



Certified Solutions

**Introducing MSC Malaysia
Certified Solutions**

Creating Value for Solutions

Time is right for new standard

■ By Eliza Najar and
Gregory John Basil

THE thrust towards an ICT-enabled society is active and forward moving. It carries with it the intention of giving every single person, organisation, agency and institution the ease of access, the capabilities and the options that come with a society equipped for 21st century living.

Malaysia has recently intensified its efforts in line with the strategy aimed at national development and nation building with ICT as catalyst to transforming the country from a production-based economy to a knowledge-based one.

In the bid to further establish Malaysia as the global ICT hub and advance the development of the Multimedia Super Corridor various efforts are being intensified. This includes development of flagship applications, upgrading of communications infrastructure, talent maturity, focus on the

"Without any sort of measurement, we do not know where and how our software products stand, and therefore it would be very hard to improve and produce better quality products if we do not know where we are."



Datuk Badlisham Ghazali, CEO of the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC)

is capable of doing. Added to this are the measures and policies that have allowed market liberalisation and open invitation from multinationals to set up base and make the country their top choice.

Local ICT players have moved in tandem with governmental efforts and are in line with the national strategy, pushing aggressively to provide, use and generate demand for ICT-based solutions.

These advancements, concerted efforts and advancing capabilities are made against the backdrop of the prejudice that locally made products are of lower quality when compared against ICT products from the rest of the

world.

At the 21st MSC Malaysia Implementation Council Meeting (ICM) two years ago, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak spoke about the need to address this misconception and to further prove the capability of made-in-Malaysia ICT solutions that were able to meet the needs both locally and internationally within desired quality standards.

The Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC) was mandated to look into developing a comprehensive standard to assess various ICT products – softwares and solutions – developed by the MSC Malaysia Status Companies, to ensure that this misconception did not derail

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efforts already in place or disrupt the operations and growth of MSC Malaysia or its companies.

To address this issue, MDeC with the cooperation of stakeholders put together a standard that would assess and rate MSC Malaysia developed products. The ultimate aim of the project is to promote and implement quality standards in the development of MSC Malaysia products, thus reducing negative perceptions about locally developed software and solutions. The successfully assessed and rated products will then be granted the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions certificate.

Software companies were picked as the first segment of the MSC Malaysia community to be put through the product assessment process.

"MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions is vital both to Malaysian companies and to the economy on the whole because through this effort, it would encourage confidence among consumers of the reliability, security and overall quality of software products from the companies under the MSC Malaysia banner," says Datuk Badlisham Ghazali, CEO of MDeC, the driver of the MSC Malaysia national initiative.

MDeC worked closely with TUV Rheinland to co-develop the product assessment and rating standard, which is the backbone of the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions initiative. At the same time, MDeC facilitated input and feedback from both potential buyers and software developers during the development of the standard.

"Without any sort of measurement, we do not know where and how our software products stand, and therefore it would be very hard to improve and produce better quality products if we do not know where

we are," elaborates Badlisham.

"Despite the strides that we have taken and the milestones we have passed, in the back of many minds and even sometimes discussed openly, is the stigma that locally developed products are not up to standard. And I believe this is mainly because they do not have something to substantiate against, especially with newly developed products."

Nevertheless, for any standard to work it must be first accepted by the software companies, which was why MDeC and TUV Rheinland ensured that it would have user friendly means to efficiently, accurately and quickly assess and if necessary certify the products made by MSC Malaysia Status Companies. MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions also conforms to international standards and with its rollout it would be globally recognised as a true measure of the quality of MSC Malaysia's ICT products.

Another essential element of the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions was its feedback mechanism where it is able to facilitate the improvement of lower rated products, thus ensuring that there is a mechanism in place for check and balance.

However, MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions is not a magic pill that will change mindsets across the board.

Badlisham says: The standard will not be able to solve all issues. But the standard will be able to assess the quality of local software and solutions, thus increase the confidence of buyers.

"This standard focuses on addressing the quality side of the product, in order to help customers gain a certain confidence level in the quality of products that are rated against the standard. In the least, the quality issues of the products will be addressed through this initiative, which is a vital step."

Software companies were chosen as the first type of MSC Malaysia Status Company to have their product measured against the standard because currently, there isn't a comprehensive, user-friendly and cost effective standard available. Ten software companies were chosen to participate and they were open and encouraging in getting their software products assessed and rated. Since the pilot implementation of the programme ended in December last year, MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions has been rolled out and to date there are many products in the pipeline for assessment.

