

Maintaining a competitive edge in a fast-changing business environment

From its origins in 2000 as an IT firm, Aedge Holdings has diversified into many different industries, going from strength to strength

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FROM its origins as an e-commerce and information technology (IT) solutions provider, Aedge Holdings has expanded into other areas such as security, manpower and transport services.

The breadth of its offerings has allowed the company to continue to grow since it started in 2000, despite intense competition and disruptions along the way.

In 2018, Aedge Holdings clinched the Enterprise 50 Award for the first time in its history.

The company's founder and chief executive officer, Poh Soon Keng, said: "Businesses need to look and plan ahead. It's a constant challenge for many companies, but this forward-looking philosophy has helped us succeed over the years."

Aedge Holdings' journey since its inception in 2000 has been filled with many twists and turns, having to brave and weather many economic challenges and market turbulence to get to where it is today.

Mr Poh incorporated Aedge Technologies in 2000 under the name of Auto Interactive Pte Ltd as an e-commerce and information technology (IT) solutions provider.

The company started by offering IT consultancy and implementation services to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and has since diversified into security and manpower services, engineering and transport.

Aedge Manpower was registered in 2004 to cater to a growing demand for recruitment and staffing outsourcing solutions.

The company has since been rebranded into Aedge Services and it expanded into the security industry.

It has incorporated communications and security technology to complement its security guarding services and ventured into the aviation industry by providing outsourced staffing solutions to aviation companies.

Aedge's engineering arm, Aedge Technologies, initially undertook e-commerce and IT consulting before

diversifying into scaffolding and manpower subcontracting services for the oil and gas industry in 2006.

This move paid off due to the high volume of construction activities and sub-contracting services on Jurong Island.

In 2017, the company expanded its range of engineering services to become an integrated engineering service provider for the process, marine and construction industries.

The firm also made its foray into transportation after the Government planned to slash the carrying capacities of lorries in 2011 to improve worker safety during transportation, following a spate of accidents involving lorries carrying workers.

Mr Poh's entrepreneurial instincts prompted him to sell his fleet of lorries and buy five buses instead, which he used to ferry workers.

He also realised that he could maximise the use of these buses by applying for a public bus licence and running premium bus services when the fleet was ferrying workers.

This led to the formation of Aedge's transport division. In 2014, it made a successful bid for a package of three City Direct bus routes.

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Poh Soon Keng, founder and CEO of Aedge Holdings

Aedge then started adding more corporate customers and ad-hoc jobs to its portfolio.

Despite facing manpower shortages and rising labour cost, Aedge has successfully stayed ahead of the competition through strategic foresight and excellent management.

Another important reason for its success was its flexible management structure and style.

Mr Poh believes in not micro-managing the business and refrains from interfering too much with the day-to-day operations.

Instead, he built a self-sustaining team of capable and committed senior managers to lead the various subsidiaries.

This empowers the senior management to capitalise on their extensive connections and industry knowledge.

Mr Poh believes the company must continually innovate and improve its quality to beat the competition.

To manage rising labour costs and a shrinking pool of local workers, Aedge is looking at automation. For example, remote monitoring is used to reduce the need for security officers.

Today, one of the unique value propositions of Aedge is its ability to provide a one-stop, comprehensive multi-services platform for its clients in areas such as engineering, transport, security and manpower services.

It provides a single contact point for the various services customers need, so they don't need to manage many vendors.

Customers also get better value for money, since the price offered for its services can be lower due to economies of scale.

This also benefits the company, since its resources are deployed more efficiently.

At the same time, the company's business model is highly demand-driven, responding to market changes and customer preferences.

The multi-services strategy also helps the company to cross-sell its services, and buffers it from unexpected shocks in the market.

In developing its multi-services



Founder and CEO Poh Soon Keng believes in not micro-managing the business and refrains from interfering too much with day-to-day operations despite the company's wide range of activities.

platform strategy, another challenge was integrating technology into its business model.

The operating processes needed to be re-engineered to identify potential bottlenecks and to incorporate new solutions, supported by a pool of skilled talents.

Aedge intends to adopt a two-prong approach to growing its business – organic growth as well as inorganic growth via strategic mergers and acquisitions (M&A).

As organic growth can be fairly limited, acquisitions can help it to tap quickly into new markets and acquire much-needed technology.

Together with organic growth, strategic M&As can increase synergy

between business units through the adoption of best practices and new technologies for market penetration and future growth.

Mr Poh believes there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to any problem and the team is constantly refining its business models.

The company will continue to leverage on its core competencies and competitive advantage as a multi-services solutions provider.

Its motto – "Together, we can excel" – is testament to the value it places on forging partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders.



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