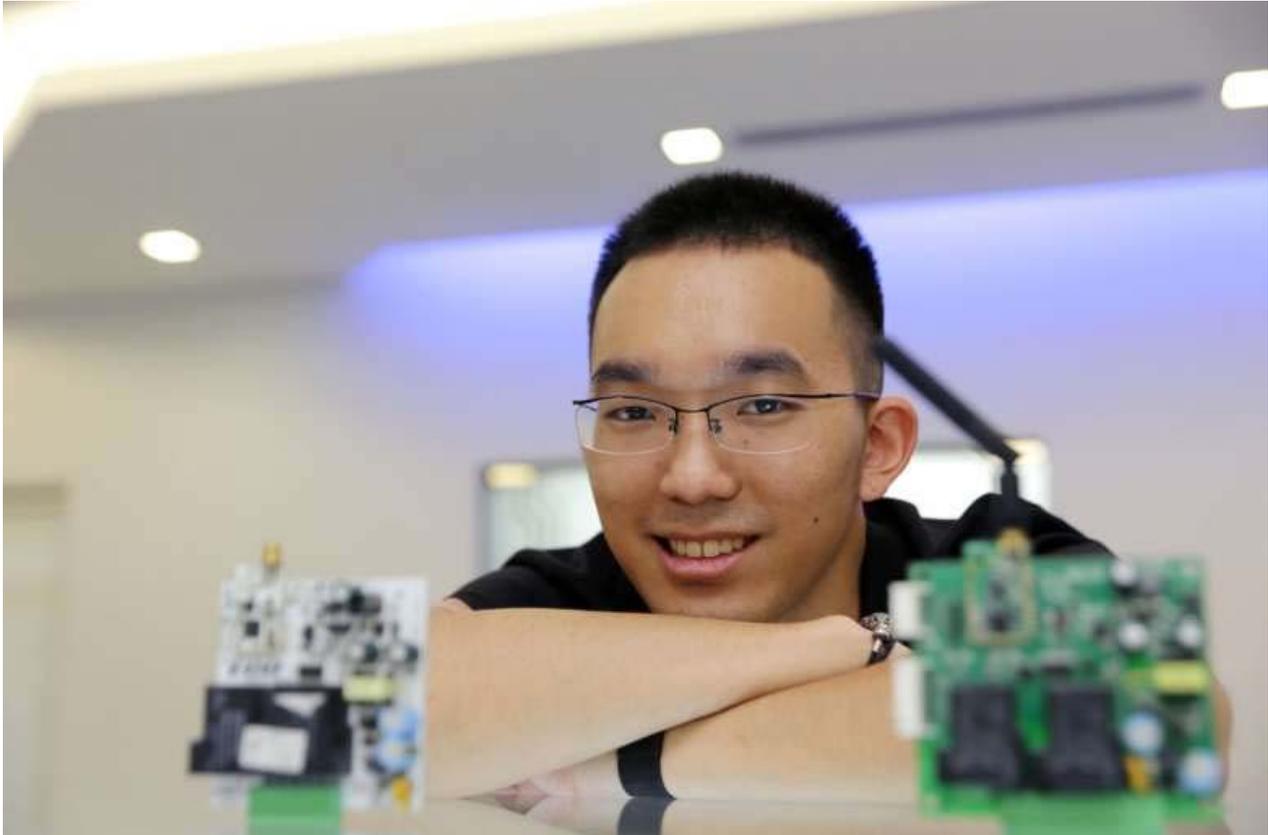


THE STRAITS TIMES

Five questions with EverComm



Mr Chen says his firm hopes to move into China, then Europe. Its longer-term target is the United States. ST PHOTO: TIFFANY GOH FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

🕒 PUBLISHED 3 HOURS AGO



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Energy start-up EverComm Uni-Tech Singapore has a simple goal: to help companies better tackle climate change. The home-grown firm harnesses technology and big data to help organisations improve energy efficiency. It has expanded into overseas markets such as Malaysia and Taiwan, and counts various multinational corporations among its clients. Jacqueline Woo speaks to co-founder and chief executive Ted Chen, 27, to find out where the start-up is headed.

Q How did EverComm come about?

A I set up EverComm in 2013 with my business partner Koko Phyo, then my classmate at Nanyang Technological University (NTU). We wanted to develop solutions to tackle climate change. I was an engineering student focusing on energy studies, so this is something that has always interested me.

The core product and solution that we offer is aimed at helping enterprises and government organisations identify the most cost-effective way to manage and improve energy efficiency. You can imagine that for places like huge factories or universities, they are very complex when it comes to energy usage. We make energy management very simple and easy for them, using Internet of Things technology and big data analytics. We've been able to achieve energy savings in the millions for some of our clients.

Q How has the company grown?

A We started with \$200,000 from our savings, but managed to generate about \$500,000 in revenue in our first year. I can't disclose our latest revenue figures as we are preparing for our Series A fund-raising. We had only three people then, but our headcount has since grown to about 20. We've also expanded into overseas markets - Malaysia, Thailand and Taiwan - which now account for about half our overall revenue. Our focus is more on energy-heavy industries, especially manufacturing. Most of our clients are MNCs that span industries, including semiconductor, property management and telecom.

Q What was the toughest challenge in getting the business off the ground?

A One was convincing clients to identify energy wastage with use of data. Clients might have concerns working with a young firm, so we offered a free run of a proof-of-concept project to identify opportunities. We managed to secure GlobalFoundries, our first local client. Once we got over that hurdle, we were able to start developing the product and grow our team.

Q You were named in Forbes 30 under 30 Asia list this year. Has age ever been a hindrance for you in the corporate world?

A In the early days, it was hard to get some people to take me seriously. Some told me straight off that what I was offering was rubbish - which was true in some sense because back then, we had yet to have the depth. These people have been in the industry for decades, so who was I to give them recommendations? But when they saw that we were able to give them the tools to manage their energy use and started delivering results, they were more willing to cooperate.

Being in the Forbes list doesn't change things much from the company's perspective, but it's more of a branding exercise. People are now more willing to listen.

Q What are your plans for growth?

A We are now focusing more on helping government organisations find ways to manage and implement various global sustainability targets. Apart from ongoing tender processes, we're already in discussions with 20 government agencies with assistance from the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore accreditation programme. We've also partnered with NTU School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering's Smart Nation Trans Lab to make cutting-edge research readily available to the agencies and easy to adopt.

The Series A we are preparing for will help us strengthen our product offering and expand more aggressively overseas. There's a lot of manufacturing going on in Asia, which means energy consumption is high and there's still a lot of room for us to work with. We hope to move into China next year, and then Europe. Our longer-term target is the United States.

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