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Characteristics of the standard

PROCESS and performance improvement is essential to any company that intends to be not only successful but also enduring. Standards and guidelines assist companies to progress in growth. The most commonly used standards in Malaysia are the ISO standards, Capability Maturity Model Integration (CMMI) and Common Criteria.

The Multimedia Development Corporation's new initiative, the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions will certainly draw comparisons to existing standards, and rightly so. Standards are set in place for quality control, and to put products on a level playing field. One of the aims of the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions is to erode and destroy the perception that Malaysian products are not of superior quality as compared to foreign products. The business world in Malaysia is used to working towards and complying with these existing foreign standards, so the question will inevitably arise: are the new standards good enough?

The product assessment and rating standard, which is the backbone of MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions, was developed with reference to international standards currently in use in Malaysia. This harmonisation was vital for a smooth transition from using international standards to using the local one.

The software evaluation criteria of the standards cover aspects of software quality that are already tested in the international standards. For example, the internal quality criteria of MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions, ensuring the upkeep of quality during development, are also covered by CMMI Process and ISO9126-3. External quality (the quality of the executable product — ease of use, portability) is also found in ISO9126-2.

The local quality evaluation model also covers aspects such as quality in use — the user's view on the software product when used in a specific environment and context (such as security and compatibility), and quality measurements (the measurement of internal, external and quality-in-use

attributes).

MDeC's aim was to create an assessment and rating system for software products that is global in nature and internationally accepted, which is also part of the reason it is based on international software evaluation standards.

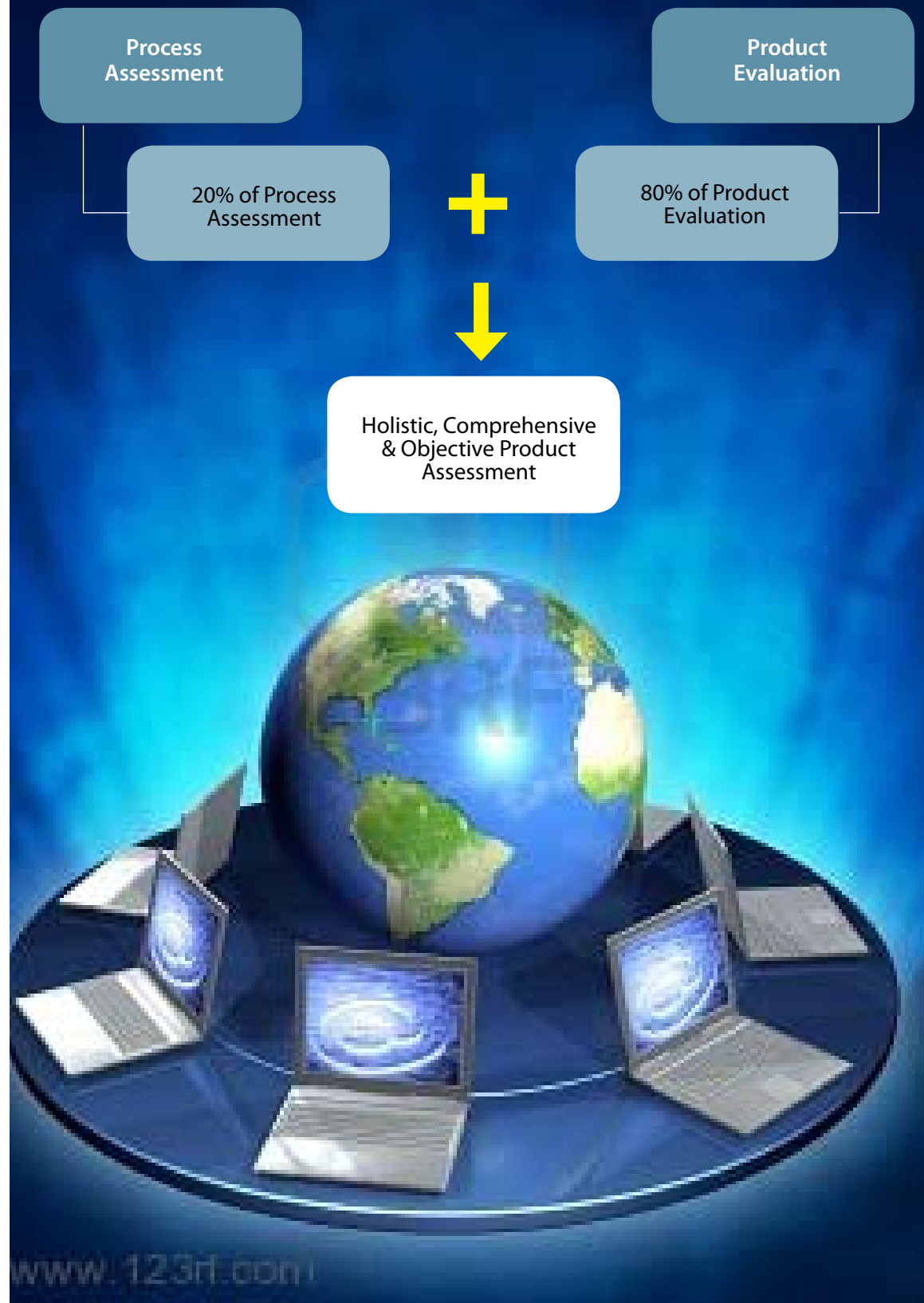
In fact, the methodology used by MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions defines the criteria and sub-criteria intended to cover all aspects of software evaluation. Besides referring to international standards such as the ISO 9126 (software engineering — product quality) and CMMI already mentioned it also refers to standards such as ISO 14592 (software product evaluation), ISO 15408 (Common Criteria — computer security) and Software Engineering Institute's COTS Software product evaluation. MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions do the job of highlighting areas of improvement for products with lower ratings as a guide for further improvement.

