



Blackwall aims to close cybersecurity gap among MSMEs

By Edg Adrian A. Eva
Reporter

LOCAL cybersecurity startup Blackwall Industries is focusing on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to address what it sees as a largely untapped and highly vulnerable segment of the market.

Before its formal establishment in May, the company initially targeted large corporate clients to secure stable revenues, but found it difficult to gain traction without an established track record, said Joseph Daniel B. Ferido, co-founder and head of sales of Blackwall Industries.

“Cybersecurity deals with very sensitive data, so without a name or strong backing, it was difficult for us to close deals with big corporations,” he said in an interview via Zoom.

This prompted his team to shift its focus to MSMEs, which account for about 99% of businesses in the Philippines and are among the most exposed to cyber risks.

“We realized cybersecurity should be for everyone. It shouldn’t be limited to corporations that can afford enterprise-level solutions,” Mr. Ferido said.

He cited a 2025 global report by US-based cybersecurity and consulting firm BD Emerson, which showed that around 60% of businesses shut down within six months of a major cyberattack.

The same report found that 43% of cyberattacks in 2023 targeted small- and medium-sized businesses, resulting in average losses ranging from \$254,445 to as much as \$7 million.

Since its formal launch, Blackwall Industries has tailored its offerings to MSMEs by providing lower-cost, customized cybersecurity services based on each client’s needs, Mr. Ferido said.

Among its products is the Fort Package, which includes vulnerability assessment and penetration testing, incident response and recovery, managed security services, continuous threat hunting, and compliance support.

Pricing for the Fort Package varies depending on the number of devices covered and the scope of work required, he said.

The company also offers cybersecurity packages for individual and household users.

The Shelter Package covers two devices for P600 per month, while the Bunker Package protects up to 10 devices for P1,500 per month, both providing round-the-clock protection against cyberthreats and online scams.

Mr. Ferido said Blackwall’s services cater to a wide range of sectors, including brick-and-mortar businesses, agriculture, and business process outsourcing firms.

“Any business that uses software or digital systems needs cybersecurity,” he said.

To protect client data, Blackwall Industries uses its proprietary “Black Wall Systems” technology, which it says is developed entirely in-house.

“We don’t use third-party applications or licensed software. Everything is built from the ground up,” Mr. Ferido said.

“That allows us to keep overhead costs low and price our services more competitively.”

The startup has recently been inducted as a founding member of the Cybersecurity Council of the Philippines and has collaborated with major industry players, he said. It has also partnered with international firm Simple Security and is working with the Philippine National Police Anti-Cybercrime Group.

Looking ahead, Mr. Ferido said Blackwall Industries aims to support government-led cybersecurity initiatives and potentially partner on national programs as digitalization efforts accelerate.

Startup tackles homeownership gap

REELIST8, a startup with an artificial intelligence (AI)-powered ecosystem, streamlines property transactions and renovations to boost homeownership in the Philippines.

“Our mission is to provide the pathway for more people to own the good life,” Reelist8 Chief Executive Officer Marianne Aubrey S. dela Cruz said in an interview with *Business-World* on Nov. 14.

“The affordability aspect of the properties, as well as the gap between what you know and what you can do, it’s that expertise gap that we’re trying to solve,” she added.

Backed by the Department of Science and Technology, Reelist8 utilizes an AI-powered marketplace, Property Options, that enables users to discover and bid on low-market and unoccupied properties.

“This is our exclusive, invitation-only marketplace that connects serious buyers with verified sellers. Every bid is tracked. It’s fast, fair, and completely transparent,” Reelist8 Chief Operating Officer Borj de Borja told reporters during the launch of the platform.

“For qualified properties and qualified buyers, this new path to ownership can start at as low as 0.5% equity,” he added.

After securing the property, users can also generate real-time price quoting from floor plans through a project management tool called Buildin.

“Find the deal, fund the purchase, and start the build — this is the new ecosystem for real estate,” Mr. De Borja said.

The Reelist8 executive noted that access to quality property deals and insufficient income are among the main barriers to property ownership.

The 2025 ULI Asia-Pacific Home Attainability Index ranked the Philippines among the most expensive livable cities in the Asia-Pacific region, underscoring the disparity

between residential property prices and income.

