

Connecting the dots on data

MANY small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) would love to be in the shoes of Latize, a tech start-up that helps organisations make better use of corporate data.

After all, the six-year-old company, whose Ulysses software can connect and analyse disparate sets of data using linked data and visualisation technologies, has been a first mover in a fledgling field, at least in Singapore.

"With our innovative and differentiated technology, we are usually the only vendor bidding for government contracts," says Mr Vikram Mengi, Latize's co-founder and chief executive officer.

While the bidding process took longer than expected due to government procurement rules, Latize eventually nailed a contract from the National Library Board, which is currently using Ulysses to make it easier for patrons to discover relevant information through Web searches, social media and mobile apps.

More recently, Ulysses was accredited by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) under the Accreditation@IDA programme, under which accredited products are considered first by government agencies.

"It took six to eight months for us to be accredited, but the outcome was worth it as it made it easier for us to reach out to prospective government clients and

raise capital from venture capitalists," Mr Mengi says, adding that Latize has secured a round of growth financing from equity investors earlier this year.

Reach out to researchers

Much of Latize's success, however, would not have been possible without a turnkey moment more than a year ago, when it turned to the United Overseas Bank-Singapore Management University (SMU) Asian Enterprise Institute to identify more potential markets for its software.

"We have the potential to grow globally, but we cannot just be a government-focused business," Mr Mengi says.

"We had to start looking at other sectors to scale up."

So, with the help of three undergraduate students from SMU, Latize embarked on a six-month digital marketing and research project supported by Spring Singapore.

During the project, the students researched data management problems faced by different industries and how Latize could solve those problems.

"One of the things we realised through the research project is that unlike government customers, businesses, especially in sectors like financial services, tend to have larger amounts of transactional data that is created quickly,"

Mr Mengi says.

Such insights have not only helped Latize to finetune its software, they also spurred the company to develop solutions that address specific business needs in financial services, such as risk management and marketing to affluent customers.

"With a more in-depth understanding of these sectors, we now focus on customisable and scalable solutions," Mr Mengi says, adding that Latize now delivers very targeted factsheets, presentations and software demos when meeting potential clients.

To communicate the business improvements that Ulysses can bring to potential clients, Latize also optimised its website to improve its web search rankings, built a social media presence and developed a corporate video to demonstrate its capabilities.

All the effort has helped Latize grow considerably and now counts Singapore payments provider Nets as one of its clients.

It is also looking to investors to support its regional and global expansion plans, plus tap Spring's support to shore up its HR and branding capabilities.

"Building a cool product has brought us this far, but it's only part of the story," Mr Mengi says.

"Now, we have to build a company that can scale — and branding and HR management are important things we need to look at."



Latize delivers targeted factsheets, presentations and demos when meeting potential clients, says Mr Mengi. PHOTO: NURIA LING