Bringing all these standards and criteria together into one solution will have the effect of streamlining the processes of standardisation, quality control and performance improvement in Malaysia's software production industry. User-friendliness is the key here.

During the development of the standards, MDeC ensured that each criterion and requirement was thoroughly analysed before being placed in the standard. This enables the assessors and the companies being assessed to prioritise criteria according to relevance, saving time and cost. There are evaluation models for reference, which allow the assessor to verify and validate the product's conformance as placed against the selected product criteria in the standard.

The standard is adaptable and applicable across the board for software development companies. It is divided into two main parts, assessing process and product. There are 13 main criteria that the product must satisfy, focusing on different aspects of the software product. There are those that test functionality, architectural principles, security, requirements management and product integration, amongst others.

MSC MALAYSIA SOFTWARE PRODUCT ASSESSMENT AND RATING STANDARD



The software products being assessed will have to obtain a certain amount of points at each level in order to obtain the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions certification. Each product will have to obtain a minimum rating of 75 per cent for the four main criteria (functionality, reliability, security and usability) and a minimum rating of 60 per cent

for all the other criteria. The overall product rating would have to be at 70 per cent.

The MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions certification will be slowly introduced to the wider market in stages. The roll out is currently focused on MSC Malaysia Status Companies that develop software products. MDeC aims to share the standard with

the wider market within the next two years. As a locally-developed assessment framework, MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions will not only promote the development of higher-quality products, but also benefit the consumer down the line. It should certainly be well-received by the Malaysian software industry.

Implementing the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions

The first ten software companies to work through the framework talk about their experience with the standard and what they think it will do for Malaysian ICT products

Knowledge Base Sdn Bhd

Knowledge Base Sdn Bhd, known as KBase, is principally involved in providing ICT, business and technical consulting services and integrated application solutions. Its end-to-end solutions and services, such as the Balanced Scorecard, Business Intelligence, Enterprise Data Integration and Data Cleansing systems, are used by some of the largest corporations in the Asia Pacific region and the US.

Established in 1998, KBase attained MSC status in 2004 and has ISO9001:2000 certification. It is also certified at Capability Maturity Model Integrated (CMMI) Maturity Level 5, the highest standard in CMMI. The company helps transform ad-hoc and chaotic software processes into mature, disciplined ones, and has developed its own web-based second generation Balanced Scorecards software, iStrategi, built to break price barriers and make such software more affordable.

Already well-received by the government and public sectors, K-Base recently expanded into the private sector. It is also looking to further its reach both in Malaysia and regionally through strategic partnerships.

Calms Technologies Sdn Bhd

Specialising in multi-application smart card solutions for education institutions, large enterprises and government agencies, Calms Technologies Sdn Bhd basically simplifies systems for companies. The One Card system enables companies to use a single card for multiple applications, creating a fully integrated environment and maximising their return on investment. This solution helps the organisations to automate and improve business processes in a secure environment while increasing productivity and easing operations.

