by **ALEXIS ANG**

Lignar Engineering

A home-grown success

Lignar Engineering, a Singapore-based company, is a familiar name to those in Asia. Managing Director Mr. W.K. Tan spills the beans on his company's success thus far.

Like many other wood industry businesses, Lignar Engineering is a family business, and Mr. Tan's father started it more than 40 years ago. At that time, the company only handled servicing of the wood working machines. When Mr. Tan and his brothers came on board, they decided to diversify into other areas, such as machine refurbishing, and dust control systems.

An energy efficient dust collecting system

Mr. Tan shares the company ventured into China in the late 90s. Many of the wood working machine manufacturers already had a representative in the country, so it did not make sense to focus on that aspect of the business. Instead, they turned their attention to the numerous regulations that the Chinese government had established with regards to air quality and dust control.

Modular transflow and filter system

Although China is such a competitive market, Lignar Engineering is continuing to do well because of energy savings. Mr. Tan explained that when compared to their Asian competitors, the Lignar system could easily save 30-50 percent of the electrical energy required to run a factory's dust collecting system. In fact, he proudly shares that one of the largest furniture factories in China is his client.

"One of our customers compared our system with that of our competitors," Mr. Tan said. "They had proposed a system that ran on more than 4000 kilowatts. Our system ran on 2000 kilowatts. This meant that we were saving them more than half a million USD of electrical energy every year. While our system might cost a million dollars more than our competitors, they would have gotten back the same amount in returns after two years. And every year after that would be a savings on their part. At the end of the day, it's like our system was free."

Flexibility

Another boon to the system that Lignar Engineering provides is the flexibility that they offer. Mr. Tan elaborated that the system allows the user to reorganise their factory machinery layout easily.

In conventional systems, it is simply a on or off setting. "Our system can adjust automatically to the required air volume of the number of operational machines," Mr. Tan states. "This means that there is additional cost savings in terms of electrical energy."

In addition, the modular arrangement means that machines can be relocated easily should the need arise. "There are times when a manufacturer has to rearrange his machines so that the

production flow will be smoother. Our system allows him to rearrange his machines without compromising the standard of the dust control. Their production will increase and rejects will be minimised due to the smooth production flow."

Stable and reliable

The company prides itself on the quality of their system. Their principal, JHM Moldow, is a pioneer in the field back home in Europe, and has perfected the concept of the modular filter system. Having been around since 1921, JHM Moldow is well known for their superior systems.

Following in their principal's footsteps, Lignar Engineering puts great effort in their work at every stage – design, fabrication, installation, and commission.

"It is important to have a stable system," Mr. Tan explains. "Many of our clients work on a JIT production system. They calculate how many days they need to finish an order, and the container arrives at the end of the stated period. If a manufacturer has a system that stops for a few hours, every few days, this means a delay in production. This automatically means that the order cannot be completed on time, and the shipment will be delayed. Many manufacturers lose opportunities because time sensitive shipments were late. For example, if your order was manufactured for the Christmas season, and your shipment arrives after Christmas, that is a loss of revenue. When working on such deadlines, it is imperative that the dust control system does not break down."

In the event that such a thing does happen, Lignar Engineering is prepared. Help is always nearby in the event of a malfunctioned system. The company has service teams in China, Singapore, and Malaysia. In other parts of South-east Asia, their dealers also double up as the service teams.

The engineers are constantly sent for training in Italy, Germany and Spain. "We want them to be geared up, and up-to-date," Mr. Tan shares. "We want them to be as good as our principal's engineers."

Reconditioned machines

Although based in Singapore, the company's

Cyclone and silo

High efficiency industrial fan

A company picture

factory and warehouse are in Johor, Malaysia, where they have over 70 employees. All the manufacturing and warehousing is done at this facility.

Of the two buildings, one is used for the reconditioning of wood working machines. All of Lignar Engineering's machines (more than 300 machines in stock) are procured from Europe and Japan. Once reconditioned, the machines are moved to the other building, which functions as a warehouse. Here, the refurbished machines are laid out supermarket style.

"When people come to our warehouse, they can see what machines they want. They can pick, choose and test the machines. This way, they know exactly what they are getting," Mr. Tan states. Moreover, Lignar Engineering is so confident of the quality of their work, that they also provide a 6-month warranty on all their machines.

Although the current economy is rocky, the company still has enough on its plate to keep itself busy. "I am still fortunate," Mr. Tan confesses. "I have more than 70 people working at my factory in Malaysia and Singapore. I have not had to retrench anyone, and my employees are still working a full work week."

When asked if he was worried about the company's prospects in these bullish times, Mr. Tan simply says, "Our dust collecting system is one of the best systems for the wood working industry. I've been in this business for 30 years. My principal has been in the industry for more than 80. If you combine this, we have over 100 years of experience. So why can't we make it through this recession?" **PFA**

Factories in Johor, Malaysia

Wood working machinery