

Aiming for zero defects

Genovate may have been set up during the last stages of the dotcom era, but that doesn't mean it had its head in the clouds, chief executive and co-founder J Anton Ravindran tells **DANIEL BUENAS**

FIRST-time E50 winner Genovate Solutions does just what its name suggests. Coined from the words "genesis" and "innovation", the six-year-old IT company provides for product development, business applications, software solutions and consulting, as well as value-added educational programs and quality training services in the Asia-Pacific region.

The company has developed numerous innovative IT products, including a whole-class highly scalable enterprise resource planning solution called ezGems and an advanced comprehensive knowledge management tool and performance support solution called InfoPak. Founded in Singapore, Genovate has expanded its operations to more than nine countries with offices in more than 15 cities.

The company may have been conceived and set up during the last stages of the dotcom era, but that doesn't mean it had its head in the clouds, says Genovate's chief executive and co-founder J Anton Ravindran.

"From the onset, we embraced conventional approaches to building sustainable businesses in spite of the futuristic model touted during the dotcom days," Mr Ravindran says, adding that the company faced three key challenges when they began — enlisting quality people, raising funds and building a brand name.

"To build successful and sustaina-

ble businesses required us to assemble a team of highly skilled and motivated people with expertise and experience," he says. "In addition, the funds had to be available to innovate and to build the brand."

However, the firm has since met, and risen above, these challenges. The company now employs over 200 highly-skilled IT professionals, and over the past five years or so, has seen compounded annual revenue growth of nearly 40 per cent per annum.

Mr Ravindran says Genovate is looking into an initial public offering or other strategic initiatives sometime in the immediate future in order to continue its expansion plan.

Award winner

Mr Ravindran himself is no stranger to awards — he has won a number of entrepreneur accolades, including the Rotary Club and Association of Small and Medium Enterprises' Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2005 and 2006.

On making it to the E50 list this year, Mr Ravindran says the achievement was due to "the entrepreneurial spirit, creative mindset and leadership of the company which flows down to every level in the organisation".

He points to a number of factors which have helped distinguish his company from the competition, in-



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cluding ethical conduct, and the pursuit of excellence.

"From the CEO and throughout the organisation, everyone takes personal responsibility and pride to deliver innovative solutions and in achieving the best possible results for Genovate's customers and employees," Mr Ravindran says. "In every task that we do, we do it well and with pride. Genovate aims for zero defects in our services and we adopt a positive, 'can do' and 'never say die' attitude when confronted with a difficult problem."

Mr Ravindran adds that commitment towards "making a difference" and team spirit are also key factors for the company's success.

"Genovate is responsible and accountable for all actions taken — every decision must be made with detailed and careful planning," he says. "It is only wise to learn from mistakes; we must be prepared for the

worst and be humble enough to admit mistakes and, most importantly, not repeat them."

Looking ahead, Mr Ravindran notes that challenges will always abound, and not all of them can be anticipated. "In today's connected virtual economy, market changes and turbulences can be fast and furious — where there is chaos there is opportunity," he says.

"The key challenge is finding quality people with both the right skill set and mindset. As the world economy is currently booming, Singapore is positioned well to reap the rewards of this current situation."

In this light, the company is also "making all efforts" to invent, and reinvent, itself to grow in the midst of today's ever changing market.

"We strongly think that promising opportunities have begun to unfold in Asia with the unprecedented growth experienced by China and India and

progress experienced in the recent years in Japan," he says.

From a technology perspective, Mr Ravindran says the company is beginning to see more opportunities for IT applications and services coming from the healthcare, bio-informatics and digital media sectors, as well as applications for handheld devices (mobile applications). "With the rise of China and India, our growth will be outside of Singapore's shores and from the region," he says.

Conducive environment

However, Mr Ravindran also points out that his company's growth would not be possible without a conducive business environment that supports and nurtures technopreneurship and promotes corporate governance.

"Singapore also has been always at the forefront in adopting and embracing the latest IT technologies and policies," he says. "This has enabled

us to establish ourselves as a credible and reliable brand and to use our Singapore HQ operations as a base to leapfrog into the region."

Touching on the topic of entrepreneurship, Mr Ravindran believes that, in order to build an organisation, the entrepreneur has to have a "winning team". He also feels that the entrepreneurship instinct is "in one's chromosomes" — in other words, an innate ability.

"However, even if it's in our genes, the traits can be blocked if we fail to identify, cultivate and use them strategically," he says. "Life, career and entrepreneurship are all about evolution. To succeed, an entrepreneur should have a good understanding of his genetic inventory — natural abilities and limitations and the ability to learn and evolve. It's a fine mix of inherited and learned ability (nature together with nurture)."

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