Calms has found its niche in the rapidly evolving smart card industry, standing out from the rest because of its value proposition to its customers. Its small, highly qualified, professional and motivated team work on establishing solid relationships with customers and business partners, seeing this as a critical factor for success.

The company's client base is currently comprised mainly of mid-size organisations, though Calms has plans for further expansion. It recently signed up as a strategic partner to HID Global, a global secure identity solutions provider, in order to leverage on their network for its own global reach.

Mediclink Systems (M) Sdn Bhd

Mediclink Systems (M) Sdn Bhd was established by a group of tech-savvy healthcare experts who decided to build clinical-centric, user friendly and cost effective clinical applications.

The company has found a niche in the healthcare informatics sector by delivering innovative and unique clinical and medical software that

is customisable to suit various workflows and needs. With clients in both the private and public sectors, Mediclink pays a pivotal role in implementing clinical solutions and systems that promote the use of information technology to improve patient care, data management and access to clinical information.

The healthcare informatics sector is growing exponentially, and Mediclink has already established itself as a leader in the industry. With increasing demand for its solutions, the company has plans to venture into the international market.

Profitera Corporation Sdn Bhd

Profitera Corporation Sdn Bhd is basically a technology provider. Solutions such as Revenue Collections and Debt Recovery Management Software assist organisations to focus on their clients and optimise profits throughout their revenue and profitability management lifecycle. Profitera's PowerApps can be used by banks, telecommunications companies, utility companies and the government to automate revenue collection, debt recovery and third party management processes.

The company started as a solution provider to local telcos in 2000 and slowly evolved into providing solutions in the banking, credit cards and financial services space. Now Profitera's products cover the requirements of the banking industry and cater for conventional banking, Islamic banking and debt buyers of non-performing assets as well.

Profitera now counts among its clients banks in Malaysia, Indonesia and even India. Penetrating the Indian market, where the software application space is hyper competitive, was a great success for the company. It is now pursuing even more projects both locally and internationally.

ARKIBIZ MSC Sdn Bhd

Formed three years ago, ARKIBIZ MSC Sdn Bhd develops software in the records, document, workflow and email management space. The company's world-class applications systems protect customers' digital information and secure and manage them from creation until disposal.

The company's information management systems incorporate a portal feature with the ability to integrate business applications to store and manage information generated by these applications in accordance to international record keeping standards. Its solutions also assist companies to manage their volumes of information according to their business life cycles, comply with local and international legal regulations, automate business processes and allow easy access to the information stored.

ARKIBIZ's next business step is to go international — it is beginning to recruit partners and resellers in the UK, Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the US.

THE Multimedia Development Corporation has already started implementation of the newly developed initiative, the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions. Wasting no time after the development of the backbone product assessment standard, MDeC chose 10 software solutions developed by MSC Malaysia Companies to go through the assessment.

These 10 products may have been guinea pigs in a way, but the field test was a solid effort by MDeC to analyse the assessment process, gauge its suitability and sustainability and, with feedback from the assessed companies, make improvements before a wider launch.

One of the challenges faced by these Malaysian ICT companies was the lack of acceptance of their products by the local market. The perception seemed to be that Malaysian products are not as efficient or suitable as foreign products, or give the same value for money.

"We see ourselves as a premium solutions provider that can help our customer save hundreds of millions of ringgit," says KeshMahinder Singh, CEO & President of Profitera Corporation Sdn Bhd. "The buyer's psyche, however, is that foreign is better. As a Malaysian vendor we are constantly expected to give significant discounts on software and service prices."

Despite such mindsets, many local SMEs in the ICT sector have found niches to sell their products. Buyers may be doubtful at the onset, especially of local products, but software producers that are able to show experience and deep domain knowledge embedded in their software are usually able to break down any barriers of perception.

It seems to boil down to branding — local software companies are unable to reach out far enough to promote their products. And if Malaysian buyers pass up local brands, the reach of these products and solutions is certain to fall short of the global marketplace. "Malaysia has global competency and has developed many world-class products," says Ritesh Ranjan, Knowledge Base Sdn

Bhd's Business Development Manager. "But the branding of Malaysian-made products is still sub-standard. Malaysian companies need to appreciate home grown products."

MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions seems to have come just in time then to turn perceptions around before they become ingrained beyond change. "It certainly is time for Malaysian products to be assessed based on international standards," says Prem Anand Raghavan, Managing Director of Mediclink Systems (M) Sdn Bhd. "Most Malaysian products are equivalent to or surpass these standards already." As a means of having their products and services assessed by an independent third party as being well developed, supported and managed, local ICT vendors are certain to welcome MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions.

