# INSPIRING THE BUSINESS WORLD

MAGAZINE

GETTING SOCIAL WITH CHINA

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### INVEST

DOES AN MBA MAKE YOU A BETTER CEO?

### FIND YOUR IKIGAI

Change the way you live, lead and work

### INSPIRE

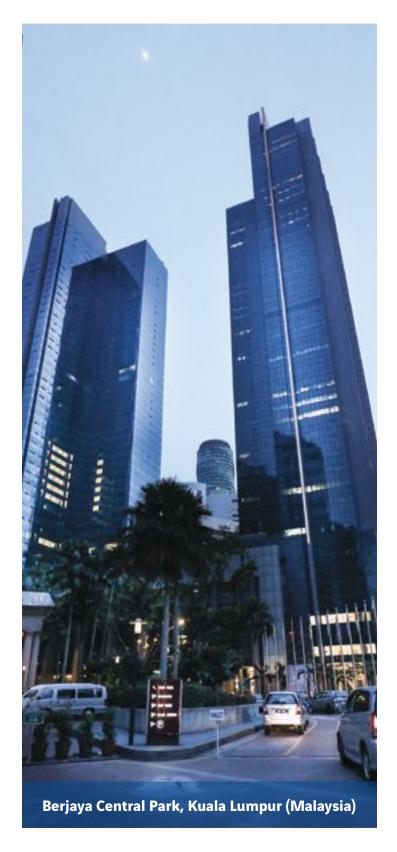
# **ENGAGING**THE BOARD

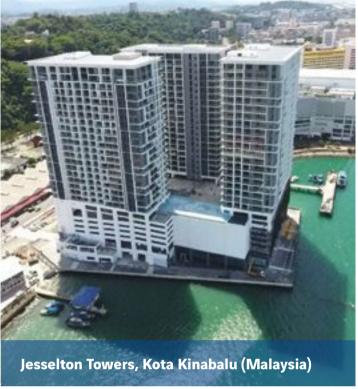
Get their buy-in from the beginning

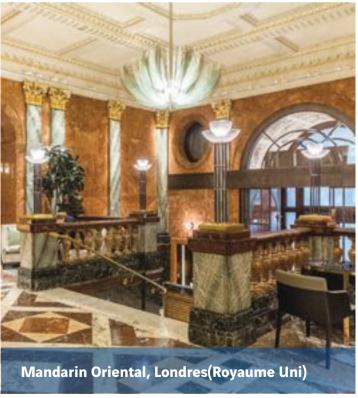
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The key to playing the generation game

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VINCI and subsidiaries photo libraries & Mandarin Oriental Group, Louis Vuitton Franck Gehry









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Cover image courtesy of TA Global





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**AVAILABLE ON** 



elcome to the new issue of The CEO Magazine, our first for 2018. This month we have

lots of fascinating features that I hope will inspire you to innovate, invest and indulge.

First up is our cover story with Joo Kim Tiah (page 10). The passionate, inquisitive, energetic CEO of TA Global is a design aficionado and a natural leader with great vision - we'll certainly watch with great interest as he continues to rise to the challenge of creating some of Malaysia's most impressive skyscrapers.

For something a little more grounding, we investigate the Japanese concept of ikigai (page 54). Loosely translated as your purpose in life, once identified it is believed to have the power to change the way you work, lead and live. What's more, understanding the impact it has on you and your team can help you achieve your organisational, and personal, goals. So tell me, have you found your ikigai?

We also ask the question, do you really need an MBA? (page 116), and reveal how having your board primed for action rather than reaction can make all the difference to your brand (page 22).



We speak with the world's first female rum master blender, Joy Spence, we check out the McLaren 570S and we take a look at some of the world's most luxurious escapes. From Otago in New Zealand to South Africa's Cape Town, we've tracked down a selection of indulgent destinations that have inspired us to take some time out - we hope they inspire you too.

Enjoy the issue, see you next month.

Susan Armstrong Editor-in-Chief



### Editor-in-Chief SUSAN ARMSTRONG

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# INSPIRE

CAN THE JAPANESE
CONCEPT OF IKIGAI
CHANGE THE WAY YOU
LIVE, WORK AND LEAD?

- IKIGAI: FINDING YOUR PURPOSE, P54





# "My MOTIVATION is not JUST PROFIT."

TA Global's young CEO doesn't just want to construct skyscrapers; he wants to build lasting memories.

WORDS DANIEL HERBORN . IMAGES TA GLOBAL

fresh-faced dreamer who can often be found pounding out heavy metal rhythms on his drum kit, Joo Kim Tiah, it's fair to say, is a different kind of CEO. The son of TA Enterprise's chairman Datuk Tony Tiah Thee Kian, one of Malaysia's wealthiest men, Joo Kim says he has a fundamentally different approach to many of his peers. "Most CEOs are very type A, dominant personalities. When they go out, they want to talk a lot. They don't really listen. I'm the opposite. When I go out, I don't want to talk; I like to listen. I'm inquisitive, I like to learn from other people more."

Joo Kim is now CEO of TA Global, a TA Enterprise subsidiary and a premium lifestyle property company, which has developed large-scale luxury properties, including high-rise residential and upscale, mixed-use commercial projects. It has also managed a suite of five-star hotels from Sydney to Singapore and from Canada to China. »

### ROAD TO THE ROLE

While many saw him as destined to take over his father's company, Joo Kim has described himself as a rebellious youth. It took him a while to discover his true passion in the world of business. "I was an idiot when I was younger," he laughs. "I didn't really know what I wanted to do; I wasn't very mature. I thought, 'Okay, I'll just go to school, get some exposure to the business and see what happens."

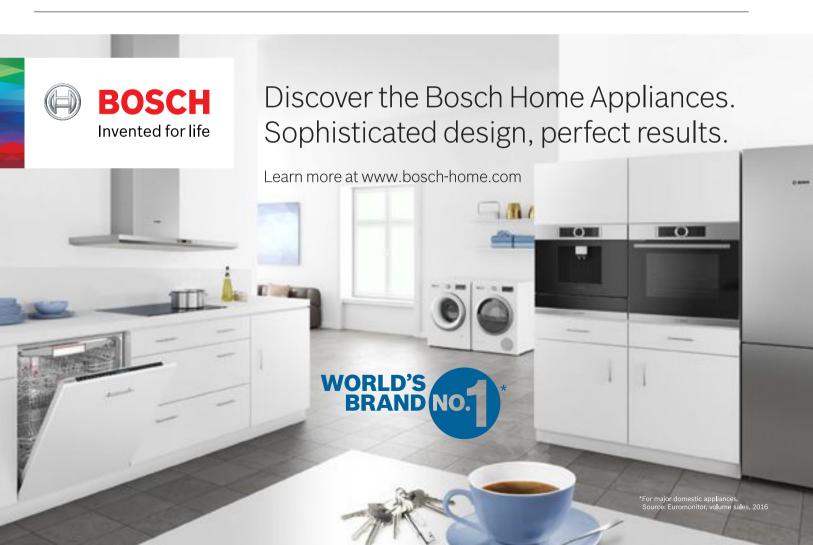
At that stage, the family company was more concerned with the world of finance and retail stockbroking. "The financial business didn't excite me as much, but I found I had a passion for real estate," he explains. "We were still relatively young as a real estate company, so it allowed me to shape my own identity and create my own legacy as a real estate guy."

Joo Kim completed degrees in Science (Management) and a Master of International Business at Oklahoma's Oral Roberts and Sydney's Macquarie University respectively, but emphatically says that on-the-job learning has taught him more. "No university likes to hear this, but I don't think it really teaches you much of the practicality of your work. There are a lot of things that school doesn't teach you, that you can only learn by doing the work and being in the real world."

In January 2016, he moved into the CEO position at TA Global and has helped shape it as a real estate developer with an eye for ambitious and elegantly designed luxury projects. Joo Kim says his background gives him a very different focus from many competitors in the real estate sphere.

"I think a lot of developers are very profit-driven," he explains. "They're not trying to re-imagine the work; they're focused on what will sell, what will have a strong profit margin. I grew up pretty comfortable, so my motivation is not just profit. Don't get me wrong – money is important, but it's not my motivation. It doesn't get me out of bed in the morning.

"What makes me excited is the possibility



of building memories and experiences for people. The opportunity to build communities, shape the skyline, and really impact the way people live and experience their daily life – that's what gets me excited."

A design aficionado who firmly believes that great architecture can bring people together, Joo Kim has a passion for creating visually striking buildings and an understanding of the market realities and practicalities of real estate projects. "We can't just build monuments," he concedes. "We want to build things that people can enjoy, afford and be part of. Most of the time, I'm one of those people who believe that when you build something of quality, there will be tangible long-term advantages."

Working on exciting projects and establishing a coherent style across a portfolio is important, Joo Kim says. TA Global will be looking for iconic and influential ventures, hand-picking boutique projects that have exciting potential, rather than settling for run-of-the-mill work. "Every development is going to be special," Joo Kim enthuses. "It's going to be bespoke. We try to raise the bar, to set a new standard in every development we do. I think that will create long-term value in our projects."

### LIFE AS A YOUNG CEO

Joo Kim moved into the CEO role at just 36, and says the challenges of being taken seriously by his much older industry counterparts were substantial. "There's a little bit of politics that comes with that. There are going to be a lot of people who try to undermine you or control you because you're young. People will think you're not good enough." But he won over the sceptics with his unrelenting work ethic. "You lead by working hard, and people will naturally follow you," he says.

"Meticulous and professional are the key qualities that best describe working with TA Global, who have consistently exhibited creative thinking. Bosch Home Appliances is proud to partner with one of the most promising developers in the region, and we look forward to greater collaboration in the future." – Mikhail Fong, Head of Project Business, BSH Home Appliances Sdn Bhd.



Yet, Joo Kim says there are also significant advantages that come with being an unusually youthful CEO.

Recognising "My some's own strengths and weaknesses is

he says. "As a young person, you lack experience, but what you have is way

key to success,

more energy and more drive than anyone else. You need to work harder than everyone, and if you're not an expert, you have to become an expert. It's also good to soak up as much knowledge as you can from other people. »

"My strength, I think, is that I have good vision. I have a naturally inquisitive mind."



"I'm also very passionate. I love design and creating experiences; those are my strengths. I'm strong in those things. And I think I'm good at leading a team, and giving them the vision and confidence. I can get a team motivated, get them to buy into and work for our goal."

why people are acting or reacting in

a certain way.

His deep curiosity has proven particularly useful in figuring out what makes a real estate development shine. While his peers may be content to kick back in a cocktail bar, Joo Kim will be trying to figure out why the bar is buzzing while others on the same street are dead. He is a subscriber to the idea that a successful project in any field, be it hospitality or commercial office space, will have lessons that are applicable for his real estate development work. "I will be like: 'Dude, can you please tell me about your business?" he says. "I always want to know how things work so I can learn more."

When he is scouting a new area for a development, he will study financial reports and economic forecasts, but he also says it is vital to talk to bar patrons, taxi drivers, local police officers, and anyone who has a feel for what is happening in the community. "I try to understand what consumers are gravitating towards. If you understand your target market, then you can come up with a product that they like."

### TRUMP TOWER: LESSONS LEARNED

The project Joo Kim is most associated with so far is the Trump International Hotel and Tower, Vancouver. This was construction on a grand scale. A 63-storey twisting tower designed by architect Arthur Erickson, it became the second-tallest building in the city. Its construction history was complicated, however, and the building became the centre of immense media interest and protest, which only heightened when its branding partner, Donald Trump, started his presidential campaign. Local politicians attempted to stop the building going ahead and campaigned to have the Trump name removed from the Vancouver skyline.

Joo Kim says he learned an incredible amount from the high-profile and often

stressful project. "Some of it I sort of decided or designed on the fly and it became a coordination nightmare that resulted in a lot of changed orders and variations in cost. I still kept it under control, but that would be the first thing that I learned.

"The other main thing I learned is that we need to pace ourselves. That kind of project is a marathon, not a sprint. You need to go through different phases: there are different types of work that you have to do at different stages of the process."

Joo Kim says he has developed a more strategic approach in the aftermath of the Trump Tower project. "Now I don't get too hung up on any one thing. I understand that it's a process, and I don't get too stressed out about anything because you need to focus on the task ahead. That's all you need to do."

Over and above the various logistical and construction challenges, the backlash against Joo Kim took a personal toll. "That's stuff that most people don't really go through," he remembers. "Dealing with – I hate to say it – controversy or backlash from certain people, people sending me mean tweets, threatening me. It was just odd.

"I'd never experienced it before and I didn't really know how to deal with it at that point in time. I just tried to remain focused and not get distracted by any of it. I had to understand that I had a task that I needed to accomplish, and I was determined to just remain focused on that."

### HEAVY METAL DRUMMER

Inevitably dressed in an immaculately tailored suit with a dapper pocket square, Joo Kim nonetheless has sides to his character that don't fit neatly into the corporate mould. He enjoys heavy-metal drumming and finds the sheer energy of the music empowering. "It's freaky, I know," he admits. "But sometimes

we forget that work is not everything and that we need to have other things in our life that take our mind off things. I think having a hobby is good, something that you're passionate about and enjoy.

"I like drumming because it goes very well with my personality. Drumming takes tons of practice, and when you're drumming, you cannot think of other things. You need to focus on hitting on time, getting the repetitions right. I like it because it teaches me the things I need to do to be successful in everything else

I need to be in life."

"I like drumming ...
it teaches me the
things I need to do
to be successful in
everything else I
need to be in life."

The punishing discipline of drumming is also an aspect that appeals to Joo Kim.

Getting the complicated rhythms of heavy metal down takes hours upon hours of practice.

"Sometimes when you're practising, it's boring as heck," he admits.

"But you put in the time, and finally you realise, 'Oh, man, I'm so good now!' It becomes second nature."

Joo Kim is also an avid basketball fan, preferring to follow the storylines of individual players rather than any team. The up-and-down career of Stephon Marbury is one that struck a chord with him. After his time in the sport's pinnacle competition, the NBA, came to a premature end, Marbury was widely seen as a difficult personality and a wasted talent. Yet, his story had an unexpected second act when he moved to China and became such a successful and respected figure in the league that locals built a statue in his honour.

"I don't know him; it's just a story I followed, but I'm very happy for him," Joo Kim says. "Sometimes it's good to see a person reinvent themselves. Through the course of a life there's going to be highs and lows, but at the end of the day you end on the good. You know what I'm saying?"



ntrepreneurs who can solve problems with disruptive solutions change industries. However, the essence of what makes a person disruptive doesn't start the day they launch a business. It is ingrained in them, and is then built on a foundation of knowledge, resources and abilities.

At the age of 21, with the blissful naïvety of youth and about US\$24,000 in savings, I started my first business: WINK Models. Having worked in the industry for several years as a model and producer, there were so many things I loved about it, yet I was frustrated by the way agencies worked with

models. It was common practice for models to be paid late, not in full, or not at all, and jobs could be few and far between. I felt compelled to fix what I saw as a broken business model.

From day one, WINK's company policy was to pay all models within seven days, regardless of whether we got paid by the client. I am proud to say that, to this day, we still pay within seven days. The company was completely bootstrapped, saw fast growth, and has just celebrated its tenth anniversary.

### **DISRUPT OR BE DISRUPTED**

The lessons I learned during those first few years allowed me to watch the market and adapt to what the company needed to grow. I quickly realised how important technology was in allowing us to scale up and successfully manage our talent in a streamlined way. We started by building the first industry app, which allowed us to integrate payroll, accounting and live web updates. The technology allowed us to facilitate a sustainable structure, it removed the key dependencies in the business, and we thrived. That's when the idea came for my current business, theright.fit.

Theright.fit is a two-sided marketplace for creative talent and influencers that makes it easy, efficient and cost-effective for brands to create impactful campaigns. The platform empowers a wide array of talent including models, influencers, actors, photographers, stylists, videographers and make-up artists to control their careers and build their brands online. It can be hard to find work as a freelancer, and talent are traditionally charged a commission on every booking. Theright.fit gives talent the tools to build their brand profile online via the site and connects them to jobs they may not otherwise have found. For the clients, they can book and pay for their entire campaign in the one place, knowing that they're working with professional, fully screened talent.

While many people have asked me why I would risk disrupting the success of my existing business, I believe no business is immune to disruption and, as an entrepreneur, it is my duty to ensure my

### ENTERING A NEW MARKET TO BE A DISRUPTER IS

DISRUPTING THE MARKET THAT YOUR BUSINESS IS ALREADY IN WHILE STILL OPERATING THAT BUSINESS IS



companies are constantly evolving and building. I see a place for both, depending on the client's needs and budget.

### PARTNERING, DELEGATING AND COLLABORATING

Being at the helm of not one, but two, businesses, both at different life stages, was a steep learning curve for me. I knew that to continue to achieve growth, I needed to start delegating. I have an amazing managing director at WINK who controls the day-to-day operations of the business. This has allowed me to focus my efforts on the right. fit to ensure that we are delivering the best possible platform and creating a company culture that

impacts our teams, our clients and the industry.

With technology allowing us to operate in a global environment, we knew early on that we would need outside investment and working capital support. As those who have raised capital know, the journey is like a full-time job and, for a period, limits the time you can put into the everyday operations of the company. My advice to anyone considering investment capital is to make sure you are crystal clear on what you are looking for in your investors outside of capital, and that you are aligned with them on what success looks like.

Having grown one business before, I knew how important it was to surround myself with the right people, and I really wanted to have the best in market as soon as possible. Six months into the business, we secured a seed-funding round of about US\$575,000, with experts in online marketplaces, Airtree Ventures, who have been a constant support throughout the journey.

### ARE YOU RECOGNISING THE OPPORTUNITY?

I firmly believe that the fastest way to go backwards is to stand still. From an early age, I have been focused on problem solving and challenging the status quo.

The idea for both my businesses came from a desire to improve an existing situation and to meet a market need. This has caused a flow-on effect to others in the industry who are feeling the pressure to also do so.

Whether it's through technology, ideas, systems or people, I challenge you to look at the industry you are in and ask yourself these two questions: 'What can be done to improve efficiency?' and 'How can I be a part of it?'

If you're serious about being a leader and making a difference, you will find the answer.

For those serious about really impacting their industry and seeing disruption as more than a buzzword but an actuality, the next question can only be: How do I make it happen?

# The family DUS111CSS

Aurum Land's Director Michelle Yong never planned to join her family's property development business, but it's a good thing she did, as it's thriving under her watch.

WORDS SHARON MASIGE . IMAGES YEW KWANG

nly three per cent of family businesses are expected to survive into the fourth generation. For Michelle Yong – the fourth generation of her family's construction company, Woh Hup Holdings – she never expected she'd ever take on a directorship role. However, fate had a different idea. "From a very young age, my brother was always groomed to take over the family business," Michelle tells *The CEO Magazine*. "I grew up thinking he would be the one to join the company and that I'd take a different path and chase my own goals.

"I worked in academia for a little while, consulting with a private sector think tank for the UK government, and then I did a stint in management consulting."

She fondly recalls the two years she spent working as a management consultant as a "rich period" of her life when she got to meet many interesting people. However, she soon found it unsatisfactory. "It wasn't sustainable," she says. "There were weeks where I did 18-hour days. So I got a bit disillusioned with that industry

because a lot of it was up in the air and I wasn't creating anything tangible."

Michelle did eventually end up joining the family business; however, it sadly happened under less than ideal circumstances. "My uncle, who was running one of our subsidiaries, Aurum Land, passed away unexpectedly. He was only 40 years old and had a stroke. The timing was right for me personally; I was looking for a change, so when I was approached by the family and asked to take over that business, I said yes."

Michelle was at a point in her life where she was looking for something new. "I wanted to be able to make a difference. I felt like I had gained enough experience outside the family business to vouch for myself professionally, so I was ready to give it a try. The offer was to take over the business, make it my own, and try to turn it around because, at the time, Aurum Land was quite small and not as profitable as it could be. It just made sense for me to accept," she says.

As the director of Aurum Land, Michelle oversees the operations of the »



boutique property developer. She says that at first there were many challenges to overcome. "I didn't know anything about the industry, real estate or construction," Michelle confides. "As I said, I grew up thinking I was not going to join the family business. But I did do economics, accounting and law as part of my studies, so I had quite a broad background. All of the due diligence work I did as a management consultant – all the number crunching and feasibility analyses – helped me greatly."

In addition to learning on the job, Michelle signed up for a part-time course at the National University of Singapore (NUS) to understand the foundations of real estate. But her best teacher, she says, was her uncle. "He was instrumental in guiding me. He's an architect by training, so he taught me how to read drawings, how to critique them, and how to add value in that sense," she shares.

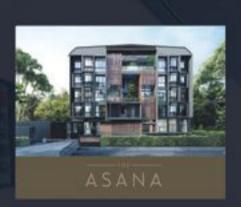
A focus for Michelle has been to continue to nurture the user-centric approach

that differentiates Aurum Land from other property developers. "We take a hands-on approach in the design—development process. We don't just leave it to the architects, consultants and contractors to coordinate the design and build. We see ourselves as representing the end user, the owner, the buyer, at the decision table because they're the most important stakeholder," she says.

With a proven track record of success at Aurum Land, Michelle has become the co-founder of Collision 8 – a co-working space for innovators. Developed in collaboration with a former colleague from her consulting days, Collision 8 was spawned from the idea of combining the residential development experience with the co-working style of operating and building an empowered community instead of just building spaces. "It's a curated members club, but for innovators, bringing together those from the technology, start-up and investor world and the traditional corporate world that my family business inhabits.

