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## Unlocking potential and success

**LOCKER & LOCK®**

*Locker & Lock's journey over the past three decades illustrates how family-run businesses can redefine their industries.*

As one of the largest and fastest-growing smart storage solution providers in Singapore and the region, Locker & Lock has come a long way since its founding in 1990. What began as a coin-locker operator has evolved into a leading smart storage solution provider — propelled by the entry of second-generation leader Zack Chen into the business.

### **A humble start**

Locker & Lock was founded by Zack's father, who started his career in a Japanese engineering company. During business trips to Japan, he noticed the widespread use of coin lockers at bustling train stations and transportation hubs. Inspired by this efficient storage solution, he brought the concept to Singapore in 1990 under the name Vision Marketing Agency.

Initially focused on importing and renting out coin-operated lockers, the company carved a niche for itself in entertainment centres and public spaces across the city-state. In 2004, the company rebranded as Locker & Lock to reflect its focus as a distinctive entity specialising in locker service systems and concepts.

Fast forward to 2016, a year of transformation for the SME. That was when Zack, equipped with a background in hospitality and finance, joined the business. Both father and son recognised the need for a broader strategic direction to stay competitive and adapt to a rapidly evolving market. Together, they initiated significant changes to push the company forward.

### **The key is smart technology**

Over the years, Locker & Lock's journey has been marked by incremental innovation. What started as a traditional locker business soon expanded to include various locker models made from PVC and ABS plastics. The company then moved into the digital locker space, which proved to be a game-changer.

"Innovation came out of necessity. With each phase — from key-operated to digital lockers, and now to software-based solutions — we stayed ahead by adapting to market needs," says Zack, who is the Executive Director of Locker & Lock.



*The Locker & Lock team installing a Smart Locker system.*

This shift enabled the company to move beyond traditional products to creating proprietary locker solutions. “At first, we were 80 per cent reliant on external manufacturers and systems,” Zack explains. “But over time, we realised the need to own our brand and solutions to be adaptable and flexible to market needs. That’s when we decided to set up our own software engineering team in Vietnam and develop our own systems.”

Locker & Lock’s Vietnam office, which was initiated by Zack, now employs close to 20 staff members – most of them software engineers. The company also has a presence in Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia and Thailand.

Building its own software capabilities opened new possibilities. The result? Innovative smart solutions such as the Delivery & Collect Lockers for the secure, seamless transfer of parcels or valuable items between individuals, businesses, and service providers, enhancing convenience and operational efficiency. Another breakthrough is the Smart Medical Dispensing Machine, which enables patients to conveniently collect prescribed medications labelled with the patient’s details, providing a secure and efficient alternative to traditional pharmacy visits.



*The Locker & Lock team in Vietnam, made up mostly of software engineers.*

Zack adds that the transition to smart technology also marked a change in how the company viewed itself. Instead of merely providing storage solutions, Locker & Lock became a partner to their clients, helping to enhance the internal efficiencies of businesses in various industries.

“For instance, in a manufacturing line, spare parts that need to go from one department to another can be held in a transit zone, and that’s where our smart lockers come into play,” he explains. “Sensitive documents or high-value items can go through our lockers too, as we can build in a secure audit trail.”

Finally, recognising that diversification was crucial to growth, the company segmented its operations into three main divisions with distinct branding:

- **3S** focuses on traditional offerings, including metal and plastic lockers that are still in demand across educational and institutional settings.
- **Relacsys** is the tech-centric arm behind the company’s repositioning as a solutions provider.
- **Bag Concierge** manages rental pay-per-use lockers in public spaces like shopping centres and tourist spots.



*The company's Relacsys team in Singapore.*

These strategic divisions allowed Locker & Lock to cater to a wider range of market needs, so that the company remained relevant in a rapidly changing environment. This diversification was especially beneficial when unforeseen challenges arose.

### **Resilience in a time of crisis**

The COVID-19 pandemic tested the mettle of many businesses. However, Locker & Lock's status as an essential service provider proved to be an advantage. "We were already integrated with hospitals, supplying both traditional and smart locker solutions. When COVID hit, our services were needed more than ever," Zack shares.

Additionally, Locker & Lock played a pivotal role in the Federated Locker and Collection Points Programme, a national initiative spearheaded by the Infocomm Media Development Authority. The programme aims to create an "alliance" of locker operators, last-mile delivery companies, and online marketplaces and retailers to enable seamless and efficient delivery operations across the island.

Amid these challenges, the company's leadership became even more crucial. The groundwork laid by both generations ensured that Locker & Lock could navigate the pandemic effectively.



*Executive Director of Locker & Lock Zack Chen (left), with his parents, the founders of the company.*

### **Building trust and leadership**

The transition from first-generation to second-generation leadership often presents challenges, but Zack credits his father's guidance for a smooth process. "My dad empowered me when I joined, letting me make decisions after I spent a year learning the trade as a salesman," he explains. "This trust is now ingrained in how we operate. We empower our team members to make independent, logical decisions."

While the leadership transition was largely successful, Zack acknowledges that not everyone immediately embraced his vision and way of doing things. Even so, he emphasises the value of acknowledging the contributions of others.

"The most important thing is for me to give them recognition first. I am who I am because of their work and efforts before I joined," he says. "I try to learn from them and understand why certain decisions were made. Only then could I develop my own strategy and make changes where needed."

This leadership approach, which is grounded in trust and transparency, has yielded strong results in staff retention and operational success. It echoes the company's core values of integrity, relationship-building and financial prudence. With these foundations, Locker & Lock is well-positioned to pursue further opportunities and expand its footprint.

### Securing growth opportunities

Locker & Lock now remains focused on its vision of growth and expansion. “Our goal is to turn regional partnerships into full-fledged Locker & Lock entities, expanding our brand’s footprint beyond Singapore and Malaysia to Vietnam and Myanmar, where we already have operational bases,” Zack says.

In this regard, he can — in part — leverage the networks he has built through the Enterprise Leadership for Transformation (ELT) by SMU programme, in which he is currently enrolled. Already, he has collaborated with a course mate by providing rental lockers for an event, while the same course mate assisted Zack in organising another.

“It’s been inspiring to be part of a network of peers who are not only focused on growing their companies but are also genuinely supportive of one another. Everyone is eager to learn from one another and to grow,” Zack says of his peers in the programme. “I love hearing about how others deal with challenges and strategise for growth. These different experiences change and add to my own perspective of business and entrepreneurship.”



*Zack with the SMU Enterprise Leadership for Transformation (ELT) Cohort 8 business leaders at a welcome dinner at the Sheraton Guangzhou Hotel during an overseas immersion trip to China.*