



### Trusted Professionals: Acestes Pte Ltd

Acestes Pte Ltd was established in 2014 to provide security and investigation services. As a niche business which must meet the stringent conditions imposed by the authorities including the Singapore Police Force, the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) strives to ensure that the relevant requirements are consistently met while delivering the highest standards of service to its customers.

The company, though younger than many in the industry, has achieved several milestones since it was set up. In 2018, it obtained bizSAFE Level 3, certifying that the company has met the prerequisites stipulated in Ministry of Manpower's Workplace Safety & Health (WSH Risk Management) Regulations. As shared by the SME, the bizSAFE certification is an important part of its journey to ensure a safer work environment for all its staff. More recently in October 2020, SkillsFuture Singapore approved its ATO accreditation. As an approved training organisation (ATO), it can conduct training courses to help individuals upgrade their skills and capabilities.



*"Your Safety is in Good Hands" by the team of Acestes Professionals*



*Acestes officer receiving a SPF award for assisting in the capturing of a thief who had stolen hundreds of items from condominiums in Sengkang area.*

Acestes' core mission is to provide more opportunities for Singaporeans to secure gainful employment. Through stable jobs and increasing incomes, they can enjoy a better livelihood for themselves and their families. To this end, the SME has a 100 per cent Singaporean workforce. Beyond its direct hires, the company is constantly exploring ways to improve the lives of people in the community. Through its targeted corporate social responsibility initiatives, it has helped a number of youths become useful, contributing members of society.

As a licensed security outfit, Acestes is qualified to provide a range of security services. Its customer base ranges from condominium management corporation strata titles (MCSTs) to big event organisers like Singapore GP, the company behind the celebrated Formula 1 Grand Prix night race in Singapore.

The SME is keen to transform itself in a dynamic and sustainable way so that it can continue to create value for its customers, employees and the community. With this goal in mind, Acestes turned to the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI). Through the Institute's SME Consulting Programme (SCP), a team of student-consultants, supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and supported by a UOB-SMU AEI manager, embarked on a brand audit and strategies project.

### **Ready and vigilant**

The student-consultants used a combination of primary and secondary research to better understand Acestes' customers and their perceptions of the company. They designed a survey to elicit three salient pieces of information from the firm's existing customers: why they chose Acestes, the overall performance of the SME, and the strength of its brand. An interview questionnaire was also sent, by email, to MCST managers who were not on Acestes' customer list. To encourage more width and depth of response, the questionnaire comprised 19 open-ended questions.

Using established models and frameworks including Keller's Customer-based Brand Equity Model and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis, the student-consultants ascertained the standing of the Acestes brand. Significantly, whether or not they were the SMEs' customers, all MCST respondents valued the same qualities in a security company, namely, professionalism, safety, and price competitiveness. The research also revealed branding factors that favoured the firm. Keeping these in mind, the team proceeded to design a strong brand image for the SME, and practical, effective ways to convey it to the target audience.

As the limited sample sizes of the primary research might skew the results, the team employed secondary research to verify the findings; the secondary research largely corroborated the outcomes of the primary research. The desktop research into companies which have reaped tangible returns by increasing brand awareness and communicating brand values would go on to support the propositions made by the student-consultants.

### **Standing tall and proudly visible**

Tapping on the research findings, the student-consultants proposed four strategies that would exploit the opportunities available while addressing the SME's possible vulnerabilities. They are: communicating brand value through content; raising brand awareness through online and offline channels; customer relationship management (CRM), and refining the company logo.

By definition, a corporate identity is how a company portrays itself to its stakeholders and encompasses how it looks, behaves and communicates. A strong corporate identity would differentiate a company from its competitors and enhance its image as a professional entity. Given that professionalism in a security firm was most highly valued by MCSTs, the student-consultants anchored their recommendations on this quality. Thus, from the design elements of its corporate and marketing collaterals to the quality of its copywriting and intended messaging, *how* something was conveyed was as equally important as *what* was being said. If done successfully, a compelling visual identity – the sum total of graphic elements spanning the company logo to layout, colours, fonts and anything that can forge a visual connection – coupled with quality copy through the use of an appropriate writing style, correct grammar and relevant choice of words, should immediately discern the Acestes brand.

The final report featured a comprehensive set of focused, functional strategies for Acestes to achieve its objectives. Included in the report were proposals for the firm's corporate colours and reimagined logo; website design, and digital and offline marketing strategies. Explanations and evidence were



cited to lend weight to the suggestions. The student-consultants also provided practical tips, for example, sample key words to boost search engine optimisation (SEO) and search engine marketing (SEM). There were CRM campaigns and activities to strengthen relations with customers as well as to attract new ones. To pave the way for a systematic course of action for Acestes, the team crafted a detailed, one-year implementation schedule.

### **Ready to be of service**

Teresa K. Sia, Assistant Director, HR & Corporate Development, Acestes, shared that the consulting team was able to “relate to the ground situation”. They had successfully identified the issues and “formulated a solution for the challenges the business was facing”. In particular, she gave the thumbs up for the “social media strategy recommendations and useful tools to elevate our branding”.

Ms Sia acknowledged the student-consultants for their insights, which proved to have real, enduring value. Acestes would consider carrying out the initiatives after the project handover as they would “help improve our image and branding”.

The opportunity to work on a real-world project and contribute to an SME drew the student-consultants to the SCP. For the team, the project had allowed them to provide “curated, applicable and practical recommendations” using their research, brand audit and digital marketing knowledge. “The hands-on experience also taught us the importance of incorporating feedback and continuous liaisons to improve the overall feasibility and relevance of our research and recommendations,” they shared.

Project Advisor Victor Kwan found his young chargers to be “resourceful and professional”, and credited Singapore Management University for having “prepared them well for their future careers”.

#### **Project Advisor**

**Victor Kwan**

#### **Student-Consultants**

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