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## Spotlight

### Exclusive Interview with Stanley Samuel Founder & CEO, Ecosoftt Pte Ltd

#### 1. Please tell us about yourself.



**ECOSOFTT PTE LTD:** Stanley Samuel, Founder & CEO.

*We provide total water solutions for homes, buildings, communities and industries to be sustainable, water secure and compliant. We do this through the end-to-end or integrated management of sources and uses of water through decentralised or distributed solutions. We work with our clients across sectors to reduce their fresh water (potable water) footprint, reclaim and reuse water from various points of use, and be compliant when it comes to discharge into the network or back to mother nature. We create a smart ecosystem for water and its management that guarantees more efficient use making their operations more sustainable. Our hybrid business model allows us to serve clients in the developed and developing world, be it in highly sophisticated urban settings or rural marginalised communities.*

#### 2. PUB: At the recent Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week, you won the 2019 Zayed Sustainability Prize. Tell us more about the experience and the journey leading to the award.

**ECOSOFTT:** We are a relatively new player in the space of water and used water management solutions. We commenced our operations based out of Singapore in 2012, with a vision to play a humble part in addressing specific challenges customers faced when it came to water shortage, scarcity and quality. In 2013, we won our first design award, followed by our first installation to prove the concept and its value. Since then we have successfully executed over 50 projects in Singapore and India and we continue to spread our wings in the ASEAN region.



*An Operator at River Omkareshwar in the State of Madhya Pradesh proudly sharing the quality of treated water where ECOSOFTT's decentralised solutions manage over 2.5MLD of sewage from open drains from mixed habitats*

Our vision, work and solutions became even more relevant and gained rapid acceptance in all three scenarios i.e. where there is a fully developed water and used water grid, where the grid is partial or dysfunctional and where there is no grid.

As pioneers and innovators in decentralised solutions, it took us some time to demonstrate that to achieve water security, there is no one size that fits all. Centralised and decentralised solutions can co-exist and complement each other well if we are to address the challenges that different countries and communities face when it comes to water sustainability and security.

Our hybrid business model allows us to deploy high-tech solutions for highly sophisticated applications and at the same time serve marginalised and rural communities not serviced by the water and sanitation grids.

The journey was exhilarating and exciting as we did not come from the water sector, but had identified gaps and pain-points that were compelling enough. Both Marcus Lim (Co-Founder) and I developed ECOSOFTT (Eco Solutions For Tomorrow – Today!) from a thesis at our dual degree master's program at INSEAD & TSINGHUA University, Beijing and turned it into an award-winning enterprise. The journey was not without its challenges, but we were able to move from strength to strength with a 'fit-for-purpose' business model, suitable solution sets, technologies, a good team and support from early adopters.

We offer packaged and engineered solutions that go beyond zero discharge. Our next frontier is Net Zero (for water) Buildings and Communities where potable water is only used for potable purposes. We help those we serve to diversify and augment supply from various sources. The PUB and various government agencies in Singapore have encouraged us, nurtured us, guided us and shaped us to become a regional player.

We first showcased our innovations at the Singapore International Water Week (SIWW) 2014 and never looked back. And through each successive SIWW we learned more, gained more visibility, gathered more traction and gradually evolved. We have presented papers, posters and have been given the opportunity to showcase emerging technologies and solutions that positioned us well.



The Poseidon - Packaged System for water reclamation and reuse. Advanced MBR for hotels, hospitals and commercial malls



The Sheikh Zayed Sustainability Award, 2019, was yet another recognition for our contributions in our chosen field of endeavour. We are the first Singapore company to be awarded one of the most prestigious awards in water by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces.

Ecosoft co-founder, Marcus Lim, receiving the 2019 Zayed Sustainability Prize at the Abu Dhabi Sustainability Week

**3. PUB: What are some of the challenges you face in your current role, and what are the strategies in place to mitigate or overcome them?**

**ECOSOFTT:** Some of the biggest challenges we face are linked to competing views on centralised vs decentralised solutions. We overcome this by demonstrating that both approaches are complementary and what matters is that we have to become more efficient in water use, reuse as much as possible and maintain the environmental equilibrium, especially when most of us depend on ground and surface water. Not all utilities or communities can afford world class solutions. Not all countries can make the high investments that Singapore has made to be water secure. We had a steep learning curve. We were also able to 'shift-paradigms' and unleash innovative solutions that combined technologies and services through our unmatched value propositions both for the urban and rural sectors.



*School children in India have benefited from Ecosoftt's Solutions for Underprivileged Lives Programme*

Through our hybrid business model, we can serve those who are affected by water shortages, scarcity and quality issues.

From zero to fifty projects in less than five years is not a mean achievement. This also puts a lot of stress on working capital and places an emphasis on fuelling the business via pursuing projects of incremental value that are across geographical disparities. We had solid support from organisations like PUB, the Building and Construction Authority (BCA), Enterprise Singapore, Jurong Town Corporation (JTC), Nanyang Technological University Environment and Water Research Institute (NEWRI) and others as we chartered our own course. We tapped into the ecosystem and worked through partnerships and alliances as we were out there to provide solutions that plug gaps in the market and address pain points.

**4. PUB: What would be one piece of advice you would give to young professionals in the water industry?**

**ECOSOFTT:** There is a great potential across various applications, from drinking water to reusing reclaimed water, and from desalination to recharging of aquifers. Evolution and innovation will co-exist, hence making today's best practices better and unleashing innovations which will be even more rewarding and fulfilling. We need to influence this generation and shape the next generation, where managing water and maintaining the delicate balances in mother nature's way of working is a way of life and 'comes naturally'.

**5. PUB: What are your views of the Singapore Water Management Series as a whole? What are the best segments and the ones you like best?**

**ECOSOFTT:** The Singapore Water Management Series is one of the most comprehensive knowledge and best practices sharing platform for professionals, academia and users. Designed with the industry in mind, it offers very high quality of professional insights covering a wide range and themes. The faculty and speakers come with high credentials and a proven track record. It brings together the best from around the world and offers rich-holistic insights that are not covered elsewhere.

We have benefitted from PUB's first HydroPreneur Program (a training programme for start-ups) in 2014. It was an amazing experience and was very relevant to us as an early stage start-up then.

**6. PUB: What are some of the most valuable takeaways from this program? How are they applicable to you in your line of work?**

**ECOSOFTT:** Some of the valuable takeaways are the "Singapore Water Story and Journey", the transformation of a nation through inspiring leadership, committed teams, social engineering and the use of technologies. The program had some of the best speakers and offered holistic insights into the latest trends, lessons learned, best practices, experience sharing combined with field trips to see vision in action. The Singapore Water Management Series is a source of inspiration, helps develop competencies, enhances one's knowledge base and positions us well in our role and as an enterprise.

*ECOSOFTT showcased its innovations at the Singapore International Water Week*

