

Paving the way for a greener future

Chye Thiam Maintenance is leading the evolution of Singapore's environmental services sector through innovative technology.
BY MOG SHI XIAN, LIN DAXIN, KOW WEN XIN AND ADRIAN TEO CHUN KIAT

A TRAILBLAZER in introducing and adopting numerous innovations, Chye Thiam Maintenance (CTM) has slowly but surely carved a place in Singapore's competitive business landscape. The core of its business philosophy is to perpetuate excellence in all areas of work while adhering closely to the lifelong motto of its founder, Tan Chye Thiam, that "honesty wins the world".

Since securing its first major contract with the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore in 1983, CTM has been an early adopter of new cleaning technology. It began using mechanical road sweepers even when such technology was still novel, paving the way for CTM's rapid expansion over the next 37 years.

By investing in the latest technologies in cleaning both commercial and outdoor spaces, it is freeing up workers to focus on other tasks. CTM's multi-functional, fully autonomous robots, LeoBots, can take over large-scale routine cleaning tasks that typically require hours of manual labour.

CTM has also made significant technological investments in its waste management business.

To reduce the amount of waste sent to the incinerators, it invested in a semi-automatic Material Recovery Facility (MRF) in 2018.

Equipped with unique features such as a ballistic separator and an electromagnetic system to sort out useful materials, the MRF managed to recover up to 40 per cent of waste,

thus saving up to 20 per cent of incineration costs each month and creating a new revenue stream from the sale of recovered materials.

This has raised the bar for waste management and positioned CTM to be a front-runner in collaborative efforts with environmental agencies to address future sustainability challenges.

CTM is now zeroing in on electronic waste (e-waste), which is fast becoming a health and environmental concern with the proliferation of electronics. Under the Resource Sustainability Bill passed in 2019, companies that manufacture or import electronic products are required to collect and recycle their e-waste.

Leveraging on this opportunity, CTM has invested in a high-tech e-waste recycling plant which will be ready in the last quarter of 2020, and is in the midst of hiring new members for its latest endeavour.

As the number of Covid-19 cases soared in early 2020, demand for cleaning services spiked as businesses scrambled to sanitise their workplace. This feeds into CTM's strength as its vast experience and preparedness set it apart from other cleaning companies.

During the Sars crisis in 2003, CTM was involved in the disinfection of passenger aircraft. Tapping on this experience, the company set up a pandemic response team in 2016. Since then it has been involved in multiple mobilisation activations and drills with various government agencies to test its mobilisation response time, equipment and crisis preparedness.



Edy Tan (right), CEO of CTM, serving his staff at the company's 40th anniversary. It has been a long journey since CTM's founding but its unwavering people-centric culture remains. PHOTO: CHYE THIAM MAINTENANCE

When Covid-19 surfaced in early 2020, CTM was ready to hit the ground running.

To better combat Covid-19, CTM imported the SteraMist, a new misting disinfection unit from the United States. Costing S\$40,000, the novel portable technology which makes use of ionised hydrogen peroxide, kills on contact and dries instantly, speeding up the disinfection process.

Despite its cost, CTM made the investment to allow its pandemic disinfection teams to be more productive while adding a complementary tool to its disinfection service.

"CTM is ready to serve any customer that requires quality disinfection with a well-trained professional team, and will continue to invest and introduce new equipment and technology to ensure the safety of both the team and customers," says CEO Edy Tan.

To provide quality cleaning services for its clients, CTM places

strong emphasis on manpower training. A Workforce Skills Qualifications Approved Training Organisation, the company has in place a comprehensive in-house training programme for its 1,800 employees.

Its efforts have been recognised. It received the lauded National Environment Agency Enhanced Clean Mark "Gold" Award in recognition for its quality workforce and effective use of technology to deliver high cleaning standards. And in 2019, CTM became the first environmental services company to set up a company training committee in partnership with the Employment and Employability Institute (E2i) and Building Construction and Timber Industries Employees' Union (BATU).

The committee seeks to identify, implement and institutionalise training and development to support CTM's objectives of company transformation, having better wages, welfare and work prospects for its employees.

Another key contributor to CTM's success is its people-centric culture. Despite being in an unglamorous industry, CTM has managed to retain employees through its competitive employee compensation packages. During its Chinese New Year celebration earlier this year, two of its employees who had served the company for over two decades received generous long-service awards.

The company also organises regular team-bonding sessions and annual overseas company retreats for its employees.

It also tries its level best to ensure staff safety. During Covid-19, CTM equipped all frontline staff with adequate personal protection equipment and ensured they were adequately trained in enhanced cleaning procedures.

As Mr Tan emphasised, "Safety is paramount... without my guys, we are nothing."



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