



# A successful marriage of cultures

With business in Asia Pacific growing by a healthy 50% over the past 12 months, things are looking good for Menlo Worldwide Logistics. Simon Saunders talks to MD James Hsu



Before taking the step into logistics James Hsu graduated in the US with a masters degree in industrial engineering. But it was at the end of the 1980s, that he discovered the attraction of logistics.

"The thought of applying my degree to this field was very attractive. The challenge to the logistics and supply chain in Asia was to gain and then manage visibility and clarity into the end-to-end process. Engineering helped me understand the process and advocate the need for better coordination between people and systems," says Hsu.

It was a good move, and since rising to that challenge his career path has been a dazzling one, taking him all over Asia. He's worked for providers and in consulting, and his CV takes in some of the biggest names in the business including UPS, TNT and Deloitte Consulting.

Prior to Menlo, he was in the government sector as deputy director of Singapore's Economic Development Board, responsible for the formulation of strategies and the development of new business models for the logistics and supply chain industry in Singapore. It was here, he says, he realised the importance of forward thinking and planning. And it was the knowledge he'd

gained of both management and business needs from a global perspective, along with an understanding of the need for the localisation of solution sets, that brought him to his current role, he explains.

"Menlo was looking for an Asian manager who understood the difference in culture, process and methodology across the Pacific, so there could be alignment for global strategy and execution in the local environment. My experience was just right for this, although I was also attracted by the opportunity of working with a company which I thought had the right model for the business, and presented the opportunity to grow."

Hsu feels the industry in Asia needs to create more awareness and understanding of what it can offer its customers. And, conversely, for end users to have realistic expectations when it comes to implementation and that to get the best solutions to their needs they need to invest in time to get a true understanding.

He says Menlo's operations in Asia bring with them the same flexibilities as in the US and Europe, but with the unique challenges in the region, they come with particular sensitivities to local markets. Some-

thing Hsu maintains is fundamental to his company's success.

"Many of Asia's markets are still developing and we have to take into consideration the environment for service providers, the infrastructure, users and end-customers. It is important for a 3PL to understand this dynamic and what the real challenges and opportunities are in each of the local environments. Flexibility is important to the customer so services will be effective within and among different parts of the region, as well as between Asia and other world markets."

Never one to duck a challenge, Hsu thrives in this environment. And as he steers Menlo to further success in the region, he looks back over the past two years as some of his best in the industry.

"I've helped Menlo to build its talent pool, and to support our core business and customers with this talent. We've also worked hard to educate our people and our partners on the reality of the business environment across the Pacific region, and how to operate successfully in this environment.

"As a company, and personally, we are very proud of our growth and how customers are embracing our approach."