Atlas shrugs off hiring woes

By CHERYL LIM

EAM’S site at the core of Atlas Sound and Vision’s business. The 50-year-old audio visual equipment business was built up by two generations of Tiens – current chief executive Michael Tien and his parents Mr A.B. Tien and Mrs Siew San Thoe. The firm’s retail teams are seen as “communities of passion” and are given autonomy to areas they decide who their team leader should be and who they want to be part of their team.

He explained that Atlas, like most small and medium enterprises (SMEs), has faced hiring woes, especially in its earlier years.

“People would have the idea that SMEs have no (career) progression prospects… It was almost impossible to get a degree holder to join the company.”

The firm first started off as a retail record library service set up by the Tien family in Market Street in 1962.

When he joined the business, it had 12 staff. That has since grown to 102. Atlas racked up an annual revenue of $2.4 million last year.

It has four showrooms in Singapore, with another two in Kuala Lumpur.

Mr Tien acknowledged that Atlas, like most small and medium enterprises (SMEs), has faced hiring woes, especially in its earlier years.

“One way of doing this, said Mr Tien, was to create a structured training programme that would allow them to chart their career progression within the company.”

In the last few years, the firm partnered with Spring Singapore and embarked on the HR Capabilities Programme, which resulted in improved work policies and remuneration package structures.

Mr Tien believes that a well-rounded balance of both formal and informal training, including on-the-job training, would help staff to develop a well-rounded balance of both corporate and personal development.

The career progression within Atlas has included rebranding, talent management and climate-building in the form of training programmes based on the employees’ needs.

“I had a conversation with Michael Tien about how communications in the company could be better managed, so that the business was something else,” said Mr Devakaran.

“Mr Devakaran is also pursuing a bachelor’s degree in business administration at the SIM University under a management development programme offered by Spring Singapore and Atlas Sound and Vision.”

RETAIL was not a career option for Mr Vijayan Devakaran, now 35. Mr Tien, who decided what he first started looking for was a sales job. Eight years ago, the newly minted mass communications diploma holder was hearing himself with job applications for positions at public relations and advertising companies.

But on a whim, he applied to Atlas Sound and Vision for a sales position and was offered a sales job on the spot, which he readily accepted.

“Mr Tien, who readily accepted. He asked me if I was interested in joining,” said Mr Devakaran.

Mr Devakaran is also a SIM University student. He is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in business administration at the SIM University under a management development programme offered by Spring Singapore and Atlas Sound and Vision. The scholarship is aimed at helping young executives who want to develop leadership potential by pursuing graduate business programmes at local universities.

“There was never a moment for the job to get dull”

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