

AUSTRALIAN MALAYSIAN
SINGAPOREAN ASSOCIATION

Passages December 2010 Edition

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Editor's Note



Thanks for your patience for this much delayed issue of Passages. The reason for this delay is LOVE..... One of our editorial team (unfortunately not me) was passionately involved in an almost interminable series of honeymoons. Let's congratulate this loving couple

for achieving what most of us can only dream about. Now, can you forgive us for the delay?

A new AMSA team is in place since the last AGM in April. I would like to welcome our new President, Evelyn Tian and her new Exco. Evelyn hails from Singapore and was formerly with McKinsey, the world-famous US consulting company. Evelyn is currently a certified business performance consultant and master practitioner of advanced neurological repatterning. Let's all support her in her efforts to build on the legacy left behind by the past presidents, especially Dr. Bin Yap and Daniel Kwan , both of whom the Exco has retained as AMSA advisers.

Thanks to Elvan, I'm including the inspirational speech by Kalimullah Hassan. While acknowledging the problems Malaysia is currently facing, his speech embodies hope and aspiration for UTAR graduates and all Malaysians. I have condensed his speech, hopefully without affecting its flow and the essence of the message. We had met many years ago and had co-written an article on *Smart Partnership* that was published in MAS in-flight magazine.

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This issue also carries a report on our *AMSA's Australasian Annual Dinner* on 16 October , our Business Seminar on 25 September and our special dinner briefing on *Malaysian's Brain Gain* program hosted by H.E Dato Salam Ahmad, The Malaysian High Commissioner to Australia and to bid farewell to AMSA's staunch supporter, Mr.Y.C. Ong, Malaysia's Trade Commissioner on 2 Dec.

Other highlights of this issue include three business articles and two mouth-watering *nyonya kueh*. Wishing all AMSA members a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Dr. Yew Kam Keong

President's Foreword



I would like to congratulate the Passages team for adding new features to cater to a wider spectrum of readers. Passages is enriched by the number of business articles providing useful tips for entrepreneurs. It is encouraging to note that Passages has become a useful informational tool for knowledge appreciation. By capturing all AMSA events, those that have taken place and those taking place, it keeps the AMSA community well-informed.

For all our business seminars and events, we extend our invitation to other community-based social and business clubs. With this gesture, we hope to cultivate friendship, collaboration and to develop a closer bond amongst us. Together we can achieve more.

People from Malaysia and Singapore absolutely love good food, especially scrumptious nyonya food. Our 2nd Peranakan High Tea, on 24 July succeeded way beyond our wildest expectations. The bookings had to be closed 2 weeks before the scheduled date. Those who missed out, please make sure you register early for our next event. We hear you loud and clear.

AMSA's signature event the Annual Dinner held on October 16, 2010 was a sell-out too. It is a celebration of AMSA's 40th anniversary. Besides great food, captivating entertainment, every diner was a winner due to the generosity of our sponsors. I believe that we have more prizes than any other dinners.

Finally, I would like to thank all AMSA members for your support and to express my appreciation to our dedicated Executive Committee members for working tirelessly to ensure the success of every event.

Evelyn Tian
President
November 2010

AMSA Activities

Celebrating AMSA 40th Annual Dinner

Report by Evelyn Tian

In this new decade in 2010 we are celebrating the milestone of achievements on AMSA. It has come a long way to celebrate its 40th year.

While we celebrate yet another successful year for AMSA, we congratulate all past presidents and office bearers, members, sponsors, business associates and friends for their valuable contributions towards AMSA's progress.

AMSA has always been, and will continue to be a much recognized independent, non-profit, non-political and non-religious community that promotes a greater awareness of multiculturalism. We will continue to make in-roads with other multicultural communities.

I take this opportunity to thank all members, sponsors, community leaders, guests, family and friends of AMSA - for being there to celebrate AMSA's 40th Annual Dinner. I acknowledge the Executive Committee for their untiring efforts, valuable and meaningful contributions to a very successful 40th Annual Dinner celebrations. Attached are photos of a great evening had by all present.

Evelyn Tian
President



AMSA Activities



AMSA Activities



AMSA Activities

Peranakan High Tea 24 July 2010

Report by Bin Yap



If you yearn for a taste of the exotic nyonya cuisine you should have joined the group of more than 60 people at the Peranakan High Tea at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts.

The organizing committee eagerly presented a range of culinary dishes for tasting and enjoyment. There was aromatic chicken curry, sweet bee ko moi, spicy and tasty vegetarian achar, spicy beehoon goreng, nasi goreng and a variety of delicious nyonya kuehs. Photo shows some of the nyonya kuehs presented for tasting.



To enlighten the crowd with some specialist knowledge surrounding the Peranakan culture, guest speaker, Dr. Marc Rerceretnam, (photo on left) spoke briefly on the history of the Babas and Nyonyas including their early cultural development in the Malay Archipelago. Marc stressed that the most significant legacy of Peranakans was the concept of cultural hybridity (ability to take on and create a new culture) and intermarriage. All these were made possible by the early Chinese, Indians, Arabs, Portuguese and Dutch traders visiting the Malay Archipelago. So, how far has this concept progressed in Australia, one might ask. In fact, successive governments in Australia have attempted to introduce cultural hybridity-type initiatives via multiculturalism over the years. This exercise is considered a modern and progressive move, similar to the initiative implemented by the Peranakan communities hundreds of years ago.

Following the cultural perspective, Peranakan traditions have been manifested in the cuisine of the Babas and Nyonyas. And what better way to showcase the exotic hybridized cuisine than through the artful demonstration by Peranakan Ms. Lim Kwee Phaik who is also the author of a Nyonya Flavours Cookbook.



Kwee Phaik putting her magic touch in the preparation of a nyonya kueh.

Whilst making nyonya kuehs is one aspect of the Peranakan culture, the unique cooking skills of trained Peranakan chefs also contribute to the backbone of the Peranakan cuisine.



Master Chefs (L to R) Evelyn Tian, Jennnifer Ong and Lim Kwee Phaik. Both Evelyn (left) and Kwee Phaik (right) are dressed in the colourful traditional Peranakan Sarong Kebaya.



A specialist cuisine presented at the High Tea was the aromatic and spicy chicken curry. Photo (left) shows another Master Chef Jonathan Ong serving the curry dish to members.

Eager interest by the group of attendees in the food tasting session.





To throw more light on the Peranakan culture Elvan Tong (photo on left) briefly reminded the group of the history of Malacca and its association with the legendary warrior Hang Tuah. A review of the history and articles on Peranakan culture are published in the May edition of Passages on the AMSA web site.



MC Peter Wong entertaining the crowd with his introduction and cheery welcome.



President Evelyn Tian, dressed in the traditional Peranakan Sarong Kebaya, addressing the crowd.

The crowd helping themselves to the range of exotic Peranakan cuisine.



The reception team: (L-R):
Standing: Jennifer Ong, Jonathan Ong,
Sitting: Wallace Wang, Angeline Wang, Sean Chen.

Grateful acknowledgement is also due to the following organizing committee and helpers:
Angeline Wang, Evelyn Tian, Elvan Tong, Jennifer Ong, Jonathan Ong, Lim Kwee Phaik, Peter Wong, Sean Chen, Wallace Wang.

