

Soaring higher

After scoring its first Enterprise 50 award, SAC Capital sets its sights on going regional

BY MARY LIM

This year not only marks SAC Capital's 14th anniversary, but it is also the year the company wins its first Enterprise 50 (E50) award.

The corporate finance specialist advises small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in matters ranging from initial public offering (IPO) and fund management to equity research, and mergers and acquisitions.

It is a Capital Markets Services licensee that deals in securities, advising and corporate finance, and also a Catalyst Full Sponsor authorised by Singapore Exchange to guide sponsored issuers on listing obligations.

SAC Capital's clients include Yifan International Pharmaceutical (for the acquisition of biotech company SciGen in August), integrated services provider Advancer Global (for its secondary new share placement of \$22.1m in August), and property developer SLB Development (for its \$55 million IPO in April).

Such achievements can be attributed to SAC Capital's efforts in keeping up with its clients' needs amid the rapid digitalisation of the global economy.

Its chief executive officer Ong Hwee Li says adopting new technologies helps to keep the company cost-competitive as human capital costs increase. It also boosts efficiency, reduces wastage of resources, and ensures greater service quality for clients.

He describes the award as an opportunity for the company to further showcase its services.

"We have gained the trust of many clients and business partners over the years," says Mr Ong. "Winning an E50 award allows us to strengthen their confidence in our team, and for us to reach out to potential customers."

In January 2017, SAC Capital established equity research capabilities to advise those who want to invest in SMEs, and educate the general public on the merits of investing in listed SMEs.

This is supported by an in-house customer



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relationship management system that identifies clients' fund-raising requirements and matches them with its database of institutional high net worth investors.

An automated documentation software also helps to reduce processing time and paper usage, while a company-wide secured print management system seeks to improve accountability, security and cost management.

Big plans

Mr Ong says the greatest challenge the company faced while introducing such innovations was changing employees' mindsets.

For instance, changing the print management system meant staff would no longer enjoy the convenience of indiscriminate printing. But structured training by the company's in-house information technology (IT) team and support from its IT vendor, especially when the system was first rolled out, helped.

Indeed, SAC Capital has gone from strength to strength while working towards a unified vision. After successfully steering a management buyout of passive investors in 2012, Mr Ong has led the company in other major projects, including the acquisition of Canaccord Genuity

Singapore from Canaccord Genuity Group in 2016.

Plans are underway to add a fund management sector to expand SAC Capital's portfolio of services.

All this will bring the 30-strong company closer to its objective of going regional and its goal of becoming an investment banking firm.

Mr Ong says: "We have been preparing for years, and we believe we have a good investor base and network of companies to take SAC Capital overseas. As a local investment banking services firm, we know we have something to offer clients in other parts of South-east Asia."

He urges SMEs to consider engaging SAC Capital early in their planning phase.

"Choose your advisor and investors carefully, and execute business plans in a proper manner," he advises. "There are no shortcuts, it takes at least five to 10 years to build a business."

And the E50 award will stand his team in good stead. "To me, success is defined as achieving win-wins for our company, clients and partners," adds Mr Ong.

"So getting an E50 award is a major milestone that will inspire us to value-add and deliver better service."



SAC Capital CEO Ong Hwee Li says new technologies help keep the company cost-competitive.