

ENTERPRISE 50

C&R Interiors: building a legacy in office furniture

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FROM its beginnings as a residential carpentry workshop half a century ago, C&R Interiors has grown into an office furniture specialist with regional reach.

Founded in 1977, the business originally made custom wood furniture for homes. But as Singapore modernised, demand for commercial spaces grew.

After an ownership change and company restructuring, C&R Interiors pivoted away from custom residential projects towards commercial "system furniture", which includes workstations and partitions.

The company invested in scalable manufacturing, aiming to win government and corporate tenders that were then moving towards modular solutions.

"We combine craftsmanship, material expertise and a passion for functional design," said managing director Alan Ng. "Our products speak through their quality, adaptability and practicality."

This move laid the foundation for long-term business-to-business growth, and the company significantly increased its market share. Today, C&R Interiors has grown from a single Singapore office to a regional network, with operations in Malaysia, Thailand and China.

C&R Interiors maintains direct control over every stage of production, with both R&D as well as manufacturing kept in-house.

By doing so, it is able to ensure consistent quality and timely delivery, even for orders that are customised to client needs.

The company's R&D team continuously looks at how clients use their workspaces. It also works with production specialists to ensure design concepts can be manufactured efficiently and at scale, while reducing delays and preventing waste.

The company's supply chain is strengthened by longstanding vendor and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) partnerships.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, when many manufacturers faced supply chain disruptions, C&R Interiors diversified its sourcing, and even acquired its own metal fabrication facility to stabilise production and costs.

Besides maintaining manufacturing excellence, C&R Interiors places a strong emphasis on a personalised approach to sales.

Many of its clients have been partners for decades. The company is not just a supplier, but a problem-solver and adviser – providing clients with guidance on space planning, ergonomics and future-



C&R Interiors has pivoted away from custom residential projects towards commercial "system furniture", which includes workstations and partitions. PHOTO: C&R INTERIORS

ready workplace designs.

Even as artificial intelligence dominates discussions about the future of work, C&R Interiors remains committed to a personalised approach.

The "human touch" is not just a buzzword, but a philosophy embedded in how the business operates.

Innovation, sustainability and people

With a belief in constant improvement, C&R Interiors continually evolves its lean manufacturing methods. Sustainability is also embedded throughout its manufacturing process.

The company designs products that are easy to disassemble and recycle. By-products from manufacturing – such as wood cut-offs, laminate and metal – are repurposed and recycled. Machinery has been upgraded and workflows optimised to reduce energy consumption.

Challenging the perception that "green products" come with higher price tags, C&R Interiors has integrated these eco-friendly practices without raising prices. This has resonated with multinational clients that need to adhere to strict ESG requirements.

C&R Interiors also attributes its growth to the success of its people-centric culture.

Its commitment to staff development includes regularly sending employees to industry events so that they can be attuned to new market trends. The insights gained are shared internally, encouraging cross-department collaborations.

This collaborative culture has led to the development of successful product lines and improved manufacturing processes.

The company also prefers to develop existing staff rather than hiring replacements. Even in challenging times, C&R Interiors chooses to retain its staff instead of resorting to layoffs. Many senior employees have been with the company for decades.

For C&R Interiors, the Enterprise

50 Award 2024 is a validation of its efforts, innovation and resilience over the decades.

It signals to clients and business partners that the company has a proven and sustainable formula for success, and opens the door for new collaborations and market opportunities.

In the next five years, C&R Interiors' expansion strategy covers both organic and inorganic growth, driven by strategic partnerships and acquisitions across the Asia-Pacific region. The company aims to set up new sales offices in key regional markets to serve a larger clientele.

It expects future product development to be influenced by emerging workplace trends such as hybrid work models, hot-desking and reconfigurable layouts.

Sustainability will remain central, from sourcing of materials all the way to end-of-life product management, in line with circular economy principles.

Digital integration is another priority, with upcoming product lines featuring Internet of Things. C&R Interiors will continue investing in R&D and digital tools, while maintaining the human touch in its personal relationships with clients.

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This series is part of the Enterprise 50 Educational Project between the E50 partners and the NUS Business School. C&R Interiors was among the winners in 2024. 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.