Buyers in overseas markets typically require some form of independent validation or certification of products, especially if the brand is not well known outside the originating country. "We definitely need a benchmark from a reputable organisation. This standard will serve as an assurance to prospective clients," says William Lim, CEO of TRIAset Sdn Bhd. "Now we can get clients, whether overseas or local, to refer to MDeC to get an independent opinion. If MDeC makes itself more visible in the overseas markets, these markets will know it is a reputable organisation." Once it gains proper



Bill Cheng, CEO of Arkibiz MSC Sdn Bhd



KeshMahinder Singh, CEO & President of Profitera Corporation Sdn Bhd

recognition, this standard and rating will serve to satisfy that requirement and will be a good measure of where Malaysian products stand in the global market.

MDeC has made the assessment process thorough, comprehensive and intense. It takes two to three full days on site for the assessors to complete the review, and companies need to assemble documentation, information and people from various departments — development, testing, training, support — to meet with the review requirements. Questions are asked, rephrased and asked again in order to ensure complete accuracy.

Profitera, for example, was required

by the assessors to demonstrate in detail how issues were handled, such as how traceability of a client-raised concern was handled. "The assessment is done this way because they need to ensure that all angles are explored," says KeshMahinder.

"Everything we explained verbally had to be demonstrated as evidence of being done and working in real life." "The assessment should also include the research and development work that the company has done for continuous product enhancements," adds K. Kuppusamy, Managing Director of AETINS Sdn Bhd. "This will convince the market that the

company is here to stay and is committed to product improvement and sustainability." Almost all the participating companies that were assessed found the assessment criteria relevant and suitable, though companies in specific niche markets, such as Mediclink, may find the need for some tweaking. "The involvement of domain experts in the assessment process would improve it, otherwise the criteria can seem a bit too generic," explains Prem "In our case as a clinical applications provider a clinician should be involved."

Such accreditation will only be truly successful if it is received by the general public as well as the global market. "The standard itself needs to be known and established in the market," says Ameran Jaffar, CEO of MySepadu Sdn Bhd. "The buyers must get comfortable with standard first."

This calls for marketing and education with regards to what the standard entails and means. "Marketing the standard will be a critical factor that decides whether or not it can elevate our perceptions of the quality of Malaysian products," says Koh Lee Ching, Technical Director of Calms Technologies Sdn Bhd. "Otherwise we do not see it having much impact on the local market."

"At the moment we do not see any significant impact on the marketability of our product," adds Kuppusamy. "The accreditation must

be promoted, at least in Malaysia first for there to be any effect."

This brings it back to the original problems of branding and perception — can a Malaysian standard really meet global expectations?

"There is a danger of MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions being compared to international standards, and be seen as a lower quality rating," says Lim. "It may not be enough to get large organisations or foreign organisations in Malaysia to use Malaysian products. A lot more must be done, perhaps even enforcing use of local products by local companies."

MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions will of course reach its objective faster if it is seen to be associated with a globally recognised standard. In this case MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions is working with TUV Rheinland Malaysia, one of the world's leading providers of product testing and certifications. Whether this standard will become the premier software standard in Malaysia is a matter of time and depends much on branding and marketing.

Koh, however, believes that Malaysian buyers value a good track record rather than accreditations. "The accreditation may have a bigger impact on the overseas market," she opines.

Companies that go through the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions assessment will have to invest time and money into the process — days of on-site assessment and RM12,000. Shutting down all other activities for two or three days during the exercise may seem like a big sacrifice, but companies that are willing to go through with it will certainly be rewarded with a true account of how their product fares in the market.

The cost is relative, says David Vannu, iPerintis Sdn Bhd's Head of Applications Delivery "Companies whose revenues are in the hundreds of millions of ringgit will find this amount insignificant as opposed to companies with a much lower revenue capability. But the important aspect here is that the value of this cost."

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AETINS Sdn Bhd

AETINS Sdn Bhd (formerly known as Pentasoft) is an insurance software solutions provider that offers single end-to-end insurance solutions. The solutions cover individual life, group life, investment linked and general insurance and spans several functions including illustration, quotation, policy servicing, agency management, and commission and benefits. The company works to assist insurance companies achieve transformational growth by leveraging on information technology.

