



Photo: 123rf.com

Good attracts good

Growth and profit isn't everything in business. Good managers know that good attract good. Take care of your staff and customers, and your business will grow.

By Ricky Chey

I'VE always been drawn to business. I like the idea that you can chart your own destiny and shape your life through building a successful venture.

This was at the back of my mind, even as I started my career in banking. I worked in Malaysia for a while before moving to Singapore to work in management consulting. I got to travel and understand businesses better, and I enjoyed every minute of it.

However, I felt a strong urge to join the family business, Farmcochem, which manufactures and markets crop protection and plant nutrient products.

This was what led me back home some 10 years ago. At the time, Farmcochem was largely domestically-driven, so the first thing I wanted to do was go international. I suggested we export our products.

Since then, we have sold our products to more than 25 countries. I also looked into our finances and modernised our systems and processes. I brought in professional managers and, on the manufacturing side, initiated our ISO-certification for quality assurance.

Today, Farmcochem is one of the

major crop-protection companies in Malaysia.

To improve our branding and reach out to the farming community at the grassroots level, we focus on a few branding exercises each year. One interesting thing we've done in terms of corporate branding and CSR is taking over a semi-professional basketball team. The Farmcochem basketball team supports local interest in this sport by running basketball clinics and organising competitions for our dealers and the community.

In 2012, we were champions in the Malaysia National Basketball League. We also promote the colour red, and customers now associate the colour with our company.

Over the years, I've had to adapt to a different management style. When I first came back, armed with an MNC-mind-set, I was rather aggressive. It was all about growth, growth and more growth. However, if you ask me what I believe in today, I would say, at the risk of sounding spiritual, that I believe in universal law.

Good attracts good, and this belief governs how I manage people and the business. I've changed in that sense.

I believe in taking care of my staff, developing them profession-

ally and giving them opportunities to grow. In turn, they will give their loyalty, take care of customers and help grow the company. We would not be where we are today if not for our people.

I also strongly believe in supporting the farming community.

What we are doing as a company is to educate the farming community through transfer of knowledge and technology, and this in turn helps farmers to improve crop yield and income.

Moving from the MNC world to join the family business has been a rather seamless transition for me. I had a clear understanding with my father, and he gave me the freedom to operate. Our relationship is built on mutual respect, and he is my go-to sounding board, both professionally and personally.

However, one challenge I did face was the lack of a peer-to-peer touch. This was what attracted me to the Young President's Organization (YPO). YPO was founded in the 1950s by an American named Ray Hickok who, as a young CEO, felt the need to connect with his peers to share ideas and experiences.

YPO is now an organisation with 23,000 members across 130 countries, providing leaders with a pow-

erful network and supporting this with educational programmes.

Recently I attended the YPO - Harvard President's Program. We stayed on campus and participated in workshops and study groups. I met diverse and accomplished CEOs, who shared the rationale behind their business decisions through case studies. You just can't get this amazing experience anywhere else.

This experience helped me move away from my comfort zone.

What's fantastic is that when you attend something like this, everyone speaks the same language because the organisation has formed a structure across the globe. You could speak to a YPO member in Brazil and immediately have that in common.

YPO also encourages members to take leadership roles as it is a member-led organisation. I was appointed secretary when I first joined four years ago. This year, I hold the position of membership officer.

As with all things in life, there must be a balance. With my business, I believe that we shouldn't over-stretch ourselves. One must be realistic. We cannot do everything unless we have a good foundation.

I am also an advocate of work-life balance. I try to take small breaks for self-reflection. I also encourage my staff to do the same. You can take this time to improve yourself. Your job doesn't have to be confined to the office, as there is much to learn from the world out there.

The views expressed by Chey are his own, and not necessarily representative of YPO Malaysia. To find out more about YPO and its global network of over 24,000 CEOs, log onto www.ypo.org.



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