Malaysiana

The Malaysia that could be

by Kalimullah Hassan delivered during the Convocation ceremony at the University Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) on 21 Aug 2010

In my life, the one thing I have always been proud of is my belief that this is a great country which could be greater; and that I am proud to be a Malaysian — first and last.

Today, the theme of my message to you is that only you can decide how you are going to live and that it is you who will decide what your Malaysia, your future generations, and your world will be long after we are gone. At a time when Malaysia is seeing daily debates on race and religion, you have a heavy burden to bear; you, the young generation, will decide which direction Malaysia takes and I hope today, I can share a little of what our generation went through so you can learn from our mistakes and build on the right things we did.

While we learn from our own mistakes, we should also learn from history.

I want to talk about the American civil rights leader Dr Martin Luther King Jr, a great man, who like us, had a dream. I want to talk about him because his thoughts have bearing on us as well.

Dr King died for his dreams but the whole world can continue to learn from him; especially us, a country that is multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious; a country our founding fathers had hoped would symbolize the dream that they had; that was no different a dream from the dream Martin Luther King Jr had. I quote Dr King in one of his most famous speeches, where he spoke about his American dream. He said:

I look forward confidently to the day when all who work for a living will be one with no thought to their separateness as Negroes, Jews, Italians or any other distinctions.

A dream of a land where men will not argue that the colour of a man's skin determines the content of his character;

The dream of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality.

Today, more than 40 years after that speech, a black man is the President of the United States of America; a black man, it is proudly said, lives in the White House.

As I say this, today, I stand here and ask you — have the dreams of our founding fathers been fulfilled?

Some people say that it took the United States more than 200 years before the true American dream could be realized. They say we are a young nation, only 53 years old, and we should be proud of what we have achieved. Yes, we have achieved a lot. Yes, we never had the kind of discrimination and civil rights abuse as the United States had for more than 100 years. But that doesn't mean we too should wait 200 years to realize the dream our founding fathers or we have.

I believe that if our founding fathers were looking over us right now, they would be proud to see the physical achievements of our country; but their hearts would break to see the path we have taken in addressing each other as fellow Malaysians. If they looked at the news; at what right-wing charlatans and extremist groups are doing and saying; at the daily racial baiting and taunting, they would weep.

And, no, we cannot wait for 200 years like the United States of America to expect change

because today, the world moves at too fast a pace and we are already lagging. If we don't change, then we will forever be known as the Malaysia that could have been.

Once sleeping giants like China and India can transform themselves from two extreme ends of catapult themselves into the forefront of the world economy; countries once deemed backward like Indonesia and Vietnam are charging ahead; all around us we see that those who dare to take the brave step forward, move forward. So, no, we cannot afford to wait 200 years to realize our dreams of the Malaysia that should be.

As you go out into the world today, your Malaysia is different from the Malaysia I grew up in. My Malaysia was the Promised Land; it was a Malaysia where our differences mattered so much less than our similarities and our shared dreams; it was a Malaysia where we ate at each other's homes, where we played games together, where we grew up together and where we have remained friends even in the winter years of our life.

Your Malaysia is a different Malaysia. It is a Malaysia which, unfortunately, is today again struggling to find an identity, more than half a century after independence. It is a Malaysia where every day we find our differences accentuated. It is a Malaysia where it seems the spirit of family, of togetherness, of oneness is a spirit which only the twilight generation reminisces about.

My Malaysia was a Malaysia where we dreamed of venturing out, seeking opportunities and building our homes and prospering our country. Today, my Malaysia is a small part of a global village where opportunities abound in the world around us. In your new world, you are an international citizen, shackled only by the limits you set yourself.

In the year 2007 and 2008, almost half a million Malaysians left this country to work abroad. That, respected audience, is almost 2 per cent of our population — and probably accounts for more than five per cent of working professional and skilled Malaysians — a disturbingly large number for a developing country like ours.

We can see the phenomena in many small towns and villages in rural Malaysia where the young have left for opportunities in the cities and abroad and their kampongs and home towns become dwellings of old folk. They build a new life and return perhaps for the annual festive holiday or *balik kampong*, and don't look back again. Magnify that at the level of our country — if our young and skilled continue to leave for opportunities abroad, is it possible that we, too, could one day become a country for old men?

There must be reasons why Malaysians want to leave such a wonderful country. Could it just be diminishing opportunities here and better opportunities elsewhere? Unhappiness? Politics? Marriage? Discrimination? Or what?

It cannot be an easy decision to leave your country because we are, I am sure, all familiar with the saying: *Hujan batu di negeri sendiri lebih baik daripada hujan emas di negeri orang*. Why then are people leaving?

There was a time when people from other countries wanted to come to Malaysia because it was seen as a land of opportunity and a land of promise; a land of honey and sunshine; a land where dreams could come true. That, ladies and gentlemen, was my Malaysia, the Malaysia I grew up in.

It is still a great country, and we owe that to our founding fathers but it is a different Malaysia today; a sad Malaysia. In that respect, how could anyone fault you if you say our generation is to be blamed for giving you the Malaysia you inherit?

But please do not mistake what I am saying. I believe that Malaysia has very good people and God's given treasures; we can still be a great country - but only if we work towards

making it great.

Let me now talk about my Malaysia. I wonder how many of you are fans of Lat, the cartoonist?

Many of my generation grew up on Lat's cartoons. He is an extraordinary human being who epitomizes the true Malaysian spirit our forefathers envisaged. In Lat's cartoons we would always see the portrayal of Malaysian life where all Malaysians worked together, played together and lived together in harmony. But there was one cartoon by Lat two years ago which showed all his multi-racial characters huddled under an umbrella made out of the Malaysian flag; they were taking shelter from politicians, right-wing activists and chauvinists who spewed racial invective.

To me, it was a sad cartoon. It was a tragedy of the new Malaysia that we live in today. Two years after that cartoon, not much has changed. In fact, if anything, it has become worse. Yes, it is true that it was not all glorious sunshine and camaraderie in our country since 1957; and yes, it's true that we did live through the madness of May 13, 1969. But save for that stint of insanity in our history, we have largely had good years.

Today, most of our childhood friends still keep in touch and though we do not meet regularly, we are still friends. You see that in Lat's cartoons over the last three decades as he rolls out his own life story.

Where did we take that wrong turn in nationhood that we ended seeking refuge under the flag? When did racial baiting and taunting become an almost every day affair?

I don't think anyone of us can say when we started taking the wrong fork in the road to come to where we are today. The question is - can we do anything about it? I believe we can.

As in everything, character is normally shaped in our formative years — at home, in our neighborhoods and in schools.

Everything you do, every conscious act, is preceded by a thought. Your dominating thoughts determine your dominating actions. Repeated actions crystallize into habit; and the aggregate of your habits is your character. In simpler language, practice makes perfect. If you practice negative acts, for example lying, stealing, cheating, it becomes natural to lie, cheat and steal. But if in your mind, you believe that lying, cheating and stealing are bad, are wrong, and you tend to do the opposite as much as you can, you will become a truthful, honest, do-good person.

It is a simple psychological law that any type of thought, if entertained for a sufficient length of time, will, by and by, reach the motor tracks of the brain, and finally burst forth into action.

The thing clearly to understand is this: That the thought is always parent to the act. In other words, you are what you think.