Insurance companies typically use several clumsy mainframe or super-mini computer applications and have difficulty integrating their legacy IT applications to respond to market changes. To overcome this AETINS developed a customer-centric, channel-centric and process-oriented enterprise insurance software solution that handles all line of insurance business and grows with the business.

The new company name, changed in March this year, better signifies what the company stands for and does. AETINS is an acronym for Assured Eternal Insurance Solutions. As part of this rebranding the company also created a Takaful subsidiary, AETINS Solutions. The company already has customers all over the region, the Middle East and Africa, and is expanding into the US and Europe.

iPerintis Sdn Bhd

iPerintis Sdn Bhd is a technology solutions provider for the oil and gas industry. Established in 2000, it was formed to develop and drive new ebusiness models and opportunities in this industry. Four years later it was appointed the ICT outsourcing partner of Petrolim Nasional Berhad, managing the full breadth of the latter's ICT operations and projects implementation.

Among the myriad ICT services the company provides are business systems and solutions integration, cloud computing, consulting services, ICT project management, SAP implementation and support, and software and solutions development.

This MSC status company has also been certified ISO20000, ITIL Level 4 and ISO27001 as well as TUV Rheinland STAR (4 stars). iPerintis has successfully delivered its large scale enterprise solutions in the international market as well, in the Sudan, Iraq, Indonesia, Egypt, Vietnam, Australia and the Netherlands.

mySepadu Sdn Bhd

mySepadu Sdn Bhd is the holding company of mySepadu Group. The Group consists of three companies — Sepadu Computer Sdn Bhd, mySepadu Systems Sdn Bhd and mySepadu InfoServe Sdn Bhd — that operate strategically to provide services to the local ICT industry.

Incorporated in 2005 to address the need for research and development for the group, mySepadu performs continuous improvements and carries out market research on ready-to-market solutions developed and implemented by the group. In 2009 the company was appointed to the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology, a collaborative partnership that researches RFID applications.

mySepadu's research and development work focuses on SME/ SMI business solutions (iBizz), learning management solutions (ILMS), medical systems solutions (MEDISYS) and resource management solutions (CONCERNS). The company has already started expanding outside Malaysia, partnering with Indian software consultation company Great Deccan Software Inc. Beginning next year it will slowly venture into the ASEAN and OIC markets.

TRIAset Sdn Bhd

Created to develop state-of-the-art software solutions for treasury, risk and investment systems, TRIAset Sdn Bhd's COMPASS suite of applications is used globally. These software solutions increase the interactivity and effectiveness of the treasury, risk and investment activities of large and mid-sized market companies.

COMPASS spans all levels of development and implementation, in line with the company's philosophy of providing solutions designed to maximise clients' profitability within the clients' risk appetite. Each implementation approach is specifically tailored using precise recommendations to situational needs. As a one-stop solutions provider, the company assists clients with project management, analysis, data conversion, post implementation support, software maintenance and helpline support.

TRIAset already has a presence in Vietnam and Brunei, and its products have penetrated the Middle East and North Africa through its Kuwaiti partner. The company is looking to expand into Indonesia in the near future.



K. Kuppusamy, Managing Director of AETINS Sdn Bhd

Koh Lee Ching, Technical Director of Calms Technologies Sdn Bhd

Ameran Jaffar, CEO of MySepadu Sdn Bhd

Ritesh Ranjan, Knowledge Base Sdn Bhd's Business Development Manager

William Lim, CEO of TRIAset Sdn Bhd

David Vannu, iPerintis Sdn Bhd's Head of Applications Delivery

Prem Anand Raghavan, Managing Director of Mediclink Systems (M) Sdn Bhd

Partners have their say



WHEN Malaysian-made products are mentioned, one would not immediately associate them with ICT products in particular.

However, the products that the country has produced thus far are innovative and cater to a wide range of applications. Some of our local ICT products are even on par with those produced in other parts of the world. Furthermore, our software industry has produced a number of unique products especially in the healthcare, Takaful and oil & gas industries.

The main concern that is holding our local ICT sector back from soaring is the issue of branding and this is where the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions assessment comes in play as it was developed with the aim of elevating Malaysian ICT products.

Products that are assessed against the developed standard will be given MSC Malaysia Certified stamp. The MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions initiative is supported by the newly developed product assessment and rating standard. Standards are vital as they give an outline of what needs to be done in order to meet a certain minimum level of acceptable quality. It acts as a benchmark to quality and sets minimum levels of compliance.

