



Fire Safety Turnkey Solutions: Wilsafe Systems Pte Ltd

Wilsafe Systems Pte Ltd provides a comprehensive suite of fire suppression systems for the marine and offshore (O&M) industry. With expertise spanning design, manufacturing, installation and commissioning, the small and medium-sized enterprise's (SME's) complete solutions translate to seamless efficiency and convenience for its customers as the company can help oversee the value chain of their fire suppression systems from end to end.

From the tailored solutions for new builds to the retrofitting of existing systems, Wilsafe is known among its customers as the experts when it comes to innovative, efficacious and cost-effective solutions that fulfil customer and classification needs.

In recent years, the O&M industry, like many others, has been reeling from the impact of COVID-19, global inflation, fluctuating oil prices and geopolitical tensions which have disrupted the entire supply chain and also created new challenges for businesses big and small. As an SME with lean resources, sustainability is a strategic concern that requires constant attention. To this end, Wilsafe decided it was time to look inwards with the objective to identify the right strategies so that when the opportunity arises, it can quickly scale up and forge ahead.

Wilsafe turned to the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute (UOB-SMU AEI) to discuss its business concerns. Under the Institute's signature SME Consulting Programme (SCP), a team of three student-consultants, supervised by an industry veteran as Project Advisor and supported by a Project Manager from the Institute, undertook the brand audit and strategies project.

Don't play with fire

The student-consultants began their investigations by delving into the O&M industry, Wilsafe's core business and the SME's standing vis-à-vis its competitors and target audience (customers and non-customers). Leveraging proven scientific methodologies that is the hallmark of the SCP, they conducted primary and secondary research to collect salient data for analysis.

The team interviewed a Wilsafe staff member and its current and prospective customers whose profiles broadly represented chandlers, shipyards and maritime companies. They obtained insights into the purchase journey including how customers sourced for information, the main factors driving their supplier selection and how the final decisions were made. They also discovered the target audience's perception of Wilsafe, its products and its service delivery.

Tapping on established business frameworks to carry out their analysis, the student-consultants used a brand positioning map to chart where Wilsafe stood in relation to its competitors. They found that the SME distinguished itself with its mid-tier competitive pricing while providing better service.

As companies with good brand equity have a higher chance of acquiring and sustaining customers, the consulting team, applying the consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) model on Wilsafe, determined that it was regarded more as a “performance” brand than an “aspirational” brand.



Wilsafe Deluge Skid Package



Testing of Wilsafe Deluge Skid with offshore customer and classification society



Wilsafe delivery of Clean Agent System (Inergen)

Safer with Wilsafe

According to the analysis, Wilsafe's strengths lay in its good track record, flexible project terms, knowledgeable staff, good suppliers and partners, and favourable internal brand perception. However, it was deemed to be weaker than others in its international presence, brand positioning and "emotional" connections.

Paying heed to the SME's relative shortcomings in relation to its SCP objectives, the student-consultants proposed to strengthen the Wilsafe brand through four action pillars – brand revitalisation, website revamp, social media profile, and future expansion.

A clear brand positioning is vital as it helps current and potential customers know what the company stands for; it can also boost brand awareness and credibility in the longer term to support the company's sustainability. As the student-consultants verified from their analysis, Wilsafe stood out in terms of excellent service underlined by timely delivery and an efficient handling of the customers' fire suppression systems from start to finish. They proposed that the SME concentrate on adding value with a focus on service orientation as its brand positioning, as well as develop more highly supportive relationships with customers to build emotional connections.

The final report provided practicable recommendations and detailed plans on how to execute each of the action pillars. For example, the student-consultants crafted a refreshed set of vision and mission statements which aligned with Wilsafe's new positioning. For the website, they suggested improvements including navigation structure, content, messaging and more. To widen the SME's reach, they encouraged Wilsafe to establish a credible presence in the social media space, such as setting up a strong corporate LinkedIn profile. The company's various online platforms should also be linked so that existing and would-be customers can seamlessly move from one platform to another while researching Wilsafe.



Although Wilsafe was not yet considering overseas expansion, the student-consultants, in their research, also explored future possibilities for its business growth using the Ansoff's Matrix. They examined the four key strategies for diversification via market and product considerations, to guide the SME's future scalability and sustainability.

Firing from all cylinders

Honest feedback and data collection were not easy to come by, according to Wilsafe Director Dawn Setoh, so she appreciated the "valuable feedback", "diligent research and industry insights" generated by the student-consultants. "This feedback is helpful for our business progression" and "validated our business plans", she affirmed. She also liked that the recommendations were "feasible and implementable".

For Project Advisor Raymond Leong, "prioritising between the objectives of various stakeholders is key to ensure that all parties' objectives are met". As an SCP project, this meant the outcome must be "driven by practicality and innovation" for the SME. Thus, the students' learning had to be aligned towards meeting the project objectives, without compromising the student team's own objectives.

Describing his young charges as "proactive and diligent", he said they were "receptive to new ideas" and were quick to adapt based on the client's feedback. That the SME has decided to adopt the recommendations in its next phase of corporate branding development was testimony to the success of the project, Mr Leong stated.

The student-consultants shared that they were enriched by the hands-on experience, where they had the opportunity to manage the "entire process of what a branding project entails". They considered the project "an eye-opener into the dynamics of the O&M industry". To their SMU juniors who are considering participating in the SCP, they were unanimous in their endorsement – "it offers good exposure to the consulting field, and the entire process is very guided and systematic".

The client was "very supportive and appreciative of the students' work", acknowledged Project Manager Lina Lee. There was a "high level of trust and confidence" among the different stakeholders as everyone was "willing to work together to make things happen".



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Project Advisor	Raymond Leong
Project Manager	Lina Lee
Student-consultants	Chin Jing Xian Bachelor of Business/2018
	Ng Jie Ying Cassandra Bachelor of Business/2019
	Tan Zhi Ying Madelene Bachelor of Business/2019