Thus a simple effort to control ones thoughts, even if at first failure is the result, and even if for a time failure seems to be about the only result, will in time, sooner or later, bring one to the point of easy, full, and complete control.

From the individual to the society; every earnest effort adds an increment of power that will eventually accomplish society's objective.

Now, allow me to go back to that path we took in our road to nationhood that has led us to where we are today.

If we subscribe to the belief that thought leads to character building, then how we live with each other in a multi-racial, multi-religious society begins with us, at home, with our children, in the neighborhood we live and in the schools our children go to.

The character of schools was then different. The students were from all races and denominations; and let's face it; children are the most innocent and least prejudiced beings in the world. They grow up accepting each other, no matter what their color, no matter what their religion. Those formative years formed our thoughts and our character and thankfully, most of us carried that on into our adulthood.

Our elders, too, were not as prejudiced, living with each other in mixed neighborhoods, accepting each other's differences, each others cultures and each other's different beliefs. Sure, it was not all hunky dory but they were, although poorer, a happier society.

But despite that, May 13 happened and it shattered the myth of one happy country and we tried to rebuild ourselves. We had campaigns in *earnest such as the muhibbah campaign in schools; we had the Rukun Negara; we had Rukun Tetangga*; our leaders strived to salvage our shattered dreams and we did recover, largely because it was a societal effort. But there was terrible cost to pay and many people migrated during that period, most, never to come back again.

Today, again, we seem to be taking the wrong path again – churches being burned, mosques and temples desecrated; right wing groups touting race over nationality, threatening those who don't think like them, discriminating and differentiating.....

Today, as a parent of four grown-up and growing children, I want to state that despite trying to put all our prejudices aside, my wife and I found that there were occasions when we were shocked at the things that our children picked up in school. They would utter things in innocence which displayed prejudices we did not impart upon them. It was after a lot of soul searching that we concluded that in our schools today, children were separated by race. In each environment, those outnumbered felt more comfortable within their own race group, their own silos, and some, across the spectrum, displayed the prejudices that their own parents had. There is something seriously lacking in our education system today; but unfortunately, change has not come despite all the negative fallouts where from young, our children are deprived of growing up in a true Malaysian environment.

Since my wife and I knew that we could not change the system, we asked what could we do? I can tell you that it was not easy. We exposed the children to our friends, so much so that many of our old friends and their children, of different racial and religious backgrounds, are also today their friends. We encouraged them to learn about other cultures and other religions as much as we encouraged them to learn about their own religion. We have visited temples and churches in places we have gone to and we did not discourage them from sleeping over at the houses of their friends and vice-versa, no matter what religion, culture or race.

At times, we felt we were fighting a losing battle because growing up in the impersonal city is so different from the kampong or small towns where camaraderie is easier, where prejudices are less. But today, that the kids are adults or near adulthood, we are grateful that we persevered because they have grown up shedding prejudices and accepting people as people, rather than as Eurasians, Chinese, Malays or Indians.

It has also helped that there are many inter-racial marriages within our immediate and extended families and weddings and family get-togethers bring together our Chinese, Kadazan, Indian, Pathan, Iban and Malay relatives. But it has certainly not been a smooth ride because societal pressures have often threatened to derail our own dream of a one Malaysia.

When the kids were overseas — the two elder ones are back after graduating — my wife and

I used to take them and their friends out for dinner. We enjoyed taking them out as well as listening to them talk, and marveled at their innocence, at their inability to grasp why people should look at each other and evaluate each other by race, religion or colour. They are idealistic but I wish that more of us shared this idealism.

Listening to the children and their friends, I often felt a great sadness because I knew that one day soon enough, they would finish their education, come home to Malaysia, and if things did not change, they, too, would eventually get a little influenced, become a little prejudiced and lose a little of their innocence.

They would find it a little disconcerting to be referred to by their race because overseas, they just find comfort in hanging out together; because in their mind, they are just Malaysians in a foreign land. They are not black. They are not white, yellow or brown. They are just Malaysians.

Maybe I have become too cynical but I often wonder what people would say if I were to ask them what race are you?

Take my nephew, Johan, for example. My brother's wife is Chinese. Johan looks every bit a Chinese. What race is he? My wife is of Malay, Gujarati and Sinhalese descent. What race are our children? You will be amazed to know that because of this inability to determine what race we are, my children are deemed to come from different races, as stated on their MyKad. My eldest is listed as a Pakistani; my second and youngest as Malays; and my third child as Indian. I refused to argue with the National Registration Department because as far as I am concerned, my kids are all Malaysians — first, second, third or last.

I can give you other examples. My friend Mervin is a Malayalee who grew up in Kuala Lumpur and Kuantan. He married a Kadazan from Tamparuli in Sabah. They are Catholics and they now live in Hong Kong, hoping to come back in a few years when he retires. Their daughter, Natasha, married Reza, a Shia Muslim, originally from Iran, born in Pakistan and who moved to London. Both are working in Singapore now. What race is Natasha and what race would their children be?

What race are they? What colour are they? Who is the Malaysian? THEY ALL ARE.

One Malaysia must be in our hearts, not only on our lips.

Barack Obama said people have a choice — they can either remain as bystanders and go on with their lives and let others talk about the world they want build or they can work towards building that world.

I have been inspired by many of Obama's speeches. He said, of people who want change, that:

Throughout your life, you will face many challenges in seeking change; and there will be many periods when you will be at the crossroads, wondering whether it is worth your while; whether you should not just narrow your interests and get on with your own life than trying to be a crusader for the larger good.

All it takes is one act of service - one blow against injustice - to send forth what Robert Kennedy called that tiny ripple of hope. That's what changes the world.

So never give up. Never allow disappointment to stop you in your tracks. You have to pick yourself up and go on. And if you do that, you will do well by yourself and by your country.

My generation is fading into the twilight of our sunset years. It is now up to your generation, to transcend this challenge. And you will be doing so in a world that is as different from ours as night is from day.

The globalised, interdependent, interconnected era we live in today means that when you leave this hall and set forth on your journey of life, you will do so not as Malays, Chinese, Indians, Punjabis, Ibans or Kadazans. Perhaps not even as Malaysians. You will undertake the journey as GLOBAL citizens, competing and collaborating across communities and across borders. The IT revolution has placed in your hands the tools and the opportunities to fashion this world in line with your own ideals and hopes. The future is in your hands. And now, having imparted those words of wisdom, allow me to relate an old Indian tale. One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said: My son, the battle is between two wolves inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith. The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: Which wolf wins? The old Cherokee replied: The one you feed. As you leave this evening, and go on to a new life and new future, just ask yourself one question – which wolf will you feed? Before I end my speech, let me come back to Martin Luther King's dream. Something else that Dr King said perhaps bears context to our Malaysia today. He spoke about the lack of the spirit of human generosity in today's world and I quote: *When we look at modern man, we have to face the fact that modern man suffers from a kind of poverty of the spirit, which stands in glaring contrast with a scientific and technological abundance.* We've learned to fly the air as birds, we've learned to swim the seas as fish, yet we haven't learned to walk the Earth as brothers and sisters. So go out today and make the Malaysia that should be. It is in your hands how you want to shape our country. God bless and thank you.