"The standard is aimed at standardising processes and product performances across the Malaysian software industry. It will also give the end consumer confidence in the software product and the assurance that the product has been assessed and rated by a reputable and independent third party," says Carol Ng, Project Leader of TUV Rheinland Malaysia.

This is a unique standard that covers both product performance and process

management and Ng believes that the arrival of this standard is timely as the country progresses towards a knowledge-based economy.

"The standard will serve as a guideline for products to be produced in a consistent manner resulting in reliable and safe products every time," adds Haliza Ibrahim, Senior Manager, Corporate Services Department of SIRIM QAS International.

"Additionally a standard like this can act as a checklist for the product assessors to ensure that all key components are assessed and verified," she continues.

The MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions will prove that the Malaysian ICT industry is to be taken seriously by other international players.

"It is an opportunity for us to show that we are equal if not better than the other countries that consider ICT exports to be an important contributor to their GDP," says Manfred Lottig, Chief Operating Officer at TUV Rheinland Malaysia.

As with anything new that is being implemented, there were concerns in the initial stages of MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions.

"We had a number of concerns," elaborates Haliza. "Among them was the ability of the standard to cover the numerous aspects of producing ICT products, establishing criteria and requirements that are effective, consumer recognition of the standard, and reaching a consensus on it."

Another of their concern was the standard's buy-in from ICT producers.

For TUV Rheinland Malaysia their concern was ensuring that the product assessments that were conducted using the standard did not become a

burden to developer companies in terms of time required and costs, but rather served as an effective evaluation of the software product's quality that is easy to adopt and acceptable to the end user.

"The standard was not intended to require complete hands-on quality testing of the software itself by the independent assessor as this would have consumed too much time and the cost borne by the developer country would have been too high," adds Lottig.

MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions was designed to assess requirement management, technical solutions, product integration, validation, verification, support, functionality, reliability, security, usability, maintainability, portability and architectural principles.

"Out of these, the criteria deemed most important are functionality, reliability and security," says Ng.

She explains that this is because functionality ensures the final product meets the actual need of the end user. Ng continues that the assurance of software's reliability is important when it concerns mission critical software, such as medical software, which can have dire consequences should it crash.

"Security is also an important criterion as it is vital that certain data stored within a particular software which is not accessible by unauthorised personnel," she adds.

"The standard addresses both product functionality and the processes adopted by an organisation in developing software products which is what makes it unique," says Lottig.

Lottig is confident that MSC

Malaysia Certified Solutions will be accepted by the industry.

"It was conceived with participation from the players of the Malaysian ICT industry — we obtained input from both software developers and users from the various industries. We also had participation from government-linked companies and also hardware manufacturers. This is why I can safely say that MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions will be a success," he elaborates.

Haliza too is confident that MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions will act as a positive step in achieving its objective of increasing the consumer's level of confidence and enable them to have a better perception of local ICT products.

MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions has a very bright future in Malaysia and if it is marketed the right way it will be able to set the benchmark for all future software product assessments on an international scale.

"The government can consider

mutual recognition of software standards originating from other countries as a start to get MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions into the international standards market. This will certainly enhance the image of the Malaysian software industry as a whole," Ng opines.

ICT has certainly become an important aspect of our everyday lives and the future of ICT in Malaysia depends on its ability to provide products that are reliable and serves the needs of the consumer in a consistent manner and with the inauguration of MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions, we are well on our way there.



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Haliza Ibrahim, Senior Manager, Corporate Services Department of SIRIM QAS International.

The first step to better market access

■ FROM PAGE 2

A standard that assess quality is indeed vital as it allows Malaysia to take its place on a global stage with greater confidence. Standards such as these would help MSC Malaysia companies experience consistent growth, which will be prompted by quality that can be benchmarked. This in turn will ensure that these local players are able to generate more revenue and increase their market share.

The existence of the standard will ultimately lead to MSC Malaysia Status companies maximising their potential through continuous improvement of their processes, their product quality, their professional development and business management. This can only mean that the nation's competitiveness will reach greater heights through best practises and policies.

MDeC is not going to stand idle now that MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions assessment has been tested on several products during the pilot implementation. Among them are Proffitera Corporation and its Revenue Collections and Debt recovery software; Calms Technologies and its One Card system; and TriAset and its COMPASS suite of applications. The results are relayed back to the stakeholders.

"We are currently in the process of getting the standard recognised as a Malaysian standard," says Badlisham. "At the same time we hope to be able to share this standard on a regional platform, as part of MSC Malaysia's contribution to the development of quality software products."

