

ITCAN's CEO walks the talk

Amit Sujan recognises the hard work and efforts of his employees and attributes the success of the company to their contributions

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A competent entrepreneur, courageous leader and experienced businessman are just some of the words that have been used to describe Amit Sujan, CEO of tech consulting firm ITCAN.

The idea to establish ITCAN came while Mr Sujan worked at multinational companies such as NIIT, JPMorgan and IBM. There, he realised that there was a high demand for quality technology services at competitive prices in the market. Back then, big brands such as IBM and HP were providing good services but their fees were very high, while local providers charged lower fees but were not able to deliver on the service standard. Mr Sujan recognised the opportunity "to create a niche and a unique IT service at an affordable price", says Mr Sujan.

Mr Sujan explains that ITCAN competes on quality instead of price. Today, some 2,000 employees deliver enterprise technology solutions across the entire value chain. ITCAN also provides onsite consulting services and turnkey software projects to some of the biggest multinational corporations around the world. It is

currently working on projects in Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Australia and Hong Kong, and is looking to enter the United States and the United Kingdom. Its impressive list of clients includes Fortune 500 companies, consulting firms, as well as insurance and banking companies.

From getting its first client to achieving its first million, ITCAN has achieved many milestones since its inception in 2006. Still, ITCAN's ceaseless spirit continues to propel the company forward to scale new heights.

Employee-centric approach

Mr Sujan takes an employee-centric approach to management and his first priority is to empower his team. He recognises the hard work and efforts of his employees and attributes the success of the company to them. In fact, ITCAN designs its management processes and policies to accommodate and attract driven individuals who can contribute significantly to the company.

For instance, it provides flexible working hours and project submission deadlines. Employees can report later if they had worked overtime, and can extend their project dead-



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lines as long as they are able to get the job done within a reasonable timeframe. Employees handle their own projects without close supervision and are encouraged to suggest new initiatives through an internal ticketing system.

Mr Sujan's second priority is continuous employee motivation. Every month, he presents five "Employees of the month" with a certificate and monetary incentive.

Furthermore, the company's remuneration policy is performance-based to motivate the employees to do more. Last year, it distributed two kilogrammes worth of gold to reward employees for their hard work and good performance. Apart from the annual performance appraisal, employees are appraised and rewarded once targets are achieved. Mr Sujan notes that rewarding employees at the right time can help motivate them to be successful in the workplace. Such initiatives ensure that employees feel valued.

Mr Sujan also believes in investing to give his staff what they need to succeed and perform. Whenever a new staff joins, an assigned talent acquisition manager will work with that person to carefully plan and develop a personalised career advancement programme. Employees are given the flexibility of internal mobility and can request exposure to different environments, client industries or technologies.

Mr Sujan explains: "If the company grows, everybody grows with the company. I think they have taken care of the growth of the company and we have taken care of their growth, and everybody has a good success story to share."

The culture of ITCAN stems from its values of transparency and inclusiveness as well as its four core philosophies: Encourage Innovation, Value Teamwork, Empower Teammates, and Reward Performance.

"Our values and philosophies create a very unique platform that brings everyone together to achieve a common goal," says Mr Sujan. "For a company that operates in nine countries, having a common bond and mission transcends geographical boundaries."

The company's culture influences all aspects of the firm, including recruitment, organisational structure, development and its social responsibility.

During recruitment drives, applicants are assessed on their technical abilities and qualifications as well as their soft skills and most importantly, whether they have the right attitude.

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Mr Sujan explains that the company is very clear about what is unacceptable – politicking, corruption and illegal practices.

Equally important, the company's flat organisational structure lowers the power distance between superiors and subordinates, thereby increasing communication efficiency and encouraging better teamwork. All employees are encouraged to share their ideas and opinions freely.

Mr Sujan recounts that a young staff member had suggested a multicultural "Lo Hei" (a ritual of tossing raw fish salad for good fortune) with samosa, an Indian snack, during the company's Lunar New Year celebrations. This helps to build inclusiveness and raise participation.

Furthermore, ITCAN also ensures that employees feel appreciated. Notably, it has set up the CAN-CLUB committee which takes care of employees' welfare through initiatives such as birthday celebrations, company re-

treats and corporate discounts. In addition, the committee is responsible for organising Corporate Social Responsibility activities.

Mr Sujan also believes that people and companies have "responsibilities towards society". In 2008, ITCAN was the corporate sponsor for the R D Barman Band which raised funds for The Leukaemia and Lymphoma Foundation.

The company also donates generously to several charities, including the Old Age Foundation. Mr Sujan believes that by instilling this value of selflessness and graciousness in all its employees, it will create a greater sense of purpose in them.

The CAN-CLUB also plays a crucial role in creating unity among employees, especially among those seconded to clients' sites. Activities and welfare benefits offered by the CAN-CLUB keep employees engaged by recognising their contributions and supporting them.

Empowering younger staff

With regard to the future, Mr Sujan aspires to keep ITCAN relevant to the younger generation. He is keen to recruit and retain young Singaporeans to challenge the status quo and provide unique ideas to improve ITCAN.

He understands the younger generation desires challenging and creative projects as compared to routine tasks. Thus, the company is shifting its approach to involve younger employees in its decision-making process.

With these initiatives and changes, ITCAN hopes to spur innovation and improve service quality. The company believes that focusing on employees is the right approach. As Mr Sujan notes: "If we take care of our customers, we should (also) take care of our employees."

■ The writers are students from NUS Business School.