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Meat the professionals

Indoguna started life as a premium meats purveyor in 1993, but has gone beyond B2B to now also reach out to the consumer market

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THE Indoguna story began in 1993 as a purveyor of premium meats to hotels and restaurants. Its customers include high-end supermarkets and hotels such as Dairy Farm Group, Marina Bay Sands and Grand Hyatt Singapore.

Over the decades, it has expanded to include an assortment of premium food products that range from gourmet meat and seafood to its extensive range of halal dim sum.

To spice up its business, Indoguna has established various house brands specialising in an array of products. To cater to customers' growing appetite for premium seafood products, Ocean Gems was introduced. Hot on the heels of the introduction of Ocean Gems, Carne Meats was launched to focus on European-style small goods such as sausages, cold cuts and salami. Another house brand, Masterpiece, specialises in halal dim sum.

Initially a business-to-business supplier, Indoguna has expanded into a multi-faceted business to include consumers. This is achieved through its online e-commerce platform – Greengrocer.com.sg. This web portal was launched in 2007 to allow a customer to purchase any quantity of Indoguna's gourmet products with a convenient click of the mouse.

Growing from strength to strength, the company has grown from two employees more than two decades ago to a sizable staff strength of more than 200 today. Moreover, Indoguna has won various prestigious awards – it is a five-time winner of the Enterprise 50 Awards, and most recently, the Hall of Fame for Gourmet Distributor of the Year at the World Gourmet Summit Awards of Excellence 2017.

Commitment to quality and safety

"Food quality and safety are of paramount importance to us", emphasised Helene Raudaschl, managing director of Indoguna. This belief is the key driving force behind the management's impetus to be involved in the daily affair of visiting, tasting and giving quality assurance to customers to ensure the highest quality for every product in their repertoire.

For example, the company is committed to producing only natural products without fillers and additives through its house brand, Carne Meats. To earn the trust of customers, Indoguna's production facility is also open for them to observe the company's stringent process of ensuring food quality and food safety. Jason Chong, assistant general manager of Indoguna, said: "Indoguna adopts an open-door policy. Because we are so proud of the way we do things, the processes, the way we produce things – we are always ready for our customers." Such efforts help in obtaining customer buy-in to support the company's philosophy of producing only the best products.

To uphold the twin pillars of food quality and food safety, Indoguna needs to constantly innovate and adopt the latest technologies in food processing. As a Food and Beverage (F&B) manufacturer and distributor, Indoguna is highly susceptible to disease outbreaks and food safety hazards. Indoguna thus adopts a robust ISO 22000 Food Safety Management System, which allows full traceability of its products.

In order to boost its technological capabilities, Indoguna has upgraded its SAP system by investing in an additional production module. With the business expansion towards manufacturing, this timely improvement enables the company to have better control over its entire production value chain.

Motivated by its success in Singapore's small domestic market, Indoguna took a leap of faith and expanded its business to the rest of Asia and the Middle East.

Beyond local shores

Focusing on house brands and halal production, Indoguna has selected Dubai as its Middle East base due to its strategic location. It gives Indoguna a competitive edge as it provides many opportunities to expand the business in the long run.

Furthermore, customers who have expanded their business into the Middle Eastern region continue to favour Indoguna's products. This strong customer loyalty gave Indoguna the confidence to set up a halal-certified food manufacturing plant in Dubai. Additionally, Indoguna's penetration into the Middle Eastern market has also enabled the company to be cost-efficient at an optimal scale.

The house brand, Masterpiece, introduced halal dim sum so that Muslims do not miss out on the authentic taste of Cantonese cuisine. In a case of bringing "coal to Newcastle", Indoguna even took the bold step of selling halal dim sum in Hong Kong, where dim sum restaurants are world-renowned. This has earned it favourable reviews.

The decision to expand beyond Singapore has proven to be a strategic one, as Indoguna has reaped significant rewards in its Middle Eastern and Asia-Pacific ventures. By spotting a gap in the market, Indoguna has created a niche market for itself through pioneering halal dim sum.

Executing this novel idea was not a smooth-sailing journey for Indoguna as there is no internationally standardised halal certification body. In order to overcome this, Indoguna sought the assistance of the government agencies, Spring Singapore and International Enterprise Singapore to initiate and coordinate meetings with the various halal certification bodies across the countries.



Customers, accompanied by Indoguna's managing director Helene Raudaschl (second from right), during a production facility tour that sheds light on how food quality and safety are ensured in Indoguna's products.

Employees as the key driver

When it comes to the company's culture, Indoguna's mantra is clear – "Human resources are our No 1 asset".

Indoguna encourages continuous skills upgrading to maintain a robust and highly competent workforce. In order to encourage employees to develop a lifelong thirst for knowledge, Indoguna has crafted an array of experiential learning opportunities that extends beyond Singapore.

For instance, employees get exclusive access to suppliers' farms overseas to understand the sourcing and preparation of raw materials. Such opportunities prompt employees' reflection on the entire value chain from farm to fork, thus providing ideas on product developments and food innovation.

In line with enhancing workforce capability, Indoguna emphasises career progression and talent scouting. This is coupled with a well-structured talent management programme that comprises open appraisals, simulations, performance reviews and group work opportunities.

Indoguna's vision to penetrate the Asia-Pacific and the Middle Eastern markets is already in progress. As Indoguna transforms into a multinational corporation, it is vital that the company is equipped with a well-trained and highly motivated workforce.

Never contented with its current successes, Indoguna continuously aims for excellence by ensuring the highest standards of food quality and safety.

The writers are students from NUS Business School

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