"I was hearing a lot of talk among corporates about better ways to encourage engagement and co-creation, so Collision 8 was born as a platform to create new growth opportunities for both sides of the equation."

As Michelle continues with her business ventures, she





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e intuitively know that customer experience is what keeps clients truly engaged. This is particularly important in the current climate; in a time of rapid change, the way businesses create and nurture an emotional connection with their customers is more crucial than ever.

It's unfortunate then that results from recent 'Board Effectiveness' research, issued jointly by the Australian

Marketing Institute (AMI) and Deloitte, indicated many businesses in all sectors are reacting slowly to disruptive change. The report, undertaken by the Australian Institute of Company Directors, also showed that those adapting their models are generally doing so out of a competitor response – because someone has already beaten them to it. This disconnect between what customers are seeking and what businesses are providing stems from the board and upper management, the paper showed, noting that "the



businesses most profoundly disrupted are those that know the least about their customers, while the ones succeeding are the ones building their knowledge of their customers, deriving insights from their markets, and improving their marketing effectiveness and audience engagement through a continuous data feedback loop".

Put simply: embrace the customers' needs or be disrupted by them.

To understand this disconnect we should first look at how customer expectations have risen significantly in the past two years. The Temkin Group's 2016 Customer Experience Rating study showed a severe decline in customer experience, with the percentage of 'good' and 'excellent' companies dropping from 35 per cent in 2015 to just 18 per cent in 2016. In our increasingly immediate, personalised and connected world, customer expectations are rising faster than most companies can keep up.

Knowing that customers now expect every interaction they have with a company to be the best experience they can have, delivering superior customer experience is paramount. But, as we know, in order to deliver this, we first need to understand our customers – and a lot of boards don't. This is caused by a number of factors: a lack of diversity or adequate representation of the 'real' customer in the boardroom; an absence of the CMO on the board; and most crucially, a distance from the actual customer experience - the board is often significantly removed due to both status and location.

The distance between top-level decision makers and the customer experience they are accountable for is the issue itself. You can't have a conversation about 'the numbers' without understanding how they connect to the customer, and the conversation you're having with those customers through your business. We know customers become loyal because they are emotionally attached – a business that optimises for an emotional connection outperforms competitors by 85 per cent in sales growth. So while the 'experience' and 'numbers' conversations might seem disparate, they both need to happen at a board level.

Beyond the knowledge that understanding our customer leads to results, the disconnect between the board and customers can only be filled by taking significant steps to bring the board into the customer experience.

### ноw то create A BETTER . experience

### **DEVELOP PROGRAMS**

Develop a program that has your teams (including your board) spend time with the key customers. Connecting with them in a physical setting and shadowing them as they experience your business highlights the small details that are lost in Big Data. It also helps the business to better understand the consumer.

### THINK ABOUT MARKETING

Having someone on the board who has in-depth customer interest and a picture of how the business is perceived in the 'real world' is crucial to filling the knowledge gaps, particularly if this person is (and they should be) prepared to educate the rest of the board.

### **ENSURE THERE IS DIVERSITY**

Including people on the board who represent the 'real' person you're trying to connect with provides a greater understanding of your customers' needs.

### **REVIEW YOUR DATA IN-DEPTH**

There is a variety of data points that boards should refer to in order to ensure their business is creating a powerful customer experience and the obvious ones are sales and net promoter score (NPS). Other recommendations include: repeat purchase numbers; marketing programs that offer a referral incentive; brand-tracking studies to monitor likeability; and closeness scores.

In an era of major disruption and when good isn't 'good enough', boards have the opportunity to be pivotal in prioritising and driving customer experience, and creating a powerful brand. As Deloitte partner and CMO David Redhill commented in 2016: "Boards need to respond to the increasing power of the connected customer and focus their business strategy and operations on the customer's needs."



# THE TIGER 1. AND the White ELEPHANT

Lee Ang Seng delicately juggles both Beca's Singapore and Myanmar businesses with ease, thanks to his superior people leadership and management skills.

WORDS ADRIAN FLORES • IMAGES YEW KWANG

fter 20 years rising through the ranks of New Zealand engineering consulting firm

Beca – first as an engineer and then in project delivery and as General Manager in

Singapore – Lee Ang Seng was made a Managing Director in 2013 and given the reins
of both the Singapore and Myanmar businesses. As for the two countries, they couldn't
provide a more stark contrast in terms of their respective economic development. On one
hand, Singapore is one of the four Asian Tigers, the others being Hong Kong, South Korea
and Taiwan. Meanwhile, Myanmar is just beginning to open its economic borders following a slow transition
to democracy for the country.

Ang Seng is well aware of the unique opportunities and hurdles that both Singapore and Myanmar bring. But regardless of which country he's handling, his approach to managing people is essentially the same. "I run these two countries and regard them as one company," he says. Further, Ang Seng is also pioneering an 'emerging leaders' program, aimed at young engineers with high leadership potential. The aim is to prepare them for elevation into leadership positions within Beca. *The CEO Magazine* sat down with Ang Seng to find out how he successfully juggles the business of two countries at very different stages of growth. »



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# BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE









# The CEO Magazine: Tell us more about Beca's presence in both the Singapore and Myanmar markets.

**Ang Seng:** In Singapore and Myanmar, we focus primarily on buildings. In Singapore, we are regarded by some architects and clients as one of the top three engineering consulting firms. I dare to say one of the top three because of the number of large projects we have undertaken, since by size we are not the largest. Obviously, Singapore is a very developed country. But because of the property cooling measures that were put in place by the government, development in the private sector has slowed down significantly over the past three to four years. However, the government has been developing lots of infrastructure projects, institutions and buildings, and that helps the built environment industry.

Over the past two years, our focus has been on doing public sector projects. We have other private sector projects for some of the hotels and so on, but the main part of our work is focused on government projects. In Myanmar we are quite small, a team of about 40 people. We set up the Myanmar operation more than 10 years ago, pretty much like a low-cost production centre. Since last year, we have begun to upscale the office to train our team to become engineers. One of the initiatives we've got is to transfer people from Myanmar to Singapore for one to two years, or even longer, and then we send them back again, so that they become well-equipped engineers and can lead their team locally in Myanmar. Now, I have a Country Manager based in Myanmar who looks after the operations and talks to me directly.

## What has it been like working in Myanmar? The country itself has had quite an eventful history.

That's right, it has only opened up in the past two years with the Aung San Suu Kyi-led government. They are beginning to put regulatory systems in place for standards and consistencies. For example, in the building space, they are putting more procedures and systems in place.

The country is still quite backwards

"If you go to Yangon now, you will see high-end shopping malls open for business. Ten years ago, you would not have seen such buildings."

in terms of development with weak infrastructure. But being an emerging market, Myanmar attracts lots of interest from investors who are keen to put their money there to build new infrastructure and buildings. In recent times, we have been involved in designing a Grade A office tower. There aren't many in Myanmar but we are building one there now.

# It is encouraging that Myanmar is finally developing as a nation. Do you worry that the situation in Rakhine might deteriorate and regress?

I'm not too concerned, but I do have to keep a close eye on the situation. The current unrest in Rakhine State involving the Rohingyas is rather unfortunate. But in cities like Yangon, it is very much business as usual with development of new buildings. If you go to Yangon now, you will see high-end shopping malls open for business. Ten years ago, you would not have seen such buildings.

I'm very confident that Myanmar will continue to progress well as a country even though it's not as fast as we would like. I know that some Chinese investors are going into the country to invest in building high-rise buildings.

### How are you able to juggle the needs of two markets at sharply contrasting stages of their economic development?

Internally, I'm respectful of the different cultures and practices, but in terms of knowledge transfer and equipping people, I »

regard the two countries as one. What that means is that we send the good Myanmar engineers to Singapore and let them work there for a period of time (a few years) to gain engineering knowledge and skills. These engineers get involved in projects in Singapore working alongside their Singapore colleagues. We let them learn skills and equip them with knowledge, so when they return to their own land with their families, they can make an impact on the technical development of the Myanmar office to elevate the level of capabilities. We called this a staff transfer scheme to help us do that effectively and successfully.

In Beca, we share work within our offices around the world. Take our Thailand office as an example. They don't report to me directly, but we collaborate and work with our Thai counterparts very closely on a project in Sri Lanka – the Singapore—Thailand Beca offices work as a team to deliver the project there successfully.

### What has your journey been like rising through the engineering ranks?

I graduated from the Singapore Polytechnic with a Diploma in Electrical Engineering. This was in 1988. Then I went on to the National University of Ireland where I completed a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Management.

After that, I started working for a local mechanical and electrical engineering consulting firm in Singapore, which was about 30-people strong. I was there for three and a half years. Then I switched to become a resident engineer on a project for a contract of 10 months.

The Consulting Engineer of that project, Beca, offered me a position as an engineer in 1993 after my contract ended, and I've been with them ever since. Four years ago, I was appointed Managing Director of the Beca Asia hub operations. But last year, there was a change in our group structure, which transitioned our business from a hub-based

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focus to a country and market focus. With this group restructuring, I took on the appointment as Managing Director of Singapore and Myanmar.

### Do you still remember the first project you did for Beca when you joined?

I was involved in several projects as electrical engineer when I first joined Beca. The first was a large residential project consisting of more than 600 condominium units.

Other projects included hotels and a shopping mall in Orchard. As I progressed in my career path in Beca, I was involved in leading large major projects both in Singapore and overseas.

What made you want to change your career focus from engineering to a role more based around business management?

I'm a very people-focused person. I love influencing others; to motivate them towards

excellence and career development. I therefore took a management degree to gain more knowledge and understanding of what a good leader of managers should be like within an organisation. In an engineering consulting firm like us, I believe we need to have a balance of technically competent engineers as well as those who are competent in business management and leadership skills.

I started doing my diploma in electrical engineering in Singapore Polytechnic, the first polytechnic school in the country. My focus then was in engineering, but after graduating I felt that I wanted to go into a management role rather than an engineering one. I didn't continue with pursuing an engineering degree because I felt I was more naturally inclined towards business and people management.

I guess I have a deep sense of self-awareness, if you may say, of what I'm good at and what I am not as good at. That's why I pursued a management degree instead. »





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### How do you define what it means to be a leader?

A leader isn't really one if he or she doesn't command the respect and trust of the people who look up to him or her. I also believe that a good leader must always be on the lookout to uncover the potential of individuals and to know what people's strengths and weaknesses are. The key is to put them in the space where their highest potential can be further developed and to minimise the exposure of putting them where they will struggle to succeed. This has been my principle when I work with people and can apply even in assigning people to different projects.

I also believe that a leader can only be as strong as their people. Hence, the key is to develop 'strong shoulders' that the leader can stand on. If the shoulders are not strong, then the leader's position can be quite shaky and they won't enjoy their role as leader. So the key to success as a leader is about developing people so that they provide the strong

shoulders for the leader to lead. I have experienced this in my progression to a leadership role at Beca.

Recently, I've begun investing in a group of our young people with high potential by enrolling them in an emerging leaders program. Together with my leadership team in Singapore, we identified 12 of them in Singapore and we put them through a two-year emerging leaders program. After the first session, this program was so well-accepted that we have now extended the program to our offices in Indonesia and Thailand. Each of these offices has since sent two people to participate in the program. A good leader must always think about developing and grooming our future generation of leaders for our business.

### Tell us more about this leadership program that you're pioneering in Beca.

Pretty much all of the people in the program are quite young and in their late twenties or early thirties. They are required to attend a







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fully sponsored two-day course every quarter. The modules in the course include sessions requiring active engagement of the participants in role play of several core leadership skills. For example, emotional intelligence is addressed in the first module. Participants were tasked to discover self-management skills through the role play. In subsequent modules, they will also learn influencing skills and the skill of negotiation, and what it takes to lead a high-performing team. The interval between these sessions provides these leaders the opportunity to apply what they have learned in the program and put it into practice in the real world. I believe this is a quick way to reinforce the learning experiences.

We are hoping that at the end of the two years, which will be by the first quarter of 2019, we will be able to elevate most, if not all, of these emerging leaders into leadership positions.

Development program aside, I would like to see every engineer I hire into my firm find fulfilment in a meaningful career with Beca. I want to uncover their potential. My leadership team and I have the responsibility to provide opportunities for them, but it's up to each individual to work towards progressing the path of reaching their full potential.

### Is this a cycle that you'll keep repeating after the current batch of leaders come through?

Yes, I will. I have presented this program to my Asia board and they are very supportive of it. After the current batch have graduated, we will identify another batch whom we'll develop for the next couple of years. This process will be repeated until we can find other means of developing our people.

### Quite often when someone rises to the top of an organisation, they'll just stay there with no future plan. How important is succession planning in business?

I think that's a good question. Apart from the emerging leaders program which I talked about, I have other initiatives that I've put



forward to my group's HR to assist me in terms of developing a succession plan for my role as managing director. I believe in leadership succession in a sustainable business, and so, I need to have a plan to find successors who will one day, when I move on to other roles, take on my position and bring the business to another level of excellence and success.

Leadership succession is not just at my level. In Beca, for example, below me are the Operations Managers, below them are the Section Managers and below them are the Team Leaders. So you can see that we have quite a hierarchy. These are the positions that would require succession plans, in putting people into these positions whom we think can contribute and excel effectively as a leader.

Succession plans may not be immediate but at least the plans should be put in place so that, in times to come, another group of people will be able to move into those roles. If an organisation keeps doing that, I »





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believe they will retain their key people, the business will stay strong and relevant, and continue to do well in the market. I've found with some of the local engineering consulting firms here that, once their founder has retired, the business dies with them, or somebody purchases the business so their brand will no longer be around, which is something I find really sad. But if an organisation is prepared to invest in people and looks at succession, the company will continue for ages, because you have a plan in place to continue bringing in people to breathe life into and lead the business. That is what I like to see.

### You've been involved in many projects throughout your career. Are there any that you're most proud of?

Well, I must say that my most memorable project is the Republic Polytechnic Campus. It won the President's Design Award in 2006. I was the Director in charge of the project and Beca was involved in the Mechanical and Electrical disciplines. It was considered one of the largest projects at that time, and we had both local and foreign architects and engineers working very well together. So that's one project that I find personally very satisfying. The other one is obviously the Universal Studio project at Resorts World. That was exciting because it was the first Universal Studio theme park in South East Asia. With theme parks, the input we have to put into the project is quite different from

"We appreciate the collaboration with Beca's experienced and qualified team. We value the symbiotic relationship that has been built over decades. The mutual trust in this partnership has seen us through the challenges and changes of the industry." - Chua Hai Kuey, Managing Director, King Wan Construction Pte Ltd

what we would do with typical buildings. I was leading a team in developing the project towards a good outcome under very trying and challenging conditions.

### How do you see your business developing over the medium term?

Over the next five years, I'd like to see growth in our business by at least 10 per cent every year. That would be my ambition. I would like to see my business expand geographically as well. I want Beca to get more involved in projects in countries such as Vietnam, Sri Lanka and the Philippines. I also want to reach new industries. In Singapore, we want to increase our market share on projects in health care, education, airports and commercial office space, as well as hospitality through hotels. -



### KERRIE HESS TURNED HER PASSION FOR PAINTING INTO A HIGHLY LUCRATIVE BUSINESS VENTURE.

WORDS SKYE HOKLAS • IMAGES BONNIE CEE / GRACE ALYSSA KYO

er fashion illustrations have graced the pages of Vogue and
Harper's Bazaar, featured on the covers of books (including her
own, Shoestring Chic), and been used by the likes of Cartier,
Kate Spade New York, and Louis Vuitton in their high-end marketing
campaigns. She's had an 18-piece solo exhibition in the ballroom of
Le Meurice hotel, Paris – the same place where both Dali and Picasso
exhibited their works – and she's sold thousands of original prints to
buyers all over the world. Kerrie Hess has done what many creative types
only dare to dream of – successfully turn her hobby into a full-time career.

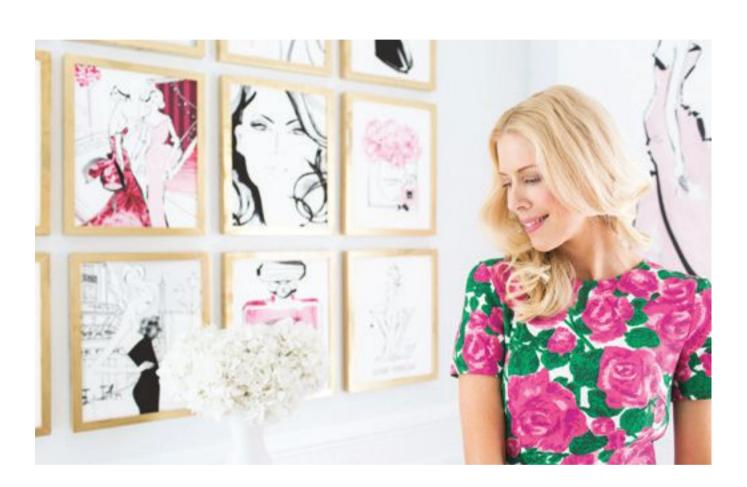
Hailing from Brisbane, Australia, Kerrie studied graphic design at university before landing her first job with a London-based newspaper. There she had an unexpected opportunity to show off her illustrating skills when she put her hand up to draw something after a stock photo didn't come through at the last minute. The lucky break turned into a regular column with the publication, and her unique style quickly garnered the attention of others. It wasn't long until she had interest from a variety of fashion publications and brands, all wanting to commission her for work. Here she shares the business rules that have helped her navigate the

business world, while staying true to her creative side. »





#### "I THINK I HAVE JUST FOUND MY WAY AS I HAVE GONE ALONG AND LEARNED FROM MY MISTAKES OVER THE YEARS – OF WHICH I HAVE MADE MANY – BUT THEY HAVE HELPED ME."



#### RULE ONE

Do what you love, but know your own value

Don't sell your work to every brand that wants to work with you. You can't work with everyone, so sometimes it's okay to politely say, "Thank you, but it's just not the right fit at this time." Put your work out there on social media and see what people respond to. This is a really good indication of what your community likes from you. Make sure there is a market for what you love to do. Don't oversaturate yourself as a brand. If art is your main thing, don't veer too far from that, otherwise you can lose the magic and romance of why you started. Love what you do and look at every mistake as something to really learn from.

#### RULE TWO

Don't always say yes

The best decisions I ever made were turning down adverts for cigarette brands, and not selling my work to a mainstream homewares chain in the US. The homewares offer came up when I was just starting out, and it was for a large amount of money at the time. Something in my gut told me to turn this down, and I think it's the best thing I have ever done. Your instinct is always right. I think it's sometimes the things you turn down rather than the things you say yes to that can define your career path. Putting your work on candles and pencil cases may give exposure, but it may take something special away from your art. Choose collaborations very wisely.



#### RULE THREE

Create your own happy space

I think creating an office or studio that you love is very important to starting the day in a positive mood. I am also generally most productive in the morning, so I try to schedule painting and drawing then, and emails and phone calls in the latter part of the day when I don't generally feel as creative. Music, coffee and dark chocolate also make me feel happy in the studio.

#### RULE FOUR

Learn to prioritise and slow down

Do the most important thing that needs to be done first. Anything else is a bonus. I also think sometimes that slowing down and not multitasking helps to get more done. I sometimes put my phone away from my desk too, if I really need to concentrate.

#### RULE FIVE

Don't overthink things

Sometimes it's best to say yes and figure out how you will do it later! This was definitely the case with saying yes to painting and shipping 18 original pieces to France to exhibit. That was very tricky, but I made it work.

#### RULE SIX

Find what brings you real joy

While I love collaborating with fashion and beauty brands, my main happiness is creating my own limited-edition prints and original art pieces. For me, this is where the real joy is. While I have had an online store for art prints for some time (*kerriehess.com*), I have recently started an online gallery for original works. It was just something I wanted to try. When it launched, four out of six pieces sold in the first hour. I was completely surprised! Since then, I have shipped original pieces to the US, Germany, Russia and France as well as within Australia.

#### RULE SEVEN

Don't be afraid to evolve

My painting style has really changed. I started out working with a fountain pen, and now I am much more about brushes and paint for most of my work. It's probably a little less detailed but, hopefully, a lot more romantic. I moved over to this style about 10 years ago and did have to teach myself how to work in these media by hand, but now I love working with paints and brushes. Large canvasses and watercolour are my favourite medium.

#### RULE EIGHT

Strike up relationships

Making sure all the work that I do is true to my heart, as well as something that the client loves – if there is a client involved – is important because it leads to long relationships. Some years ago, Lancôme Paris asked me to paint an image for their packaging as a one-off. It was so successful for them that we ended up doing this same collaboration, internationally, six times per year for three years.





## MOTORING AHEAD

Since taking the helm of Bosowa from his father, Sadikin Aksa shows no signs of pressing the brakes anytime soon.

WORDS • ADRIAN FLORES

ince its founding in 1973 as an official dealer of Datsun automobiles, Bosowa – named after the three Bugis kingdoms, Bone, Soppeng and Wajo – broadened to five new industries over the next 47 years, with interests in cement, mining and energy, financial services, property and education. With Sadikin Aksa as President Director, the family-owned empire is on the cusp of entering its third generation of ownership.

