

Managing properties with innovation and adaptability

Turning crises into opportunities has helped Exceltec punch above its weight. **BY NICOLE CHAN, HON SHI RUI, HU SHUYI AND NATALIE HONG**

STARTING down crises and thriving through them is second nature to property and facilities management company, Exceltec Property Management Pte Ltd.

Established as a subsidiary of International Merchandising Mart (IMM) under Yaohan International Holdings to manage the building management and maintenance operation in IMM mall in 1991, Exceltec underwent a management buy-out when Yaohan fell on hard times and exited Singapore during the 1997 Asian financial crisis.

Koh Hock Seng, then executive director of Exceltec, saw its potential and did a management buyout and Exceltec became an independent entity. However, that crisis was only the beginning of a long journey.

In the subsequent crises – the 2003 Sars outbreak, 2008 global financial crisis and the current Covid-19 pandemic, Exceltec has proved resilient each time. Indeed, it has emerged from each challenge stronger than before.

How did Exceltec manage to successfully establish itself as a prominent player in the competitive property and facilities management industry for over 3 decades?

Keeping up with the big players

With a keen understanding of its position, Exceltec uses its smaller size to its advantage, turning a weakness into strength to punch above its weight.

It enjoys lower operating costs compared to the bigger players, which translates into competitive prices for its services.

Compact operations and reduced reliance on outsourcing al-

low Exceltec more flexibility when it comes to reacting to changing market conditions and seizing new opportunities.

An eager learner, Exceltec is vigilant in spotting market trends and adopting best practices from market leaders.

The company knows it is not good enough to only offer similar services as the rest of the pack; it has to create more value and establish a unique competitive edge if it wants to distinguish itself in the highly saturated industry.

Hence, Exceltec places great emphasis on its research and innovation efforts.

In 2018, it set up a research and development department to develop its own unique internal capabilities.

As of 2021, the department has created 9 new products, which are deployed at over 50 client sites and used in 6 countries.

Exceltec truly lives up to what Koh describes as “same same, but different” – to learn from the best while adding its own unique, innovative value to its services.

Exceltec stays in tune with new technological developments as it recognises the importance of digitalisation and is a major user of smart facilities management (FM) solutions in its operations.

For instance, TenderBoard digitalises the company’s entire procurement activities while the MuRho Inventory Management System manages all its goods and assets online, reducing the need for physical labour.

In line with Singapore’s Smart Nation initiative, the company took the opportunity to improve and establish its smart FM solutions, which streamlined job duties, re-

duced costs and enhanced Internet of Things (IoT) solutions. Overall, Exceltec’s services became more efficient.

Braving the pandemic

2020 was a tumultuous year for companies and it was no exception for Exceltec. The company adapted quickly to the challenges brought on by the pandemic.

To facilitate work-from-home arrangements, it conducted training sessions for employees and updated its IT servers to enable remote access.

The pandemic also brought about a significant increase in new industry competitors – hard-hit construction companies pivoted into the project and facilities management industry.

With the industry becoming a “red ocean”, Exceltec reacted swiftly and adopted a “blue ocean”

Emphasising the acronym – COCC which stands for Confidence, Open mindset, Creativity and Competitiveness, founder Koh Hock Seng explained that one should be confident in their skills, be open to new ideas, have the creativity to think out-of-the-box and be able to establish a competitive edge.



Exceltec’s key management team with founder and managing director Koh Hock Seng (middle), with the 2020 Enterprise 50 Award. PHOTO: EXCELTEC PROPERTY MANAGEMENT PTE LTD

strategy to target alternative industries, and created new complementary products and services to stay relevant.

While the pandemic brought about many challenges, it also triggered opportunities for Exceltec, which was quick off its feet in 2020 when it created an in-house disinfection team.

The environmental and cleaning services department began training its cleaning staff early on to form a specialised disinfection team, giving Exceltec an early head start to become one of the first few to register with the National Environment Agency as a recommended and approved disinfection services provider.

Exceltec spotted the chance to provide services for the newly-set community care facilities in Singapore, which are government facilities that house Covid-19 positive and recovering patients.

With its experience and in-house cleaning capability, Exceltec was able to manage these facilities which required a high degree of expertise in healthcare and facilities management.

To seize these business opportunities, Exceltec employs a cyclical 4R (Redesign, Retrain, Reassess, Redeploy) approach.

By redesigning work scopes to fit the new way of working and training employees, it equips staff with the most updated skills and ensures they are in job roles that best match their skill sets.

It is only with continuous upgrading of staff that the company would be able to keep up with the rapid pace of technological advancements.

As Koh put it: “We have to make sure that our people are ready for these new technologies.”

Hence, the pandemic has allowed Exceltec to gain an advantage over its competitors, as well as create new capabilities that complement its existing business.

Koh’s advice for aspiring entrepreneurs: Have passion that can cultivate an inner drive and willingness to learn.

He added that failure should not be feared as it teaches valuable life lessons and builds competence in the long run.

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