

Growing a Business Edge in human resources

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IN THE crowded field of human resources (HR), Business Edge Personnel Services seeks to differentiate itself from the competition by caring for both its employer-clients and jobseekers, and building close relationships with them.

Service is a core value, said founder and chief executive officer John Koh.

This is not just about being polite to customers, but going beyond expectations, he added. "In the end, it's about speed and efficiency: how fast you can respond to the client, how fast you can send a resume or generate a contract, and how fast you can answer their queries."

Similarly, in an industry where jobseekers are often treated as "products" to be pushed to companies, Business Edge instead recognises their needs in the job-matching process and aims to develop a personal connection.

Said Koh: "The job market has evolved, and the things people are asking for are now different."

By treating jobseekers with respect and doing the best to meet their expectations, Business Edge has been able to build strong and

long-term relationships. Some jobseekers become clients later, he added.

Koh described Business Edge's early success as a mix of opportunity and luck. The company began in 1991 by providing placement services – slotting workers into vacancies – but then recognised the need to offer a wider suite of HR solutions to better serve its clients.

It has since developed three other business "pillars": contract outsourcing, payroll services and work-pass services. In each case, the company saw a demand for the service and took the opportunity to diversify, said Koh.

With this range, Business Edge can position itself as a HR company offering a full suite of services.

The company's main focus is still on strengthening its placement-services pillar.

With a strong foundation already built in providing placement services to government bodies and public institutions, Business Edge now eyes more private-sector customers.

It is also looking at opportunities to expand in HR consulting, which it currently offers to clients only on an ad hoc basis.

Business Edge has also expanded into Malaysia, and hopes to go



further afield in the longer term. Its Malaysia branch focuses on sourcing for talent there for clients in Singapore – but plans are afoot for the office to serve clients in Malaysia too.

Koh added that a large part of the company's success in diversification is due to how it restructures as it expands, ensuring that its standard operating procedures and business operations keep up

with changes. Work processes are improved and streamlined regularly, and employee feedback is frequently sought on how to further improve operations.

Paying attention to employee feedback was also crucial when Business Edge started to digitalise.

The company's philosophy is to focus on its people, who are the key to its success, said Koh. "You don't build a business, you build people,

Business Edge founder and chief executive officer John Koh (holding award) with director of operations Joel Koh (fifth from right) and other team members at the Enterprise 50 Awards. PHOTO: BUSINESS EDGE PERSONNEL SERVICES

and your people build the business."

In the transition away from traditional processes and towards digital ones, Business Edge ensured that all employees underwent training to learn how to use their new integrated software system.

It welcomed employee feedback on how to improve the efficiency of system adoption, and took care to ensure that staff could cope with job demands and changes.

"To be able to pledge excellent services to customers, the company needs to have a happy and reliable workforce," said Koh.

Business Edge does not believe in hiring en masse during good times and then letting go of employees when times are bad or when growth slows, he added.

"We hire specifically what we need. Rather than hiring indiscriminately, we believe in spending time identifying the right candidates and nurturing them."

This is part of the Enterprise 50 (E50) Educational Project between the E50 partners and the NUS Business School. Business Edge Personnel Services was among the winners in 2022. The annual E50 ranking is co-organised by *The Business Times* and KPMG, sponsored by OCBC Bank, and supported by Enterprise Singapore, Singapore Exchange and the Singapore Business Federation.