The private sector is developing at a dynamic pace IT sector. Today, IT Park has more than 500 residents, of which 15 percent are largely global and local companies (The Truth of the East, 2022).

By 2025, it is planned to increase the number of residents to thousands with the active involvement of large and medium-sized IT companies.

Matilda Dimovska, UNDP Resident Representative in Uzbekistan highlighted that according to the Digital Readiness Assessment held jointly with the Ministry of ITC of the Republic of Uzbekistan in five priority dimensions: infrastructure, government, regulation, business, and people Uzbekistan scored 3.57 out of 5, which means that the country is systematically advancing in key areas of digital transformation based on identified priority areas. “Now it is time to explore how to leverage digitalization to build forward better, to accelerate Uzbekistan’s growth while ensuring it is more inclusive and resilient through strengthening *the national capacity to integrate into the global digital economy*,” (UNDP in Uzbekistan, 2022).

### **The future’s imperatives**

Outsourcing work to overseas providers has primarily been driven by cost arbitrage. Quality enhancement and high productivity will be some of the primary motivations for offshore in the future, in addition to cost differences. Broad coverage, domain expertise, location advantage, sales and marketing capabilities, regulatory compliance, and risk management are all characteristics that will help KPO suppliers differentiate themselves and maintain a competitive advantage in the future. In the long run, these criteria will determine who will be the leaders and who will be the laggards (Pahuja and Verma, 2020).

#### *Quality*

The shift from low-end BPO to high-end KPO services is being fueled by offshore suppliers' growing skill and maturity. The progressive move to the KPO industry can be ascribed to some of the country's leading vendors providing consistently high-quality services.

#### *Domain Expertise*

BPO services focus on completing standardized routine operations, but KPO processes require advanced information search, analytical interpretation, technological abilities, as well as some judgment and decision-making.

#### *Regulatory Environment*

In BPO, service providers must follow the same regulations as their clients. As the sector evolves from low-end services like customer support and medical transcription to high-end services like research, analytics, medical, insurance processing, and media services, the technology component of BPO grows.

#### *Risk Management*

When work is outsourced to an offshore vendor, the client assumes a lot of risk. Contracting with a third-party vendor lowers the following business risks:

- ~ Pre-formed teams with well-established processes or procedures are employed.

- ~ Large upfront fixed expenses are shifted to incremental variable costs, and management teams with local experience and competence in managing and scaling activities are employed.
- ~ Clients, on the other hand, are still susceptible to risks such as compliance, regulatory, and legal concerns, and it won't be long until Indian BPO/KPO enterprises must prepare for these challenges as well.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

Industry experts as well as the current statistics opine that the BPO and KPO industry offers a very large opportunity for Uzbekistan both in terms of employment generation and wealth creation. But challenges such as the breadth of coverage, domain expertise, location advantage, compliance with regulator standards, and risk management need to be addressed with caution and clear focus so as to attain differentiation and sustain a competitive advantage in the future. There is tremendous potential in the BPO and KPO space. Only companies that have a strong pedigree, domain expertise, clear focus on the high-end space, proactive solution orientation, and a collaborative mindset will emerge as the winners.

There are some practical recommendations on how the government of Uzbekistan can take advantage of the successful realization of BPO in a first manner. The following Diagram 5 clearly depicts the determinants of success for positive outsourcing practices and these can be classified into four categories (see Diagram 5):



**Diagram 5<sup>9</sup>: Robust practices that contribute to success in BPO**

- 1) Contractual Governance ('the formal, written rules that govern client-provider relationship');
- 2) Relational Governance ('the informal rules that manage client-provider relationships');
- 3) Client Retained Capabilities (the way clients manage 'providers by shifting their capabilities from managing resources and processes to managing inputs and outputs); and
- 4) Provider Capabilities (the 'ability to identify, acquire, develop, and deploy human resources to achieve both provider's and client's organizational objectives' (Lacity & Willcocks, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Source: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2490262](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2490262)

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