

ENTERPRISE 50

Finding a niche in protected piping

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BY PROVIDING bespoke solutions at swift speeds, Almarc Engineering has established a niche in corrosion-resistant piping systems, with major pharmaceutical multinationals among its clients.

Almarc specialises in pipes that are lined with polytetrafluoroethylene/perfluoroalkoxy alkanes (PTFE/PFA), for “high-purity” applications where they need to be non-stick and resistant to chemicals. Such protected piping systems are used in the pharmaceutical, food, oil and gas, chemical and waste management industries.

Since its establishment in 2015, Almarc has developed expertise in such pipes and fittings, including tanks, hoses, valves and pumps. This allows it to cater to demand that is not addressed by mainstream providers.

Almarc has been able to out-compete larger firms and provide piping systems to pharmaceutical giants such as Pfizer, GSK, MSD, Sanofi and Lonza. Its pipes are also used to transport corrosive chemicals in petrochemical and chemical processing; handle potentially viscous and sticky substances in food and waste management; and ensure purity in breweries.

To guarantee product quality, the company only works with long-standing business partners. It is particular about the source of its raw materials, buying mainly from countries with a strong repu-



Almarc Engineering’s PTFE/PFA-lined pipes are carefully inspected before being fitted into customers’ manufacturing facilities. PHOTO: ALMARC ENGINEERING

tation for quality such as Germany, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

“We will strive for continuous improvement and to always provide excellent service and quality products to all our clients,” said managing director Alvin Cher.

Staying close to customers

To provide bespoke solutions, Almarc’s production team works closely with customers and their technicians. Based on the customer’s piping requirements, Almarc designs customised fittings for

even the most challenging applications, with the help of 3D modelling software.

Almarc is geographically close to customers, too. Most PTFE/PFA-lined systems are from the US or Europe – but Almarc has its own production facilities in Singapore and Malaysia, bringing it much closer to its customers in Southeast Asia. With its service team and engineers based in Singapore, the company can also minimise the response time for repair and maintenance should problems arise.

Through its excellent customer service, it has secured contracts even from former sceptics, including a leading biopharmaceutical company, said Cher.

“Initially, the company did not want to place an order with us, claiming that our price was too steep. But a few months later, we received a call from the company. They must have recognised then the value of excellent customer service,” he said.

Innovating and expanding

To maintain its market lead, Al-

marc undertakes research and development to maximise efficiency and improve the quality and durability of its products.

In April 2022, the company installed a S\$150,000 rotomoulding machine that uses a hollow casting technique to line odd-shaped pipes and valves. This is a vast improvement to manual casting and has given the company greater flexibility in meeting customisation requests.

Almarc is also looking at the possibility of producing its own PTFE/PFA liner material, instead of depending on imports.

Global expansion is one goal that the company is aiming to achieve. It has already expanded from its base in Singapore to Malaysia and Thailand, and has plans to venture into Indonesia and Australia.

Cher has been well acquainted with Indonesia since his earlier days of running the business. While he acknowledges that competition is stiff, he is ready to attempt entering the market with his increased experience and expertise.

As for Australia, Cher believes it holds strong upside potential for the company despite the high labour cost there. This is because of the strength of the country’s mining and chemical industries, which are potential markets for Almarc’s PTFE/PFA pipes and piping systems.

Even as the company grows, its culture is familial. Flexible working arrangements help to build

trust and camaraderie, said Cher, adding that giving staff such autonomy makes them feel more responsible. The company also organises trips to nearby destinations such as Malacca and Penang for staff bonding, with family members being welcome to join.

The success of this approach shows in recruitment: Almarc depends largely on word-of-mouth in gaining new hires, as satisfied employees introduce their friends and family to the company.

This series is part of the Enterprise 50 Educational Project between the E50 partners and the NUS Business School. Almarc Engineering was among the winners in 2021. 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 Singapore Business Federation.

