

Need IT solutions? ‘Can,’ says ITCAN

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COVID-19 left many businesses fighting to survive. Local information technology (IT) company ITCAN, however, not only survived but thrived in the first two years of the global pandemic.

In 2021, its revenue reached S\$77 million – having doubled in just three years, from S\$38 million in 2018. Founder and chief executive officer Amit Sujan now aims to cross the S\$100 million mark within the next two years.

IT services form the backbone of any industry, and future trends will only increase their importance, he said. For example, declining manpower will require greater adoption of automation and other innovative technologies, causing organisations’ IT needs to increase.

Sujan founded ITCAN in 2004. Having previously held senior positions in large corporations such as JPMorgan in Singapore, he observed that many large companies outsource their IT functions to big tech companies, yet are often left unsatisfied with the services provided.

“I wondered how a large technology multinational corporation could fail to meet its contractual obligations,” said Sujan.

This gave him the impetus to start his own business to provide high-value IT services to companies at a reasonable cost.

The company’s name was chosen to convey the IT-related nature of the business while evoking the Singlish affirmation “can lah”, suggesting that it can fulfil any client’s IT needs.

A wider client base

When ITCAN began, banks and fi-



ITCAN chief executive officer Amit Sujan (centre, in blue suit) and IT managing director Sippy Sujan (centre, in red dress) at a company event with employees. The Sujans see company culture as key to attracting and retaining talent. PHOTO: ITCAN

nancial services firms accounted for almost 90 per cent of its revenue. However, the 2008 global financial crisis highlighted the need to diversify its client exposure, making it more resilient and less vulnerable to cyclical downturns.

ITCAN’s customers now fall into three categories: banking and financial services; government-affiliated clients; systems integrators and end brands. Each group contributes roughly an equal share of revenue.

The company has also expanded geographically, with offices in Malaysia, Hong Kong, India and Australia, besides its Singapore headquarters. In 2021, about 40

per cent of ITCAN’s revenue came from its regional business.

“We provide much more value than what we charge and clients get access to regional services in all the Asia-Pacific locations wherever their operations are,” said Sujan.

The company also plans to explore product development in addition to its current service offerings, and has already developed an in-house human resource (HR) portal. The portal, which ITCAN has used for the past two years, provides end-to-end solutions from candidate interviews to onboarding.

Having started with just three employees, ITCAN now has some

1,900 employees across its locations. It has also clinched numerous awards along the way, including the Enterprise 50 Award, which it won for the first time in 2007 and multiple times since.

In 2017, it won the Dun & Bradstreet Business Eminence Award, and in 2018, it received the Singapore Enterprise Medal of Honour Award from Singapore Management University.

The right people

In 2006, Sujan’s wife Sippy Sujan joined the company as IT managing director. The couple attribute ITCAN’s success to their synergy when working together, as well as

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the quality of their employees.

Most of ITCAN’s management have been with the company for over 10 years. But at the same time, the company recognises the importance of hiring young talent, and over 80 per cent of its workforce is aged below 40.

ITCAN has achieved this by fostering relationships with organisations such as the NUS (National University of Singapore) Business School to recruit fresh graduates.

As part of its mentorship programme, new graduates are attached to leaders in different roles such as service delivery and research, for greater exposure.

Even though IT is a very technical field, ITCAN pays particular attention to candidates’ soft skills when hiring, looking out for attributes such as a professional attitude and critical thinking.

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To motivate employees, ITCAN’s compensation policies are designed to reward performance. Salary increments are contingent on the achievement of quantifiable targets: for instance, an employee in a sales role may have specific revenue and profit margin targets.

But the couple does not believe that money alone is enough to attract or retain employees. Said Sujan: “If it’s only money that can hold back individuals, it is very easy for any organisation to just

pay more and (for companies to) keep attracting talent from each other.”

Aiming to build a company culture that would attract talented employees, the couple coined the acronym “Ever”, which stands for: encourage innovation; value teamwork; empower teammates; and reward performance. The easy-to-remember acronym aligns every ITCAN employee to the company’s corporate culture.

“The fact that ITCAN’s employees are staying with the company for 10 to 15 years is a clear-cut reflection that the Ever philosophy is believed in and implemented throughout the organisation even now,” said Sujan.

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