

MAXIMISING CUSTOMER BUSINESS THROUGH IT

Mesiniaga has come a long way from its early days as an IBM sole agent and dealer back in the 80s when the country's IT industry was still in the nascent stages. Goh See Wee, Mesiniaga Director of Operations offers an interesting insight into what Mesiniaga is doing to remain relevant to their customers.



As one of the more established systems integrator (SI) in Malaysia, the 32-year old Mesiniaga with about 1,000 employees has managed to stay in the game by promising reliability and delivering on its promises.

However, in today's ultra-competitive business world, reliability counts for little with customers if not coupled with solutions or services that are game-changing. At the very least, the solutions and services on offer must allow companies to differentiate significantly from their competitors.

REMAINING RELEVANT

Five years ago, they came up with a strategy

that was meant to turn the company into one that would be a proponent of customer success. They reasoned that only by being so would customers perceive them as relevant. Success to an organisation would usually be measured in terms of business growth or productivity. Therefore, it should have no hesitation in employing a company that is able to offer a chance of improving these two success factors through the means of IT solutions. IT in this case, would merely act as an enabler.

According to Goh, SIs these days can no longer operate as of old – merely offering to integrate IT infrastructure and building a

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network environment with related services thrown in. This is deemed as the bare minimum in the world of today. Instead, the expectation is for SIs to know their customers' business as well as the customers know it themselves and subsequently to be able to harness current technology to improve business performance.

"Customers expect companies such as Mesiniaga not only to ask them what they want to buy, but instead to sit down with them and understand their business – how they engage with their customers and who their competitors are. Basically, they need us to understand the market in which they operate. This is where Mesiniaga aims to differentiate ourselves – in the thorough understanding of our customers' environment," said Goh.

A LEARNING ORGANISATION

Achieving this objective is no easy matter.

"Previously our skills are mostly IT-specific. But now, we also need to develop people who can become subject matter experts (SME) in industry-specific sectors. If necessary, we will also engage external SMEs for this purpose," added Goh further.

Goh himself is a good example. He is a recent addition to the Mesiniaga family, being previously employed most of his working life in the banking sector. As a one-time customer of the company, he is able to provide valuable insight into ICT requirements which are driven by customer business demands.

NEW TECHNOLOGY AREAS

As a proponent of customer success, Mesiniaga does not blindly chase after the latest, trendiest or sexiest IT fads, but instead consider them first from the perspective of their value to their customers. Goh was keen to share how they are now venturing into areas which are non-traditional for them.

When asked to elaborate, he mentioned a number of projects that they are now implementing for several big-name property developers. Success for property developers is measured by take-up and conversion rates, identity and branding as well as gross development value appraisal. These projects, termed Smart Communities, is able to create new streams of differentiation by ensuring

convergence of infrastructure, integration of functionalities and seamless usability thereby elevating home buyers experience.

Goh is quick to add that this does not mean Mesiniaga is ignoring new technology trends – they are just more cautious in touting them as the next big thing without proper study and research.

For instance, technological advancement in mobile connectivity has been proven to have a large impact on businesses. It has great potential as the means to increase productivity and improve revenue gains. However, it does come with its own set of challenges. Mesiniaga first tested mobility solutions on themselves – not just in terms of BYOD (bring your own device) but mostly to ensure that effectiveness in productivity enhancement does not come at the expense of data security.

We also asked him whether Mesiniaga is offering cloud solutions. Answering in the affirmative, Goh stressed that cloud computing is not necessarily suitable for all customers. It is important to understand how cloud can be harnessed to respond to increased demands for resources as well as to cater for future needs. This is why their offerings include cloud readiness assessment and roadmap strategy. According to Goh, they have a private cloud for development purposes.

ENSURING GOOD CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

As with all businesses, retaining the goodwill of your customers is a sure sign of relevance. Goh said that validation from their customers is the only indicator they use in measuring this. Mesiniaga's customer experience survey is slightly different from the norm. Instead of merely asking if customers are satisfied, they ask if they are the best IT partner the customer has worked with.

"This is a strong measure of how much value we are demonstrating as a technology partner to our customers. This is so important to us that even employee bonuses are tied to the survey score," said Goh.

In ending the interview, Goh added, "The evolution of our business is ongoing because we want to continue to remain relevant for a good many years to come."