



Safe Environment, Safe Workers: Assets Training & Technical Services Pte Ltd

Established in 2004, Assets Training & Technical Services Pte Ltd (ATTS) provides competency-based training for personnel working in a potentially hazardous environment. It is the first in the region to provide a fully CompEx-audited training facility that uses realistic scenarios in its training. Such facilities ensure that course trainees are better equipped with the competences required in their jobs, thus enabling them to work safely under potentially dangerous conditions. The training syllabi are based on global standards including the IEC International Standards, primarily IEC 60079 – 10, 14 and 17, so that there are international conformity and harmonisation of safe work practices and ATEX Directives for safe construction and installation practices.

ATTS' fundamental training philosophy is work-based training competency. Aligning with this philosophy, the SME offers other internationally-accredited training programmes spanning High/Low Voltage, Variable Speed Drives, SCR as well as customised training programmes for the marine, oil & gas, power and general industries. The training courses focus on developing relevant skills and knowledge to enhance worker capabilities. While ATTS' training is in demand by the industries it serves, there is a need for the company to keep in tune with evolving trends, such as training in Functional Safety and Human Factors, as well as explore new course offerings for business sustainability.

As shared by Thomas Won, Executive Director, ATTS, when he approached the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI), he was looking for insights and independent findings into the two focus training areas of Functional Safety and Human Factors, with a view to expanding the company's repertoire of industry training programmes. Under the Institute's flagship SME Consulting Programme (SCP), a team of student-consultants, supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and a Manager from the Institute, undertook the SCP project on business strategies.

Digging deep

A hallmark of the SCP is the use of more methodological and scientific approaches to address business issues. For this project, the student-consultants used a combination of primary and secondary research to gain an understanding of the current market and industry needs, with a focus on Functional Safety as well as Human Factors training.

An internal and external analysis of ATTS was conducted using the SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) tool, with the findings put through the PESTEL analysis. The latter explored the factors that would impact the business environment, such as political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal.

When determining the feasibility of introducing the training courses, the team used the Business Model Canvas as it provided a structure to "visually" develop and test new business ideas. With essential information presented on just one page, users can, at one glance, see the company's value proposition in terms of how it could create, capture and deliver value. A Business Canvas Workshop was also conducted for the ATTS staff members. Participation was wide-ranging, with attendees from across specialisations and levels spanning the top management to the marketing departments and also the instructors. The primary research garnered useful insights which were consolidated and evaluated. The face-to-face feedback and direct responses served to affirm and corroborate the team's secondary research findings, and used to finetune their preliminary proposals and ideas.

In high places

There are a multitude of diverse players in Functional Safety and Human Factors training. As the secondary research revealed, each of these service providers – possessing its own significant outreach, high investments and years of experience – in turn serves industries that are of high asset value, with extremely high costs for downtime. As such, it would be challenging for ATTS to develop training materials and achieve the required branding, within a short time, to challenge existing players. Thus, the student-consultants recommended that ATTS could form strategic alliances with selected existing players instead, and offer the courses in the industries where it already has a strong presence. By doing this, ATTS can work towards getting a recognised leadership position in its niche client industries.

The team proposed advancing in four phases, first with strategic alliances for Functional Safety, followed by Human Factors, then expansion of service offerings and finally, diversification into other industries. A detailed plan and shortlisted potential partnering companies to leverage their key strengths vis-à-vis ATTS' needs were put into the final project report.

With their eye on adding to the SME's bottom line, the student-consultants also suggested that the SME could review its strategic direction to explore opportunities in other promising areas, such as providing consultancy services or risk management, at a later stage.

Safer, in the long run

ATTS appreciated the objectivity and insights afforded by the SCP's scientific research methodologies. "They validated our thinking and direction, and gave us potential leads that we intend to follow up on," said Mr Won. Calling the recommendations "useful", he informed that the company has adopted them and was actively pursuing the opportunities for collaboration.

For ATTS, the Business Model Canvas has proven to be a useful tool that could provide the company with a comprehensive yet flexible framework to refer to and build upon as it registers changes in the future. For example, it can be used to chart and monitor its business strategies using such categories as Key Partners, Key Activities, Key Resources, Value Propositions, Customer Relationships, Channels, and Customer Segments, with Cost Structures and Revenue Streams traversing various categories. Mr Won highlighted its use by the consulting team as being "definitely informative and instructive to our company". He credited it as a "good approach to address business issues for the company; the staff also found this very useful".

To the student-consultants, this turned out to be "a very interesting project" as it required an understanding of "technical terms" and "deep research". They addressed the domain unfamiliarity by reading up on relevant literature and research, viewing YouTube tutorials and turning to Project Advisor Paul Teo for advice. They shared that the project was "different" and fulfilling because "we cannot follow a certain 'rule', and the approach has to be flexible; it also allowed us to exercise creativity and objectivity at the same time".

Mr Teo agreed that the project was very technical and the industry was new to the students. As such, it was necessary for him to handhold them, especially early on in the project. "But once they gathered the gist of the information, they were good in developing the business case and put forth the recommendations," he said. On his part, he closely monitored every stage to ensure that his young charges were headed in the right direction. "The depth of the project coverage and the principles to apply were regularly defined and reconfirmed with the SME so that the final recommendations are practical and beneficial to the client," he added.



Project Advisor	Paul Teo
Student-consultants	Darnelle Tay Bachelor of Social Sciences / 2017 Raquel Karina Andika Bachelor of Business Management / 2018 Wong Zing Rong Bachelor of Business Management / 2018