



GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Trust is at the heart of everything that home-grown company Aik Moh Paints & Chemicals does. This core value has enabled the firm to grow by leaps and bounds, since she started out as a small neighbourhood shop in Jalan Besar in 1980.

Over the years, Aik Moh has managed consistent growth, expanding to two factories in Singapore (Tuas), occupying a total area of 131,000 sq ft. Aik Moh has also set up two overseas sales offices in Batam, Indonesia and Manila, Philippines since it embarked on its expansion abroad. Now, the company employs about 84 staff in the Asia Pacific region. Recently, Aik Moh also won the Enterprise 50 Award for the third consecutive year.

We caught up with Executive Manager Roy Tan Keng Hong, who

manages the family business started by his father. He runs this traditional SME business by establishing the good system and structure of an MNC, while maintaining the flexibility of an SME.

Q What are some of the challenges you faced when you first went into business?

SMEs and MNCs have very different cultures and sets of people. Many SMEs have employees of an older generation, so it is normal to find staff who have worked for us for more than 15 years. Getting them to understand the new generation's way of thinking and working can be tough. That is one of the key challenges. Implementing changes is also not easy among older staff. Fortunately, the MNC I worked in previously gave me quite a bit of experience in

doing so. Older staff in general don't really challenge authority, unlike in MNCs where people readily come up with ideas. Over here, they tend to be very receptive to following instructions rather than giving ideas. That takes time to change.

Q How do you differentiate your business from your competitors?

The chemical distribution business is a stable industry. We were just a passive distributor, but after looking at our business model, we thought it was going to be tough being just a pure distributor in today's competitive environment with rising operating costs. Hence, we try to incorporate service into our business model and we are probably one of the few companies in Singapore that offers complete services along with the products. Most of the distributors just sell, so that has been one area that we have been very different. As we expand our business, we are committed to a high level of service to our customers. To gain a competitive edge over other firms, Aik Moh has been certified with the Singapore Standard for Business Continuity Management (SS540:2008).

Q When was the moment you realised the business would work and support you?

For a lot of entrepreneurs, there is the satisfaction every time your company achieves a certain milestone, because you put your heart into doing it. You can attribute the success to yourself. This satisfaction of attributing the success to my team and I is driving me forward. 