

Altron Shipping keeps ahead of the competition

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COVID-19 caught many companies off-guard, but not Altron Shipping. Five years earlier, the logistics company had already put in place an ISO-certified business continuity management plan. This allowed it to minimise operational disruptions when the pandemic hit. Altron's employees were also equipped with the necessary skills and technology for a seamless transition to remote work.

And even as global supply chains were disrupted, Altron's reputation as a reliable partner contributed to increased sales. Overseas agents chose the company as their preferred cargo partner, thanks in part to its track record.

Granted, Altron's logistics and warehousing capabilities were still considerably stretched. Said assistant vice-president Leonard Leo: "During that period there was a significant bottleneck, and warehouse and vessel space was tight."

"Even if customers were willing to pay a premium, their goods still may not have been able to move," he added.

Altron had to source for more options for its customers – a process the team viewed as an opportunity to retain customers by helping them solve their problems.

"We can say we are there to support our customers. That is why a lot of our customers are still with us," said executive vice-president Dino Se.

Growing and transforming

Established in 1997 by chief executive officer Leo Teng Hong as a freight forwarding company, Altron has since grown from a founding team of six to a staff strength of over 50.

It has expanded its services to include warehousing and logistics, and established a network of over

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100 agents and eight overseas offices.

Altron's experience in the industry has strengthened its ability to negotiate. Said assistant vice-president Leo: "Customers tend to prefer to work with someone that has a longer history, and a more reputable firm."

Altron may be an established player, but it is not standing still. The management sees digitalisation as key in maintaining its competitive advantage.

Said Se: "We cannot wait for our clients to transform before we do. We should be one step ahead so that they know that we have the competitive edge."

The company's digital efforts include developing an in-house system for daily operations, which allows it to fulfil customers' requests with shorter order creation and response times. This also frees up employees to focus on more complex enquiries and monitor different shipping processes.

With about 80 per cent of revenue coming from direct customers, Altron pays close attention to maintaining customer relations.

This in-house system provides a centralised database and pricing across the headquarters and over-



Altron Shipping, led by chief executive officer Leo Teng Hong, aspires to offer an integrated suite of freight forwarding and logistics services.
PHOTO: ALTRON SHIPPING

seas subsidiaries, ensuring the accuracy of shared data and enhancing efficiency.

Looking forward

One of Altron's core businesses is representing foreign shipping companies by setting up offices in other South-east Asian countries.

It has a presence in more than eight countries, both through its own subsidiaries and collaboration with agencies. China is another main market that it serves.

The company is also going further afield, expanding into Europe. Its existing South-east Asian network has served it well here, as Altron puts it: "When you work with

Altron, you work with South-east Asia."

Having spent over two decades at the helm of the company, the founding leaders have actively worked on succession planning – ensuring that the company's vision is aligned across both generations of leadership. Other priorities include employee satisfaction, work-life balance, as well as personal and professional growth.

The company's long-term aspiration is to provide an integrated suite of freight forwarding and logistics services. In pursuing this vision, Altron is not ruling out joint ventures, mergers and even an eventual initial public offering.



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