* *Datuk Seri Kalimullah Hassan is a veteran journalist, a former editor-in-chief of the New Straits Times and a former Chairman of Bernama, Malaysia's National News Agency.*

AMSA Business Seminar

Befriending the Dragon and Koala : Navigating your way to business success in China and Australia Held on Sat. 25 September 2010, at SMSA Sydney

Report by Dr. YKK

The event was a success with good attendance and two captivating speakers who imparted excellent values to those in business or aspiring to do business.



A section of the audience



Speaker Peter Wong, sharing his tips on doing business in China

The first speaker, Peter Wong provided useful advice for doing business in China. He is a 20-year veteran in the financial services industry and is familiar with the different financial and business practices across Asia, particularly in China. His topic, *Dancing with the Dragon without Falling from the Sky* held the audience spell-bound with his tips on how to avoid the pitfalls and the importance of building Guangxi . He concluded that the future is bright if you know the right way to do business in China

The second speaker David Baumgarten. Chair of the Business Enterprise Centres (BEC) Australia provided invaluable insights of what assistance is available from Business Support agencies, State Government & Federal Government. His topic *Dining With The Koala And Still Staying On The Tree* gave references to resources and shared indispensable tools in growing business in Australia. It was indeed a mind-opening session for the audience who embraced the speaker enthusiastically.



President Evelyn Tian presenting a Certificate to speaker David Baumgarten

A Special Briefing on *Brain Gain* by H.E. Datuk Salman Ahmad, Malaysia's High Commissioner to Australia at the Grace Hotel, Sydney on 2 December 2010

Report by Dr. YKK

Datuk Salman welcomed his about 70 guests invited through AMSA. The invitees were specially selected as potential candidates for the Malaysian Brain Gain Program. His presentation spiced with self-deprecating humour endeared him to the audience.

Some of the points that he covered include:

The close ties between Malaysia and Australia and the recent visit of Prime Minister Julia Gillard to Malaysia . Among the topics discussed were trade, education and security (with regards to illegal immigrants)

Malaysia's Brain Gain program – short attachments of between 2 weeks to 3 months with an allowance of RM30,000 p.m plus accommodation, medical and insurance benefits. This will be coordinated by the Talent Corporation from next year.

Malaysians residing in Australia can register at the High Commission to vote in the next General Elections.

Malaysians can renew their passports at the High Commission in Canberra within half a day.

Those who wish to register their interest were advised to communicate with the High Commission at malcanberra@malaysia.org.au , Ph: 02 61200300

The outgoing Trade Commissioner , Mr. Yew Chee Ong thanked those who made his job in Australia such an enjoyable and memorable experience. He had the audience in stitches when he related his fond memories of his nearly 5 year stay in Australia, especially while indulging in his favorite pas-time , golf.

Scuba Diving at the Sunken City of Magicienne's Rock

By Lim Kwee Phaik

Have you tried scuba-diving? It is an incredible experience. Let me relate to you my first and most unforgettable sea-diving experience in the idyllic island Pulau Tioman, off the east coast of peninsular Malaysia.

My adventure began with our instructor and examiner Daniel and his diving team when we arrived at the seaside village of Sulang in Tioman. Our accommodation is basic - a long house with several rooms. The thatched roof of the long house was made of layers of woven dried coconut leaves with plank wooden walls. We had to sleep in wooden bunk beds with mattresses mad of "kapok". There was a wall fan attached to the far end of the room. My family of four shared one room with two double bunk beds

The toilets were holes in the ground and the bathroom consisted of a built -up concrete enclosure where water flowed into the huge "bath-tub". We had to dish out pails of water to pour over ourselves when bathing usually dressed in our swimming costumes.

We had been warned about the primitive conditions before our departure from Singapore, so we had prepared ourselves but it was still a real eye opener. We would be spending a lot of our time diving in the sea and only return to the long house for dinner and to sleep, therefore the primitive conditions would need to be endured for a short part of the day. It proved to be a real adventure and challenge to get back to the absolute basics of living.

By the third day of our diving programme, we were doing two dives a day plus night diving. We had been tested on our diving skills as we progressed in performing different manoeuvres while diving. Roger, our team leader, said we had done well, so he was going to reward us by taking us to a place called "Magicienne's Rock". Only he and his boatman knew where this spot was. The boat took us out to sea about forty minutes from Tioman, when it started to circle, and then stopped. Roger, holding the bar of the boat with one hand, stretched his body out towards the sea, looking at the surface of the sea. Then he gave the signal to the boatman to start up the boat again to move to another spot. At each stop, he performed this ritual of stretching his body outside the boat. I became very curious and asked what he was looking for. He then asked all of us to look for schools of fish swimming in circles. All of us held on to parts of the boat and leaned out to look for the circles of fish. The boat kept going in circles and we kept looking but alas, no fish were seen. Then Roger asked the boatman to move to another area. This time, wearing snorkels and fins only, he dived into the sea after the boat stopped. He came up for air and dived again. After several times, he surfaced and gave a loud yell of glee.

"It's here! I've found it. Now get geared up and I will lead you to the spot. Hurry before the tide changes". Roger was shouting these instructions while splashing around at the surface of the sea. We quickly donned on our scuba gear and, led by Daniel; dived with our buddy and descended twenty-five to thirty feet below the sea surface following the anchor-line. I had to equalize the pressure in my ears several times and so was a little slower in joining the rest of the group. When the group had descended and assembled on the sea floor, Roger gestured for us to follow him. After swimming about a hundred metres from the anchor line, we were greeted by many schools of fish, big and small ones, the yellow-fin fish, long beak translucent ones, orange and grey spotted fish which just swam past us. The silver fishes glistened as a streak of sunlight pierced through the

crystal-clear sea. Gliding gracefully in-between the fishes, with a gentle waving movement, was a stingray fish, leaving a trail of bubbles. Then there it was: “Magicienne’s Rock”! It looked like the sunken city of Atlantis.

What looked like miniature buildings were made up of white corals. It was such an amazing sight, it took my breath away, blowing more bubbles from my mouth piece. Nothing could fully describe the scene in front of me. It was so beautiful, peaceful and bursting with vibrant colours. Who would ever imagine such beautiful colours and sea inhabitants existed here. The burst of exotic colours of orange, yellow, violet, purple, red, green, blue and the rainbow colours of marine plants and sea anemones interspersed among the white corals. There were formations of multi-coloured corals and clusters of sea ferns swaying gracefully with the changing direction of the sea currents, reaching out towards the sea surface.

Schools of fish were swimming around the corals, not frightened by our presence. They passed by in front of my face mask and swam all around me and just continued to swim past. There were hundreds of them; I kept very still, perched on the tips of my fins; having achieved neutrality and weightlessness in the water. I stretched my gloved upturned hands outwards and the fish swam into them. I was thrilled beyond words and felt such joy to experience this. I felt light and was floating, yet held down by the weight belt at my waist. It was such a marvellous feeling, surrounded by the marvels of the activity of the marine life, yet enjoying the absolute silence except of the sound of my own breathing exhaling bubbles through the mouth piece.

A solitary, big bright blue fish with spots all over its body moved very leisurely towards me. I kept very still, breathing shallowly and held out my upturned hand, moving my fingers slightly beckoning the fish to come into my palm. It would not come into my palm but swam around me checking me out and then it came very close and slowly swam towards the crevices of the corals to take refuge. Later I found out it was a blue-eyed cod, which was a rare fish in tropical waters.