Cement continues to form the core part of Bosowa's business, with the company's Maros and Batam factories accounting for a significant majority - 65 per cent - of its revenue, and aims to control 10 per cent of Indonesia's cement market within the next year. Most recently, in December 2016, it opened a new plant in Banyuwangi in East Java worth R800 billion.

However, Sadikin hopes to build up the other businesses in order to lower that figure to around 30 per cent. Alongside the Banyuwangi plant, Bosowa opened a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) terminal worth R787 billion. To help that along, the company is looking to broaden its investments in the mining sector even further, and is considering new ventures in coal, nickel and tin.

The second of five children to founder and owner Aksa Mahmud, Sadikin was appointed to head Bosowa in 2015, eight years after eldest son, Erwin, succeeded their father in the post in 2007. Erwin now has a role in the company as president commissioner. »

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"The economy changes every five years; just a few years ago, it changed every 10 years. It changes faster now and we have to adjust."

As might be the case with any family-owned business, a decent succession plan was always front of mind for the family patriarch, who placed much of his attention on maintaining strong relationships among the family's second generation (as well as Erwin and Sadikin, there are three younger siblings, Melinda, Atira and Subhan).

To maintain cohesion, the family meets every quarter to discuss business and personal issues, something Mahmud says instils a strong ethical grounding in his children and plays a major part in maintaining the sustainability of the company. In addition, the family hopes to turn Bosowa into a publicly listed company before the next generation, currently comprising 12 grandchildren, becomes involved in the business.

In recognition of its success in Indonesia and as a way of giving back to the local people, Bosowa also established a not-for-profit foundation focused on education, humanities and culture.

One of the foundation's initiatives is the Bosowa Merit Scholarship, offered to students from South Sulawesi "with high achievements, honourable personalities and strong leadership spirits", an opportunity to pursue an undergraduate degree at one of Indonesia's leading universities.

Despite the pressures, both personal and professional, that go with handling a family business, Sadikin remains unfazed. "The times have changed. The economy changes every

five years; just a few years ago, it changed every 10 years. It changes faster now and we have to adjust," Sadikin told *Forbes Indonesia* in 2015.

Sadikin even makes time to pursue his interests outside Bosowa. An avid motorcyle racer, he is also chairman of Ikatan Motor Indonesia for the current term, from 2016 to 2020.

The Aksa family continues to be a major force in Indonesian society. Even though Aksa Mahmud has not had an active role in Bosowa for the best part of a decade, he still commands a net worth of more than US\$860 million and is number 34 on Indonesia's 50 Richest People, according to Forbes.

With such a strong hold on the Indonesian market, Sadikin hopes to elevate Bosowa into a global player in the same way his older brother lifted the company from a local to a national player.

"Only businesses that are well prepared can lead the transformation. That is what motivates Bosowa to be dynamic and adaptive to change," Sadikin says. "Even with all our achievements, we will never stop moving forward."





# ENERATION GAME

With today's workplace accommodating ages from 20 to 70, how best to handle the dynamics of such a diverse set of staff needs and attitudes?

WORDS · STEPHEN CORBY

or the first time, we have five generations working side by side: the outgoing traditionalists through to the incoming generation Z. As the boss, the fresh challenge is how to manage the dynamics of the most diverse workforce industry has ever seen.

As alarming and implausible as it may seem, people who were born while most of us were partying like it was 1999 (because it was, in fact, 1999) are now rolling out of universities and into workplaces. This is the kind of knowledge that makes even millennials feel like Mick Jagger.

These generation Z workers will be joining colleagues from generation Y, generation X and the people who started this whole generation game, the Baby Boomers, as well as the declining number of 'traditionalists' (born pre-1946) in the same offices.

As you may have noticed, this presents a whole world of challenges for a management team suddenly tasked with balancing the needs, and attitudes, of people aged from 20 to 70.

So what's new about that, you might wonder. After all, people of different ages have always joined the workforce, even back when young people were just young people, and not card-carrying members of a generation with a consonant attached.

"We've always had different generations at work, but they were ranked based on age and experience," says Mark McCrindle, head of the McCrindle social research firm. "You had the older people running the show, you had the middle people in middle management, and the young people on the frontline.

"But now you've got graduates who are managing older people. You've got retrained older people coming into junior positions. You've got a mix of generations on the same team doing the exact same jobs. That presents legitimate management challenges."

The way the C-suite meets these challenges can have a significant impact on a company's fortunes. A global study recently conducted by the University of Sydney's Business School found that companies that manage intergenerational workplaces well are more innovative, and more successful, than those that don't.

Yes, it literally pays to have a workforce that gets along, and understanding what defines and drives each of those generations is the key. »



#### Self-reliant, engaged, wants flexibility

These bright-eyed, screen-worshipping graduates, only now joining the employment market, will form just the first wave of an enduring assault on the workforce, quickly becoming a not-so-silent majority. And like any majority, they will

be seeking to change a company's culture rather than conform to the existing one.

"The starting point is simply to understand the data," McCrindle says. "And the employment data is showing that currently Baby Boomers and generation X workers comprise the majority of the workforce. However, within a decade, by 2025, generations Y and Z will together comprise two-thirds of the workforce. So they're quickly entering the arena and will soon become not just the majority but the vast majority."

Research suggests this new wave of workers will be looking to be more than just a cog in the machine, no matter how successful that machine is. They want to engage and be engaged, and to feel like they are personally making a difference.

"If you can bring in a leadership style that is more participative and collaborative than perhaps the autocratic style that used to dominate, that's going to really engage with the younger worker," McCrindle says.

"Moving away from the command-and-control model to one that's flatter in structure, one that involves the younger generation in giving a bit of a shape to things, that's going to work. That speaks their language.

They're hitting their early 20s as they launch into a career, and they're ready to roll their sleeves up and get involved. They feel pretty empowered, and they want to have a bit of a say and to influence something."

And that's not all, says McCrindle. They also want to make a difference. They don't just want to be an employee and be told what to do; they want to feel engaged and like

they're having an impact. "We have to tap into that. What a great resource to have – you've got a motivated and activated generation that wants a seat at the table. That should be every employer's dream."

The downside, of course, is that if you don't engage them, they'll leave. The idea of a 'job for life' is about as outdated as typewriters, with the average high-school leaver today expected to have 17 different employers over a lifetime.



#### Multitasker, eager, motivated

If there's a generation more roundly vilified than those who identify as millennials, it seems likely it hasn't been born yet. They're too lazy to work, too demanding when they do land a job, and are more obsessed with smashing avocados at music festivals than building anything that even resembles a meaningful career.

Or so we're told by pundits and commentators on a near-daily basis. Interesting, then, that the genuine experts disagree wholeheartedly, and are quick to point out that organisations that embrace and value the varied skill sets of Australia's young workers are largely more successful than those that don't.

Leanne Cutcher is Professor of Management at Sydney University's School of Business, and has just completed a major global study of intergenerational workplaces. She says we need to reframe the idea of experience, understanding that it can be more than an employee's working history – something in which millennials are clearly at a disadvantage.

"One of the words that came up a lot was 'experience'. And what we found was the way in which that idea of 'being experienced' is understood is often the difference," she says. "We've found that if you have a very open view of what 'being experienced' means as a manager of your team, you're going to get much more innovative practices developing. Someone recently out of university, for example, will have the most up-to-date knowledge, as well as experience in working with the latest software and technology.

"This is a generation that wants to be valued, so a good manager in the C-suite will see that as an energy they can tap into. Because the problem is, if they feel that they're not being valued, they probably will walk away from the organisation."

It's easy to assume the source of any inter-office anguish is these upstart kids, with neither the time nor inclination to be told what to do by some meddling older person. But that's not the case, with Sydney University actually pointing the blame at older workers, many of whom see younger employees as a threat, and treat them as such. »



#### (BORN 1965 TO 1976)

#### Task-oriented, self-reliant, work-life balance

Less interested in job-hopping than their younger colleagues, generation X workers want to commit to a workplace, and they want to feel that their experience is being valued and that they can safely share their knowledge without being herded out the door the moment they do.

"We found the opposite to what we were expecting," Cutcher says. "We thought we would find lots of younger workers saying of their older colleagues, 'Oh, they're old fuddy-duddies; they don't know what they're doing.'

"Actually, we found the opposite. And when you get people saying things like, 'Young people don't know what they're doing,' then instead of it being about a culture of sharing knowledge it becomes almost like you're hoarding knowledge. It becomes your currency. You can't really blame people for doing that if they don't feel like they're going to get recognised for sharing. If people feel like they're just handing over to the next group coming through, and then they'll be pushed out of the door, where's the incentive for them to impart their knowledge?"

Workers who belong to generation X want the traditional linear career path shifted to something more flexible, so that those approaching the halfway point in their careers, and beyond, can feel their knowledge is valuable and appreciated, and that sharing it with their younger colleagues won't be a shortcut to redundancy.

If the only way to move in an organisation is up, it doesn't leave a lot of options for the people nearing the top of the corporate tree.

"You've got to allow people to move across and move back, as well as go up – and without having any of those negative connotations that this often has," Cutcher says.

"They want to be able to contribute; they want to share their knowledge and experience. But their managers are saying, 'There aren't any systems within the organisation that allow me to recognise an older person and the contribution that they're making to the team, because I'm only able to recognise ambition.'

"Organisations need to think about it in a different way, because it goes to attracting a diverse workforce. And our research shows that in organisations where there's diversity of age, as in people are doing all that sharing of knowledge, they are more innovative."

## BABY BOOMERS

(BORN 1946 TO 1964)

#### Questions authority, self-centred, crusades causes

The reality here is that, for the most part, Baby Boomers have clawed their way to the top of the corporate tree by now, and they'll be setting the workplace tone as a result. But while that's not always the case, it doesn't make it any easier for any members of generations X, Y or Z who might want to shake up the workplace, only to be stymied by a Baby Boomer boss. The answer, says McCrindle, is for everyone to understand the real and tangible benefits of age diversity. This is something that starts with Baby Boomers, who are often in a position to change a workplace's culture. "Why have diversity, any diversity? We know that we need to represent our community. We know that different cultures or genders will help us do that. They'll bring different perspectives. They'll give us a more holistic view, and therefore, a more lasting and relevant solution to a diverse client base and a diverse community," he says. "The same arguments hold true with generational diversity. Yes, there's a bit of pain and a bit of challenge and a bit of adaption needed, but if we can get that functional, thriving generational diversity, we will have a range of age groups who therefore can connect more naturally across the different client or customer bases. The younger generation will keep us a bit more in touch with the trends, the changes. The older generations will bring that experience, that flexibility, and some of the broader perspectives that only come when you've been through a few business cycles or been through a number of scenarios." In short, Baby Boomers - no matter their company rank - have to be a little flexible here, and lose the 'that's the way it's always been done' approach, embracing instead the possibility of trying something different. "That's where the intergenerational workplace can work well, where we do understand the strength this generation brings, and we do a bit more listening rather than thinking that 'here's how it's going to be'," McCrindle says. "The older generation needs to move away from that 'I'm the older one. I've got the experience. I'll tell you how it

"The older generation needs to move away from that 'I'm the older one. I've got the experience. I'll tell you how it is' idea. It's taking the principal point that each generation brings strengths and unique aspects, and listening to them.



# LISTED for GREATNESS

Getting listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange kicked off a string of improvements for Chelsea Logistics Holdings Corp.

WORDS SHARON MASIGE • IMAGES CHELSEA LOGISTICS HOLDINGS CORP.

or Chelsea Logistics Holdings Corp. President and CEO Chryss Damuy, the company's public listing was a game changer that opened a range of opportunities for the business in the long term. Chryss's career has involved working at a variety of export companies, tracking vessels, and managing various shipments. He then took up a position at Phoenix Petroleum Philippines which, at the time, was Chelsea Logistics' parent company. As an independent oil company, Phoenix deals with petroleum products and operates oil depots and transport and storage facilities. After a while, the boss at Phoenix saw Chryss's potential and moved him to the shipping side of the business.

"I delivered a good performance in the petroleum group because it required shipping knowledge," Chryss says. "So the owner decided to move me to the shipping group because I had been working with him for quite some time."

Chelsea Logistics specialises in transporting passengers, oil, petroleum and other bulk products, with a fleet that includes 11 tankers, eight tugboats, four barges and three cargo vessels. One of the greatest milestones for Chelsea Logistics so far has been getting listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange in 2017. Before that, as a subsidiary of Phoenix Petroleum, Chryss says, the company was heavily dependent on Phoenix's affiliates. But with the listing, it has been able to broaden its customer reach. "Before, Chelsea had been serving mostly the requirements of the affiliated company, Phoenix," he says. "When I joined, Chelsea used to be very dependent on affiliates around 70 to 80 per cent of our revenue came from them. Now we've been growing the revenue but are less dependent on »



affiliates. In fact, the affiliates do not account increasing or for the most volume anymore; it's around 40 and expanding per cent now. Most of our revenue mad now comes from third parties, so we've been expanding our customer base outside our group of companies."

"If you compare Chelsea two years

With the listing and subsequent ago with Chelsea increase in third-party customers, Chelsea now, it's an entirely different company."

Logistics has broadened its capabilities. "We've been able to establish better systems and improve the company," Chryss says. "With lever that listing, we are now lining up a lot of programs, including increasing our fleet, we've the company."

We see a lot of the sea of the sea of the substitute of the substitute of the sea of the substitute of the substitute

"Keppel Offshore & Marine, with its network of 15 yards and offices worldwide, responds efficiently to its customers' needs. In the Philippines, Keppel Batangas Shipyard and Keppel Subic Shipyard provide ship owners such as Chelsea with extensive and reliable services." – Leong Kok Weng, President, Keppel Philippines Marine, Inc. increasing our routes, improving our system, and expanding our business." The listing has made Chelsea Logistics even stronger business-wise and has opened up

the potential for more

opportunities in the future.

"Being listed, we have better corporate governance," Chryss adds. "The proceeds of the listing have meant our rates are improved and we have the money to further expand the business. Strengthening the balance sheet acts as a small leverage, if we need to borrow from for big projects that we can't cover.

banks for big projects that we can't cover. We see a lot of opportunities with being listed and, if we remain disciplined, there will be more passed on from financial institutions, which will allow us to deliver."

In addition, Chelsea Logistics has become better equipped to deal with the market.



"The company has evolved significantly. It has become more disciplined because we have enhanced the service. Now that we are serving companies outside the group, we get to serve multinationals when it comes to their cargo, and we get to serve the passengers. The culture of safety and better service has improved a lot. As I mentioned, being listed means the group is more disciplined and very conscious about corporate governance. If you compare Chelsea two years ago with Chelsea now, it's an entirely different company. We have evolved. Just imagine: before we were serving affiliates and now we're serving a lot of customers - from a single customer to more than a thousand customers. It entails a lot of discipline and good service to maintain these customers and, considering that the industry's quite competitive, we have to really ramp up our services to satisfy our customers."

Internally, the business has maintained its approach of treating its employees like family. "The owners have been very appreciative of



all the efforts of its members, and we try to support each other and develop each other's skills. It's not about working for oneself; we see it as working for the family of all the members we have in the team. We watch each other's backs and help each other. This is the culture we try to instil in our employees: the idea that your failure is my failure, and my success is your success."

Chryss's idea of success is ensuring »

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that the company's investors get value and the business gives back to the community. "Success is if we feel that our investors are getting their value and we're able to share this through our social corporate responsibility in the areas we serve.

It's not only focusing on the bottom line; it is also about giving back to the community we are in," he says. "In fact, we have existing programs on the environment, on education, and on disaster relief and support. We are also coming up with a program to provide

scholarships to seafarers. Again, it's about getting good returns for investors and giving back to the community. If we're able to do that in a significant way, then we can say that we are successful."

Chryss believes more should be done to support the shipping industry, which will in turn boost the Philippines' economy.

"Shipping and logistics is one of the industries that is really needed to support the growth of the economy in the Philippines, particularly with the country being an

archipelago. The government now has a 'build, build, build' mentality.

And it's not just the government; the private sector has also been expanding a lot outside the metropolis. With that in mind, there is a need for more and better shipping and logistics support to achieve those 'build' scenarios." The next phase for Chelsea

Logistics is ramping up its logistics capabilities and potentially taking its offerings to the skies. "We are looking to be the dominant player in the shipping and logistics industry. We're the market leader now, but we want to consolidate to show our dominance. It's important for us to get more profits, and





**Fast Fact** 

Chelsea Logistics' approval for

listing came on the same day

Phoenix Petroleum celebrated its

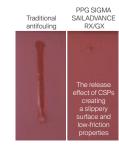
tenth anniversary of listing.



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it will involve finding ways to modernise the industry. We want to improve our service by fielding ships that are more modern and safe," Chryss says.

"In the next couple of years or so, we see ourselves not only focusing on shipping and logistics, in which we are strong; we want to expand our other shipping businesses like port operation, ground handling, and maybe even operating our own port. We want to come up with other services allied to shipping, like ship repair, and we are hoping to get involved in shipbuilding. We are ultimately looking at getting into some activities related to air because we are now more focused on logistics in shipping and by sea. We're looking at the possibility of expanding our businesses, maybe partnering with other airline logistics to be part of the air market."



"Congratulations to our business partner Chelsea Logistics Holdings Corp! Sharing business with such a dynamic company is truly a valued relationship, and count on Nippon Paint Philippines to support and share your future success." – Mark Owen Webb, President, Nippon Paint Philippines, Inc.

"We appreciate our strong partnership with Chelsea, as their Turbocharger maintenance service provider for all their vessels. Their cooperation with our preventive maintenance programs, fair treatment of contracts and the alignment of our companies' vision on sustainable growth are highly valued in this continuing alliance." – Teofilo Edwin L Cayco, President, Rurex







The Japanese concept of *ikigai* translates loosely as your purpose in life – and finding it could change the way you live, work and lead.

WORDS • **DOMINI STUART** 

hy do you do what you do?
It sounds like a simple
question but, in the context of
ikigai, it's the key to living and
working in a more productive and fulfilling way.

According to Japanese tradition, your *ikigai* lies at the heart of four overlapping circles – what you love, what you do well, what the world needs, and what you're paid for.

The word has no direct English translation, but Associate Professor Akihiro Hasegawa, who conducts research into *ikigai* at the Toyo Eiwa University in Japan, suggests: 'reason for living', 'self-actualisation', 'meaning of life', 'purpose in life', or perhaps all four.

Ikigai is still relatively unfamiliar outside Japan, but the broad concept has been taught for many years. Authors including Eckhart Tolle, Rick Warren and Deepak Chopra have written dozens of books on the subject of finding your purpose, and in yoga philosophy this is an aspect of dharma.

Repa Patel, director of Leading Mindfully, draws on the prevailing principles of *ikigai* to help business leaders connect to their passions and align with their higher purpose in their role.

"Understanding the impact this has on you, your teams and your wider organisation can help you harness your energy to achieve personal and organisational goals," she says.

#### STRENGTHENED LEADERSHIP

When Melinda Crole was asked to act as interim CEO of YMCA Australia, she hesitated.

"I had the confidence and support of the board, but I wasn't 100 per cent convinced I was the right person for the job," she says.

Then one of Crole's directors introduced her to Patel.

"Repa supported me professionally by encouraging me to think about who I am, why I'm here, and how I could bring my best to this particular role," says Crole. "Once I understood my meaning and purpose, I realised I could be the leader I needed to be and bring a strength to the organisation that hadn't been there before."

At the time, YMCA Australia had just embarked on the challenging process of transforming the 150-year-old organisation.

"We had started to focus on creating space for young people to develop, grow and be



inspired to make a positive impact," says Crole. "This fit beautifully with my own purpose of maintaining the human rights of children and young people, and listening to their voices. Like finding my *ikigai*, I had been through a process of uncovering what I'm best at, what I love, and what the organisation needs. When there's a confluence of these three elements, I think you're bound to get the best outcome in the work that you do, and for most of us that includes the fourth aspect of *ikigai* – what you're paid for."

In November 2016, Crole accepted the offer of a permanent position as CEO.

"Finding my purpose significantly increased my confidence as well as my capability, including a deepening of my leadership skills," she says. "My personal style of leadership is very collaborative, and I am now much better at recognising where other people's strengths lie. It's also far easier to make good decisions, and do so for the right reasons, when you always have a clear purpose in mind."

Knowing your *ikigai* can also help in the search for a new role.

"Most people can list their skills but find it difficult to explain the 'how' of what they can do," says Patel. "Building your sense of purpose into personal marketing documents such as your résumé and online profiles provide a deeper insight into the qualities you would bring to an organisation. This could be a key differentiator."

#### **DRAWING ON RESEARCH**

According to Patel, some C-suite executives are sceptical about the value of introspection, so she makes a point of highlighting the facts.

"I always begin by referring to the research," says Patel. "I work at the intersection of mindfulness, neuroscience and positive change, and there's plenty of literature to support the benefits of looking inward to find your purpose."

It can take a while to distil the essence of what makes life worth living, she continues. "When we're identifying what we love, for example, we need to get beneath superficial

You love it

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**VOCATION** 

You are paid for it

answers such as 'I enjoy golf', just as your true meaning and purpose is even deeper than your feelings for your family," says Patel.

She usually starts with a strengths assessment because most of her clients are familiar with this concept. Patel then watches for changes in energy as they talk.

"People really do light up when they're talking about their passion," she says. "When I see that, I feed what they said back to them to gauge whether it rings true."