But more importantly, did MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions achieve what it set out to do: change mindsets?

"We have begun the rollout this year, so it's wait and see. We are positive based on the feedback, and the extent of its contribution will become clear in the near future."

Companies hail standard as the right move

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MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions is distinct among other assessments initiative in the ICT sector as it focuses on the product instead of the organisation (such as TUV Rheinland) or the people (such as Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)). It will bring awareness of the importance of quality standards in the ICT sector, and give companies a stepping stone from which to further develop and improve their products. It will, in fact, build more professionalism in the local ICT sector.

"By providing users with a formalised benchmark, MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions will help manage the perception of local products and their quality," says Vannut. "This will in turn place local products competitively against international products."

The future of the Malaysian ICT sector certainly lies in the global market. The past decade has seen a lot of growth in this sector, but there is still room for development.

MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions initiative is supported by the newly developed product assessment and rating standards.

"Currently, the government gives very little acknowledgement to local software," says Bill Cheng, CEO of Arkibiz MSC Sdn Bhd. "To give the ICT sector a boost, the government itself should put in place directives to give local ICT product preference in government departments."

"Products with a higher rating after the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions assessment could be preferred for government tenders or there could be a minimum criteria that a product should meet before being considered," suggests Ritesh. "This would make the standard really stand out and companies would see its real value, business-wise."

Steps like these will slowly but surely create a pool of recognised high-quality products in the local market. And as perceptions change, Malaysian products will be able to penetrate the global market more successfully.



"It is an opportunity for us to show that we are equal if not better than the other countries that consider ICT exports to be an important contributor to their GDP."

Manfred Lottig, Chief Operating Officer at TUV Rheinland Malaysia.

About the partners...

TUV Rheinland Malaysia

THE TUV Rheinland Group is a worldwide leader in providing technical services with more than 490 locations in 61 countries; TUV Rheinland Malaysia is one of them. An independent, neutral organisation that was founded in 1872, the group develops sustainable solutions.

It was only appropriate then that TUV Rheinland Malaysia was commissioned by the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDeC) to develop a cost effective and practical framework for the assessment of software product quality. The framework was developed

integrating requirements from the internationally recognised standards for assessment of product software quality.

In addition, TUV Rheinland Malaysia consulted the relevant stakeholders in the ICT industry to obtain feedback on additional requirements or suggestions on how the framework could be improved. It was this process of integrating internationally recognised product quality standards with the needs of local stakeholders that gave life to MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions.

SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd

A WHOLLY owned subsidiary of SIRIM Berhad, SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd was established in 1997 and is responsible for certification, inspection and testing activities.

The international certification that SIRIM QAS offers serves as a means for companies to display their compliance with requirements that are internationally recognised through a channel that is credible and affordable. Its services and schemes also serve to assist local companies to penetrate the global market.

Serving as a one stop solution provider, SIRIM

QAS International offers its services to a wide spectrum of sectors ranging from electrical and electronic to forest management.

In the creation of the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions assessment, SIRIM QAS International was asked to come on board to provide input on third party certifications and related audit activities.

SIRIM QAS International also served as an auditing service for the MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions pilot programme and provided feedback to MDeC that will help enhance the quality of the programme in the future.

Creating Value for Solutions

Competing in the global software arena is not a small task. Stiff competition to penetrate the local and international market means MSC Malaysia Status Companies need to ensure that they are well equipped. Realising this, Multimedia Development Corporation is proud to present this new MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions initiative.

If your product complies with the following requirements, you may participate in this product assessment exercise:

- **Malaysian-made, MSC Malaysia Status Companies' products**
- **In good financial standing with no claims or liability issues**
- **Falls within the following industry clusters:-**
 - o Healthcare
 - o Finance (Banking & Insurance)
 - o Oil & Gas
 - o Telecommunication
 - o Security
 - o Human Resources
 - o Logistics
 - o Agriculture
 - o Education

Processing is fast and efficient, with only a maximum of 15 days of complete end-to-end product assessment, subject to the approval of the application.

To find out more on MSC Malaysia Certified Solutions and how to get your products assessed and certified, talk to us at clic@mdec.com.my or log on to www.msomalaysia.my/eds.

Terms

- Limited to less than 7 modules per product
- Only the latest version is to be assessed
- Software must not have more than 1 outsourced supplier for development process

**FULL REIMBURSEMENT
for the first 100 products assessed
is up for grabs before October 2011.***

*Terms and Conditions apply