A short distance from the “sunken” city was a steep cliff covered with marine plants and corals, again in a multitude of colours which faded as it reached into the deeper depths of the sea. On the seabed, there were hardly any marine plants, only sea grass and sand which was grey and dull. The water was very cold at this depth and we could not stay long for we would use up too much air. Daniel and his buddy went lobster hunting among the crevices of the corals. In a deep hole they spotted the antenna of a lobster. We could see excitement because of their wild hand gestures followed by lots of bubbles coming out from their mouth regulators, with frantic pointing of fingers to indicate the position of the lobster. We gathered round the excitement. Daniel’s buddy held the lobster’s antenna while he gently slipped his hand under the belly to tickle it and coax it out of the crevice and into his net. Jubilant at his catch Daniel gave the thumbs-up signal to surface and we followed suit. We were running out of air anyway.

After we had surfaced and boarded the boat, we took off our scuba gear and exchanged accounts of what we had seen at “Magicienne’s Rock”. Roger dived again, this time to spear some fish for our dinner that night. He did not want any of us to be in the sea while he was spearing fish as the blood from the fish might attract small sharks. He was a very experienced diver and could get out of the water very quickly. After having speared enough fish for dinner, he came on board and told the boatman to take us back to the island.

Later at dinner we recalled our amazing experiences at “Magicienne’s Rock”. I told the others that this was one dive I would always remember. The serenity contrasting with the teeming marine life and absolute beauty of “Magicienne’s Rock” are etched in my memory forever.

KUEH BENGKA UBI KAYU (BAKED TAPIOCA CAKE)

1 kg fresh tapioca / cassava, skinless
1 grated coconut or 1 can coconut milk
½ grated coconut, white only
4 pandan leaves **Banana leaves**

A: Ingredients to be mixed together:

450 g fine sugar
3 eggs, beaten
3 tsp cornflour mixed with 2 tbsp water
50 g butter, melted
1 tsp salt

METHOD

1. Heat oven to 180° C (350° F). Grate tapioca.
2. Grease a rectangular cake tin and line base and sides with a layer of cleaned banana leaves. Place pandan leaves on top of banana leaves and spray or brush with oil.
3. Make 1st coconut milk from grated coconut and set aside. Add water to make 1 ½ cups of 2nd coconut milk. If using canned coconut milk dish out 2 tbsp.
4. Mix **A** ingredients thoroughly and add 2nd coconut milk or remaining canned milk. Cook mixture in a non-stick saucepan over moderate heat, stirring well till it thickens. Add 1st coconut milk or 2 tablespoons canned milk and cook for 1 minute.
5. Add grated tapioca into this mixture, cook for 2 minutes, stirring all the time. Allow this mixture to cool, then add in the ½ white grated coconut and mix well.
6. Pour tapioca mixture into cake tin. Bake for about 20 minutes till surface is golden brown. Then cover top of cake tin with aluminium foil, reduce oven heat to 150° C and bake till cooked through (about 1½ hours). Test with skewer.

7. Remove from oven and cool completely. Cut into 4 cm widths, then into squares or diamond shapes and serve.

KUEH DADAR PANCAKE WITH COCONUT FILLING

Batter:

150 g plain flour
1 ½ cups coconut milk
1 egg **2 pinches of salt**
8 pandan leaves to make 2 tbsp juice

2 tsp pandan essence

1 tsp green food colouring

Filling:

½ grated coconut, white only
100 g palm sugar (Gula Melaka)
2 tbsp sugar **2 pandan leaves**
1 tsp tapioca flour mixed with 1 tbsp water
1 cup water

METHOD

1. Sift flour with salt. Make well in centre of flour. Add coconut milk, pandan juice, pandan essence, green food colouring and beaten egg. Mix batter well. Leave aside to stand for about ½ hour.
2. Chop palm sugar, put in saucepan with 2 tbsp sugar, pandan leaves and 1 cup water. Boil till sugar is dissolved. Strain syrup and return to saucepan. Add coconut and cook over low heat till mixture is quite dry. Add tapioca mixture to thicken. Allow to cool.
3. Make pancakes with the batter in non-stick omelette pan. Dish out and fill with coconut filling. Roll up pancakes with sides folded in.
4. Dish up and serve.

Business

Supercharging Your Business Through Creativity

By Yew Kam Keong, Ph.D (Dr. YKK)

Introduction

One of the greatest obstacle to success in business is past successes. Successful businesses tend to bask in the glory of past successes rather than applying the collective creativity of their people to perpetuate success.

They spend too much time relying on the winning formulas of the past and lost touch with the reality present. However, in our fast changing business environment, it is no longer enough for companies to routinely go about its business. In today's highly competitive world you're either moving forward or you are lagging behind. You constantly have to innovate just to keep ahead of competitor.

The most underutilized resource in business today is the collective brainpower available to the company. It has been reported that the average person uses less than five percent of their brainpower. A surprise finding is that for most companies, the collective brainpower usage percentage actually decrease rather than increase. This is because thinking is compartmentalized, factions and functions compete against each other and too many people are sidelined from the thinking processes of the company.

In a world where competitors can undercut us in pricing, outspend us in marketing and promotion, copy our technologies and clone our trade secrets, our ability to think creatively in order to innovate our business is our only true competitive advantage. Business innovation is about raising the **top-line** and not unduly focusing on the **bottom-line**.

You can Supercharge your business through creativity!

The B.U.S.I.N.E.S.S Formula for Creativity

I have devised a *B.U.S.I.N.E.S.S Formula for Creativity* as follows:

The first part B.U.S.I deals will how to manage your business creatively. The second part N.E.S.S provides tips on how to manage your company creatively with particular reference to tapping into the collective creativity of your people.

B : Be different -

Don't do things better than your competitors, do things differently. Do not compete, stand out from the competition.

U : Use Technology

Leverage on the power of technology. Harness the power of the internet for your business.

S : Sell Imagination

Imagination is the most profitable product in the world! Incorporate imagination into your products or services.

I : Innovate Constantly

Innovate constantly. Kill your own products before your competitors do.

N: Nurture Creativity

Institute a Creativity Culture throughout your company. It begins with creative leadership.

E : Energize Minds

Provide training on creative thinking to all levels of people in your company. Creativity once trained is a life-long skill that brings immense and long-term benefits to your company, providing the best returns on imagination.

S : Source Expertise

Use all the brains you have and borrow those that you need. If you are part of the forest, you see only trees. You need an outsider to provide a view of the forest, that is an overview of your company.

S : Stimulating Meetings

In most organizations, meetings take away the most time. Conducting creative meetings can half the time and double the results.

Be different

The essence of *Creativity in Business* is not about doing things better than your competitors. It is about doing things differently from your competitors. There is no need to compete but there is a need to innovate to stand out from the competition.

An excellent illustration of this practise comes from WalMart, the number one company in Fortune 500 and the largest supermarket chain store in the US with a business turnover of several hundred billion US dollars. The founder of WalMart, Sam Walton used this principle in building up his business. His guiding principle was : *I study my competition and do exactly the opposite.*

Sam Walton observed that the major supermarket chains began their business in big cities. He thus resolved to do the opposite by locating his WalMart supermarkets in small towns, the first one was established in a small town called Bentonville , Arkansas. Thus the expansion of his supermarket chain of stores went unnoticed until it was too late for his competitors to stop him.