#### LIGHTENING THE LOAD

Finding your *ikigai* may not shorten your working hours, but it could help to lighten the load and improve your overall sense of wellbeing.

"I don't have much spare time at the moment because the transformation is all-consuming, but I do have the energy and drive to go to work every day and give my very best," says Crole. "When your work is your purpose and passion combined, it's something you're happy to live and breathe."



Yummy Town Holdings Group President Susan Lu proves you can start at McDonald's and rise to the top.

WORDS ADRIAN FLORES • IMAGES DANIELE MATTIOLI

he following are the titles Susan Lu
has held at McDonald's since starting
as a part-time employee more than
30 years ago: Store Manager, Operation
Consultant, L&D (Learning and
Development) Consultant, Franchising
Manager, Field Service Manager, Central Market Leader
and, finally, Operations Vice President.

"McDonald's basically shaped my career," says the Yummy Town Holdings Group President. Susan says the experience has given her a familiarity with the complex inner workings of a food and beverage franchise, as well as a broader understanding of a franchise's overall goals within the global market.

Further, the experience has taught her to be very sensitive to market trends, and thus quickly capture potential growth opportunities. For example, Yummy Town's business partnerships with China's three online food delivery giants – Ele.me, Baidu Waimai and Meituan Waimai – accounted for approximately 26 per cent of total sales within its first year.





According to Susan, the brands that can go the distance are those that can keep up with the times and evolve with the market. "Even the most durable brands have had to go through many transformations. No brand in today's hyper-transparent world is immune to a surprise," she says. "We don't wait for a crisis to happen in order to put in place on-the-job training or set socially responsible company policies."

Susan is no stranger to crisis after three decades with McDonald's.

In June 2013, a McDonald's employee in Taiwan mistook a customer with Down syndrome for a homeless person, before asking the customer to leave the premises and calling the police.

As Operations
Vice President at the time, Susan's response was immediate, issuing a full apology to the customer on behalf of McDonald's. "Our staff's treatment was really inappropriate and we apologise to the customer for causing her embarrassment when she was planning to dine at our store," she said in a statement.

"We are sorry about our failure to meet the expectations of the public."

the UK, Canada, South Korea, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

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Thankfully for Susan, this proved to be only a minor blip in an otherwise unblemished career. Since being appointed Group President in mid 2016, Susan has far exceeded expectations, with Yummy Town reporting 50 per cent store growth over the previous year, and an after-tax profit of 67 per cent. But what she has found most impressive is the long-term sustainability of the Happy Lemon brand, specialising mostly in lemon-based iced tea beverages. "The life cycle of a brand in China is normally less than two years. Happy Lemon is in its eleventh year and we are still growing," says Susan.

"Pretty much like the way people age, so does an upstart brand. The challenge is figuring out how we can succeed when appearances fade and the competition is fierce. I believe we have to play the long game."

Given the notoriously fickle nature of the food and beverage industry, Yummy Town's response is simple – aggressive

**MORE THAN LEMONADE** 

Yummy Town has more than 790

Happy Lemon stores since the

brand launched in 2006, with

stores in Taiwan, China, the US,

expansion. A key facet of the company's business model is the 'Yummy 1,000

Initiative'; to have 1,000 shops open around the world by the middle of the year.

"The market changes very quickly and we view aggressive expansion as the right approach to take Yummy Town forward," Susan says.

"The larger the market share we capture, the easier it is for us to leverage our business model in the short term."

Armed with a deeper understanding of McDonald's famous franchise system than most, Susan hopes to leverage that knowledge to transform Yummy Town into an international fast-food leader and become the entrepreneur's first choice of tea shop brand in China.

Taking into account the historically fraught relationship between Taiwan and Mainland China, it is especially important to her that Yummy Town positions itself as a 'cross-strait bridge', promoting new food and beverage brands between the two territories.

What is not disputed is that Susan's story puts to bed once and for all the stigma of 'working at McDonald's'. There are currently around 400 McDonald's restaurants in Taiwan. One of them could be employing the next Susan Lu.

# AFAMILY AFFAIR

Family ties keep Cyclect together as third-generation Managing Director and CEO Melvin Tan continues to increase the company's share in Asia's marine, infrastructure and clean-energy sectors.

WORDS HOLLY JOHNSON . IMAGES YEW KWANG

elvin Tan, Managing Director and CEO of Cyclect Group, is a third-generation owner determined to make his mark on the family business and do things a little differently. "It's my turn to bring Cyclect to the next level, and I don't want to miss a single opportunity," he says. Under his stewardship, the firm has diversified from its marine and offshore roots to the booming businesses of renewable energy and engineering services, robotics and automation for the aviation and logistics sectors. Now Cyclect's thousands of clients and 700 staff are spread throughout nine countries.

Founded by his grandfather Tan Ai Meng in 1943 in the midst of the WWII Japanese occupation, Cyclect started out as a handyman and appliance business in Singapore – a prime location for the budding engineering industry. »



It has since grown into a regional group and a trusted partner across the infrastructure, marine and offshore, industrial, building and special events sectors. The company was taken over by Melvin's father in the 80s.

"My very first job was with Cyclect as a management trainee," says Melvin. "I was studying business and information technology in Canada in 1996 when I received a call from my father urging me to return to the company to help with the business.

"When I arrived, the company's primary business was in ship repair, a sunset industry. That period also saw the rise of electrical engineering businesses."

In the mid 2000s, the company experienced severe financial challenges caused by poor economic conditions, some poor investments, and loss of key talent to its clients.

"This crisis peaked in 2006, just as I took over as managing director," adds Melvin. His priority was to stabilise the finances of the company and reassure the staff. "I was worried that the performance of our team would be greatly affected by the lower morale. A company is only as good as its people," he says.

Melvin met with every single one of his then 200 staff to make them feel safe and valued, and to determine exactly what internal issues they were facing. "I wanted the truth – not what people thought I wanted to hear," he says. "My objective was to truly understand the underlying root causes and to tackle them head-on." Melvin transformed the company's outdated internal processes, equipment and training programs in an effort to boost productivity and performance and stay ahead of competitors. "The knowledge and skills were in the minds of our team leaders, but they had never been

# Galmon

#### **STILL YOUR SAFEST WAY TO THE TOP**

Established in 1982, Galmon is the pioneer of mobile elevating work platform (**MEWP**) use in Singapore.

With a fleet of more than 3,000 MEWPs, Galmon is one of the largest distributors in the Asia Pacific region.

The company caters to the wide-ranging needs of different industries from construction to aviation, marine to manufacturing, media advertising to maintenance, as well as public works such as landscaping and utilities.

Its training arm Galmon Academy is Singapore's first and only facility dedicated to work-at-heights safety training. The academy is a locally and globally accredited training provider for MEWPs and the only PASMA-approved training centre outside Europe.



<sup>&</sup>quot;As excellent business partners for a decade, Galmon understands Cyclect's business and training needs for work-at-heights safety, and shares a common vision for delivering quality products and services. We wish them greater success and look forward to our continued partnership." – Desmond Ong, Chief Executive Officer, Galmon (S) Pte Ltd.

"We've never had an 'I made it' moment because I'm always looking at what we can do better."

built into a functional process," says Melvin.
"I set in motion the journey to transform the company from one that was reliant on knowledgeable individuals to one that was collaborative and process-oriented." He then turned his attention to securing projects to build revenue. "First, we reassured existing clients of our commitment to performance,

"It's been a great opportunity to work with such a professional and well-established company as Cyclect Holdings. The company's values, professionalism, vision and how they handle the market have been outstanding and synergised well with our company." – Agus Budiharto, President Director, PT. Berkat Manunggal Jaya

quality and service. Simultaneously, we sought out new clients, market sectors and business opportunities," he says. "I never doubted the abilities of our people, only the state of the market."

Cyclect acquired several clients that played a key role in the company getting back on its feet: a global semiconductor foundry, a night street sportscar racing event, and the world's most prestigious integrated casino and resort. "Without the hard work and resilience of our team, we would have never achieved those crucial wins." On the back of the 2007 construction boom, Cyclect left its economic struggles behind and turned its eyes towards a promising future. But Melvin refused to get comfortable: "We've never had an 'I made it' moment because I'm always looking at what we can do better," he explains."I was beating myself up for not becoming a specialist engineer when a wise friend told me that being a 'jack-of-all-trades, master of none' is an advantage. I'm a lifelong learner and this has given me a lot of insight into »



the needs of different people, markets and cultures.

"We have been in Brunei and Malaysia for three decades, where we have established strong footholds, and we are seeing exciting new growth throughout Asean and China," says Melvin.

"Our company specialises in five major business lines: engineering and construction; technical services; energy; facility and plant maintenance; and product distribution.

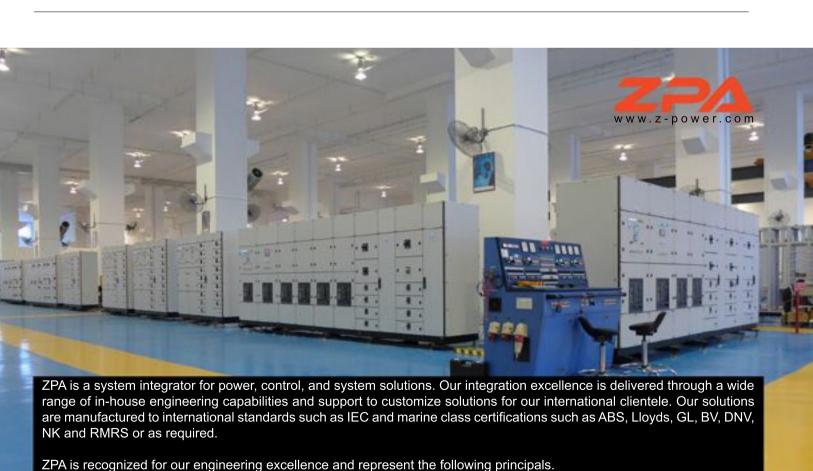
Innovation is of particular importance as we develop new technology for clean energy, automation and robotics to develop our competitive advantage," explains Melvin.

Cyclect is also looking at robotic and automation solutions to improve baggage handling, performing tasks that use human resources inefficiently. "We are particularly proud of these projects because they will potentially make a significant difference to a great number of people."

Nevertheless, Cyclect has not forgotten its roots in the business of ship repair. "We have

worked on thousands of vessels in the global marine industry and now have a reputable standing as a highly reliable service provider," says Melvin. Since its first contract with the Royal British Navy in 1957, Cyclect has served thousands of customers in the industry, including global shipping companies, shipyards, FPSO (floating production storage and offloading) units and oil rig operators. "Our business is diverse and challenging, and this speaks to the capability of our people to deliver." Cyclect is a two-time winner of the Prime Minister's Office TEC Innovator Award, and has also been honoured with the Enterprise 50 Award, Asean Federation's Best Contractor Award, World Intellectual Property Organization Award, Singapore Sustainability Award, Asean Award for Innovation, as well as dozens of safety awards.

After two decades of steering Cyclect through the ups and downs of economic cycles and changing industries, Melvin has learned one key lesson: innovation is essential. Looking to the future, he is focusing on two



EcoXpert

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main areas for growth. "The first is sustainable clean energy, a necessary resource for the building, infrastructure, marine and offshore industries," he says. Melvin saw this new sector as a natural progression from the company's traditional bastion of oil and gas. Today, Cyclect's green technology, cogeneration and waste-to-energy installations continue to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 16,000 tonnes per year. Melvin is constantly looking for expansion opportunities and long-term partnerships with energy consulting companies or distributors of energy-efficient products to ensure Cyclect stays ahead of the curve.

"The second growth area is in automation and robotics to meet the challenge of population ageing and manpower shortages," says Melvin. "These problems are becoming more apparent every year in industries requiring physical labour." In May 2017, Cyclect debuted its LINQ convoy robots, designed to autonomously transport people and baggage within an airport with minimal human intervention. This innovation is ideal for the aviation industry, where it often requires several people to move individual wheelchairs around the airport, but it can also be customised for other industries. Cyclect was also a finalist in the Changi Aviation Challenge, helping to develop an innovative system to automate the baggage handling of narrow-body aircraft and increase productivity by 30 per cent.

"Singapore is at the heart of Asia's aviation, finance, marine and technology industries, so it is our aim to become the go-to engineering hub in the region," says

"As a system integrator, I had the opportunity to meet and work with some of the best in the industry. ZPA had the pleasure of working with Cyclect, and the seamless collaboration ensures customer satisfaction. Cyclect's passion towards their work and clients is admirable." – Ang Cheng Siew, Managing Director, Z-Power Automation Pte Ltd



Melvin. Cyclect is working hard to develop the Asian story, made easier by its strong connections in the region.

"We have a good business network throughout Asia and we continue to build on each other's strengths." Melvin explains that a collaborative leadership style has been vital to keeping the company strong. "I'm sensitive to the requirements of my team, so there's a strong element of trust and mentorship rather than management," he says. "Our workplace culture is derived from a time of historical significance, and we have many devoted staff who have served our company for decades. Through the highs and lows, our people have remained loyal and hardworking, and that is what I am most proud of."

While Cyclect's departments span diverse industries and countries, the company is held together by one common core competency: family. •

# The TRAILBLAZER

The first woman to be President and CEO of specialist science and technology company Merck Malaysia, Ee Boon Huey is a passionate advocate for inclusion and diversity.

WORDS DANIEL HERBORN . IMAGES YEW KWANG

n 2016, Ee Boon Huey shattered the glass ceiling by becoming the first woman to be President and CEO for Merck Malaysia. "All my predecessors were male, so I'm proud to be the first female president and CEO. It goes to prove, yet again, that this can be attained with the right values and goals."

She approaches her daily challenges pragmatically, with the opinion that one would have to be very clear and focused as to how one can contribute positively and effectively. To this, she credits having a strong network to support her aspirations.

#### **BEGINNINGS**

Upon obtaining her degree in chemistry and biology, Boon Huey was employed at Bayer as a sales representative. This provided the valuable insight into the importance of reciprocal relationships between customer and company, and gave her an overall understanding of the industry. Having gained a stronger footing, she moved to GlaxoSmithKline and was involved in the marketing and brand management side of the business.

Shortly after, she was approached by Merck Malaysia and took up the role as head of sales and marketing, where she was responsible for the set-up of a new oncology unit. This greatly appealed to her, since it involved more than just heading a department. It presented an opportunity to »





engage in people management and development over and above the sales and marketing and product launching aspect of the business.

#### INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

From there onwards, Boon Huey rose through rank and file in roles with increasing responsibility in oncology in Singapore, as well as covering the domestic markets in six other neighbouring countries.

While a pivotal move to China as vice-president of oncology brought with it significant opportunities, it was not without its challenges. Boon Huey, with her tenacity, drew on her multilingual skills as well as her experience to adjust to this rapidly developing socioeconomic environment. This was more so with the introduction of new policies throughout the year that brought

about the need for constant adjustment and adaptation. During this time, Boon Huey sat on the global oncology leadership team and represented the Asian region. This role came with high expectations, as management staff were expected to deliver upwards of 20 per cent growth year on year.

In her four years in China, Boon Huey doubled the size of the business – and this without new product launches. The growing business meant that she was required to recruit new staff, including a new leadership team. Naturally, she had to oversee their training and development, and credits a sound understanding of the culture, not to mention sheer hard work, which led to her success. "It was extremely hard work in those four years but, looking back, it was richly rewarding," she added.

#### **HOMECOMING**

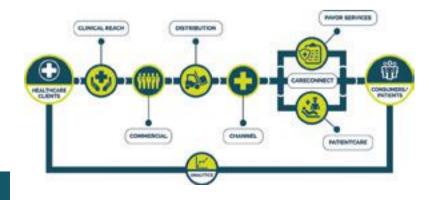
Having gained valuable exposure at the highest levels of management, with insight to global strategies, Boon Huey then sought



#### **OUR PURPOSE**



Our commitment to make healthcare more accessible is central to our business and all of the healthcare services we provide





country. It was an easy decision to make."

Boon Huey strongly believes that
Malaysia, with its unique characteristics, has a
strong, conducive environment with adequate
resources in a capable and talented workforce.
"My international stints equipped me with
invaluable experience and innovative ideas to
meet the needs of Malaysia's fast-evolving
business environment. Being a Malaysian, I
am familiar with our local culture, mindset
and behaviour, hence my drive to further
support local talent with their career
aspirations and further strengthen Merck's

"Personally, I would also like to bring a little more awareness to female executives that they are equal to their male counterparts in leadership positions," she says, adding, "We should be proud of who we are, with our talents and capabilities. I'm pleased to see that the stereotype mindset is slowly but surely changing."

footprint in this country," she says.

Boon Huey receives satisfaction and fulfilment when she speaks about innovative medicines that significantly improve the lives of patients through their safety, efficacy and quality. Stories from patients give her her further impetus to strive harder.

Boon Huey has been with Merck for
13 years and has embraced the company's
core values of courage, achievement,
responsibility, respect, integrity and
transparency. "I am privileged to be with
the oldest pharmaceutical and chemical
company in the world – as a matter of fact,

immense gratification in that she has

contributed back to society, and this gives

we shall be celebrating our 350 year anniversary in 2018," she proudly states.

Boon Huey's commendable achievements have earned her the respect and admiration of many in the industry. She proves to be a formidable equal to her peers. With her dedication and vision, she looks set to break further barriers. With the addition of her passion, she is well on her way to conquer new frontiers. The world awaits.



As Managing Director of Liebherr Singapore, Albert Chua would be the first to tell you that tenure counts for a lot.

WORDS ADRIAN FLORES . IMAGES YEW KWANG

lowly but surely, Albert Chua has spent the past 22 years working his way up the ranks of Swiss-based equipment manufacturer Liebherr, first as regional sales manager for the Mobile Cranes division in 1995 and then all the way to the top as managing director of Liebherr Singapore in 2011. Albert currently oversees all seven of the company's divisions: Mobile Cranes, Tower Cranes, Construction Cranes, Earthmoving, Appliances, Aerospace and Maritime. "Every industry is different, so one of my jobs is to synchronise all these different interests and coordinate a market strategy that caters to all the different perspectives within the region," he says.

The CEO Magazine spoke with Albert and asked him about how he built up his reputation over that time, as well as how his long tenure has helped him in his current position. »







# The CEO Magazine: What is it like working with a European company and trying to make the business model work in Asia?

**Albert:** The traditional mindset of a European company is to design and build something in Europe and then sell it around the world. We all knew that was not going to work in the long run because we never received proper feedback from Asian customers, such as what do they need, is it relevant, or have they overdone the certification? This is probably why some of the staff from Europe came out to Asia.

In the past, there was also a distinct difference between the European

strategy. When you play a competitive game, you need to do certain things in order to win. You need to train, you need to be cool under pressure, as well as have other crucial attributes that are more or less helpful in fostering leadership.

## How have you coordinated your strategy in running all of Liebherr Singapore's seven divisions?

Because each division operates in its own specialty industry and requires unique knowledge, it's impossible for me to know every field, which is why I have general managers for each of those divisions. For me, it's more about supporting them, and then

"Support is more than just giving orders and saying, 'Okay, we should do this and that.' Support only comes because you've been in the system for a long time."

technologies compared with their Asian counterparts. But over the years, you can see that the Asian manufacturers are also learning very quickly and becoming more competitive. Of course, the technology is still not up to European standards, but the gap is certainly narrowing.

It's only a matter of time before Asian manufacturers will be at a level very close to the European equivalent. The gap is much closer now compared with 10–20 years ago.

## You mentioned that you're a keen badminton player. How has that helped your approach to business?

It doesn't matter who the other person is when you're playing a game. They can be the CEO of a company or they could be a taxi driver. It doesn't matter. It has encouraged me to build friendships with a lot of people regardless of their background. Sport has in a way shaped how I behave not only in business management but as a person too.

When you're in competitive sports, it helps in developing your determination, having an objective and forming a good making sure the kinks are ironed out with regards to the policies, strategies and execution. Of all the divisions, I'm more direct and hands-on with the Tower Cranes and Mobile Cranes divisions, as that's where my background lies.

On top of that, the geographical coverage of our divisions is also different. For example, Aerospace and Appliances cover Asia–Pacific. The Mobile Cranes Division also covers Central Asia. Maritime and Earthmoving are in South East Asia. Then there are Liebherr's sister companies in the region. We have Liebherr in Thailand, Malaysia, and China, to name a few, and we work with them as well. It's quite complex.

#### How do you untangle all these complexities across all those divisions?

First, one of the advantages I have for this job is having been with the organisation for a very long time. It's been 22 years now, and I worked my way up. Liebherr is a family-owned company. It's not like one of those hot American companies that hires and fires. You can go step by »

"Having Liebherr as one of our strategic partners is truly a great honour. By offering Liebherr's customers SMFL's leasing expertise and global network, we are very excited to forge ahead with a long-lasting partnership with Liebherr in Asia and beyond." – Minami Aida, Senior Managing Director, Sumitomo Mitsui Finance and Leasing Co., Ltd step, and along the way you can prove your worth and win the trust of your European colleagues, which is very important.

I should emphasise that a lot of support is necessary in my role. Support is more than just giving orders and saying, 'Okay, we should do this and that.' The support only comes because you've been in the system for a long time and know how the company works, because you know who to talk to at the right time, and understand people's needs and what their concerns are.

