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Stretched beyond the limits

Teliwave Pte Ltd

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While studying Computer Engineering at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Ong Kok Choong, then 23 years old, started Byte Square with seven friends. The company focused on mobile data technologies in three areas – mobile surveillance, data storage and MMS. The young entrepreneurs received \$40,000 in funding from NUS and SPRING Singapore's Entrepreneurial Talent Development Fund, and boot-strapped for three years.

"On hindsight, developing one good product on a \$40,000 budget was tight. And we were trying to push out three products simultaneously, which was just suicidal," explained Kok Choong. "Our team consisted of engineers who were good at product development, but had no sales experience. I learnt quickly that a company's aspirations, abilities and resources must match. Unfortunately, I unknowingly overstretched myself – both from a financial and capability point of view. Staff grew restless, we ran out of money and closed the company."

Starting Again

Despite this setback, Kok Choong was passionate on the mobile telecommunications space. He met an investor who shared his beliefs and set up his second company, Teliwave in 2007. Teliwave focuses on developing technologies that connect people and services in a seamless integrated communication environment. The company has grown to 20 employees, with some 15,000 customers. Their product, Hoiio, recently won The Straits Times Digital Life's Choice Award and Kok Choong expects the company to hit \$1 million in revenue in 2009.

"At Byte Square, I acquired many important skills. I learnt that it is more important to develop a product that people are willing to buy rather than to develop a high-tech product for technology's sake, with no user in mind. In addition to sales, you must also do financial planning and corporate structuring at various stages of growth in order to scale up the company. I have been mindful of these lessons with Teliwave, and our next step is to hit the overseas markets," said Kok Choong.



"If you are young and willing to sacrifice certain materialistic aspects of life for a couple of years, Singapore is a good place to start a company. The support is there and if you fail, you can look for another job. So what is there to be scared of?" Ong Kok Choong, Founder, Teliwave Pte Ltd

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