Another standard practice of the supermarkets at that time was having regular sales promotions. Sam Walton decided not to have any sales but instead instituted a policy of *Everyday Low Prices*. In effect, it was like having a sale everyday!

Use Technology

According to Bill Gates, we use machines in the past to leverage our muscles, we use technology today to leverage our minds. With the power of technology today, it is possible for a small upstart company to beat the giants. A case in point is the making and marketing of the blockbuster movie *The Blair Witch Project*.

The Blair Witch Project, a low-budget horror film was made by people totally unknown in the film industry with an unheard of budget of only US\$35,000; in Hollywood terms almost zero. The quality of the film is atrocious as it was made using the ordinary handycam video camera. At times the hand holding the camera was shaky and all that was shown was only grass. Yet it took the movie world by storm and was featured in the international media like Time and Newsweek magazines and the television media giant CNN. The film was a box-office hit and grossed US \$250 million beating many of the big budget movies from Hollywood. How was this possible?

The answer lies in leveraging imagination over the internet. The story about the movie (see below) was circulated widely over the internet. Those who received it in turn emailed it to their friends creating a pent-up demand to watch the movie. It was suspected that the film-makers and their distributor were seeding the web with fan sites loaded with rave reviews of the movie.

Three film students set out into the Black Hills Forest to make a documentary on the legendary Blair Witch. Armed with a handycam video-camera and audio-recorders, they record every step, word and sound. After wandering around the Black Hills Forest, the threes students , Heather, Josh, and Mike are cold, lost and hunted. Finally, one night after the last ray of light had left the forest black, they were never to be seen again. One year later, a bag full of video and audio tapes were found. The behind the scenes, video footage and the film, are cut together, and this is..."The Blair Witch Project."

The amateurish nature of the movie makes it very believable to those who watched it. A similar formula was followed by the movie *Paranormal*, made with a budget of US\$10,000. This movie enjoyed the extra advantage by being endorsed by Steven Spielberg.

Sell Imagination

Imagination is the most profitable product in the world! It accounts for more than 42 percent of the export value of the greatest economy in the world, the USA. Bill Gates company, Microsoft , for example sells highly profitable softwares which are basically the product of human imagination. The material cost of CDs where the softwares are embedded is almost zero compared to its selling price. Other products of human imagination exported by the US are Hollywood movies, entertainment products like songs, music and technology licensing.

Human imagination is also the major driving force of the other economies of the developed world contributing more than 50% to their economic growth.

Fortune magazine did a study on Nike shoes. It compared the income of the CEO in the USA with the total combined income of one of its largest shoe manufacturing plant in Indonesia with over 15,000 workers. Guess who won? The CEO won by a wide margin. The reason is obvious - the CEO uses his imagination while the workers use their hands.

Innovate Constantly

Gary Hamel in his best-selling book , “ *Leading the Revolution*” recommends 10 business strategies for business success and to build a billion dollar company. The first strategy is to set unreasonable business targets. If you normally set a business growth of, say 20 percent, change it to 500 percent. It is only by setting what most people considered to be outrageous targets that will force your people into out-of-the-box thinking. Following the traditional way of doing business will definitely be out. You may need to innovate practically every aspect of your business.

Two companies that practice this strategy are HP and Intel. They innovate all the time. Their common policy is to kill their own products before their competitors do. HP introduces new printers while the previous models are still selling well. Likewise, Intel brings out a new computer chip while the previous one is still popular. This means that their competitor will have a tough time just catching up.

Nurture Creativity

The famous quality guru Edward Demings says that 94 percent of all business failures are due to systems failures. The same is true for nurturing creativity for business in your company. You need to establish a system that can tap into the collective brainpower of your organization. Every worker is a potential source of ideas but most important creativity has to start at the top. In my best-selling book, *You Are Creative- Let Your creativity Bloom*, I have provided 10 Guidelines on how to build a corporate creativity culture.

Energize Minds

Companies spend a lot of money developing their people by sending them to attend all sorts of training programs. While they are useful, there is usually very little follow-up. As a result training becomes an expense item rather than an investment. Perhaps it is time to change this approach and focus on a long-term program to develop skills in creative thinking. This is necessary to energize minds to unleash their creative brainpower, the most important asset for sustainable competitiveness for your company.

There are seven reasons why training in creativity thinking is the best investment that you will ever make for the long-term success of your company:

- Wealth Creation
- Best ROI (*Return On Innovation*)

- Sustainable Business Competitiveness and Growth
- Innovation For Greater Efficiency And Effectiveness
- Life-long Skills in Ideas Generation and Problem-solving
- Leveraging On The Imagination Of Your People
- Self-Esteem and Personal Fulfillment

Source Expertise

Use all the brains you have and borrow those that you need. If you are part of the forest, you see only trees. You need an outsider to provide a view of the forest, that is an overview of your company. Look for experts that will help you to build a creative business organization. They could facilitate meetings and discussions and provide consultancy that will add vibrancy to your business.

Stimulating Meetings

According to a Wall Street Journal survey, **meetings account for the greatest amount of unproductive time** topping telephone calls, e-mails, paperwork, travels and office gossips. Despite the advent of advanced telecommunications technology, there is still no escape from meeting. Meetings are essential for the conduct of my business. The problem is how to have stimulating meetings that are more creative, efficient, productive and results-oriented.

I have created a system whereby it is possible to conduct meetings in half the time and double the results.

Conclusion

The only thing predictable about the business environment is change. The only way to cope with change is to tap into the creative thinking power of your people. Weak and sloppy thinking is a threat to business. It is easy to fall into a state of complacency and difficult to get out of it. If you are to be a highly effective competitor you must nurture your one true competitive advantage; how well your people think together. You cannot afford to sideline a large percentage of your available brainpower. Rather, leaders must remain take action to build the thinking capacity of the organization as a whole. The choice is yours and it is simple, **get creative or perish**.

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Dancing with the Dragon

By Peter Wong



China certainly has plenty of prospects for foreign companies. The flip side is that it can be a tough place to do business. Even some of the world's biggest and best companies have stumbled hard in China. I am sure you have heard of the saga of the Suzhou Industrial Park developed by the Singapore Government in the 1990s. Before you consider investing in China, your company needs to figure out whether the opportunities are a good fit.

Finding the right path for your company is key. You need to understand how the market really works and what role the government plays in your business. Be prepared to change course from time to time in response to this fast changing market. You may face some of the most brutal negotiations you've ever seen. You have to play by their rules on their home turf, doing business the Chinese way. The journey will probably be long and exhausting, but it'll likely be very rewarding in the end.

The China's Appeal

The dragon called China has emerged on the world scene as a new economic powerhouse. Since China opened its doors to foreign business in the late 1970s, its transformation has been absolutely remarkable. Over the last 25 years, China has transformed itself from a centrally planned socialist state to a semi-market-driven, semi-command economy. For more than a decade, China's GDP has grown over 9 percent each year.