# What approaches do you take with regard to your personal relationships with your clients and suppliers across all the different products?

There are three areas of the organisation that I watch out for when it comes to communication. First, is there internal communication between colleagues in the different divisions so I can synchronise and coordinate accordingly and not have to reinvent the wheel? Second, what are the

external relationships we have with customers and suppliers? In the Crane businesses, we've had very close relationships spanning around 50 years. The customers or dealers of other divisions I don't know so well, but sometimes we do meet up or have some other kind of arrangements. Another area I really focus on is the communication between the factories. Since Liebherr is a big group, I need a lot of support from Europe and also from the managing directors of all the various factories manufacturing products for Singapore's seven divisions.

# Now that you've been a managing director for the past six years, what do you think is most important in creating effective leadership?

For me, a lot of it has to do with accountability. My approach to leadership is that my colleagues who have reached a certain level should know what they need to do professionally. I don't coach them or watch what they do on a daily basis.



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Over the years, have there been any industries that are not part of your background that you've developed an interest in as you've learned more about them?

The job allows me to learn a lot about the various industries and divisions that I'm involved in. Of course, I get a lot of information and training from my general managers who are specialists in their respective industries.

Even within the Tower Cranes business, which is my specialty area, the things we do have changed over the years. We used to just sell and provide after-sales service for the machines we manufacture. Because of changing needs and market demand, however, we have now gone one step further. For example, we are into the rental business for tower cranes, which we didn't do in the past, but it's just necessary now because the supply chain is getting shorter.

#### What strategies are you putting forward to ensure Liebherr Singapore remains competitive into the future?

I think the Liebherr Group has only a small part of its turnover in Asia - about 10 per cent. It definitely wants to do more in Asia over the next few years, so we will be investing and looking at increasing our land sites. We have a chance to buy those sites, so we are talking to the Singapore Government about them right now.

If everything goes smoothly, we should be able to do a few things. We want to increase our repair capabilities for the Aerospace Division. Currently, we have a repair shop, but we want to do more, including landing gears. Basically, we want to serve our regional aerospace customers better and maintain our service to increase the new product line at some point, such as the 350 Advance and Bombardier C Series.

We want to build Liebherr Singapore into a regional rental hub for tower cranes. We bought our dealer in Hong Kong, Shriro Machinery, three years ago. Now we have a rental fleet of about 50 units of tower cranes in Hong Kong. We want to increase that and spread it Asia-wide, beyond Hong Kong.

For the Mobile Cranes Division, we want to build a repair hub in Singapore to better serve our customers in this region. And then, in other divisions, like Appliances, we want to go into direct selling through ecommerce.

This is the plan of the group moving forward. Overall, we hope to synchronise all of Liebherr's efforts for the Asia region as well.

"LBBW is proud to have Liebherr as one of its key customers. Our cooperation over several decades is based on many shared values, such as fair and trustworthy partnership and innovation. We look forward to continuing this successful collaboration. Landesbank Baden Wurttemberg

# Friendly waters

Patrick Tan has grown his water tank supply company by treating staff members like family and suppliers like friends.

WORDS DANIEL HERBORN . IMAGES YEW KWANG

ith clients across Singapore's extensive condominium market and footholds in the construction of residential buildings, shopping malls and factories, Hydro Dynamic Engineering has made its name supplying water tanks. It has become known for its reliability, cost-effectiveness and ability to provide environmentally sound water-storage solutions. It also offers extensive after-sales service such as cleaning and inspections.

Managing Director Patrick Tan started the company after a series of frustrations. "I went into a Japanese trading company but, a couple of years later, the economic crisis happened and they decided to wind up, so I was retrenched," he recalls. He joined another company, but again they parted ways due to circumstances out of his control, in this case mismanagement at senior levels.

Deciding to take his fate into his own hands, he established Hydro Dynamic Engineering in 2004, initially focusing on water tanks for domestic use and firefighting applications. The early years of being self-employed were marked by hard graft. "When I started the company, it was a one-man show," Patrick explains. "I was covering everything: sales, delivery, administration, paper work, invoicing customers. It saw me working every day to 2am or 3am." »





After about two years of this gruelling workload, Patrick had a chance meeting with an ex-colleague from the trading company where he had worked before. "I asked my friend whether she'd found another job, and she said she hadn't started looking yet, so I asked her if she'd like to join me," he says.

storage tanks for chemicals, ultrapure and pure water tanks, as well as waste-treatment tanks.

Patrick says Hydro Dynamic's willingness to put itself in the end user's position is a selling point. "In business, it's more an interrelationship. I was in this industry before I started my own business, so I already had a pool of regular customers who trusted me to deliver the product. When

#### "When I started the company, it was a one-man show. I was covering everything."

they came to know that I was starting my own business, they all supported me. I still believe the

Patrick and his friend worked out of his home for another year, then moved into an office where they brought in a third employee. Another step forward followed in 2007 when they rented a 500-square-metre property where they could house water tanks and storage units alongside the office space. Along the way, the company branched out into high-density polyethylene (HDPE) tanks for chemical storage, as well as rain water tanks, fiberglass-reinforced polyester (FRP)

main difference I offer is the personal connection and the responsibility I have to my company.

"Today, we have acquired our own storage place to hold stock that lets us offer instant supply, as we have committed ourselves to after-sales service and customer support. This is a major reason why customers still prefer to work with us."

Patrick also believes face time is invaluable; he makes a point of visiting each supplier once a year and hosting them when they come to Singapore. He also keeps them up to date about the constantly evolving regulations set by Singapore's Public Utilities Board. "If something has to be



Heng Lee Composite Engineering Sdn Bhd, one of the major Fiberglass Reinforced Plastic (FRP) products manufacturers in Malaysia, is ISO 9001:2015 certified. We provide full after-sales support and timely training to enhance our competency and ensure good quality. Over the years, the company has been given a mandate to supply a wide range of FRP products to various core industries such as the electronics sector, water plant & waste treatment industry, and the housing development sector.

We would very much like to express our gratitude to Hydro Dynamic, one of our best business partners.

Congratulations on your success!



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certified or something has to be changed to meet a new standard, we will discuss this with our manufacturers and request them to change the product in accordance with the new requirements."

In addition to meeting these regulatory standards, securing green certification is important to Hydro Dynamic. In 2005, Singapore launched a Green Mark Scheme to raise awareness of sustainability and to incentivise environmentally friendly construction through rebates. This is something that Patrick says aligns with the aims of his company.

"We are transitioning towards using Green Mark-certified products. That is something we are currently discussing with our manufacturers. The certification is based around using less water and using recyclable products, and this is what we have always sought to do. In fact, when we replace a water tank, we also bring the whole tank to scrap. When we dispose of a fibreglass tank, we do that with a proper plan, and they are made with Green Mark certification as well."

Patrick now has 10 staff, many of whom he was acquainted with before they joined Hydro Dynamic. His main supervisor, for instance, is someone he knew from construction sites the company supplied tanks to. "I've been working with him for a couple of years and I like his attitude, so I invited him to join me."

Patrick has instilled a cooperative, collegial style in the company which, he says, made

the transition to delegating work easy after he had initially worked across every aspect of the business. "I like to be friendly, approachable and responsive to my colleagues. I try to understand their needs. What I always do with my staff is treat them like a family; then they will stay longer."

Employee loyalty is repaid with company dinners and even an annual company-sponsored holiday for all employees, who are off to Bangkok this year. "I'm fortunate that my staff are all as motivated as I am and that they're very friendly and approachable," Patrick reflects. "They're very open. We're like a family."

As a small company, Patrick believes, Hydro Dynamic can offer more personalised service than larger competitors. This personal touch should encourage loyalty as the company moves into new areas. It is currently exploring additions to its product range to remain competitive in the domestic market as well as selling water-treatment systems and cooling tower systems. "I believe the customer follows the salesperson rather than the company," Patrick says.

"When my customers introduce my company to their friends, they always say, 'If you need a water tank, ask Patrick.' They never say, 'If you need a water tank, go to Hydro Dynamic.' A company can be any company, but it's your relationship with the customer that will always be with you wherever you go."







# GETTING SOCIAL

WITH -

CHINA

With social media booming, international firms based in China are trying to engage with the likes of Weibo and WeChat. But it's very different in the West and presents unique challenges for newcomers.

WORDS • SAM MCKEITH



solid social media strategy is a critical marketing tool for companies worldwide keen to succeed in today's rapidly changing business landscape.

It's even more important for firms that want to break into the Chinese market given the nation's love affair with social media.

There are estimated to be at least 889 million monthly active users on local social media platform *WeChat*, with 96 per cent of all social media platforms being engaged with via smartphones.

The popularity of social media here means that firms able to gain traction on heavily trafficked platforms, like *Weibo* and *WeChat*, can gain a big edge over their competitors in this lucrative market.

#### WESTERN SOCIAL MEDIA WORKS VERY DIFFERENTLY

Social media here varies markedly from the West where Facebook, Twitter and Instagram rule, according to Matt McDougal, founder of digital marketing agency Digital Jungle. Local authorities' block on platforms of giant Western social media outlets has naturally led to the growth of uniquely Chinese apps, which global companies may find tricky to navigate in business terms.

While WeChat seamlessly integrates ecommerce and social media, enabling consumers to communicate, pay bills and even book taxis and buy movie tickets within the platform, the West simply has no single equivalent. Another challenge for international companies trying to gain traction here is the lack of experience and understanding of how WeChat works to

enable vendors to sell to consumers directly via its built-in payment system.

Weibo is the other platform presenting issues for Western business, as on the surface it may seem similar to popular news and networking service *Twitter*, but its influencer component is something that is only recently being exploited and therefore hasn't gained as much traction as in China. Micro-blogging platform *Weibo* has a vast audience – some 361 million monthly active users – and the popular way for our netizens to follow celebrities and influencers, as well as keep up with current affairs, has huge appeal and potential for companies new to the region.

While WeChat and Weibo are the most popular platforms, others with strong followings, including Renren, Youku Tudou, DianPing, and Douban, may present good options for global brands to consider making early inroads with.

#### UNDERSTAND THE CONSUMER

McDougal says while it's key for businesses to gain familiarity with these big social platforms, it's also critical to understand the local user. "The way that Chinese consumers use social media is quite different to the way Westerners do," he says. "From a business perspective, Western companies can underestimate the power of social commerce because their experience of it is that it's not that strong.

"You have to understand who you're trying to reach through social, understand their touch points, how the audience consumes, and then create stories from a brand and user perspective to pique interest."

One key consumer difference, McDougal stresses, is that, locally, people tend only to trust brands that are

verified by social platforms, and this a concept that's entirely foreign to Western investors.

The danger for a company trying to gain a following if it does not get official verification, he says, is that it risks being viewed as a fake. "Some international businesses that I work with underestimate the need for it, but then find it difficult to get engagement because no-one believes there's a real brand behind the name."

#### START SMALL. AIM BIG

Another way foreign companies try to establish a robust social presence is to target cities other than Beijing and Shanghai. China Connex's Lewis Jones says this can help businesses test their strategy and build a local base from which to grow their presence. Jones, who founded the digital and social media company with Minwen Huang, says rolling out a strategy in Tier 2 or Tier 3 cities often pays dividends, for less spend.

"It might be a place where you can get a brand name established," says Jones, who is also a director at consultancy Orient Partners. "If you can find the right demographic, then you can go and find someone who's a big deal in, say, Chengdu in Sichuan, and engage with them. In the greater Chengdu area alone, there are 25 million people, so you've doubled your potential market from the entire nation of Australia."

Jones says that while KOLs (key opinion leaders) are central to many social media successes, foreign companies shouldn't rush to roll out across social platforms, even with appropriate influencers on board.

"You might have an influencer with a decent following in one major city, and then you might be able



to start using people who are more influential in the bigger cities, which are more saturated. But first you want that feedback on what's working with your brand."

#### THE RIGHT PARTNER

Foreign businesses should also be wary of consultants who promise to help their firm break into the region with quick fixes, says ThoughtWorks' Ange Ferguson.

Ferguson, who's the software development company's Asia–Pacific managing director, says such one-size-fits-all packages usually lead to ineffective social strategies because they lack adequate creativity.

"Many businesses with ambitions to crack the market quickly and easily are trapped by one of the many offers out in the market, such as 'one week to have your website translated into Chinese', or 'get onto Alibaba and start selling'."

A better approach, Ange says, is a social media strategy that manages what she describes as the entire "customer loop". This involves supporting your *Weibo*, *WeChat* and other channels with other marketing tools. "Managing a local social media channel inevitably requires a cross-functional team that includes expertise from marketing, digital, creative, retail and more," Ferguson adds. "Building an in-house team to execute this is a challenge for businesses and another reason why working with a partner with the right expertise and experience is more cost-efficient and effective."

#### **CENSORSHIP IS REAL**

Meow Media Managing Director Lindsey Sun notes that any discussion of global brands engaging with social media in China has to take censorship into account. Sun, whose digital marketing agency specialises in helping Australian entrepreneurs do business in the region, says setting up on a platform, and publishing content, are both impacted by strict government rules.

For instance, in relation to *Tencent Video*, she says firms must provide a raft of documentation before they can get access. "[It] requires the submission of comprehensive personal details, including a photo of the creator holding their national identity card. The creator's face and the National ID card number must be clearly visible in the photo submitted."

Companies should also be smart about what they publish, especially relating to topics that could damage the "honour of China" or disturb social order. Sun says care should also be taken to avoid using social channels to incite "illegal assembly, association, procession or demonstrations" – the penalty can be severe.



# From CORN to CONSTRUCTION

Born from humble agricultural beginnings more than 90 years ago, Limketkai is now a leading household name among the Philippines' agri-manufacturing and real estate development industries.

WORDS HOLLY JOHNSON . IMAGES JASPER SALCEDA

hen Alfonso Lim took over the reins of his family's business in 1980, he had an entrepreneurial spirit, an eye for growth and a legacy to uphold. As Chairman and CEO of Limketkai Manufacturing Corporation (LMC), Alfonso's hard work and determination have seen the company grow from a small agricultural business into the Philippines' largest manufacturer of corn products, while sister company Limketkai Sons Inc. (LKKS) became the region's leading real estate developer.

It all started in 1927 when the family patriarch, Lim Ket Kai, began acting on his dream of agricultural progress in his humble hometown of Cagayan de Oro in the Philippines. The business soon expanded into the trading and exports of agricultural commodities, and in 1965 began milling to produce corn grits and flour, animal feeds,

copra and, eventually, corn and coconut oil, margarine, shortening products and other edible oils. More than 90 years and three generations later, this dream is now a legacy that spans multiple businesses and industries.

Alfonso graduated from the Mapua Institute of Technology in 1963 with a bachelor's degree in mechanical/textile engineering. "Soon after college, I set up an engineering firm with some of my schoolmates. However, a year later, my father asked me to join his business - an electronics manufacturing company - where I started as a salesman and was quickly promoted to sales manager. I was then transferred to our family's agri-manufacturing business as the Manila branch manager where I assisted my father and elder brother, Florentino, who was then the executive vice-president. I served as the company's corporate strategist and planner."

In 1966, the growing businesses were consolidated as Limketkai Sons Inc., while »



the manufacturing division was spun off into Limketkai Manufacturing Corporation in 2000. As the holding company, LKKS refocused on mainly real estate developments. "When my father and my brother Florentino "Be prepared for danger, even in times of safety."

passed away in 1972 and 1973, respectively, my eldest brother, Macrobio, assumed the presidency and board chairmanship while I took over as executive vice-president," says Alfonso. "But after a few years, I assumed the president and CEO role of the company, and later took over as chairman of the board.

"Other siblings have also assumed management positions to take care of the family businesses." With six brothers and two sisters, Alfonso explains how they have professionalised their relationships to avoid any conflict of interest. "We have a rule that each member of the family is only allowed one of their respective family members to participate actively in the business," he says. "Each member holds a key position to ensure our duties and responsibilities don't overlap.



And our board of directors is responsible for resolving any personal or professional issues."

Alfonso's business philosophy and management culture is a blend of Chinese wisdom and Western concepts. "I lead by example. I demand excellence from myself, and I expect my organisation to strive for excellence and to perform at its best," he says. "To maintain our lead in the industry, we must stay informed, reassess ourselves, innovate new products, and upgrade and expand our facilities. Alfonso mentions one Chinese proverb in particular that guides the way he does business, which roughly translates to 'Be prepared for danger, even in times of safety." I am a strategist at heart," says Alfonso. "I meticulously plan every business venture, always making adequate provisions for long-term eventualities. That's my nature.

"When I sensed new opportunities for growth and expansion, I diversified into real estate and established the Limketkai Centre, a 40-hectare commercial and business district

development strategically located in the heart of metropolitan Cagayan de Oro." Housed within the centre is the region's largest shopping mall and the 18-storey, five-star Limketkai Luxe Hotel. Under construction now is a 10,000-square-metre casino, linked to the hotel. With completion expected in January 2019, Alfonso firmly believes, the casino will further enhance the city's status as a world-class urban metropolis for domestic and foreign tourists. "Over the years, the family's businesses have grown tremendously. Our board of directors has acknowledged my contribution to the Limketkai Group's impressive growth, recognising my hard work, dedication and foresight." Alfonso was commended for pioneering investments in corn silo storage with drying facilities, for his innovative strategies in corn oil extraction from corn bran and corn mill modernisation. as well as for the success of the landmark Limketkai Centre.

The group's manufacturing arm, LMC, operates several milling, refining and »



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manufacturing plants, grain drying and storage facilities, and distribution centres throughout the Philippines. "We now have a comprehensive distribution system developed from decades of operational experience," says Alfonso. This built-up network covers the whole Philippine archipelago with strategic sales offices and regional distribution warehouses in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao, encompassing all trade channels in support. "We are currently in the process of expanding our oil refinery operations, and building a new site in Luzon to supply China's export market and meet the strong demand in Luzon and Metro Manila," explains Alfonso. "This site enables us to increase our refined coconut oil production capacity while operating at a lower logistical cost compared with the present system, where products must

system, where products m be shipped long-distance from Cagayan de Oro to Metro Manila.

"The Philippines' manufacturing sector is burgeoning and our manufacturing scope has expanded significantly," says Alfonso.
Manufacturing comprises

Manufacturing comprises more than half of the Philippines' industrial sector and accounts for almost a quarter of the country's GDP. LMC currently enjoys 12 per cent of market share in the edible oils industry, of the more than 20 industry players in the Philippine market, and dominates the region's corn retail market by 70 per cent. "We remain committed to products of the highest quality, and we regularly upgrade our facilities and operations," he says. As the largest manufacturer of corn products in the

"We are proud to be one of the partners of the Limketkai Group, witnessing today their success under the leadership of Alfonso Lim. Our relationship started more than 40 years ago and has since then grown continuously with expansion." – K K Khoo, Managing Director, Desmet Ballestra (SEA) Pte Ltd

Philippines, LMC practices stringent quality

control. "Through prudent leadership and effective management strategies, we continue to make inroads into the edible oil market previously dominated by rival international brands," says Alfonso. As a result, the company has become the Philippines' leading quality edible-oil provider, under its Marca Leon, Frito Plus and Mazola brands.

LMC places a strong emphasis on innovation to become more productive and competitive. "Over the past 10 years, we have adjusted to the changing consumer market by introducing new product lines such as shortening and margarine for the bakery market," says Alfonso. "We have also expanded our corn products from animal feeds to food applications such as corn grits for staple foods, breakfast cereals and snack foods,

as well as beer products for the institutional market.

"We continue to

make inroads into

the edible oil

market previously

dominated by rival

international

brands."

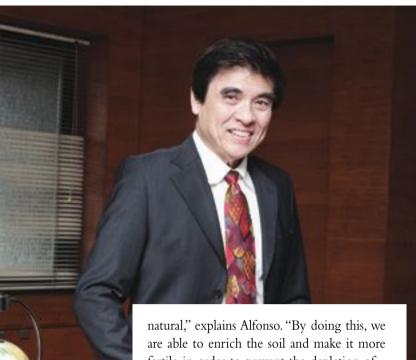
"LMC has introduced coconut oil to the institutional market for their manufacture of filled milk, ice-cream and spreads. We have also entered the budding Chinese market, where we have begun to export our coconut oil."

The emergence of a

The emergence of a health-conscious market prompted the production of a variety of lifestyle organic products.

"We tapped into this trend by producing our own brand of 100 per cent organic coconutsap sugar, made from local flowering coconut trees, under the brand Sorel Coconut Sap Sugar," says Alfonso.

The company prides itself on being a responsible corporate citizen, committed to creating value for the community and upholding sustainable practices. "In manufacturing Sorel, our subsidiary company, Tropical Organic Harvest Philippines Corp., is committed to the quality of its products by practising organic agriculture: a holistic process where we make sure that our farmlands and crops are non-GMO and all



natural," explains Alfonso. "By doing this, we are able to enrich the soil and make it more fertile in order to prevent the depletion of natural resources." This is confirmed by the stamp of approval that Sorel coconut sugar has received from USDA Organic and the Food and Drug Administration of the Philippines, as well as from the Halal-, Kosher- and Ceres-certifying agencies.

Alfonso is focused on several key areas for growth across his real estate and agrimanufacturing companies. "Given the enduring success of the Limketkai Centre and Limketkai Luxe Hotel, we are confident of launching a hotel chain, shopping mall and other similar undertakings in Metro Manila and surrounding growth areas," says Alfonso. Currently, there is a remarkable demand for residential condominium units in Cagayan de Oro City, which has grown to a daytime population of around one million people and a regional population of 4.5 million.

