

Enhancing Profitability

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Samwoh Corporation's commitment to high workplace safety standards enables it to reduce losses and improve efficiency

by alex lim

SAMWOH Corporation is an example of a company that can achieve and maintain a high level of workplace safety standards while growing its business.

"Samwoh believes that safety should go hand in hand with business," says managing director Elvin Koh.

"With the goal of continual improvement to its workplace safety and health standards, Samwoh can reduce losses, thus enhancing profitability."

Founded in the early 1970s as a partnership between three entrepreneurial lorry drivers — one of whom is Mr. Koh's father — the home-grown company in the construction industry provided transportation services to workites all over Singapore. Before long, business grew rapidly, thanks to a slew of transportation and logistics projects from the Housing Development Board.

Thereafter, Samwoh quickly expanded its business to include civil engineering and infrastructure construction activities, such as road and airfield construction and maintenance, supply of various types of materials like ready mixed concrete and asphalt remix that are used in construction of all kinds.

By 2009, the company not only diversified into new business areas, its turnover also reached some \$300 million, nearly double that of \$168 million it achieved the year before. It was the top winner in last year's Enterprise 50 awards, which recognises all-round achievements among Singapore companies.

Furthermore, Samwoh is also a regular in the list of companies recognised for their commitment and adherence to high workplace safety standards, including the bizSAFE Star level certification in May last year, following the bizSAFE Partner certification in October 2008.

"Samwoh believes in continual improvements in workplace safety and health standards to

minimise risks to workers in and around the workplace, as well as preserving the integrity of our environment," says Mr. Koh.

"We recognise the need to achieve safety and health certifications in order to have a systematic management system, through which the environmental, health and safety (EHS) standards can be monitored," he explains.

While some companies might view workplace safety as an afterthought or a secondary function for some managers, this is not the case for Samwoh. Six years ago, Samwoh hired Mr. Bhupendra Singh Ballyan to fill the newly created position of EHS manager.

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— Mr. Elvin Koh, managing director, Samwoh Corporation

His job scope involves the planning of the company's policies and procedures in related areas, so that they can meet and comply with regulations.

According to Mr. Koh, each Samwoh worksite will be assigned a team of EHS personnel. Their job is to advise the site managers on issues pertaining to environment, health and safety. The EHS team also organises campaigns, training courses, and even competitions, to drive home the importance of a working condition that is both safe and healthy.

For instance, before every new Samwoh employee starts work, he has to attend in-house safety induction courses. Risk assessment teams for each project are also created to highlight poten-

tial safety issues involved. There are also daily meetings and safety talks and project managers don't just watch the budget, they also have to conduct safety inspections. Anyone found flouting safety rules has to undergo corrective actions.

There are both carrots and sticks. "To acknowledge good practices and behaviour, Samwoh has implemented a new behavioural-based reward system for its supervisor and operators, including its sub-contractors," Mr. Koh says.

While the company's own staff and regular sub-contractors have become accustomed to its high safety standards, there is still a need for Samwoh to inspire newer sub-contractors, especially the smaller outfits, to put in more effort in achieving safety standards required by the company, says Mr. Koh.

To address this issue, the company has included an additional clause in the contracts between itself and the sub-contractors. The clause stipulates that sub-contractors need to attain at least a bizSAFE Level 3 certification within six months of their involvement in the projects.

Last June, the company collaborated with major industry stakeholders, like the Land Transport Authority and the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council, to organise a seminar for its sub-contractors on the topic of "Integrating Safety and Health through bizSAFE".

To date, Samwoh has encouraged more than 40 of its sub-contractors to register for the bizSAFE programme to achieve the Star level certification.

Samwoh sees its own bizSAFE Star level award as another milestone in the company's history. Business has to be conducted and revenue and profits have to be generated. But, at the same time, "safety is our first priority and under no circumstances should safety and health of the employees be compromised in any work consideration," says Mr. Koh.



Mr. Koh says that Samwoh believes in continual improvements in workplace safety and health standards to minimise risks to workers in and around the workplace. PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG



SAMWOH

SAMWOH BELIEF: RIGHT MINDSET, RIGHT CULTURE



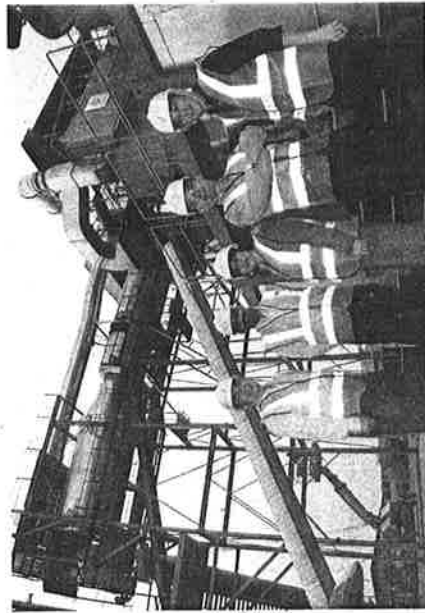
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bizSAFE Partner
bizSAFE STAR



Samwoh Corporation Pte Ltd was established in Singapore as a transport and logistics company in the early 1970s. Over the years, the company has grown from her humble beginnings into the today market leader in the fields of road, airfield and seaport construction and maintenance and pavement engineering.

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SAMWOH CORPORATION PTE LTD

25E Sungei Kadut Street 1, Singapore 729333, Tel: 62697288(10 lines) Fax: 63682886 Email: info@samwoh.com.sg Website: www.samwoh.com

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The company is also in the forefront position in providing civil engineering and infrastructure construction services, supply and lay all types of asphalt pre-mix, supply of ready mixed concrete, quarrying and supply of basic building materials, precast products, recycling and sustainable products, and supply of specialized construction materials and technologies.

Samwoh places great emphasis on workplace safety and health matters. Under no circumstances should safety and health of the employees be compromised in any work condition. Samwoh is honoured to be awarded the bizSAFE Partner Certification in October 2008 and the bizSAFE STAR Level in May 2009. Being an active bizSAFE Partner, Samwoh organised a bizSAFE seminar during NWSH campaign 2009 with support of LTA, WSHC and IES. Samwoh will continually strive to scale new heights in enhancing our safety culture and improving the workplace safety and health conditions at our sites.

