

Mudlogic engineers success by catering to the customer

Engineering firm maintains its competitive advantage by focusing on unique solutions rather than just selling products

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IT IS rare to hear a business owner admit that he does not want to dominate the market he is in.

But for Phui Eng Ko, co-founder and director of engineering firm Mudlogic, holding a 40 per cent market share of Singapore's foundation industry and 25 per cent of the tunnelling industry is enough for now.

This is because he values the customer's experience above anything else, and expanding too quickly will not allow Mudlogic's customers to be assured of the quality that the company has built its reputation on over the last eight years.

"We want to have good business relationships and good partners," he said. "I am interested in getting 40 to 50 per cent of market share because that is how we can take good care of our customers."

Mudlogic is an engineering company specialising in drilling fluid technology. With a strong presence in both Singapore and Australia, Mudlogic solves construction problems such as foundation works, tunnelling, pipe jacking, horizontal directional drilling, mineral drilling or water well.

The company was established in 2012 when Mr Phui and co-founder Harry Brooks set about pursuing their common vision that engineering was about providing tailored solutions.

This vision, combined with effective working dynamics, propelled Mudlogic to overcome complex challenges over the years.

Under the duo's leadership, Mudlogic has grown tremendously to become a successful and trusted company in the industry.

Mr Phui was the sales and marketing director for Asia-Pacific at a multinational corporation for 12 years, where he gained an understanding of the industry and its key processes.

A four-year stint in China shaped his beliefs about thinking outside of one's comfort zone to consider bolder ideas.

He is also a proponent of "giving everyone a chance to speak and listen", both for clients and for employees. This has fostered a strong culture of innovation and collaboration in the company.

Mudlogic maintains its competitive advantage by focusing on providing solutions rather than just selling products. It also ensures these products are of high quality and environmentally friendly to enhance their effectiveness.

Hence, Mudlogic focuses on developing products with their own unique formulas – what Mr Phui terms its "secret recipe" – to differentiate itself from competitors.



Mudlogic founders Harry Brooks (left) and Phui Eng Ko (right) established the engineering company in 2012 in pursuit of a common vision – that engineering is about providing tailored solutions for customers. BT FILE PHOTO

In the drilling fluid market, where market size has remained small over the past seven years, word-of-mouth marketing has proven to be the most effective way to build the company's customer base.

Mudlogic believes that a client's trust in products and services is key to maintaining customer loyalty and growing its business. Thus, the firm always ensures that it can provide its clients with products and services that exceed their expectations.

Mr Phui said: "We believe that if you are able to solve your clients' problems, your client base will increase."

Mudlogic has a strong people-centric culture and adopts a hocratic structure – where management is decentralised, and authority is distributed among self-organising teams.

"We don't believe in bosses around here," said Mr Phui. Leadership is assigned on a project basis among the departments which span Australia and Singapore.

Mudlogic practises an open-door culture where employees are encour-

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Phui Eng Ko, co-founder and director, Mudlogic

aged to communicate, highlight issues, and propose creative ideas, which allows for an innovative spirit to flourish within the company.

The firm has worked on many private and government projects in Asia-Pacific, such as the residential and commercial development V on Shenton in Singapore, and the Sentral Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) Station in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

By leveraging word-of-mouth referrals from international contractors, Mudlogic has expanded into regions such as Bangladesh.

One of its notable projects was building a special foundation for the Padma Multipurpose Bridge, a road-rail bridge envisioned to become the largest bridge in Bangladesh upon completion.

Mr Phui emphasised that Mudlogic "does not push for market expansion". "Clients come to us and we help them solve the problem," he said. "This is how we expand".

It would prefer to serve its current customers well, instead of overstretching itself and compromising on quality.

Mr Phui expects a challenging time for Mudlogic because of the ongoing pandemic. Construction spending is expected to fall, and companies may close. Material supply may also be an issue due to manpower and logistics constraints.

To circumvent these challenges, Mudlogic plans to enter the pharmaceutical and food packaging industries: bentonite, one of its key products, can be used as a drying



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agent. These industries are likely to survive amid the pandemic, and even thrive.

In the long term, Mudlogic plans to diversify through backward integration. It plans to build a blending plant in Thailand, which was chosen for its strategic location, the ease of exports and imports, and expected lower operating costs.

This plant will produce products developed through research and development (R&D) and what Mr Phui described as "one-bag solutions" – premixed customised combinations of chemicals for customers' needs.

In the longer term, Mudlogic plans to move into the raw materials industry and undertake the functions of a mineral company.

This would provide an advantage and give the firm better control over resources, and make further expansion feasible.

Mr Phui's strong belief in integrity and creativity has guided and shaped Mudlogic's success today.

With strong leadership and an innovative spirit, Mudlogic is more than a typical engineering company – it is one which is revolutionising the industry in meaningful ways.