

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Effective Solutions (Pvt) Ltd. (ESol) which was started by five undergraduates of University of Moratuwa back in 2013, has now grown stronger, being a trend setter for the high tech entrepreneurship of Sri Lanka. The company has marked its presence in several technological areas such as software development, electronics, robotics, biomedical engineering, networking and Internet of Things. ESol, operating with its theme of “let the passion be your profession”, has achieved continuous business growth since its inception. Starting with just an annual revenue of Rs. 2 Million, the company has grown it to Rs. 44 Million in 2019, with many new projects being queued up already for 2020 as well. Further, the company which started with five job creators, is now providing employment for thirty four tech loving individuals. The company has also made its presence in global scale by establishing its office premises in Japan and UK. ESol has won many national level awards including Best IoT Startup 2019 and Runners up at National Startup Challenge 2018.

Based on the initial findings about the company and the comprehensive literature review, a case framework was developed, identifying the key drivers contributing to the continuous business growth of ESol along with the moderating factor. Demonstrating entrepreneurial orientation, developing strategic partnerships and performing technological diversification were the key drivers identified while the moderating factor being dynamic technology environment. The literature on entrepreneurial orientation was spread under four dimensions, namely innovativeness, proactiveness, risk taking and autonomy. Strategic partnerships were focused on joint research and development, accessing new knowledge, inter-firm collaboration and minority equity investments. Literature for the third driver was supported for related diversification and use of the existing resources.

The primary data was gathered through 10 in depth interviews and 4 focus group discussions. The company employees ranging from the CEO to management, developers, business analysts and interns were taken for interviews. Investors of the company, a customer of ESol and a former Professor of University of Moratuwa were also taken for interviews ensuring the depth and breadth of the story were captured. Secondary data was collected through company internal documents, newspaper articles and company website. The interviews were then codified according to the drivers and the outcome, presenting a comprehensive and interesting narration on the success story of the company.

The findings of the study revealed the story of the company since its inception and was quite interesting and motivating. ESol has achieved its continuous business growth throughout the years by increasing its revenue and employees. Innovativeness has been a key contributor as the company sees its employees as thinkers, creators and problem solvers. Exceeding customer expectations without limiting to mere requirements has been a great contributor for growth. Further, the opportunity seeking behaviour, risk taking nature and employee independence have made them cross many miles of success. The partnerships developed by the company with external parties have made them access to new research, new knowledge and new projects which have led to the business growth. Moving to adjacent technologies have further strengthened the company growth.

The main pillar contributing to the success of the company has been the demonstration of entrepreneurial orientation. ESol has been doing innovations continuously and this is evident by the company receiving several awards where innovation was a key criteria. Also opportunity seeking behaviour is clearly visible with company's search for emerging technologies, participation at various exhibitions and sponsoring many university events. Risk taking is in their DNA as the founders who went out of the comfort zone in starting the company and the employees are taking risks which is clearly seen with their establishment in Japan. Employee independence is well visible in the company. The relationships with Japan for biomedical projects show the strategic partnerships developed for research and also the company establishment at University of Cambridge itself speaks of accessing new knowledge. Moving into related technologies is seen through the range of areas the company is working on. IoT has now become the core of the company while their signature product Ananke platform is being used for many other projects.

The author sees that the objectives of the case study has been achieved successfully. Continuous business growth, and the entrepreneurial ordination which acted as the key driver for growth were well explored. Further, the contribution from the three drivers to the growth of the company is evident. Several lessons such as exceeding customer expectations through innovations, reaching global level, building strategic partnerships with leading conglomerates as well as research institutes and moving to few related technologies without locking themselves in a single technology can be learnt by emerging startups of the country. Finally, universities and policy makers could also learn the importance of getting practical entrepreneurship to the universities which would truly be beneficial in driving Sri Lanka towards a knowledge based economy.