

Louken looks to digital future

It is the first branding and communications company to win the E50 award. BY LAM YI FUNG, YANG XU, YE KEYU AND YE YE

FOR homegrown company Louken Group, being the first branding and communications company to be presented the Enterprise 50 award is a recognition of its constant effort to innovate and digitalise, as well as testimony of the strength of its relationships with customers.

Louken was formed with the aspiration to partner Asian enterprises to transform them into market leading brands of the future. Louken has made its mark on many well-known brands such as BreadTalk, Charles & Keith, ValueMax, Jumbo and Skin Inc.

Louken owns an integrated suite of brand growth services that leverages digitalisation and technology. Under the management of Luke Lim, the group chief executive officer, Louken has achieved a spectacular average growth of 20 per cent over the last 15 years. With Mr Lim's vision and drive, what started as a company with four employees and five clients has grown into a 92-strong team servicing 1,580 clients today.

Integrated 360 model

The secret of Louken's success in an extremely competitive market is its "integrated 360 model" that is supported by three key pillars: consulting and training services; brand activation services; and digital technology services. The integration of its online and offline strategies has made it possible for Louken to provide comprehensive services that cater to different customer segments. Mr Lim is candid about the competition: "Of course, each of Louken's subsidiaries faces tough competition in their respective industries. However, as a group, Louken's integrated offering has a strong value proposition."

Despite being a local company, Louken has managed to serve many regional clients in China, Indonesia,



Thanks to CEO Luke Lim's vision in developing digital services from early 2010, nearly half of the group's total revenue was generated from this segment in 2015. PHOTO: YEN MENG JIN

Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, and Vietnam. With much knowledge gathered from these vast and varied experiences, Mr Lim has authored two books – *Secrets of The Little Red Cow* and *Brand Bull Run* – in which he shares his expertise and insights on branding for small and medium enterprises. Launched earlier this year, *Brand Bull Run* highlights 50 case studies and emphasises the importance of harnessing the potential of digital communication.

Louken has also built a global network through its affiliation with global consulting alliance network, Ebeltoft, which has a presence in 23 countries. Collectively, member companies of the network conduct research on key consumer trends and

innovation around the world. This has created more opportunities for Louken to serve clients globally.

Mr Lim believes innovation will strengthen an organisation, give it a competitive advantage and make a brand great again. For Louken, innovation took the form of digital transformation.

Digital foresight

"In a digital world today, brand communications have gone omni-channel. Therefore, Louken should stay ahead of the trend to provide its clients with the most innovative solutions," said Mr Lim. In order to achieve its goal, the company underwent a rapid restructuring exercise to set up several digital media-related

subsidiaries to facilitate its growth. Thanks to Mr Lim's vision in developing digital services from early 2010, nearly half of the group's total revenue was generated from this segment in 2015.

Among the services provided by Louken, digital brand activation is probably one of the most crucial steps emerging brands need to take off. For instance, Louken has an excellent track record in conducting digital brand activation campaigns for the baby-product industry. The 2016 SuperMom Bazaar held by Louken was the biggest baby fair held in Singapore with overwhelming response on Facebook, and more than 200,000 parent memberships were successfully attracted during the campaigns.

In addition, Giraffe Consulting, one of Louken's subsidiaries that serves as a social movement platform and event curation firm, has built a reputation by providing brand activation services to world-famous brands like Nestle, Milo, Great Eastern and AXA. Through its online community Rise & Shine, Giraffe helps enterprises to reach more consumers by targeting different segments of the market and raising awareness effectively.

When it comes to social media marketing and online display advertising in this connected world, Louken has its own secret recipe. Through its newly launched microsites, banner advertising campaigns on Google Display Network and re-marketing strategies to engage potential customers, the group has significantly enhanced customer interaction for many clients. Mr Lim said: "The acceleration of digital transformation can be quite scary to a lot of traditional businesses. Our mission is to help them through the whole process."

Louken's reputation for quality and success has secured the firm pro-

jects from multinational companies such as Lego, Volvo, DBS and Unilever. Looking to the future, Mr Lim believes digital investment will continue to be the strategic focus as it is expected to yield huge returns for Louken, with its digital related income forecast to hit 80 per cent of total revenue by 2020.

Through its own digital transformation, Louken is moving closer to its goal of becoming a leading branding and communications group in the region, dedicated to the brand growth of enterprises in the digital economy.

■ The writers are students from NUS Business School.



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