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The Edge Write-Up of FingerTips

Choosing a software solution is not a straight-forward process. Besides examining the business issues such as the competitive advantages and returns on investment, a decision sometimes has to be made on whether to buy an established brand or a newer, locally made product. It's a given that those who can afford it are willing to fork out big bucks for branded software and the perceived assurance of quality and after-sales support that come with it. But what if you were told that a local company, drawing from its experience as an implementer of a branded software product, has now come up with its own version of that software, tailor-made for local needs? More importantly, it has developed the product wholly in Malaysia. With a much cheaper cost base, the price is a fraction of what established brands would cost. Would you consider buying its software? That, in essence, is the pitch of Ambersoft Sdn. Bhd. (www.ambersoft.net), the maker of a document management system called Fingertips. To be sure, Ambersoft is not a start-up venturing into a new area. The company can trace its beginnings to the mid 1990s when it created software based simulators for Swedish power giant ABB to showcase the latter's technology in power generation.



In 1997, Ambersoft scored a major coup when Kuala Lumpur International Airport Sdn Bhd appointed it to implement a document management system. Sukhdev Singh, Ambersoft's amiable chief technology officer, says the airport company had filled a mind boggling seven warehouses with documents by 1997, related to the design of the buildings of the mega airport. This meant a document management system was needed. Ambersoft took on the challenging task of implementing an established US-made document management solution.

But during the two-year period (1997 to 1999) of the KLIA project, Ambersoft's team ran into a major stumbling block - getting the vendor's support was not easy. Despite having a local office, most matters had to be referred to the vendor's US office. "Coupled with the time difference, we had a tough time getting responses from the vendor in the US and this delayed the implementation," recalls Sukhdev. The software also cost a bomb, which got the Ambersoft team thinking: As document management becomes more and more important to Malaysian companies, why not come up with a solution that meets the needs of local companies?

Morphing data into knowledge.

Hence, Ambersoft began developing its own document management solution from the beginning of last year and came up with Fingertips this January, after spending "a few million ringgit" in development costs. The software comes with the nifty tagline - Morphing data into knowledge. We're pitching our services to be first used by the respective human resource, accounts or administrative departments within enterprises. Once they are convinced of Fingertips' value, that will be the best driver for these companies to implement it throughout the organisation. - Sukhdev

"Fingertips has all the key features of a document management system for a mere 10 per cent of the cost of similar US-made products in the market," claims Sukhdev. That makes it affordable even for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), he says. To penetrate the market, Ambersoft has adopted the approach of selling Fingertips at the department level within companies. "We're pitching our services to be first used by the respective human resource, accounts or administrative departments within enterprises. Once they are convinced of Fingertips value, that will be the best driver for these companies to implement it throughout the organisation," says Sukhdev.

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