Enabling a sustainable future, one green building at a time

OTTO Solutions aims to deliver smart systems that can help achieve energy efficiency. **BY CHEE MEI JING MAY, JONATHAN TEO, NURU SHAHIFQ MUNIR AND NG YONG GI**

HEADQUARTERED in Singapore, OTTO Solutions Pte Ltd started as a brick-and-mortar retail lighting company in 1992 and has evolved over the last 28 years into a smart solutions product and service provider for businesses. The company has also established a presence in Malaysia and plans to grow its business in regional countries—Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand in the coming years.

With a paid-up capital of $1.5 million, OTTO Solutions’ mission and brand promise is to listen, innovate, simplify and deliver on comprehensive sustainable smart building technology solutions designed to project delivery and be the market leader in green building automation solutions.

The Enterprise 50 winner is headed by founder and chief executive officer Vicky Andy Lai, who started with lighting supply distribution and expanded the business offerings to provide mechanical, electrical and smart building automation solutions over the years. Lai believes constant innovation is critical to success and has always encouraged employees to innovate from within the company.

An innovator himself, he was featured in The Straits Times when he caught the Singapore Good Design Mark Award.

Lai believes a strong corporate culture is the “secret formula” to a sustainable enterprise.

The three values he often quotes are “learn, grow and share” and they have been deeply ingrained in the workplace.

Today, these values are visible in OTTO Solutions’ daily operations and are the main driving force behind its success.

“Learn” refers to talent development by constantly upskilling and expanding employees’ professional expertise to meet market demand, while “grow” refers to business expansion and success with a focus on product partnerships to further innovate and expand technology product lines.

“Share” refers to the merit-based reward system for the team to achieve milestones that have been obtained collectively, team-building events and community work involvement as part of the company’s corporate social responsibility efforts.

At OTTO Solutions, innovation is highly supported and employees are encouraged to think creatively and bring new ideas to the table.

Taking risks

Lai encourages his employees to break the mold and take risks so the creative energy in OTTO Solutions helps its employees to develop professionally, placing it at the cutting edge of the industry.

For instance, OTTO Solutions’ in-house automation department was born out of this culture.

Started by engineering employee Derrick Ho, the automation department focuses on increasing energy efficiency in buildings through OTTO Solutions’ in-house products.

Ho now leads the company’s technology research and development efforts and won a national innovation challenge jointly organised by BCA and DBS Singapore in 2019 aimed at helping building operators achieve Green Mark Super Low Energy Building standards.

“Smart building systems that specifically help buildings achieve energy efficiency is the new norm. Sustainability needs to be made affordable for all building owners to adopt and implement with ease of mind. This will help Singapore reach the national goal of having 80 per cent of buildings to be green buildings by 2030,” said Mr Ho.

Being a comprehensive solutions provider, OTTO Solutions prioritises energy efficiency and cost-effectiveness by tracking usage rates, occupancy patterns and the ambient lighting.

It seeks to improve energy efficiency and reduce business costs of consumers in the long run. In addition, it offers after-sales service such as regular maintenance to ensure commitment to customers.

“We have been rapidly expanding our business and developing innovating products since 1992. With a 16-year vision of reducing climate change for a sustainable future for all, our dedicated team is now ready to spread our wings to the region, to do our part to tackle global warming,” said Lai.

Currently, a succession plan is in play and Lai is guiding the new management team as the company reaches for new heights.

For instance, the head of the department for lighting and automation, Lionel Li, in his late 20s, is working closely alongside Ho, to lead the team expansion, business growth plans and product roadmap for the next decade.

There are hurdles to cross for the team. For instance, Covid-19 has impacted businesses across all sectors and how buildings operate has changed.

OTTO Solutions has been quick to realtime itself to cater to this change, starting with technology to provide a safer environment for occupants.

For instance, the company has furthered its research and development efforts to provide smart solutions for its clients such as facial recognition contactless kiosks, automated UV lighting and blockchain-based automated room fogging sanitisation.

During the pandemic, the team took the opportunity to review its current processes and operational structures to identify improvements.

Lai proactively invested time to adapt and integrate the use of digital solutions to ensure that productivity was not compromised.

“Working remotely was a struggle at first but slowly and surely, our team managed to overcome the challenges together and now we have embraced the new normal of working remotely effectively. We believe this new normal has proven that our team is highly adaptable to changes during times of uncertainty,” he said.

To meet the future demands of each customer segment with its ever-changing needs, OTTO Solutions recognises the need for more cross-department collaboration and customised proposals from design to project delivery.

In terms of operations, smart solutions play an integral part in helping building operators reduce their costs.

For instance, OTTO Solutions’ wireless small business-friendly smart lighting system is able to automatically turn energy through daylight harvesting and occupant presence detection.

The smart lighting system also benefits the occupants with its customisable meeting room scene settings, time scheduling features for protocols and seamless integration and climate control, which greatly helps with the occupants’ workflow and productivity.

Serving building operators

OTTO Solutions provides services to both commercial and hospitality and retail sectors, with the latter forming the bulk of its clientele.

With more than 2 decades of project experience, OTTO Solutions has served building operators such as Singapura Hotel, Hotel, Singapore Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Singapore Airlines, Singapore Airlines and As-

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