

Dare to Create

Tunity Technologies

Creator: Ms. Lim Peck Hui, Managing Director

Creation: Tunity utilises Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to create products and systems such as the tagging system implemented in libraries to detect books. It has created a whole host of applications and products that are applicable to the manufacturing and retail sectors (for inventory purposes), and also for effective prison tracking systems.

Cool factor: Tunity was the pioneer team in delivering the world's first fully integrated RFID Library Management System for the Singapore National Library Board, with more than 23 libraries rolled-out with RFID technology.

Mention RFID to the layman, and you would be greeted by indifferent or blank expressions. But the sparkle in Ms. Lim's eyes when she embarks on an explanatory journey into the world of RFID affirms the importance of this technology in business. And that is why IDA (Infocomm Development Authority) has invested SGD 10 million in a three-year plan to promote, develop and adopt RFID technology for business operations. Touted as the next growth engine for Singapore, RFID systems are primarily implemented in supply-chain management, manufacturing units and also in the retail sector.

However, Tunity's inception in 2005 was not to merely ride on this RFID wave. In fact it is a spin-off startup from Singapore Technologies Electronics Limited and Ms. Lim and her team has decades of experience in this area. Ms. Lim, who was in the business development department of ST, recalls that her stumble into RFID occurred because "the file happened to be on the desk." After several years and countless coffee sessions with technicians, she grasped the fundamentals of RFID and nurtured a healthy interest in this niche sector. And she never looked back since. The company had a start-up capital of SGD 500,000.

The prisoner's tag was the first product the company launched and it is the first in Asia. The development process was immensely challenging, because besides lacking the understanding of a prisoner's behavioral patterns, Tunity was given a limited timeframe to implement the system. But with that success in place, the company was assured of its capabilities and feeds its bold spirit by continuing to create new systems and products.

Walk into the Tunity office, and be astounded by how active this company is when it comes to developing a mélange of RFID products from wrist tags to gate antennas. The office is a breeding ground for experiments and ideas to manifest. Tunity has two patents filed and two more pending.

We have the passion until today because we learn something new every time we do a new application. And that's what keeps us alive - the thirst to learn something new and knowing more and more along the way. To really deliver a good solution, you have to know everything. That's why it's challenging as every case is a new one. You must always have this very positive learning attitude.



Miracles are possible, but takes a bit more time at Tunity.

We spent about 30 percent of our annual budget for R&D, which was over SGD 100,000. But we bit the bullet during the initial phase and pulled through because as a young company we were quite bold and we didn't think so much about it. The report was positive and quite good. We took a longer time to fine tune the pilot system.

Innovation is how you creatively use technology. What is used in one industry can be crossed over to be used in another industry. So it doesn't really have to be restricted. That's why cross fertilization always gives the best breed. Innovation is nothing unless it is useful.

Different people associate innovation with different things. The term innovation gives a certain class of status, value, and significance in people's minds. I think it is good that people are using it and trying to improve their current way of thinking. If you don't take it too seriously, it can be positive. If you take it too technically, how much can you really invent and innovate?

Impossible we can do, miracles take a bit longer. We have this culture of questioning and always trying to do things better. We have a new idea almost everyday and actually we have too many ideas that it can be frightening. We can't do everything that we come up with. So those who just joined us find it hard to adapt. They find it too fast-paced. But we're quite blessed to have a good team now.

Singapore has no choice but to be innovative. We cannot grow organically, so what can 6.5 million people do? Maybe the pace of innovation could be faster? Maybe we should be more receptive and more open to new ideas? So at any government tender, officials don't always keep asking for track records. Any new idea would not have any track record. If you keep asking for track record and precedence, then we cannot be innovative.

The culture of innovative is lacking. The thing is innovation does not always lead to success. There are only 2 outcomes from innovation and that is either success or failure. How do you embrace failure? That's what many people, especially the civil servants cannot accept because their necks will be on the chopping board. And that's a self-imposed limitation to an innovation nation.