

WATERTIGHT

Patrick Tan was tired of working for companies that sold bad quality products run by bosses who lacked drive. So, in 2004, he decided to set-up his own business and he hasn't looked back since.

PATRICK TAN / MD Hydro Dynamic Engineering

Having spent years serving in the Navy, one would imagine Patrick Tan has seen enough water to last him a lifetime. Now the MD of Singapore based Hydro Dynamic Engineering, he is more than happy at the helm of his own water tank company, especially with the forecast currently pointing to calm waters ahead.

After leaving the navy and re-entering the general workforce, Patrick was employed by a number of water tank companies but often found himself frustrated with his bosses' busi-

ness plans, as well as the quality of the products offered.

So, in 2004, Patrick decided to break out and start his own company, with the sole purpose of providing and installing water tanks to the residents and businesses of Singapore.

As with most new companies, the first few years proved difficult and although Patrick had a string of reliable contacts, built up through his previous employment, it took a while to establish the company and build a reliable team around him. But Patrick was always confident he would





A small but loyal team

prove successful in this market, as he explained. “Previously, the companies I worked for either provided water tanks made of fiberglass or in pressed steel - never both. The domestic market really only uses fiberglass and industries or companies the pressed steel, so I decided to cover both sectors. This immediately made it easier for both plumbers and fire contractors (sprinkler systems) to come directly to just one source.” The strategy seemed sound enough but taking on established companies, that have a financial advantage in the market, was another area that may have proved rough going. However, once again the captain had a plan. “Most of the water tanks provided in Singapore were made in Japan and although well made, they were very expensive. I looked else-

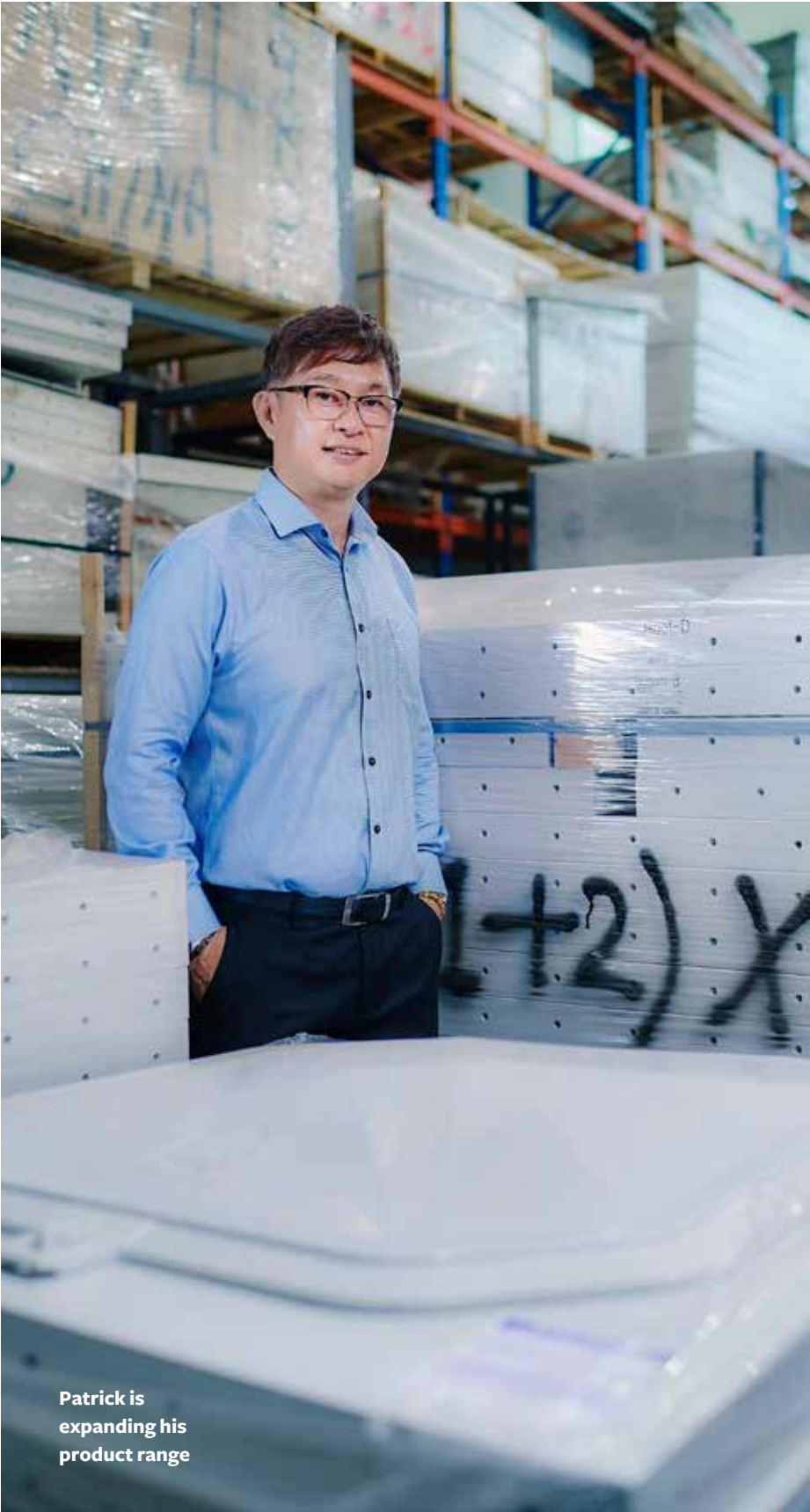
where and managed to find other suppliers who offered the same quality, but with much more competitive costs.” This simple method may seem obvious, but it took a long time to pinpoint and secure these suppliers and there were more than a few hiccups along the way. Because HDE (Hydro Dynamic Engineering) provide an end to end service to the customer, from order to delivery and construction to servicing, should anything go wrong it is HDE alone who are responsible. Hence Patrick’s policy on quality control. “Today I always, personally, visit the manufacturer wherever they are in the world, to check the quality of the product,” he says. “Promises of quality are often proved not to be true, and with the Singapore standards being so