The report noted that condominium prices in Metro Manila reached 19.8 times the median annual household income, far above the affordable levels. Townhouses remain more unattainable at 33.4 times the average income.

“This is why 90% of Filipinos will never own a property,” Mr. De Borja said. “Not because they don’t want it badly enough, not because they don’t work hard enough, but because the system is broken.”

The Reelist8 seeks to expand its services and provide in-house financing following its venture into property transactions, according to Ms. Dela Cruz.

“We’re really gearing towards becoming a fintech company,” she said. “We want to be the fintech backbone for all Asia-Pacific real estate properties.” — **Almira Louise S. Martinez**



PHILIPPINE STAR FILE PHOTO

SMIC pushes sustainability for MSMEs with free online course

OVER 100,000 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), suppliers, and partners are expected to benefit from an online sustainability reporting course sponsored by SM Investments Corp. (SMIC), as transparency and sustainability disclosures become increasingly important to business operations.

In an e-mailed statement, SMIC said it partnered with nonprofit organization Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) to roll out a free e-learning bridge course on sustainability reporting targeted at MSME owners, suppliers, and business partners within its network.

The self-paced course introduces key concepts on sustainability and climate-related issues, the business value of sustainability reporting, and practical guidance on how smaller firms can begin integrating these practices into their operations.

SMIC said it will make the course available across its ecosystem of more than 100,000 MSMEs, suppliers, and partners.

“We want to deepen understanding beyond the stories and behind the data, to empower our colleagues in the industry — and now our MSME partners — to create real business value,” SM Investments Consultant and Head of Investor Relations and Sustainability Timothy Daniels said.

The course was formally introduced during a recent workshop for publicly listed companies held in Taguig City.

Mr. Daniels said sustainability reporting has evolved into both a responsible business practice and a strategic tool for Philippine companies, noting that MSMEs account for more than 99% of registered businesses in the country.

Founded in 1997, GRI develops sustainability reporting standards that are widely used by organizations globally to disclose their economic, environmental, and social impacts.

GRI Standards consist of universal, sector-specific, and topic-based benchmarks designed to enhance transparency and stakeholder engagement.

“Through capability-building programs like this, we extend sustainability beyond our organization and help ensure it becomes a shared practice across industries,” Mr. Daniels added.

SMIC has diversified interests across banking, property development, and retail, with retail formats that include supermarkets, department stores, specialty stores, and minimarts.

SMIC reported a 6% increase in nine-month consolidated net income to P64.4 billion.

At the local bourse on Tuesday, shares in SMIC declined by 0.78% or P5.50 to close at P700 apiece. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

Company Name: HSBC Electronic Data Processing (Philippines) Inc.

Address: Building C-1, UP Ayala Technohub, Commonwealth Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, Metro Manila

Nature of Business: Information and Communication

Contact details of the Company: Patricia Mae Oliva | patriciamaeoliva@hsbc.com.ph

Job Position: Manager – Processing

Job Description:

- Initiate and plan business improvement, development, ensuring a low cost, high quality service to the business areas ensuring the risk is minimized and profit is maximized through effective management of costs/resources.
- Ensure that process and procedures are continually reviewed, improved and the changes are communicated and implemented effectively.
- The job also entails checking on internal audits and measures and regularly reviewed in order to maintain quality and productivity at the optimum level.
- Set a high standard of continuous staff motivation and leadership to ensure a good work environment leading to committed staffs who take pride in working for the company.
- Responsible in maintaining work environment which encourages creativity, defect free implementation of procedures and maintains high productivity levels through continuous improvement. Responsible for the development of thorough team coaching/counseling and identifying appropriate training & development requirements.

Basic Qualifications for the Position:

- A degree in Accounting/Finance/management/Business Administration. Higher qualification not a bar provided aspirations commensurate with the position.
- Excellent knowledge and understanding of the Reconciliations Process.
- At least 3 – 5 years’ working experience in Global Banking & Markets, and experience in managing MI reporting, report analysis, change and administrative work.
- At least 3 years of supervisory skills with exposure to appraisals, counseling, team building and staff development.

Monthly Salary Range: PHP 140,000 – 145,000

Workplace Address: Quezon City

Name of Foreign National: Ain Nadhirah Muhammad

Nationality: Malaysian

City of Residence: Quezon City

Duration of Employment: 2 years

HSBC Electronic Data Processing (Philippines) Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an **Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Wasmiya Building, Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.**

Company Name: EY GDS (CS) Philippines, Inc.