"The city is the financial, educational and political centre of northern Mindanao, with people visiting for business and academic pursuits as well as entertainment, recreation and government transactions," explains Alfonso. "We intend to capitalise on this popularity by developing 11 high-rise residential towers in the Limketkai Centre."

In its manufacturing division, LMC is expanding its corn storage and post-harvest corn-drying facilities at Bukidnon to increase the stockpile during harvest season. It also plans to expand its coconut oil refinery complex in the Philippines in tandem with its oil storage logistics centre that is based in Shanghai, China.

"This centre will have complete pier facilities, which are currently under construction, as well as a cold-storage warehouse to accommodate Philippine tropical food product imports – another exciting new business venture for us," says Alfonso. "We are also looking to join the envisioned Maritime Silk Road section of China's 'One Belt, One Road' initiative, to tap the huge and growing market there," he adds. Aimed at providing new infrastructure and economic aid to in-need countries, the scheme will connect 70 countries across Eurasia, Africa and Oceania through two routes – one overland and one maritime.

If its diverse and accomplished history is anything to go by, the Limketkai Group is looking at a promising future with Alfonso at the helm.

"Complacency is our greatest challenge. As a company, we must always aim to move forward and not rest on our laurels," Alfonso concludes, his eye firmly on the future.

Nowhere are the effects of the Philippines' sustained economic growth more apparent than in the construction industry, which is benefiting from pent-up demand and a positive outlook for future growth. This momentum has driven the industry to one of the highest growth rates in the country, with the Philippine Statistics Authority reporting growth of 11% in 2014, 10.4% in 2015 and a jump to 14.6% in 2016.

Source: The Report: The Philippines 2017 by Oxford Business Group.

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Fat Pretreatment
Fat Hydrogenation
Fat Splitting

Sweetwater Treatment Sweetwater Concentration Glycerine Distillation/Refining

Fatty acids Distillation
Fatty acids Fractional
Distillation
Fatty acids Dry Fractionation
Fatty acids Hydrogenation

#### **FATTY ALCOHOLS**

Fatty acids Esterification Methylester Hydrogenation Fatty alcohol Refining

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Purification Concentration Glycerine Distillation/Refining Detergents
Surfactants
& Chemicals

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#### Non ionics

Ethoxylation/Propoxylation Alkanolamides

#### **Amphoterics & Cationics**

Betaines Esterquats Aminoxides

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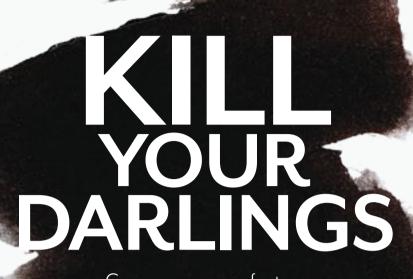
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Consumers move fast, so you need to move faster if you want to stay ahead.

WORDS • FIBENDALL

here is a popular phrase among fiction writers, attributed to the English author Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch: "Kill your darlings."

That's exactly what Netflix CEO Reed Hastings did in 2011 when he spun off the still extremely profitable DVD-by-mail part of the Netflix business and turned it into a thing

Hastings showed an appreciation for the unravelling story of digital transformation and the need to ruthlessly shed dead skin when required. Netflix could have clung to its DVD business while trying to gear up for the disruption to come as streaming services gained traction among consumers, but instead Hastings embraced the Red Queen Hypothesis of evolving in order to survive. The brand launched its streaming service in Canada in 2010 and Hastings could see from its success that this was the way of the future. He saw DVD-by-mail was an anachronism in the making, so the only thing left for him to do was move faster than any of his competitors to make streaming happen.

"In 2010 or 2011, out of 30 VPs, we had five people who were still focused on DVDs. We had to kick them out of the executive team meetings because we needed to eat, sleep and breathe streaming," Hastings told LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman in an interview.

Having been the industry disrupter that put Blockbuster to the sword, Netflix was now disrupting its own business model in order to stay ahead. It was reinventing itself in direct response to advances in digital streaming technologies and consumer broadband uptake. It wanted to be where its customers were going before they got there. Netflix could not afford to drag with it the operational costs or cultural baggage of the DVD part of its business. It had been working on streaming since the early 2000s, but the technology was finally in place along with the audience numbers to make the model work.

Consumers move fast; Netflix had to move faster.

called Qwikster, which died a quick death.

Hastings knew that for effective digital transformation, Netflix would have to consider the way its operations, culture and business model would be changed. All three of those elements had to be



opened up and re-imagined in a way that put the customer front and centre.

With Netflix as the streaming home of TV blockbusters like Mad Men, Breaking Bad and House of Cards, its CEO could appreciate the power of a strong narrative. The digital transformation narrative is continually evolving, with twists and turns few of us can predict. Major plot points like the Internet of Things, augmented and virtual reality, Al and automation, and Big Data analytics are all in play. Furthermore, blockchain and cryptocurrencies look set to reshape industries such as banking, finance and insurance.

There is no hiding from digital transformation. Companies that still silo digital or lump it in as part of some innovation division are missing the boat by a long way. These companies are misunderstanding the fact that digital by its very nature has the power to entirely alter the core structure of an organisation, whether that is through customer engagement (via things like social media), operations (think optimisation through data analysis), or business model (moving from selling products to creating platforms and networks for services).

#### **ARE YOU EVOLUTION READY?**

Companies that want to leap ahead of the pack when it comes to digital transformation have to consider these seven areas:

**Business model** Are you selling a product or a service? Are you creating value for customers through a platform that allows third-party services to grow and share profit? Can you turn one-off products or services into subscription-based models?

**Operations** Are you using all the data available to your business to improve and optimise systems and processes? Can you implement Al and automation to take care of lower-end operational matters in order to free up your staff to provide higher-end value to your customers? Will a shift to IoT-enabled machines improve safety and reliability in operations?

Talent and skills Are you doing all you can to attract digital-literate employees who are passionate about embracing transformation? Is the culture of your company truly open to innovation and agile modes of development?

Data Have you developed a data plan that progresses from simple collection and storage of data through to analysis and output? Are you testing outcomes against your data? Are you modelling innovations such as potential new business models against available data?

Measurement Are you measuring the effects and outcomes of digital initiatives, or clinging to outmoded KPI measures that fail to tell the full story? Are your metrics failing to capture the collateral damage or benefit of digital transformation? Are you measuring customer outcomes or are you fixated on employee surveillance?

Security Digital does not come without risk or cost. Are you mitigating the risks that come with digital transformation by continual investment in cybersecurity measures?

Stakeholders Are you communicating the importance of digital transformation to stakeholders such as the board and investors? If your stakeholders are not informed and persuaded by your digital transformation case, it will soon flounder. Don't rely on technology to sell itself. Know your digital transformation story and sell that narrative. Make your stakeholders understand the value it will create for customers.

Hastings took a chance at Netflix by relegating its DVD operation to the dustbin of history. He killed his darlings, so to speak. Businesses that want to leap ahead of the digital curve need to think across business models, operations and culture. You need to be ready to invest, but also to divest. You need to look at the full gamut of technology available to you, empower your people, and aim to bring value to customers in ways you may not have done in the past. Businesses need to be where their customers will be. Digital can help them get there fast. •





# The part and the purpose

Three generations have worked together to make Kian Hua Motor one of the largest providers of European car parts.

WORDS HOLLY JOHNSON . IMAGES YEW KWANG

n 1970, one family set out to make authentic car parts more accessible to mechanics in Singapore. Nestled in the heart of Little India, they began distributing French brand-name parts – Renault, Peugeot, Citroën and Simca. Windscreen and door glasses were soon added to the expanding inventories, and SEAT and Rover brands followed in the 80s. Today, Kian Hua Motor is one of the largest stockists of European brand-name car parts such as Volkswagen, Audi and Fiat, distributing both authentic and original equipment manufacturer (OEM) items. Still in the same family, the company is now led by second-generation Managing Director Michael Ng, who prides himself on delivering quality and variety to his customers.

"I joined the family business to work in operations after I'd finished my education and my time serving in the army. I have always had a love of cars and a curiosity as to which components can be used to improve their function, so that's what drew me to the spare parts business," says Michael. "Since becoming managing director in 1995, I have implemented my plan for expanding the company to reach new markets. As we grew, we were forced to purchase extra warehouses before deciding to build our own premises in 2012."

Completed in 2014, the Kallang integrated stocking and distribution centre makes for a faster response time and more efficient operation. Kian Hua Motor has developed an extensive supply-chain network and multimodal transportation system to serve the growing needs of its local and international customers. "Our business is highly dependent on exports," says Michael. "The motor spare parts market in Singapore is getting smaller, with the limited car population as Singapore encourages people to change cars after 10 years of use.

"The size of the island is another key factor," he adds. "Typically, people live close to work, so their mileage is much lower than for cars overseas. This drives down the need for spare parts in Singapore. However, because we operate in an open and duty-free economy, we are competitively positioned in the overseas market." »





Kian Hua Motor's global supply-chain infrastructure is equipped to handle the large, worldwide consignments of goods. "What sets us apart is our variety. We give customers the widest range - from our first-tier products to our genuine and OEM parts," says Michael. "Our greatest turnover is overseas, which has presented a number of obstacles. Global business recessions have hit us hard, and we have had to overcome several fiscal challenges due to fluctuations against the Singapore dollar as we import and export to locations across the world," explains Michael. "Nevertheless, we have survived by working closely with our customers and suppliers in coming up with a plan of action. These challenges have brought us closer together.

"The political and economic instability of our overseas markets means we are currently exploring the opportunity to branch out to produce even more European car brands. We are still in the process of looking at the different criteria that must be met before we can launch in the market with a fully stocked inventory."

Over the next three to five years, Michael hopes to increase the company's turnover by double digits while improving the efficiency of its operations team through technological

### KIAN HUA MOTOR PROVIDES PARTS TO:

Audi

Volkswagen

Renault

Peugeot

ŠKODA

Citroen

Opel

Fiat

**SFAT** 

Porsche



advancements. "Such innovations are made possible by my two sons, who joined the business in 2005 and 2010. Together, we are working towards our dream of having a full-scale, functional operations team," says Michael. "Although I'm not IT trained, my sons bring significant IT knowledge to the company, spanning inventory and processing to sales and marketing. We hold regular meetings where specific targets are laid out and incentives are provided to boost morale and encourage the team to meet their goals.

"We are in constant, two-way communications with our suppliers, finding out about the latest products and at the same time giving them feedback in terms of market preferences and price competitiveness in each market," says Michael. "This communication is highly beneficial in giving our suppliers an understanding of how we work and in which markets we are succeeding most.

"In terms of service, we don't just sell to our customers; we share our knowledge. Spare parts are becoming increasingly complicated with the number of technologies introduced by car makers. There is more differentiation than ever before between the part and the purpose, so we are there to assist our customers in making the right choice in terms of procurement and stocks," explains Michael. "My father taught me to work hard, be hands-on, and always aim to improve myself and my business. Only with that attitude are you able to lead and become a competitive force within the industry."



# YET TO BE TAKE

Luigi Bautista is fixing Southern Luzon's road network, one project at a time.

WORDS ADRIAN FLORES . IMAGES JASPER SALCEDA

uigi Bautista knows every last detail of each project under his supervision like the back of his hand. The President and CEO of Metro Pacific Tollways South can recall with pinpoint accuracy the distance of certain segments of toll roads. Take, for example, the Manila-Cavite Expressway (CAVITEx for short), a 14-kilometre toll road that connects the City of Manila to Parañaque in southern Metro Manila and extends further south to the Cavite province. Luigi had already spent 18 years working on projects in the North Luzon Expressway (NLEx) before being assigned to oversee CAVITEx after the company took control of the toll road in 2013. "With NLEx being very successful, Metro Pacific Tollways believed that the best practices and success in the north can be harnessed and replicated as well," he says. CAVITEx became the entry point for the presence of Metro Pacific Tollways south of Manila. "We are working on projects that have been shelved or projects that have been impacted before we came in," Luigi explains. »

He first names the project on Segments 2 and 3 of CAVITEx – the C5 South Link Project. Then he mentions the Segment 4 extension. "It is a very short road. It's a 1.2-kilometre road that will seamlessly link the Cavite Expressway and the Cavite—Laguna Expressway," he says. Lastly, Luigi talks about the CAVITEx project situated on Segment 5. "It is a 9.6-kilometre road that starts from Kawit, a town in Cavite, all the way to another town, Noveleta, and ending in yet another town called Rosario."

As a stark contrast to his scarily detailed knowledge of all of Luzon's major toll roads, Luigi's three guiding principles to work and life provide a simple approach to untangling the chaos. "Number one would be to make a mark and contribution wherever you are placed. Number two, never give up on what you believe in. And number three, pray. Pray that God will bless your work," he says. "When the company or your co-workers or employees consistently see these principles in

play, they will appreciate, and will thus participate in, your plans and programs. For me, it's as straightforward as that."

Guided by simplicity to deal with the complex, Luigi very much sounds like a man with more than 37 years' experience in civil engineering. He spent the first 15 of those years in civil work construction, both horizontal (roads and bridges) and vertical (buildings). As for the other 22, Luigi has devoted himself to developing, financing, constructing, operating and managing toll roads and other related infrastructure projects. This immense wealth of experience has allowed Luigi to hone and finesse what are undoubtedly his areas of expertise: construction project management, contract negotiation, claims management, and project development - specifically, toll road infrastructure projects.

A formative project for Luigi came in 1995, when he was a member of the original team that developed and modernised the





NLEx. At the time, it was one of the first public–private partnership projects in the Philippines. "It was also the time when the financial crisis in Asia was being felt. There were no banks that were willing to touch any infrastructure project, let alone a toll road. It was like a roller-coaster ride," he recalls.

Ten years later, Metro Pacific Tollways opened the NLEx to motorists. Current tolls for using NLEx can vary depending on how much of the expressway is used, ranging from as low as 45 pesos to as high as 408 pesos. While that may sound reasonable to most, in a country where GDP per capita is approximately 22 per cent of the world average, it is still plenty of money to the average Filipino.

"When it was a toll road that was being operated by the government, it was under the Philippine National Construction Corporation, which is a government-owned-

and-controlled corporation. I think at that time, the tolls were very low, maybe a few pesos. When we opened the road in 2005, the tolls the motorists had to pay increased by about 400 per cent."

However, in a city like Manila, notorious for traffic congestion, a drive down a toll road can result in significantly less travel time than it would have taken otherwise. "If you use NLEx, you can now reach Baguio from Manila in about half the time - three and a half hours, these days - compared with about six or seven hours 10 years ago," he says. In that case, the benefit well and truly outweighs the cost. That considered, Luigi believes it is imperative the benefits of toll roads continue being communicated to motorists. "We have to let them know that when they use toll roads, it will provide travel convenience as well as a smooth and safe journey, so it can become more widely accepted." »

Metro Pacific Tollways South is just one division of Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation, which is one of many subsidiaries of Metro Pacific Investments. It has two concessions under its supervision – CAVITEx and the recently acquired Cavite–Laguna Expressway. Then there is Metro Pacific Tollways North, which takes care of the two concessions in Northern Luzon – NLEx and the Subic–Clark–Tarlac Expressway (SCTEx).

Metro Pacific Tollways also has a presence in Cebu. In March 2017, it started the selection of the design-and-build contractor for the Cebu–Cordova Link Expressway (CCLEX), an 8.5 kilometre bridge linking the island of Mactan, where Cordova is located, with Cebu City.

Lastly, there is Metro Pacific Tollways Asia, taking care of business interests in toll roads in both Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia. "While it's not a majority stake, we have good business coming along in those

'The responsibility for acquiring the right of way rests with the government. It's a very long and tedious process."

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countries," remarks Luigi. "We're also looking into Malaysia."

As might be expected, building tollways in one of the more heavily populated islands in the world, Luigi faces major hurdles when it comes to acquiring the land needed to build the roads. "The population is already dense, meaning you have to acquire land from private owners. As a private corporation, you cannot do that. It's really the government which does that, so the responsibility for acquiring the right of way rests with the government," he says.

"It's a very long and tedious process. Constructing the road itself is comparatively easy because you normally get to procure very dependable contractors. It's really the acquisition of right of way that is one of the major challenges."

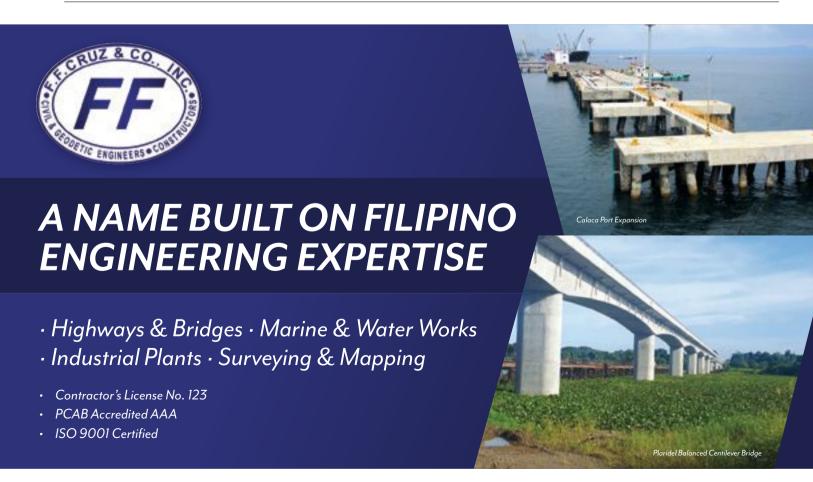
Thankfully for Luigi, the government's tender process has improved over the years. There are two methods of getting approval for a project. The first is a straightforward

bidding process, where interested stakeholders bid for the rights for a project that is already approved by the Department of Public Works and Highways. The other method is where a stakeholder conducts its own feasibility study before submitting an unsolicited proposal to the Philippine Government. Once the proposal is put up for scrutiny and meets certain criteria, the stakeholder then receives approval to undertake the project.

Regardless of which route Metro Pacific Tollways South chooses, according to Luigi, it is no longer a guessing game around what the government will do. "The rules are pretty much laid out, and if you are a meaningful proponent [for the project] you will be able to participate freely and hopefully get the project, if you do your homework," he says.

Across Southern Luzon, Metro Pacific Tollways South continues working on projects previously shelved and left undeveloped by previous owners and turning them into viable projects. »

"Metro Pacific Tollways
South, MPIC's growth arm,
are a dream client. They are
invested in the success of the
contractor, understanding that
a well-built infrastructure will
provide the greatest return on
investment. One cannot be
motivated enough to deliver
the best job for them." – AidaCruz Chinloy, Chief Executive
Officer, F.F. Cruz & Co., Inc.



It has begun construction on the C5 South Link and is constructing a flyover that will cross the South Luzon Expressway.

In addition, the Toll Regulatory Board recently approved the company's proposed extension of Segment 4 of CAVITEx. "Construction will start in conjunction with construction of the Cavite–Laguna Expressway because it is the link between Cavite and Kawit," says Luigi.

With so many projects in the pipeline, Metro Pacific Tollways South is well on its way to establishing its footprint in Southern Luzon. By 2020, it hopes to have them all complete: the CAVITEX C5 South Link, the Segment 4 Extension, and the Cavite—Laguna Expressway (CALAX).

"As far as I'm concerned, my mandate from Metro Pacific Investments Chairman MVP Manny V Pangilinan and Metro Pacific Tollways Corporation CEO Rod Franco is to grow the toll road business in the south. Hence, if it works for me to look at One project proposal is to provide faster journeys to Tagaytay, a Southern Luzon holiday town that is very popular with Filipinos.

abandoned roads and see whether we can turn them into real projects, and if it's viable, then we do it. If not, we will have to look for other projects to develop," says Luigi.

One such recent project proposal aims to provide faster journeys to Tagaytay, a holiday town in Southern Luzon very popular among Filipinos. Last July, Metro Pacific Tollways





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South submitted another proposal to build a 46-kilometre road, to be called the Cavite—Tagaytay—Batangas Expressway, with an estimated cost of around 22.5 billion pesos.

"In the past couple of years, we've noticed that travel time to Tagaytay has increased from one hour to about two and a half hours, especially on weekends. If you're coming down by around lunchtime, it can take around three to three and a half hours, so I thought, 'Surely there must be a better way,'" Luigi says.

"The proposal is currently being studied by the Department of Public Works and Highways, and what we wanted to do there, if we get approval, is to build it in conjunction with construction of the Cavite—Laguna Expressway. That way, we can create a major thoroughfare that can bring people to Tagaytay in a very short time."

Ever since joining the NLEx project nearly two decades ago, Luigi has considered it a privilege to be a part of an enterprise to provide Filipinos with a fast and safe travel



experience and some order in the chaos of Luzon roads. "To be given another opportunity to build more legacy projects like NLEx, that for me is a privilege and a blessing," Luigi concludes. "After these projects are built and used, I will feel proud that I have been able to contribute something useful for the country."

