



Silence Is Golden: Hebei Jinbiao Construction Materials Pte Ltd

Hebei Jinbiao Construction Materials Pte Ltd (HBJB) is an established supplier of outdoor noise mitigation products, with an excellent track record and reputation in the industry. With its own factory in Hebei, China, it stands among a few companies which can offer customisation for most of its products, as well as provide them at factory-direct prices.

As a leading business-to-business (B2B) player in outdoor noise mitigation products, the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) is always exploring new ways to innovate its business to increase scalability and sustainability. Currently, it is looking to make an impact in the indoor noise mitigation products market through high-quality, customised products for customers across various segments. In light of this, HBJB approached the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) for its signature SME Consulting Programme (SCP).

A team of student-consultants, supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and a Project Manager from the Institute, undertook the market research and strategies project.



Hebei Jinbiao's permanent noise control barrier for an industrial building

Making sense of the noise

The student-consultants started off with secondary research to gain an understanding of the industry. Tapping on the PESTLE analysis, they ascertained the various macro-environmental factors that have an impact on the indoor noise mitigation products market. These relate to political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors.

For example, in the area of economics, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) had shared, in its [advance estimates announced on 3 January 2022](#), the performance of different sectors in the fourth quarter of 2021 as well as Singapore's projected whole-year economic growth. That the sectors which might require HBJB's latest product innovation have turned in positive numbers augurs well for the SME.

To garner information about the SME's operating environment, the team used Porter's Five Forces to determine the impact of new entrants and substitutes, bargaining power of suppliers and customers, and competitive rivalry. Keeping an eye on the competition, a competitor analysis was conducted to determine the company's position vis-à-vis its top three competitors. Turning the attention to HBJB itself, the student-consultants leveraged the SWOT analysis. All the information would help the team synthesise its findings and insights, and direct the formulation of its marketing strategy.

Armed with useful facts and figures about the industry, HBJB's competitors and the company, the student-consultants conducted interviews with respondents from the SME's three target market segments consisting of private businesses, schools, and renovation contractors. They came away with salient insights relating to their consumption patterns, customer contact points, perceptions of the company they are currently buying from, and their experiences with these companies. The in-depth interviews also revealed the unique characteristics and requirements of each customer segment.

The value of quiet

Based on their analysis, the student-consultants designed a set of recommendations for the SME's latest innovation. Not only were the suggestions practicable, they noted the impact of digitalisation in the business landscape and as such, there were ideas for the website as well as for digital marketing. The final report featured comprehensive strategies with implementation plans and timeframes. These would guide HBJB's marketing and development efforts to create an impact in the first year of their product launch, enable them to gain greater experience in the market and, eventually, pave the way for the company to establish and sustain its position as a leading brand offering innovative, indoor noise mitigation products. For example, in the area of market research, the student-consultants proposed further in-depth studies, underlined by their findings and recommendations. The SME could also consider surveying and interviewing existing customers to obtain feedback that might impact the development of its noise mitigation products line.

In addition to market research, the student-consultants shared ideas on HBJB's product development, such as obtaining samples for testing to meet the requisite industry and regulatory standards; establishing and strengthening distribution channels, and defining the brand measurements. Each strategy was supported by action plans that were tailored to optimise impact, and boost business scalability and sustainability.

Being heard... and heeded

According to Ricky Thng, Director of HBJB, the student-consultants not only conducted surveys, “they reached out to potential clients in the market”. He considered the analysis and data “relevant” and “helpful” as they provided the company with “more insights into the new market”. Declaring himself “very satisfied” with the final presentation, he disclosed that he was “very impressed” that the team could provide the “estimated profit from the industries”. He also liked that the recommendations were “feasible and implementable”.

The student-consultants took on the project with several goals in mind, all of which were fulfilled. Top on their list was the opportunity to work on a real-life consulting project from start to finish, and make a real difference to the SME. Although the B2B market was a new market segment to them, they overcame the initial hurdles through their “personal networks” and Project Advisor Edwin Koh and Project Manager Jennifer Leow, who “helped the team kickstart our first round of interviews,” they shared. Another challenge they faced was in “managing and generating insights” from the data, in order to draw meaningful conclusions. They tackled this by having “more in-depth discussions with the SME to better understand its needs and direction” and also through the advice given by Mr Koh and Ms Leow.

“Our Project Advisor played a big part in ensuring the success of this project by offering his industry knowledge and insights,” they said. Of special mention was how Mr Koh always made time for the team meetings, where his feedback “helped us to understand how to further value-add to our client and more accurately identify the client’s needs”. The client also acknowledged the value Ms Leow brought to the project. “The Project Manager closely supervised the project to make sure it would succeed,” said Mr Thng.

Mr Koh described the whole SCP experience as being “excellent”. He complimented the student-consultants for their “drive and passion”, which enabled them to complete the project and meet the client’s expectations. Ms Leow spotlighted the team’s attitude and “best efforts to study and understand the market”, despite their lack of industry knowledge. She also appreciated that HBJB was “very supportive” throughout the course of the project, which fuelled the successful outcome.

Project Advisor	Edwin Koh
Project Manager	Jennifer Leow
Student-consultants	Audrey Seck Shuen, Bachelor of Business / 2019
	Thin Zar Zaw Moe, Bachelor of Business / 2019
	Tan Teck Wee, Bachelor of Business / 2019



Hebei Jinbiao's temporary noise control barrier



Staff manning the event booth at BuildTech Asia 2018



A get-together to celebrate the Operating Director's birthday