

Bold gamble pays off for businessman

Career switch nets him success

By YENG AI CHUN

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It was a gamble to move from selling pharmaceutical drugs to selling paint, but Marvynn Gan did not let that deter him from plunging into a relatively unknown industry 20 years ago.

Taking up the challenge, Gan set up a small company and became a dealer for Norwegian paint manufacturer Jotun Malaysia Sdn Bhd.

His company, Unforce Engineering & Industrial Coating Services, now renamed UNF Engineering & Coating Sdn Bhd, was the pioneer dealer for Jotun's marine and protective coatings.

"Back then when I started in 1988, Jotun was not that well known yet and it was a lot of hard work put in to promote the paint. I had to give personalised service and convince customers to use the paint," said Gan when met at his office in Taman Desa Murni, Sungai Dua here.

Jotun's product range spans across four segments - decorative paint, powder coatings, marine coatings and protective coatings - and Gan specialises in the latter two.

"Moving from one field to another field was not easy.

"I had to start from scratch to learn the

trade and I had to do a lot of research and homework on the paint," said Gan who had no prior background in the paint industry as his previous jobs were in the pharmaceutical and food industries.

"I applied for the position of sales manager in Jotun but Peder Bohlin (Jotun managing director and regional director for South-East Asia) suggested that I tried being a dealer.

"So after spending eight years in Singapore to familiarise myself with the shipyards and, oil and gas industry, I returned to Malaysia and applied to be a Jotun dealer," he said.

He started small with only three full-time workers.

Today, he has 25 full-time employees under him and his company provides services and products in marine and protective coatings in the northern region.

Gan's customers are mainly shipyards, refineries, power plants, oil palm mills and in the farming, petrol and chemical industries.

"Unlike decorative paint, marine and industrial protective coatings need in-depth product knowledge. You must understand the paint's characteristics, the customer's requirement, the structure on which the paint is to be applied on and the environmental condition of the structure's location.



Rising above the rest: Gan showing his company's products.

"You just don't come up blindly with the application of the paint.

"You can have the best paint on earth and good surface preparation but if the application of paint is wrong, it will not work. Here, we do not sub out contracts to other painters to do the application.

"Everything is done by my in-house applicators. This is what sets my company apart from our competitors," he said.

After 20 years of success in the business, Gan was awarded 'Jotun's Penguin Award' by Bohlin recently at UNF's 20th Anniversary in Sunway Carnival convention centre.

Apart from Gan, there are three other Jotun

dealers specialising in marine and protective coatings.

"In today's business, staying even with our competitors is no guarantee of survival.

So, we have to have the edge, to go beyond limitations, to rise above the rest," he said.

And Gan is forging ahead.

"I will install a Jotun Protective Top Coat Multicolour Computerised Paint Tinting Machine in my shop.

"This machine can produce more than 16,000 shades of colours and save them in its database. It will be the first in Penang and the third in Malaysia," he said.