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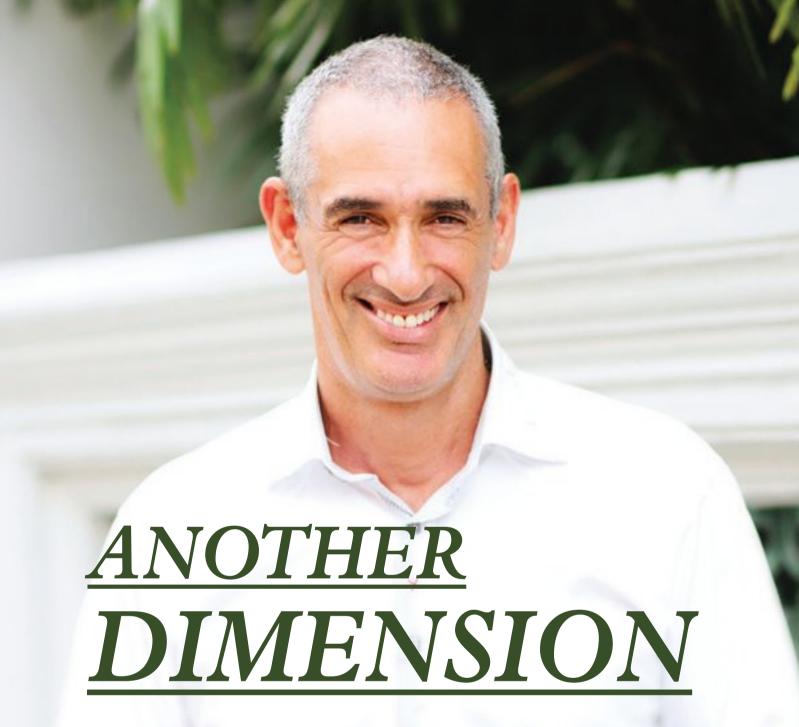
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Armed with a passion for innovation and a love of helping people, Lavi Lev is helping Ultra Clean Technology to break new ground.

WORDS SIMONE HENDERSON-SMART • IMAGES ULTRA CLEAN TECHNOLOGY

ong before he began his role as President
Asia for Ultra Clean Technology (UCT),
Lavi Lev was a leader in innovation.
Having completed his studies at the
Israel Institute of Technology (Technion)
and a five-year stint with National
Semiconductor, Lavi left his homeland and headed for
the world's most famous innovation hub: Silicon Valley.
"I started my career in the chip-design industry,"

he says. "I worked for companies like Intel, where I led the circuit design for the first Pentium microprocessor; and Silicon Graphics and Sun Microprocessors, where I designed the first UltraSparc microprocessor. I was also involved in the design of the first Nintendo and Sony PlayStation gaming consoles' processors." After that, Lavi moved to computer-aided design, taking responsibility for the US\$1-billion electronic design automation software at Cadence Design Systems, and from there



to the test equipment industry where he became the CEO of Credence Systems. All up, he spent 25 years in Silicon Valley and left with an impressive 13 US patents under his belt. Looking for fresh inspiration and a new challenge, Lavi was excited by the opportunities he could see in Asia.

"Asia is a rapidly growing area in the semiconductor manufacturing

five years, our

business in

Singapore has

grown tenfold."

industry," he explains.

"A lot of companies are moving their operations into this region, so I saw – especially in Singapore and China, where most of our business is – fantastic

business is –
fantastic
opportunities for
growth." Lavi says he
also thought that he could
bring his own skills as a life

coach to the company to help executives with this surge into the Asian market, and in training Asian executives to be more comfortable working in the broader international context. He could also feed his passion for innovation, as Singapore in particular is interested in advanced manufacturing, leading Lavi to establish what is now the largest 3D printing centre in South East Asia. "Plus, I really love the culture and the people of Asia, so it was a good fit for me personally as well," he adds.

It turned out to be a good gamble: UCT's growth in Asia was both swift and substantial. "In the past five years, our business in Singapore has grown tenfold, from a relatively small operation to what is now a multimillion-dollar operation. We have had to hire hundreds of people. And in China we grew by around 50 per cent as well.

"Hiring the best possible people and training them is actually our key to success. This enables everything because, normally, when you have that kind of people on board, they hire more good people under them, and

so on. There's a tremendous effort put into coaching them, and most of my staff in Asia are assigned a personal coach.

"I'm a certified coach myself. I'm not talking about executive coaching, like how to put a presentation together. Personal coaching is more about expanding your personality's horizon to be able to deal with people from different cultures, from various countries. For us, it's critical. So we invest a tremendous amount of effort in training and coaching staff in China, Singapore, the Philippines, wherever we have operations, to be able to bridge any cultural boundaries there might be.

"We see that when we get into heated debates about production processes and technological problems, where previously people may have received feedback that they didn't like and took things personally, they now manage to see it as an attempt to improve the company and can focus on that. It really elevates our technical day-to-day work to a much more productive level."

The investment in coaching is clearly paying dividends and, Lavi says, the teams appreciate the effort UCT is making in both personal and career development. He understands that it may not be the last job they'll ever have, but while they are at UCT they are repaying the company with extra effort.

The coaching has been a challenge, particularly as the business continues to expand in Asia, but Lavi adds that it's important that the international footprint doesn't disrupt the quality or uniformity of the service at UCT. He wants the business to be perceived as one big entity that just happens to have different manufacturing facilities around the globe.

Oh, and 3D printing. It appeals to the innovator in him. "3D printing is cool and challenging, because there are so many more unknowns," he says.



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## We see customers

South Pacific Incorporated's President and CEO Iñigo Golingay strongly believes in taking care of his customers.

WORDS SHARON MASIGE • IMAGES JASPER SALCEDA

hile the customer may not always be right, their needs are still an integral part of any business. Iñigo Golingay, President and CEO of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) company South Pacific Incorporated (SPI), knows how crucial it is to maintain positive partnerships with customers. For him, it means more than one lunchtime meeting. "It's really important to have a close relationship with customers," says Iñigo. "When I talk to a customer, I really spend time with them. I don't finish with them after having spent one hour in a meeting. I'm not happy with those kinds of discussions." Iñigo takes pride in the rapport he is able to build with his customers and considers the continuing relationship a key measure of success. "I view myself as successful when a customer has a family gathering and I am invited," Iñigo says. "I want to build a strong relationship with

customers. I want them to be comfortable and know that when they come to me, they don't need to negotiate, and that what I am giving them is fair."

An engineer by profession, Iñigo began his career at Caltex Philippines Incorporated, working in the inventory and marketing division for LPG. His marketing experience at Caltex developed his ability to handle wholesale businesses, which in turn helped him succeed in his later position at Liquigaz. When Liquigaz entered the Philippine market, Iñigo says, it had a lot of issues, but this changed when it shifted its strategy to focus on wholesale markets. "During that time, I think I was one of the people who could manage wholesale," Iñigo says. "When I transferred to Liquigaz, it only had a seven per cent market share, and then, from 2003 until the end of 2015 when I left the company, it grew to 31 per cent." At Liquigaz, the name of the game was wholesale, and large distributors controlled »





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"The Philippine industry didn't understand autogas; most cars used either gasoline or diesel."

the market. It was more of a buyer's market during that time because if the distributors were not happy, they could switch suppliers. What was happening was that these big distributors were just selling to subdistributors. But during my time, I started approaching the sub-distributors. Before, about 10 per cent of our customers controlled around 80 to 90 per cent of the volume. Later, around 60 per cent of the volume came from small markets, so we were able to have a lot of smaller customers with smaller volumes. We now rely less on the big distributors."

During his tenure, Iñigo pioneered the use of LPG (also known as autogas) in the Philippines as it was rarely used before. "I developed the autogas business here in the Philippines," Iñigo says. "The Philippine industry didn't understand autogas; most cars used either gasoline or diesel. In 2006, Chinese distributors really pushed for autogas, and Liquigaz supported them in terms of logistics and product availability. After a partnership with Chinese companies, we were then able to grow the entire autogas business in the Philippines."

Iñigo's success followed him into SPI, a partnership between Phoenix Petroleum and Republic Gas Corporation. "Both companies approached me and said that there would be a change of leadership in Liquigaz,

so I should consider building a new company for them. That's when I decided to resign and I built the entire company from scratch," Iñigo says. SPI began to grow under Iñigo's stewardship. "We started small, but we're

growing fast," he says. "Right now, our market share is 12 per cent,

> but we see our company growing to more than 25 per cent in the next two years." And at the centre of the company's operating model is its customer focus. "Since we are wholesale, it's more about relationship selling.

We see customers as king," Iñigo says. "Marketing takes a driver's seat. It is the main focal point that tries to address the requirements of the customer."

Over the next few years, Iñigo plans to expand the company's reach right across the more than 7,000 islands that form the Philippine archipelago. "We have the largest LPG storage capacity in the Philippines at the moment. Our expansion plan is to go into the smaller islands. These islands require a smaller volume, but are higher in terms of margin, so we will be expanding aggressively into these areas."

#### **FAST FACT**

South Korea is the world's largest consumer of autogas.

# Staying POWER

Serba Dinamik Group has found a way to navigate the highs and lows of a volatile market.

WORDS SIMONE HENDERSON-SMART . IMAGES SERBA DINAMIK GROUP

n our chat with the Group Managing Director and Group CEO of Serba Dinamik, Mohd Abdul Karim, there's a word that keeps cropping up: sustainability. The international energy services group provides engineering solutions to the often-volatile oil and gas and power generation industries. Riding the ebb and flow of oil prices, meeting government regulations and staying on top of technological innovation are daily challenges for Karim, but the company he co-founded 24 years ago is going from strength to strength.

One of his key strategies has been to diversify, both in terms of the business's offering and also in its geographical spread, to help buffer against the industry's highs and lows. "If you look at the oil and gas industry from when we started in 1993 to today, I would say it has gone through two cycles of economic downturn," Karim explains. "The first one was around 1997, when there was a major global economic decline. And the second was about 10 years later, when there was another downturn in terms of the economy," he says.

"As far as the oil and gas industry goes, the price of oil at the moment is fluctuating between US\$45 and US\$56 a barrel. At most, it might reach something like US\$65 per barrel. When compared with the peak of the

oil prices, where you're talking about an average of US\$100 per barrel, almost half of the value has gone.

"At Serba Dinamik, we're lucky our core competency is maintenance services. So regardless of how bad the economic downturn is, as long as factories are still operating, oil and gas platforms still producing, and the downstream plants and so on still running, maintenance is still required. So we weren't that badly affected. Yes, the volume of jobs might have decreased, and the price of the respective contracts might have reduced, but the Serba Dinamik Group operates in a broad spectrum globally. We look at countries that are still very active, and try to put more sales and development activities into those markets. We are entering into different countries so that if anything happens to one of the countries that has been contributing significantly to our revenue, it can be mitigated by another one in another part of the world."

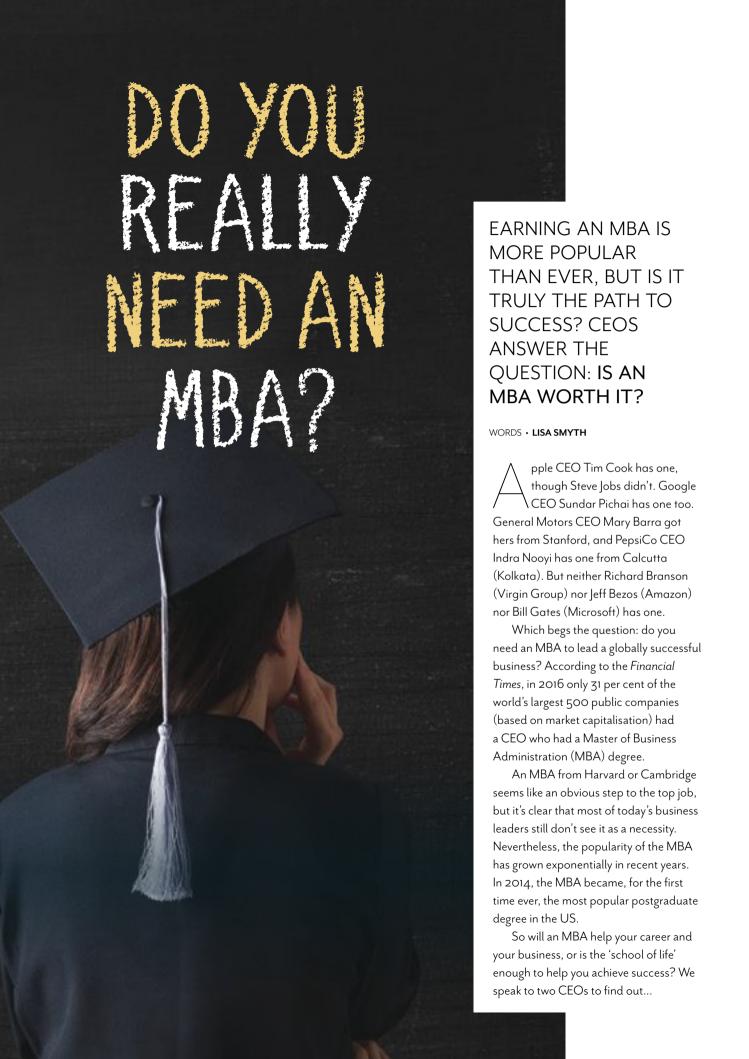
This strategy of spreading risk has helped the Group to grow, and its global presence is having a positive effect on brand perception. Karim explains: "The public mindset is that Malaysia is an Asian country, and the technologies and capabilities in Asia are still quite limited compared with those in Europe and America. Serba Dinamik has expanded



"I always emphasise to our people that we need to position Serba Dinamik as a multinational company of preferred choice," says Karim. "With that objective, we need to have a bigger global presence. At the moment, we have operations in Malaysia and Indonesia, as well as in Thailand and Myanmar. We also have a presence in six countries in the Middle East, which is contributing significantly to our revenue. Plus, we have small operations in the UK."

The Group has also recently entered the African market, securing a contract worth approximately US\$80 million in Tanzania. Karim predicts that it is here that the Group

initiatives, as the Malaysian Government moves to subsidise hydro and solar. Serba Dinamik was awarded the Green Era Award for Sustainability in 2016. It has been actively promoting the use of lowemission microturbines and has achieved ISO 14000 compliance for its environment management system. Predictably, when it comes to the award, Karim is fixated on one word: "First, if you look at the title, I would say that the word 'sustainability' is a very important one."





DR ROSALIND WILSON
CEO, FACTOR
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#### "TIMING IS EVERYTHING."

I began my career as a doctor with zero business training. After I graduated with my medical degree, I worked briefly in clinical practice, but realised I was more interested in the business side of medicine. In 1998, I was lucky to get a role with the Australian affiliate of global biopharma leader F. Hoffman-La Roche, and I spent 10 years working my way up to a senior-level position at the global HQ in Switzerland.

But, by 2004, I had reached a point in my career where I wanted to make a change, and Roche was very supportive when I enrolled in the Executive MBA program at the London Business School. I flew from Basel to London every two weeks to attend classes.

I never had any ambitions to enter the C-suite, but I discovered as a result of doing my MBA that I already had a lot of business knowledge; I just hadn't yet applied it outside Roche. The broader understanding of business I acquired doing my MBA, and the people I met, became powerful tools when I moved to a small business, and then to strategic consulting. When the opportunity arose for the CEO position at Factor Therapeutics, I believe the fact that I had a formal business qualification to complement my medical knowledge enhanced my chances, and reassured shareholders that I had the business savvy they needed.

An MBA is not a substitute for work experience, but a terrific supplement. I don't believe it would be of much value to those who have just finished their undergraduate degree – you need to be able to make sense of what you are learning – so timing is everything. Studying for my MBA gave me confidence in my abilities, and that I could handle a high-stress environment. It was definitely the right move for me.



BRETT LOUBSER
CEO, TENCENT
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Tencent is one of the
fastest-growing internet
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multiple platforms that have in
excess of 900 million users each.

#### "LEARNING NEEDS TO BE AN OBSESSION."

My first job was selling jeans at a large department store in South Africa. I wasn't quite sure what I wanted out of my career, so I drifted in and out of jobs when something sparked my interest. I worked as a draughtsman without any formal qualifications, and designed everything from kitchens to robotic parking garages.

But I began to take my career seriously when the mobile sector started to take off in 1997. I initially just wanted to play with phones, but I quickly saw how revolutionary the industry was going to be, and I manoeuvred myself into areas that had the highest potential for growth.

I learned on the job. I was obsessed with understanding the landscape and keeping on top of trends. Over the next 15 years, I worked for MTN, Nokia and Samsung. I also tried a few start-ups of my own – every failure taught me something new. I took all of it to the CEO position at WeChat (now called Tencent) in 2013, and we now have 40 staff and new, exciting products launching all the time.

My belief is that there can be huge value in an MBA in other sectors, but not in the technology domain. The landscape changes so rapidly that by the time a curriculum has been devised, what you are learning is outdated. In technology, what you need to know is right at your fingertips on the internet.

The only reliable way to stay on top is for learning to be your obsession. I don't think I could have done it any other way.

Whether your aim from day one was to lead, or your seat at the top table was an unexpected evolution, all CEOs and senior executives are the sum of their experiences. Adding an MBA to the mix might be just what you need to take the next step, or reassure a new board that you know what you are doing.

Either way, PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi said it best – "Just because you are the CEO, don't think you have landed. You must continually increase your learning."



# The RELUCTANT LEADER

Simon Kang shares his story of taking the helm of the family hardware wholesale business.

WORDS ADRIAN FLORES · IMAGES SURIWONG

ot everyone has aspirations to become a leader. But what happens when the position is thrust upon you, as in the case of Simon Kang, Managing Director of Suriwong Trading Sdn Bhd?

He took charge of the Malaysia-based industrial and agricultural hardware wholesaler following the death of his father-in-law in 2004. "I had to take on a very heavy responsibility because I no longer had a close mentor," Simon says. "I ended up having to work out for myself how I was going to bring the company to another level, to expand the business." He tells *The CEO Magazine* what he has learned.

#### The CEO Magazine: How did you first end up in the hardware business? Was it a natural progression or did you get there by accident?

**Simon:** It was totally by accident. I didn't plan on being a hardware guy. I was studying an electrical and electronics engineering degree

for three years. After those three years, I found out there weren't many opportunities for me, so I changed careers and became a salesman. Three years after that, I decided to do my own business, so when my father-in-law said he wanted to run a hardware business, that's when I made the decision.

#### What was it like learning about a completely new industry?

It was challenging, but it was a great learning experience because I started from zero. I had no knowledge about hardware products. I had zero knowledge about the customers. I also had no existing suppliers, so I had to go out and find them myself.

We started with importing products from China and Thailand, but we eventually concentrated only on Thailand because at the time I had no experience dealing with Chinese manufacturers, and I was more comfortable dealing with Thai manufacturers. That is how we started. Suriwong now promotes a lot of Thai products. »



#### Why did you find dealing with Thai importers easier than ones from China?

My educational background was at a Malay school, so it wasn't Chinese-specific and I didn't pick up Mandarin. Also, sometimes the quality of the product delivered from Chinese manufacturers was not up to the standard that we expect; that makes the products very difficult to promote here in Malaysia. So we ended up moving to Thai manufacturers because we found it easier to communicate with them.

#### What is your approach to leading people within your business?

To be frank, I don't see myself as a very good leader. But I'm doing my best to learn how to be a good manager and be a good colleague because I don't want people thinking that I have the final decision on everything. I believe I should be empowering them to make their own decisions. The company runs more smoothly that way.

Leadership should also be based around honesty. It's easy to learn about leadership from books and theory, but in real life it's very different. Every business has its own environment, culture, people, behaviours. To properly account for all of that, honesty is very important.

#### Is learning from scratch something you would recommend?

I don't say I would recommend it, but I would encourage that whatever opportunity comes along you should try your best to make it work. It doesn't mean that everybody



should start from scratch. For some people, it's pre-planned. They're fortunate that they have an older generation that has built a solid foundation in the business, so the next generation might as well take the opportunity and grow and expand the business.

Regardless of the situation, being involved in entrepreneurship is always challenging. There will always be problems, and every day there is always a hassle. You just need to be very determined and persevere.

### What other important lessons would you pass on to business owners based on your experience?

I would say we are very disciplined in managing our finance. We don't spend unnecessarily. That's why we are very careful, and the resources that we have are reinvested into the business. Then we can expand into different areas. For us, if we need to grow around US\$1 million in sales, we need to have US\$5 million of capital.

## SURIWONG'S CORE VALUES

Be Better
Be Accountable
Be Grateful
Be Inspired
Be Safe

"It has been a pleasure working with Suriwong Trading. We are driven by the same core values to create a 'Business Beyond Boundaries', and work together to achieve our common goals. This successful partnership has spanned more than 15 years and can guarantee our bright future." – Metha Phanutaiawat, Director, R.J London Chemicals Industries Co., Ltd





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## continuously ICE

Weststar Aviation has found a niche in Malaysia's oil and gas transport sector, and it refuses to compromise on safety.

WORDS DANIEL HERBORN . IMAGES YEW KWANG

eneral Tan Sri Muhammad Ismail bin Jamaluddin began his career in the Malaysian army infantry, progressing through assignments with the special forces and then working as a paratroop operator. During this time, he developed an interest and expertise in managing military technology, a field close to his current role at Weststar Aviation Services.

Established in 2008, the company began as a general aviation company and has since moved into the niche business of providing transport services to the oil and gas industry. It has assembled a cutting-edge fleet of helicopters, with a range of AgustaWestland and Sikorsky models. These helicopters all have advanced safety features, which is necessary for the offshore oil and gas exploration industry.