China recently attracted over US\$70 billion worth of foreign investments in a single year, more than any other country by far! Since China opened her door to overseas companies, approximately US\$700 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) has landed in China. China now ranks as the second largest economy in the world after the USA. It overtook Japan in August 2010 to take second place. Many economists are saying that China will be the world's largest economy by 2025. China's current GDP is US\$5 trillion whilst that of the U.S. is US\$14 trillion.

Cost Advantage and Fast Growing Domestic Market

Manufacturers based in China have considerable cost advantages over companies producing goods in Europe or North America. Foreign investors in China continue to chase cheaper wages and lower operating costs, which translate into improved margins and greater profits. Strong global demand from consumers for low-priced Chinese-made products is driving much of the foreign investment.

Foreign companies aren't going to China just to lower their production costs; they're also looking at getting a piece of the fast-growing domestic market. China's sheer size and growth prospects are a big draw for foreign companies. With the creation of more highly skilled jobs, China's incomes are rising. And rising incomes translate into

greater purchasing power for the Chinese in urban centers.

The Land of Opportunities (... but Beware)

China's economic miracle can almost take your breath away. As you stroll through a major city, you see signs of progress almost everywhere you look. China's urban centers are teeming with people and activity. Shiny new offices and residential towers are popping up all over. Construction cranes dot the horizon as far as the eye can see. Newly built automobiles are clogging up the city's arteries. Consumer product brands from around the world are all the rage.

Your day is filled up with wall-to-wall meetings with the Chinese. The opportunities seem to hold much promise for your company in China. At the end of a long day as the sun starts setting in Shanghai, you find your lower jaw suddenly begins to drop. You see the city's new skyline unfold in front of you as the sun falls behind the hundreds of gleaming new skyscrapers. You think to yourself, "This is a land of opportunity." In China's major cities, you'll no doubt be impressed by the posh five-star hotels, high-speed bullet trains, gleaming new airports, and modern business districts that have risen out of swamps. Some foreigners can easily get a little too carried away with China. But you come to understand that the country has a certain veneer to it. China wants you to believe that everything is rosy.

As you begin your journey, you realize that China is full of promises. But China is full of challenges, too. Many Western businesspeople tend to underestimate the challenges they'll face. They don't see the trap door ahead of them before they fall through it. We've heard many horror stories of doing business in China — the Chinese scam artists; companies posing as legitimate businesses; manufacturers producing products from stolen intellectual property; and employee theft and embezzlement. The list goes on and on. China can be a very good market for your business. At the same time, be aware that it can be a very bad place for your business. So keep your business on high alert at all times while doing business in China.

How to Get a Piece of the Action in China

Many people ask themselves, "What's the best opportunity for my company in China?" Business executives and managers may not be clear about what the opportunities are, never mind how to develop them. You should sit down and search in depth to understand the possibilities for your business. Despite certain challenges, China is a good place for many companies. Foreign companies have the opportunity to sell into China, manufacture in China, or source products or parts from there. Some of the most common possibilities are:

Selling into China

Exporting your products to China is one way to enter the market, and it may be less risky for your company, too. China has an estimated 200 million middle-class consumers adding millions of new consumers who are buying all sorts of consumer products and financial services. A fast-growing middle class, mostly in or near the coastal cities of China, is paving the way for strong selling opportunities. Retailers, financial services companies, and consumer product companies are jumping into the market to aggressively expand their business.

Retailing in China is taking off like a rocket. Soon, sales are expected to reach US\$1 trillion. China has more than 20 million retail outlets now. New hypermarkets, supermarkets, department stores, and electronics, appliance, and home décor shops are popping up everywhere in eastern China.

With the explosion in retailing, the China market is witnessing more consumer products and brands (prestigious foreign brands are particularly popular). New types of consumers are emerging with different needs and wants. The

markets are becoming more segmented as consumer buying behavior differs from place to place.

Financial services firms are also starting to enjoy some good times. Foreign banking institutions are expanding their capabilities and services. Foreign insurance companies are starting to gain local market share by providing much-needed protection for Chinese consumers. And because the Chinese savings rate is a whopping 50 percent, financial services companies in particular are salivating at the opportunity to tap into Chinese household savings!

Selling to businesses in China is another huge opportunity. Just about every Fortune Global 1000 firm is now doing business there. Thousands of small and medium-sized foreign companies are present, too. Opportunities for sales of business services to foreign companies operating there include management consulting, human resources, accounting, legal services, real estate, and so on.

Manufacturing and Sourcing

Foreign investors have made China the world's factory. With a good supply of labor (and other lower costs) and high-quality production capabilities, China continues to attract foreign manufacturers. Because China is highly competitive on making products at a lower cost, many foreign companies look to source parts and components there. Some large foreign multinationals are moving their global procurement centers to China. As China moves up the food chain into higher-value products, more companies are procuring higher quality products and components from China.

In the meantime, China has made massive investments in the country's infrastructure. New airports, highways, bridges, tunnels, trains, and ports have sprung up across eastern China. This brand-new infrastructure has the potential to allow transportation companies to develop more sophisticated support services for logistics and express carriers, air cargo, and sea freight. Third-party logistics services in China are seeing explosive growth in supporting manufacturing-driven export services.

The sourcing capabilities aren't just for the benefit of large multinational companies. Small- and medium-sized companies are jumping on the bandwagon, too. They can now get access to high-quality products and components to stay internationally competitive. They can also avoid middlemen or buyer's agents to keep their prices even lower. Many small- and medium-sized companies are trying to secure their future by lowering costs while maintaining high quality standards.

Is China a Good Fit for Your Business?

Many traditional manufacturers face rising business costs. Spiraling wages, higher energy costs, and other cost-drivers have taken their toll. Manufacturers have seen others go under before them. As they look for ways to become more competitive, their eyes turn toward China.

Some companies are better suited than others for doing business in China. It's vital for a company to know some of the key characteristics of a business that's likely to succeed in China. By taking stock of your company, you can evaluate your company's readiness for China. Your company shouldn't go to China because everyone else seems to be going there. And going to China as the last resort — because your business is already on its knees — isn't a smart move either. Consider doing business in China for one reason: because it makes good business sense.

Doing Business in China is for the Long Term

Doing business in China is a long-term thing. It requires management commitment, significant capital investment and patience in dealing with the government.

Commitment

Some companies know that China is an option for their business, but the owners don't have the time, energy, or inclination to figure out how to make China work for the company. They don't know where to start. They don't have a roadmap to help them find their way. It seems all too foreign for the owners. And it seems way too hard. If your company leadership has this type of attitude, don't attempt to do business in China. You need to have strong leadership that's committed to making your China business a success in the long-term. Without your company leadership's full commitment, the chances of failure increase drastically.

Capital

Your China business will likely require a significant amount of financial resources to get started and to keep your business up and running. Most companies find that making a profit in China takes longer than it does in the West. Generally, you can expect getting profitable to take twice as long. In part, this delay is due to China's competitive business landscape. Getting to critical mass takes time, too. If your financials aren't at full strength, stay away from China — your company doesn't need to take on any more risks.

Patience

To set up in China, your company should be comfortable working with government workers and officials. You'll face a lot of red tape with many permits and approvals required, too. If your company isn't prepared for dealing with government bureaucracy, China likely isn't the place for you to do business.

China's business laws are quite different from what you're used to. Make sure you do your research and can get some good legal advice. Here's what you have to be ready for:

Your company needs to have its various business activities pre-approved and then stay within them (unless you want to get more approvals).