high and changing so rapidly, there is absolutely no room for compromise.” Singapore has needed to make concerted efforts towards a more sustainable environment and the introduction of their ‘Green Mark Scheme’, to encourage environmentally-friendly construction through rebates, is just one such policy that has always been high on Patrick’s agenda. “Encouraging industries to use recyclable products and waste less water is a worthwhile scheme and we have always aimed to focus on this. Whenever we dismantle an old steel tank, it is always taken away for recycling and with a fiberglass item, the correct processes are followed to the letter.” Having expanded into new forms of water

tank construction, including FRP (Fiber reinforced plastic) cylindrical tanks and HDPE (High-density polythene), many of which are used in the storage of chemicals and corrosive materials, adhering to a rigorous environmental policy has become standard practice for HDE. As well as branching out further into the environmental market, by joining forces with manufacturers making rainwater harvesting tanks, Patrick is always looking for new products and takes a slow and steady approach to expanding the company’s product range. Some of the newest additions to this list include Glass-Fused-Steel storage tanks, stainless steel welded pressure vessels and hot water storage tanks. Patrick is also keen to nurture his slowly growing workforce. Having so often been in the position of the disgruntled employee himself, Patrick wants to ensure his staff remain both happy and fulfilled in their roles. Although he operates only a small team of around 12 staff, educating them both inside the business and sponsoring them in education outside, is part and parcel of his approach.

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“We visit all our suppliers at least once a year,” explains Patrick. “This is not just about keeping our relationships strong, but we also bring our engineers and other staff, so they can see for themselves the whole process, and that makes it possible for them to use this knowledge further down the line.” Hosting company sponsored holidays, as well as regular group dinners, Patrick has managed to assemble and retain a loyal team, who interact more like a family than a workforce. Having built his company from scratch, Patrick has not always endured the easiest of journeys. But as any ship’s captain will tell you, however rough the water gets, with a good crew on board you have a much better chance of weathering the storm. ➦



Patrick is expanding his product range