Since 2013, Weststar Aviation has been the number one offshore helicopter transportation services provider in South East Asia, offering services in Thailand, Indonesia, Morocco and Mauritania in addition to its home country, Malaysia. Its major clients read like a who's who of the oil and gas business including Shell, Petronas Carigali, Exxon Mobil Corporation and Malaysia's state-owned oil and gas company, Petroliam Nasional Bhd. »

General Muhammad says the company's proud safety record is its leading selling point. "We meet the clients' needs by delivering a safe and sustainable operation," he explains. "Our safety record speaks for itself. We have had no accidents ever since we started operation. A huge portion of my budget goes into the safety management systems and the training we do to enhance safety.

We continuously raise the bar. We don't accept minimum standards; we accept standards probably higher or similar to our competitors."

Weststar Aviation helicopters are equipped with a whole raft of additional safety features, including flight data monitoring, traffic

collision avoidance systems, automatic deployable ELT with navigation interface and GPS, and SKYTRAC, a satellite-based tracking and communication system. Additionally, the AW139 and AW189 models in Weststar Aviation's fleet are capable of Class 1 performance both offshore and onshore. This means that in the event of a single engine failure, they have the capacity to either land on a rejected take-off area or to continue with the flight to an appropriate landing area.

With this extensive range of safety features in place, Weststar Aviation has won 10 leading safety awards, beginning with the Silver Award from Safety Award for Excellence (SAFE) in 2009. The next year, it collected the Gold Award and the following year a Platinum Award. "Oil and gas

companies have the highest safety standards," the company's chairman, Tan Sri Syed Azman, has said. "We are proud to be able to fully satisfy their stringent requirements."

General Muhammad says safety considerations dictate that Weststar Aviation sometimes turns down opportunities. "There is always commercial pressure to bring business in, but it is a challenge if the organisation is not up to par on safety issues. We don't take shortcuts. If at any point we see something is not safe to do, we won't

do it. There have been a few lost opportunities because we felt it was dangerous to operate

in certain areas."

Weststar is
also involved in
HeliOffshore,
a collaboration,
among others,
with helicopter
operators, OGPs,
OEMs and regulators
to promote aviation
safety. "The whole
idea of HeliOffshore
is to collaborate with all
the operators, the OEMs, the

regulatory bodies, and also with oil and gas companies. We look at what best practice should be adopted to maintain a safe operation. The idea of setting up HeliOffshore is purely to collaborate and talk business; all we talk about is aviation safety."

With oil prices stagnating, General Muhammad says it has become increasingly important for Weststar Aviation to coordinate with its customers. "Our customers are now looking at creating a more cost-efficient operation and we engage with them in discussing how we can develop more efficient methods. We engage with them monthly. We have ideas on what needs to be done, and hopefully we can mesh this together with the customers' ideas and come up with more cost-efficient options." »







One example of this is a program called Power by the Hour. "For every hour one of our aircraft flies, the customers will pay us X amount of money and we will pay our vendors Y amount of money. So, the more we fly, the more money the vendors get.

"The big thing about this is that the OEMs will provide us with the spare parts and critical components for the aircraft. We don't buy them; they're supplied by the vendors. They are housed somewhere where we operate and the parts are swapped when needed. We just pay a minimal fee for housing those parts. It works very well."

In addition to working closely with its customers, General Muhammad says, Weststar Aviation will continue to examine other opportunities. Undaunted by the slowdown of growth in the sector, it aims to "expand vigorously into regional and global areas".

One possibility for expansion is in the Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) area. Weststar Aviation has been voted preferred partner for MRO by Professional Pilot magazine a number of times, although General Muhammad says the company has ruled out having a more extensive footprint in the MRO space for now. "That's a completely different business altogether," he says. "If we want synergy, the opportunities will be in the government sector. That sector requires aircraft, whether they are from the civilian government or from military or paramilitary organisations." Weststar has already made a number of proposals to the government in the aviation space, leveraging General Muhammad's military background as well as the company's core competency. "So far, we have been getting a good response," he notes. "We are moving in that direction; we are just not there yet."

The company is also evaluating new opportunities for expansion in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar.



Airframe Components Engines Modifications PBH Heli-One.com As Weststar Aviation moves into new territories, the challenges it will face will also change. "In any new region that we go into, we face two challenges. First, there are the regulatory challenges. There is a lot of regulation as far as aviation is concerned – tax law, labour law, and so on. However, those kinds of challenges can be managed.

"The second and more difficult challenge we have is in infrastructure. In most of the countries where they want to explore or develop oil and gas fields, there is insufficient infrastructure in place. If we intend to go in, we have to go in together with infrastructure; we have to build it ourselves. Otherwise, we just can't operate in those kinds of countries."

Expansion will also mean further recruitment. Finding suitably qualified pilots for the company is relatively easy, General Muhammad explains, as there are established benchmarks in place. "They have got to fly X number of hours as a captain, a number of hours offshore, and so on, and they need to have six to seven years' experience." However, he says, recruiting management staff, such as flight operations general managers, is a more complex task.

"They spend 35, 40 years in the air flying, but they don't have much managerial experience. We have to not only look at their competency in understanding aviation but also their ability in managing and leading people in the organisation."

General Muhammad says finding people with the requisite leadership ability remains a challenge. Faced with this uncertainty, Weststar Aviation will often look internally for management staff and has developed a talent management program for this purpose. "We identify people at a very early stage and see their potential. If they have the potential, then we start to develop them, bringing them to the various departments where we feel they can become good managers and leaders."



"The important thing is when we make a mistake, we determine how we can learn from it."

Weststar Aviation also looks for a real passion for the industry in those it recruits as leaders. Enjoying your job may seem largely irrelevant to maintaining safety standards, but General Muhammad says a love for aviation is vital. "This is a company that puts us under tremendous pressure all the time. It's a risky business, and we can't afford accidents. You can guess how much pressure my people are under. I tell my employees, 'No matter what, enjoy your job first. If you don't enjoy your job, you will be under tremendous pressure.'

"What I do is motivate them to be happy with the job they are in. Also, I always try to emphasise that they should not be afraid to make mistakes. In this business, a lot of people are afraid to make mistakes because mistakes can cause accidents. But we are human beings and are bound to make mistakes occasionally. The important thing is when we make a mistake, we determine how we can learn from that mistake."





## REBELLION

Joy Spence didn't know the first thing about rum when she joined Appleton Estate, but that didn't stop her from becoming the world's first female master blender.

WORDS · JOE MCDONOUGH

hen Joy Spence was studying chemistry at the University of West Indies, she hadn't even heard of a rum master blender, let alone considered it as a future occupation. "I thought I'd probably be in some sort of research environment in a laboratory," she considers. "Not in a million years would I have guessed that I'd branch out into this particular craft."

But this year, she celebrates 20 years as the master blender at Jamaican rum-maker Appleton Estate. It's a significant milestone in any circumstance, but what makes this story even more special, is the fact that Joy became the first woman to earn the coveted title, when she took over from her mentor Owen Tulloch in 1997.

"When I joined the company as Chief Chemist in 1981, I thought I would just be going there to do the analysis in the laboratory," Joy recalls. "I didn't think I'd get to touch the liquid and become a whole part of the process. I was given this amazing opportunity to be totally involved in the entire production process. It was a real eye-opener, because when I started I hadn't had so much as a spoonful of rum," she laughs. "But I fell in love with it because of its amazing and complex flavours."

Within the rum industry, Joy's glass ceiling-shattering promotion wasn't a surprise; everyone knew she had served an extensive and world-class apprenticeship. But outside of the bubble, she continues to be subjected to more than her fair share of humiliation. She can recount numerous examples of customs officers laughing in her face when she tells them she's a master blender. "To this day, they never believe I could be doing this, they think it's a joke," she says, shaking her head.

It wears thin, she admits, but the relaxed Jamaican, whose name aptly matches her affable personality, prefers to focus on the positives. "Who would've thought a woman would be in this position in a male-dominated field?" Joy smiles. "I could have found myself stuck in a lab testing on equipment, instead I fell into something that never stops exciting me."

If there were any doubts over her ability, she alleviated those concerns when she created Appleton Estate's 250th Anniversary Blend in 1999. "My first blend was supposed to just be commemorative, but it was so well-received that they decided to commercialise it, and it became the Appleton Estate Reserve Blend, which we launched in 2000."

She has released a host of top-shelf, premium aged rums since, but the pièce de résistance is her own celebratory drop, the

Appleton Estate Joy Anniversary Blend. Speaking with The CEO Magazine during her whirlwind global tour, Joy raves, "I wanted to develop a rum that would be so complex it would be appreciated not only by rum connoisseurs, but by whiskey and cognac drinkers too – it is just absolutely unforgettable. It has this amazing orange peel top note wrapped with ginger and spice, finishing with warm vanilla coffee, cocoa, butterscotch and almond notes."

Joy's passion and fearlessness has paved the way for an influx of women master blenders in the spirits industry, and she regularly visits

schools to create a clear pathway for young science students who wouldn't have otherwise considered a career in rum-making. Let's hope by the time these young women reach the same lofty heights as Joy, border security will understand that there are women master blenders too.



he 'Greatest Show On Earth' has drawn its curtains for the final time. After 146 years, US-based Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus ceased selling tickets in May, ending the era where mostly four-legged creatures took centre stage. Now it's up to us as bipeds to surprise and delight, thanks to expectations that have heightened over the years.

Crowds in the early days were far easier to entertain. The 1875 records of the Oregon Pioneer Association recall the simplicity of "the first one-tent, one-clown, one-trick pony, pioneer Oregon circus." While it shows how society has progressed in the ensuing decades, that written record (which you can see online in its original form) also gave us the term 'one-trick pony', and we've used it ever since.

How fair is it to label a supercar a one-trick pony? Well, considering this is a road car built by an F1 team, its focus is to be ridiculously fast. So, not too far off the mark, then.

McLaren is the brand in question and its heritage comprises half a century of competing in both Can-Am and

F1 while creating road cars. This rather conspicuous beast, the McLaren 570S, is the middle rung in the company's sports series, and builds on a tried-and-tested formula introduced with the seminal MP4-12C.

The 570S's layout is classic supercar: mid-mounted V8, sports suspension, two seats and rear-wheel drive. The F1 influence, though, is evident from the moment you press the start button. There's a whirr in the background and then a huge 'whap!' from the engine as it flares and settles down into a deep growl, sounding like a cornered feral cat.

Despite its V8 layout, the flat-plane crank eschews an expected syncopated beat, creating trumpeting blare more akin to F1 engines of years past. The 3.8-litre displacement belies the motor's considerable output, with the two turbochargers force-feeding fuel and air to create 562bhp and 600Nm.

The result is as you'd expect: zero to 100km/h in just 3.2 seconds and 200km/h in 9.5 seconds, only one hundredth of a second behind the McLaren Fi's benchmark time.



#### LIKE A TRAINED SURGEON WITH A SCALPEL. IT CARVES UP CORNERS IN A WAY THAT PUTS ITS RIVALS TO SHAME.

Weighing in at 1,313kg, it plays from the Colin Chapman school of weight reduction; and thanks to judicious use of aluminium and carbon fibre, its inherent strength has created a passenger cell that is almost impervious. Wrapped around the carbon cell is aluminium bodywork created via superforming, a process where metal is heated and pressed into a mould to create these complex, flowing shapes. And thanks to design chief Rob Melville's ability to draw while stuck inside a wind-tunnel, the bodywork employs passive aerodynamics to keep the car firmly planted regardless of speed.

Flick the left paddle to engage drive and the dual-clutch gearbox takes up smoothly, so in normal drive mode it's no harder to steer than a luxury coupe. In fact, apart from the visibility and how low you sit, you'd never know you're piloting a US\$302,500 supercar.

The ride is excellent too. The 570S misses out on the tricky, cross-linked hydraulic suspension that's fitted to the new 720S, but its adjustable dampers see to it that you don't feel like you're missing out. It copes with rubbish surfaces superbly – a McLaren hallmark if ever there was one – thus daily driving could be a possibility. But switch the two drive selection toggles to the right, press the Active button, and the car changes personality entirely.

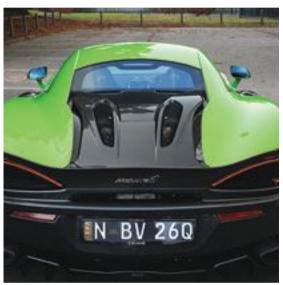
Suddenly, it's a rabbit that's been over-caffeinated, twitching its nose, ready to dart in any direction, and almost impossible to catch. The steering feels sharper, the suspension becomes rock hard, the throttle responds to any flex of the right foot, and the exhaust note becomes more urgent.

Hit your first corner in anger and the McLaren shows its true party trick - converting G-forces into grip. With a clever torque vectoring system, the 570S brakes the inside wheel as you turn, causing it to yaw without the associated roll that physics dictates. Despite the front tyres being only 255s, it never approaches understeer (or oversteer, for that matter); rather, its balance is extraordinarily neutral. That said, with 562bhp on tap, it's happy to slide if you've got the room (and the cajones) to explore.

Like a trained surgeon with a scalpel, it carves up corners in a way that puts its rivals to shame. There's no doubt, if you want to demolish a hill climb or slice through a mountain pass, the 570S will show you what the word 'fast' means.

But in daily life, it doesn't impress as much. The infotainment menu lets this car down, specifically the sat nav. It's far too slow to react to where the car actually is, meaning you'll have missed the turn you were after or picked the wrong lane before it splits off to your destination.





The interior is also very plain. Sure, you can option it up with contrast stitching and a few more speakers for the stereo (it comes with just four as standard), but there's just no 'wow' factor. McLaren could learn a thing or two from its competitors when it comes to making a car feel worth its value when you step inside.

If speed is your thing, then the 570S ticks all the boxes. But a supercar is a reward, a gift to yourself. Part of the charm is the X-factor, the intangibles that make you feel justified dropping US\$300K on your transport. McLaren has road presence nailed, but when someone says 'nice Lambo', it's a double-edged sword.

McLaren still has a way to go to put itself in the collective consciousness of the public. No-one doubts it will go fast, but a supercar needs to feel special from the moment you open those fancy doors to the moment you arrive at your destination. After all, we've moved on from the one-trick pony.



We've tracked down three of the most indulgent and luxurious destinations that also offer an experience to remember.

WORDS • SIMONE HENDERSON-SMART

#### MAHU WHENUA

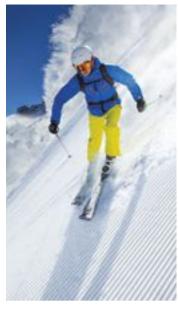
#### OTAGO, NEW ZEALAND

This vast property covers 550 square kilometres of the most jaw-dropping scenery that New Zealand has to offer. From stunning snow-capped mountain peaks, to glacial valleys, and alpine lakes and rivers, nature's beauty surrounds this very special property, which is the largest conservation undertaking on private land in New Zealand's history. The name Mahu Whenua translates as 'Healing the land', and that's precisely what the owner is attempting, with an extensive plant regeneration and bird-breeding program.

Accommodation consists of the Ridgeline Homestead, with four luxury suites for two, a sprawling farmhouse kitchen, large open living room with uninterrupted views, dining room, library, media and games room. There is also a four-berth family bunkhouse that can be booked if guests wish to have exclusive use of the lodge. Staff are on hand to attend to your every need, and all meals are included.

Highlight For the adventurous, there is an extensive offering of experiences on-site including hiking, horse riding, biking, 4WD excursions and heli-adventures (including heli-skiing). Laidback guests can enjoy the spa and massage, yoga, nature tours and lying by the pool.

Tariff Exclusive use of the property for up to 12



#### **EXPLORE**

Ski resort Queenstown is a 60-minute drive away, and is close to the famous Central Otago wineries and cellar doors that are best known for their velvety pinot noir.

Wanaka is a foodie haven, with the gorgeous lakefront home to dozens of quality restaurants, bars and cafés. Beer lovers should head straight to the Speight's Alehouse. »



#### THE SILO

#### CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Cape Town's hot, new 'it' hotel, housed in an old grain silo on the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront, is a striking combination of chandeliers and industrial chic. The giant geodesic, dome-like windows are a bold architectural statement (by Britain's Thomas Heatherwick) that let in the views across the bustling coastal capital from the sparkling Atlantic Ocean to Table Mountain. At 187 square metres, the Penthouse is vast and adds to the expanse with a private 24-square-metre balcony. Furnishings are bright, colourful and lavish, and blend modern with antique in a delightfully eclectic way. It's clear from the moment you enter the giant art- and light-filled reception area that this hotel has a strong design focus. It's sophisticated, it's contemporary, and all the other suites and rooms have either mountain, harbour or ocean views - or all three. The dining doesn't disappoint either, with menus comprising extremely well-executed, simple, seasonal dishes. Daytime diners can opt for the poolside rooftop bar, where the tempura is a standout, as is the cocktail list with an African twist. Try the Kalahari Safari: Cruxland Kalahari truffle-infused gin, with a swirl of rooibos syrup and topped with tonic.

**Highlight** Part of the same complex, the adjoining grain-storage silos are now also filled with art as the world's first contemporary African art gallery, the Zeitz MOCAA. Guests of the hotel have direct access to the museum's sixth-floor sculpture garden.

Tariff The Penthouse, bed and breakfast, is ZAR 90,000 (US\$6,350) per night.



Clarke's Burger Bar, Mother's Ruin Gin Bar, Charango and Arcade.

Kloof Street is another nearby neighbourhood dedicated to excellent food and wine. Head to Black Sheep for an ever-changing blackboard menu that's fresh and fabulous.







produce, and yes - MONA. David Walsh's Museum of Old and New Art is a breathtaking extravaganza that should not be missed. It's a short ferry ride from the Hobart waterfront that is now home to another welcome addition to the island state: MACq 01 Hotel. Modestly described as 'informal luxury', the hotel has been designed with an attention to detail and emphasis on quality that nevertheless manages to feel casual and welcoming. The waterfront suites offer views across the River Derwent, Franklin Wharf and Mount Wellington, both from the enormous windows and the private deck. Perched as it is on an ocean pier within a stone's throw of the local fishing boats, the on-site restaurant has a focus on fresh, seasonal produce with an emphasis on seafood. If you're not planning a side trip to Bruny Island (but you really should), then you can sample their famous oysters here.

**Highlight** The hotel calls itself a 'storytelling hotel'. Each room, as well as the common areas, evokes the true nature of Tasmania's cultural heritage. Artefacts abound, and there's a team of Storytellers armed with knowledge and passion to guide you via some oftchilling tales through the history of the waterfront.

**Tariff** Luxury waterfront suite from A\$1,200 (US\$910) per night.





#### **DON'T MISS**

A short walk around the waterfront gets you to some must-do daytrips by ferry:

**Bruny Island** for the local produce, especially oysters and cheese.

**MONA** for an art gallery experience like none other.

Tasman Island to experience unspoilt wilderness: sheer cliffs, waterfalls, sea birds, sea lion colonies, dolphins and whales. ■





### OPRAH WINFREY

LIMITLESS

"Passion is energy. Feel the

power that comes from focusing on what excites you."

**POWER** 

It's been said she holds so much influence she can sway elections, damage industries and turn obscure books into bestsellers. How did she get to this point?

# **PUSH YOUR**

#### BOUNDARIES

"Do the one thing you think you cannot do. Fail at it. Try again. Do better the second time. The only people who never tumble are those who never mount the high wire."

#### A TOUGH **CHILDHOOD**

"One of the hardest things in life to learn is which bridges to cross and which bridges to burn."



#### SUCCESS IS THE REWARD

"The reason I've been able to be so financially successful is my focus has never, ever for one minute been money."

#### CAREER IN BRIEF

Oprah lands her first job while still at school when WVOL hires her to read the news part-time. She also wins the Miss Black Tennessee Beauty Pageant.

#### 1983

After working as a TV news anchor, Oprah gets her big break when she moves to Chicago. Using her trademark charm, empathy and humility, she knocks top-rated Phil Donahue off his talk-show perch with her reinvention of the genre. She negotiates ownership rights, starts her own production company, and is a millionaire at 32 when The Oprah Winfrey Show gets national syndication.

#### 1985

Oprah plays Sofia in Steven Spielberg's The Colour Purple and receives an Oscar nomination.

#### 1995

Her net worth hits US\$340 million, making Oprah the only African American on the Forbes 400 list.

#### 1996

'The Oprah Effect' is born: book club 'favourites' become instant bestsellers. In 1998, Oprah tops Entertainment Weekly's list of the 101 most powerful people. Forbes names her the world's most powerful celebrity in 2005, 2007, 2008, 2010, and 2013.

#### 2007

She endorses Barack Obama, with the Governor of Illinois calling her "the most instrumental person in electing Barack Obama president".

#### 2017

Although her talk show last aired in 2011, Oprah continues to act, produce and publish, last year reprising her role as a journalist as specialist contributor on 60 Minutes. Her current net worth is estimated at US\$3 billion. ■

DON'T MISS

## The February Issue

### HE'S ALRIGHT, JACK

We get to know the man behind the Alibaba juggernaut

INSPIRING THE RUSINESS WORLD

Available from 11 January 2018

### PARADISE FOUND

The Indonesian island of Lombok presents a picture of serenity with its white sand beaches, shimmering turquoise waters and dense green forests. An enchanting journey through the winding mountain roads descends into the paradise resort of The Oberoi, Lombok.



