

Arahe on the right track

BY Karamjit Singh

Unlike those who had always dreamed of becoming one, Eric See-To is a reluctant entrepreneur.

"But someone had to pay the salaries and continue the projects I sold while at my previous company Nexus Edge," says the 37-year-old, who joined Nexus Edge, a once promising software company in 2003. Unfortunately, because of differences among the shareholders, Nexus Edge closed shop in 2005. Taking the plunge with what he felt was a promising technology, See-To bought the IP (intellectual property) from Nexus Edge and launched Arahe Sdn Bhd the same year.

See-To says Arahe scored a coup when it landed one of the largest system integrators in China to push their products

The gamble paid off. Today, See-To, CEO of Arahe, acknowledges that the enterprise software company is in an enviable position as most of its business comes from customer referrals. Any business would love to be in such a position, especially in the current economic environment when companies are constantly looking for ways to cut slack from their organisations, while aiming to maximise the value they offer customers.

For this MSC-status company, maximising value for customers stands at the core of its mission statement. "We are driven to help customers run their business faster, better and smarter by advancing ideas and technologies that work for them," says See-To.

Customers recognise this. For instance, on the morning of this interview, See-To opened up his Inbox to see an order of RM140,000 from a listed education group whose new head of IT was a previous user of Arahe's software.

Arahe, which is an amalgamation of the Bahasa Malaysia word "Arah" or direction and "e" which stands for electronic, aims its value

proposition at the virtual space that companies occupy. Specifically, it focuses on two key aspects of a company's online presence, the website and applications that run over the Internet. It goes without saying that with more business moving to the virtual world, speed of access is an anchor component that defines a user's experience.

This is where Arahe's patent-protected software comes in. Specifically, it increases performance and scalability (the ability to offer more services should demand suddenly increase, as in when a website suddenly has a spike in traffic) of existing websites and web-based applications by between two and 10 times faster by using its flagship products SiteCelerate and NetCelerate.

The company has also won the MSC Apicta award in Malaysia and went on to represent the country at the Asia-Pacific ICT Awards in 2008 held in Jakarta, where it received merit recognition in the category for Best of Tools & Infrastructure, with its SiteCelerate, a web acceleration system.

Its other focus areas are in developing and providing custom applications and solutions based on Rich

Internet Applications platforms and Java 2 Enterprise Edition (J2EE) technology using the Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) principles.

A third focus area is on implementing cost-effective and efficient content management systems for enterprises to securely create, locate and present all forms of content and media to audiences.

Its blue-chip customer base attests to the success of its products. Among its clients are DHL which uses the software in 144 countries, Media Prima, Tune Money, DiGi, Hong Leong Bank Bhd, AmBank Bhd, Maybank Bhd, RHB Bhd, Taylors University College and many others.

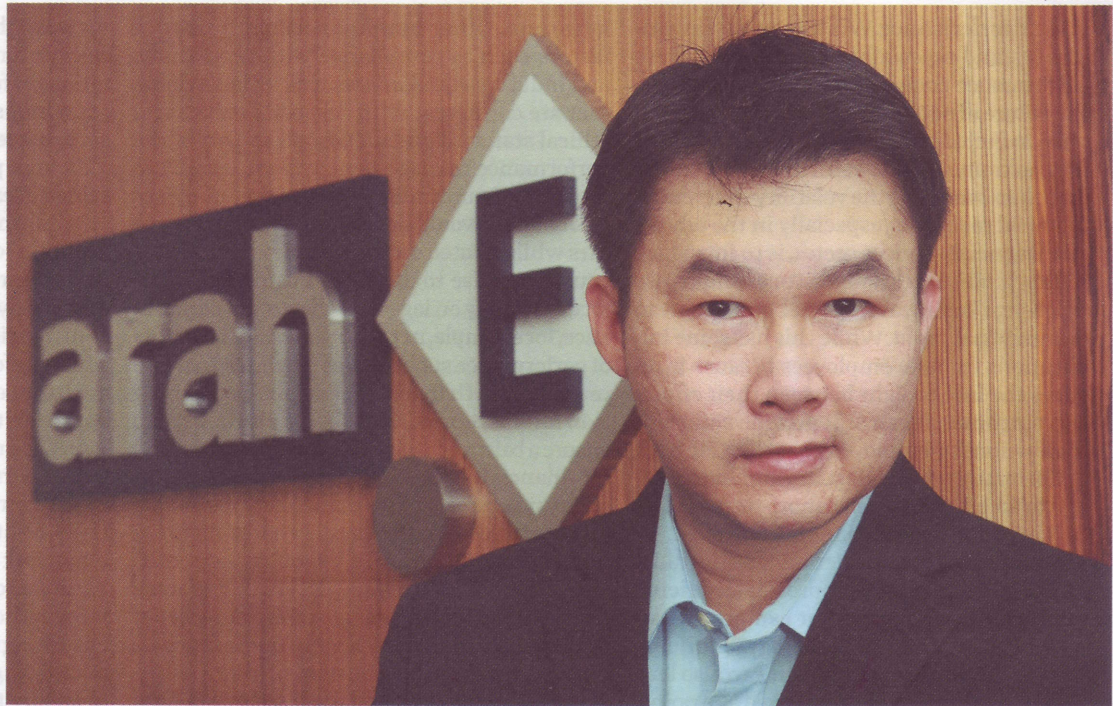
Asked what innovation means to him, See-To says it is simply about listening to your customers and meeting their needs while reducing costs and increasing their capabilities to serve their own set of customers.

With a strong customer base, increased adoption of Rich Internet Applications and growing sales, billings in January have already hit 75% of 2009's tally, and Arahe is aiming big. See-To feels they have the ability to become a mini-IBM or mini-Cisco.

For See-To, the key mission this year is to ramp up sales — not altogether surprising as Arahe has begun the process of an eventual listing on the ACE Market and needs to show the numbers. As a result, Arahe is looking for distributors in Indonesia, Malaysia and Hong Kong. It scored what See-To considers a coup in China recently when they landed the largest system integration (SI) company in China as their distributor.

What is significant about this deal is that the SI approached them, having heard from Arahe's Chinese customers about its products. "It is significant too that this SI spent three million renminbi to establish a specific department just to push sales of our software," See-To points out. He is coy when asked to name the SI, preferring to wait until the official signing ceremony to be held soon.

Arahe's journey has been a challenging one, and more challenges lie ahead as See-To seeks to lead the company toward becoming a listed entity with many shareholders to answer to. For a reluctant entrepreneur, the ride is about to get more interesting. **E**



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