The currency, the *renminbi* (RMB), has a lot of exchange restrictions, so you want to structure business in a way that optimizes your ability to repatriate money.

China has different systems for taxation, labor regulation, and resolving disputes (among other things).

Many of China's laws are somewhat business-friendly. Getting to understand how they affect your company is imperative.

One area where China's laws are very weak is intellectual property rights (IPR) protection. China has adequate IP protection laws but enforcement is still an issue. Don't sell or manufacture in China if you need to rely on intellectual property laws alone to protect technology or processes. Go somewhere where you'll have more protection.

Appreciating Cultural Differences

Different cultures do business in different ways. If your company has trouble adapting to new ways of doing things or respecting a culture that's different from your own, your company is probably not well suited for doing business in China.

On the other hand, your company's culture can also be its biggest draw in the labor marketplace — the Chinese are often hungry to work for foreign companies that offer more flexible and creative cultures than Chinese companies do.

The importance of *Guanxi* (or relationship) in China cannot be under-estimated. It is the right *guanxi* that makes all the difference in ensuring your business will be successful. The Chinese businessmen mentality is very much one of "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours."

The Path to Success

China is certainly not for the fainthearted. Many businesses over the years have tried and failed. Some foreign investors have failed more than once! The good news is that there are many success stories in China, too. You can find the path to success — YOU JUST NEED TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK FOR IT!!

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The Art of Business Networking

by Elvan Tong

Networking is a necessary activity for growing your business. Yet it is often used as an opportunity to sell or promote oneself, with the expectation of getting quick result. If that is your intention then you'll be wasting your time and effort. But if you consider networking as an opportunity to form long-term relationships with like-minded business people and are prepared to give and share then you should read on.

Here are some useful tips for the next time you plan to attend a networking function.

Researching – check out networking events that complement your business or are attended by people who are likely to do business with you in one way or another. There are networking organisations for paid-up members or inviting potential members; informal ones where you pay a nominal fee on attendance; free or paid seminars or conferences where networking is inevitable. Some are industry specific, some for women only, yet some are community-based or charity-based. Therefore, ensure that the event aligns with your business and your strategies.

Never attend all functions unless you are checking them out. When you have chosen the right ones, attend them regularly, attend them well. Soon you'll know many other people and they will know you. If people hear about you, like you and trust you they will recommend you through word-of-mouth. But you've got to work at it.

Selling – networking is NOT selling, it's not about you. It's about meeting people. It's about creating relationships and bonds over a period of time that may have lasting effects on your business and personal standing. Therefore, don't expect quick results.

If you're asked, be prepared for an 'elevator pitch', the time it takes to talk about yourself and your business in an elevator ride. In this way you will be able to cover more people by moving from one to the next without appearing rude.

Business cards – always have business cards with you, especially at a networking function. Never be afraid to ask from the other person. Ideally use both sides of your business card rather than leave it blank. The reverse side is a tremendous opportunity for you to state what you do and how your business could benefit others. Spend a few minutes chatting with the person before moving on. Write on their business cards the function, date, place and brief notes about them.

Listening – encourage the other person to talk about his/her business to show your interest and establish rapport. Never start by talking about you or your work first off unless they ask. In this way you'll get to know their business and decide later if you want to follow up. There's a saying 'If you encourage people to speak about themselves they will speak for hours' and they are likely to remember you. Don't waste time on people who are not potential referrers or customers. You can always politely excuse yourself.

Giving – focus on whether the person has the potential to do business with you or refer you to others. If so, consider what YOU can do to help them rather than the other way round. Do it without expecting a return. Your giving can generally be done after the event, in your follow-up. In the spirit of giving rather than receiving you'd be surprised what will come back to you.

Mingling - don't stay in a corner and be ignored, you are not at the event just to get information and/or sustenance. By mingling you'll be networking, the main reason for building relationships. Attend with a friend if possible who can introduce you to others. There will invariably be clusters of groups, especially at regular similar events, but don't let that deter you. Mingling and chatting will help you hone your communication skills and build confidence.

Dressing – dress appropriately for the occasion, giving the appearance of success and good grooming. Appearance and perception mean everything. Carry something in your hand, a cup of coffee, a brochure or book that will make you less self conscious.

Following up – be sure to keep a record of the events you attend and the people you meet. Follow-up on the ones you want to build a relationship, with a short email or letter. If you are familiar with the person's business or problems, your giving can be done in the follow-up, with a book or brochure, useful tips or a researched topic that will interest them. Connecting them to someone else you know who can help them not only leaves a good impression on the person you recently met but also the person you already had developed a relationship.

Remember: *The quality of relationships that you develop is the only thing your competitors cannot take away from you.*

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Upcoming Events

Christmas Lunch

Due to the generosity of one of AMSA's most ardent supporters, Harry Lau, AMSA is organising a Christmas lunch with a typical Malaysian seafood menu at a very special price.

Places are restricted to 40 only. So book early to avoid disappointment.

Date: Saturday 18 December 2010
Time: 12 noon for 12.30 pm Start
Venue: Harry's Chilli Crab Restaurant
198 Elizabeth Street (Entrance at Campbell Street), Sydney
Cost: Member: \$35 pp
Non-member: \$40 pp

Menu:

King prawns and vegetables
Malay sambal mussels
Curry fish head
Harry's chilli crab
Pepper and salt calamari
Char kuay teow
Steam rice or fried rice
Chinese tea
Knowing Harry, he's likely to throw in a surprise

RSVP 13 December: webmaster@amsa.com.au

Business Seminar

A seminar on the theme: "How to Measure Customer Satisfaction" presented by Elvan Tong has been tentatively scheduled on Saturday 12 March 2011. Watch out for further announcements.

Humour

Flight Instructor

His request approved, the CNN News photographer quickly used a cell phone to call the local airport to charter a flight.

He was told a twin-engine plane would be waiting for him at the airport.

Arriving at the airfield, he spotted a plane warming up outside a hanger.

He jumped in with his bag, slammed the door shut, and shouted, 'Let's go'.

The pilot taxied out, swung the plane into the wind and took off.

Once in the air, the photographer instructed the pilot, 'Fly over the valley and make low passes so I can take pictures of the fires on the hillsides.'

'Why?' asked the pilot.

'Because I'm a photographer for CNN', he responded, 'and I need to get some close up shots.'

The pilot was strangely silent for a moment. Finally he stammered, 'So, what you're telling me, is . . . You're NOT my flight instructor?'

Pay Attention!

First-year students at Texas A&M's Vet school were attending their first anatomy class, with a real dead cow. They all gathered around the surgery table with the body covered with a white sheet.

The professor started the class by telling them, "In Veterinary Medicine it is necessary to have two important qualities as a doctor: The first is that you not be disgusted by anything involving the animal body". For an example, the Professor pulled back the sheet, stuck his finger in the butt of the dead cow, withdrew it and stuck his finger in his mouth. "Go ahead and do the same thing," he told his students.

The students freaked out, hesitated for several minutes, but eventually took turns sticking a finger in the butt of the dead cow and sucking on it. When everyone finished, the Professor looked at them and said, "The second most important quality is observation. I stuck in my middle finger and sucked on my index finger. Now learn to pay attention. Life's tough, but it's even tougher if you're stupid."

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