

# Building the brand to build the business

N&P Maritime, a specialist in lifeboat inspection and safety certification services, realised it was too reliant on its German partner for contacts to grow sales, and the company wanted to raise its profile in the local market.

Director Francis Wong, who started the business about three years ago, says N&P had difficulties penetrating the local shipping industry because “very few potential customers had heard of the company”.

Late last year, he decided to take advantage of consultancy services provided by the UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute to help build awareness and raise the company’s profile.

Spring Singapore provided a grant to help pay for the consultancy services.

Students from Singapore Management University conducted market research to help determine N&P’s standing in the domestic market, and a brand-building plan was later developed.

Some of the initiatives included developing N&P’s position as a knowledge hub. This involved sending out regular e-mail messages containing expert content. N&P was also encouraged to raise its profile by providing co-training programmes on topics related to ship safety.

The exercise with the SMU students took several months and the firm is now implementing some of the recommendations. N&P has also changed its sales approach to focus more on existing clients rather than only on winning new ones.



**Mr Francis Wong, director of N&P Maritime, says the firm is redesigning its logo and diversifying its revenue streams by boosting sales of safety products.**

“We asked ourselves: What about our existing clients? If we continue to have very little contact with them, we would lose the relationships that we took so much time to build,” he says.

He explains that sales staff are now asked to take care of a number of existing clients while also chasing new sales leads.

This way, the company could further enhance market reach by encouraging word-of-mouth recommendations. N&P employs eight people, three of whom are sales personnel.

N&P is also seeking ways to improve productivity. Mr Wong says there is very little visible differentiation between the services provided by N&P and its rivals because the end product for its clients is a safety certificate.

“We do not want to go into a price war, so we have to find ways to cut redundancies,” he says.

He says the firm is redesigning its logo and drafting marketing and communication materials.

It is also seeking to diversify its revenue streams by boosting sales of safety products.