

irasia.com

The biggest obstacle to the successful launch of online investor relations information provider irasia.com back in 1996 was not a lack of knowledge of the importance of IR, rather it was confusion over what exactly the internet was and how it could help.

The internet wasn't very popular in Hong Kong at that time, even listed companies didn't have internet access in their offices," said Osbert Kho, Director, CTO, of irasia.com and one of its co-founders. "The prospects we approached - now our clients - didn't know what the benefits would be of using our product."

Since then, Hong Kong and its listed companies have wholeheartedly embraced the internet, and any lack of understanding of the importance of disseminating good IR information to the public, investment professionals, analysts and the media has been surpassed by the overwhelming need for overseas investment capital to enable expansion into new markets.

This is reflected in irasia.com's performance. Revenue generated from new IR clients signed up to irasia.com between November 2004 and April 2005 increased by three times compared to the six months between May and October 2004. irasia.com now has clients - listed companies - in its core markets of Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Singapore and Australia, with additional companies in Thailand and Malaysia.

It is opening up new markets such as Taiwan, where initial groundwork is starting to pay off with clients. Each country is different because market sophistication varies. In Taiwan, for example, IR information used to come from stock brokers rather than directly from the companies. There was no overseas investment and no concept of investor relations, especially for smaller listed companies. Now that the market has opened up, foreign investors are present and local companies are doing far more in terms of IR. Education about the need for such company information, what overseas investors want to know and what companies should be disclosing has been a key part of irasia.com's sales process in every market, including



Taiwan.

"Strong growth is coming from Chinese companies that are seeing the importance of disclosure in order to attract global investments," Kho said. "These companies are seeking overseas listings in Hong Kong or Singapore and irasia.com provides exactly the platform that they need to get their IR information out to the investor market."

irasia.com's revenue model is twofold: first an IR subscriptions team sells annual packages to pan-Asian listed companies in return for which unlimited IR information is distributed on the irasia.com website and through feeds provided by globally reputable "redistribution partners". The second part of the revenue model is web consulting to help clients build IR-focused websites.

Kho, an internet veteran who first started a web consulting company, said that the primary objective of irasia.com is to help listed companies get their IR information out, no matter what.

"We have two targets for 2005. One is a major revamp of the irasia.com site. We hope that the new version, which should have a third or fourth quarter launch, will help users to get more information quicker. The second is an expansion into other countries in the region including Korea, India and Japan."

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Investor Relations Asia Pacific