

Ready to spread its wings

ATT Systems, having proven itself at home, is all set now to expand into the region. **By Hebert Cundra, Koh Wan Ling and Yeo Wei Jian**

IT WAS only 12 years ago that two MNC employees had to face the reality of being laid off. Kenny Teo and Tan Ann Jee were left with just two alternatives: find a new job, or start their own business. The duo boldly chose the latter, riding on their entrepreneurial spirit to start a business providing electronic solutions.

In 1998, ATT Systems Pte Ltd (ATT) was founded. The business is positioned as a one-stop solutions provider that specialises in designing, developing and providing solutions in a wide range of electronic systems and sub-systems for private and public organisations.

When asked about the principles by which he runs the business, CEO Mr Teo had a succinct reply: "Not to wait for things to happen but to think innovatively and evolve intelligently to make things happen."

With this business philosophy, ATT has seen meteoric growth in the last 12 years. Last year, it attained total revenues of \$10.5 million and capped the year by winning its first Enterprise 50 award.

The company, located in Ubi Techpark, has around 200 employees and six divisions: Aviation Solutions, Electronic Solutions, Queue Management, Security Management, Systems Integration, and Traffic Management. It counts household-name organisations as its key clients, including CapitaLand, Changi Airport Group, HDB, Khoo Teck Phuat Hospital, SMRT, Singapore Police Force, and the Institute of Mental Health.

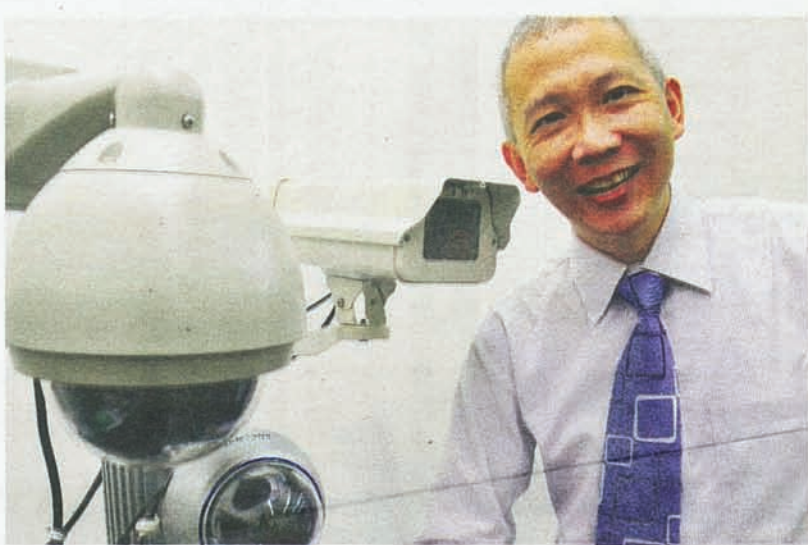
How did ATT achieve this, we asked ATT senior executive Phirence Tan. Her simple answer: "We enhance and invest in our people, technology and management processes."

People

At ATT, all employees are highly valued. The company recognises that staff need to be well equipped with the right skills, knowledge and attitude. This enables the company to achieve its mission of providing innovative solutions, quality products and responsive service. As such, the company invests actively in short-term and long-term training opportunities that include personal development, leadership and management development, IT training and mentoring programmes.

"Exceeding clients' expectations and paying attention to details will provide a perfect customer service. This is what the staff is well aware of and has been practising," said Mr Tan, the managing director.

In addition, by providing continual training through appropriate courses, employees are made to feel that they can grow in ATT, thus motivating them to see the company as



ARTHUR LEE

MR TEO

ATT's business philosophy is that we don't wait for things to happen – rather, we think innovatively and evolve intelligently to make things happen

an extended family. As a result, ATT enjoys high staff retention rates.

Ms Tan quotes this as a key reason for ATT's growth, citing the example of an IT manager who started as a polytechnic intern and is now a division manager leading 22 people.

ATT also implements health programmes to promote staff well-being. It recently won the Singapore Health Bronze Award 2010 for being a company that successfully promotes a workplace programme for its employees to stay fit and healthy.

Technology

The fast-changing technological environment and ever evolving customer preferences have led ATT to set up an R&D department to maintain its competitive edge as an innovative one-stop service provider. The department, which has 20 employees, performs market research on current technological trends for its business units, develops its own proprietary solutions and provides customisation based on its customers' needs.

The Q'SoftTM software developed in-house is an exemplary product of its R&D department. It has the flexibility to be customised to almost any queue management application context. The software can be applied in polyclinics, banks and retail outlets – in short, anywhere where a queue needs to be managed.

Due to its extensive software investment, ATT is also able to provide consultation to its clients through the whole application process, from designing, implementing and rolling out, to the monitoring and maintenance of entire applications.

Management processes

ATT maximises its people and technology leverage through its management process, whose key elements are its flat structure and its knowledge initiatives.

ATT insists on open-door communications between management and staff to bridge gaps with the sharing of positive and negative feedback.

"When employees have concerns about a project, the HR department and the bosses lend a listening ear to understand key problems – which really helps to lift the employees' morale," said Ms Tan.

ATT staff are highly diverse in terms of culture and ethnicity. Therefore, mutual respect is emphasised as a key part of the ATT corporate culture. Moreover, the staff is encouraged to strive for continual learning. The people are taught in orientation sessions and undergo on-going training to ensure that they are attuned to the ATT way of doing business.

Future opportunities and challenges

ATT sees its future in overseas markets. It has established subsidiaries in India, Vietnam and Australia. Its excellent people, technology and management process also serve as ATT's competitive advantages in overseas markets.

Despite the opportunities, international expansion is a challenge. Different countries have different needs, according to their different stages of development. Hence, identifying the right strategic partner and defining the right product opportunity are vital factors to ensure successful penetration in overseas markets.

With its strong technical expertise gained on home turf, supported by a superior management process, advanced technology and excellent staff, ATT is all set to consolidate its move out of Singapore and establish a significant regional presence.

As the Chinese adage goes: "True gold fears no fire." Anywhere.

btnews@sph.com.sg

The writers are students at NUS Business School