Address: 17th Floor Cyber Sigma Building, Lawton Avenue, McKinley West, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City 1634

Nature of Business: Management Consultancy Activities

Contact details of the Company: Raymond A. Ogan | Raymond.A.Ogan@gds.ey.com

Job Position: Senior Manager

Job Description:

Revenue Impact:

- Enhance team integration and reduce cost of delivery.
- Build team capabilities, improve integration, and foster collaboration.
- Become more competitive, agile, and responsive to client needs, leading to increased business and revenue growth.

Enhanced Communication:

- Improve communication between assurance teams.

Knowledge Transfer:

- Transfer critical knowledge through regional specific workshops and trainings.

Cultural Integration:

- Work closely with the team to create unique opportunities and blend the cultural nuances.

Collaboration and Teaming:

- Foster a spirit of learning and collaboration, break down silos, and encourage a unified approach to client service delivery.

Basic Qualifications for the Position:

- 17 years of experience in Assurance.
- Proven experience in leading large teams.
- Strong focus on delivering quality work.
- Experience in managing overseas subsidiaries component team as senior manager.

Monthly Salary Range: PHP150,000 – PHP499,999

Workplace Location: 17th Floor Cyber Sigma Building, Lawton Avenue, McKinley West, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City 1634

Name of Foreign National: Hitaka Sato

Nationality: Japanese

City of Residence: Taguig City

Duration of Employment: 1 year

EY GDS (CS) Philippines, Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an **Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Wasmiya Building, Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.**

SEC warns public vs unauthorized Hajj pilgrimage offerings

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued an advisory cautioning the public against certain entities allegedly engaged in fraudulent and unauthorized activities related to the offering of Hajj pilgrimage packages.

According to the advisory, these entities promote packages promising airfare, accommodation, transportation, Hajj visas, and *khemah* (tent accommodations) through physical offices, websites, and social media, and collect funds from prospective pilgrims.

“The public is strongly reminded that under Republic Act No. 9997, otherwise known as the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos Act of 2009, only the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF), through its Bureau of Pilgrimage and Endowment, is empowered to administer all programs, projects, and activities related to the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,” the SEC said.

It added that the NCMF is responsible for formulating guidelines to ensure the timely processing of pilgrims’ travel documents and the equitable

and reasonable collection of authorized fees.

Pilgrims are also entitled to choose their travel agencies and airlines or other means of transportation to and from the pilgrimage site.

The SEC emphasized that travel agencies are not authorized to organize, run, or sell Hajj packages. Their role is limited to selling plane tickets from the Philippines to Saudi Arabia.

The commission also noted that proposals for Hajj privatization are still pending in Congress. Private agencies cannot process, manage, or administer Hajj packages until such proposals become law.

“The public is strongly encouraged to report and file complaints regarding the unauthorized offering of Muslim pilgrimage (Hajj) packages by private entities with law enforcement authorities such as the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) or the Philippine National Police for possible criminal action,” the SEC said.

The SEC did not provide the names of the entities. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

PHILIPPINE STAR FILE PHOTO

Victorias Milling income slides 12.6% on higher costs

VICTORIAS MILLING Co., Inc. (VMC) reported a 12.64% drop in attributable net income to P1.35 billion for the fiscal year ended August, as rising operating costs offset revenue gains.

In a regulatory filing on Tuesday, the listed sugar miller said net income fell from P1.55 billion a year earlier.

Total revenue increased 11.48% to P12.68 billion from P11.38 billion in the previous fiscal year.

Revenue from sales rose 19.89% to P10.54 billion from P8.79 billion, while revenue from services declined 17.12% to P2.14 billion from P2.59 billion.

Other income, which includes storage and handling fees, interest income, and investments,

grew 16.98% to P356.83 million from P305.05 million.

VMC’s cost of sales and services climbed 13.04% to P10.78 billion from P9.54 billion, which the company attributed to “elevated raw material costs and overall increased manufacturing expenses.”

Operating expenses also rose 31.92% to P876.27 million from P664.24 million, driven by higher taxes and licenses — particularly from stock dividend issuance — as well as higher professional fees, representation, research and development, and retirement benefit costs.

Shares of VMC last traded at P2.01 apiece on Dec. 15. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**