

February 2014

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Motivating employees for Kaizen

1. Introduction

Motivation in the workplace is key. Additionally, respect, appreciation and motivation in the workplace go hand in hand.

2. The role of top management in Kaizen

Kaizen is a Japanese term that means continuous improvement. The objective of Kaizen is to improve the performance and eliminate waste in the process. It comprises on-going improvement that involves everyone, from the top management to managers to the workers.

Highly motivated and engaged workforce is a necessity in ensuring the success of their endeavours. The top management must understand the Kaizen philosophy and the importance of motivation in the workplace. Unless employees are motivated, a good attractive organisation cannot be created. It is critical for the top management to understand this, or their system will not work. Hence, leadership styles are also important.

The top management is responsible for establishing Kaizen as the over-riding corporate strategy and other activities such as communicating the organisation's commitment to all levels of the organisation, allocating the resources needed for implementation of Kaizen, establishing appropriate policies, ensuring full deployment of Kaizen policies and establishing systems, procedures and structures that are necessary to promote Kaizen.

In summary, the top management must:

- Be determined to introduce Kaizen as a corporate strategy;
- Provide support and direction for Kaizen by allocating resources;
- Establish policy for Kaizen goals through policy deployment and audits;
- Build systems, procedures and structures conducive to Kaizen.

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Kaizen can thrive only under top management that has a genuine concern for the long-term health of the company.

3. The importance of employee motivation

Motivation is, in general, what energises, maintains and controls behaviour; it acts as a stimulus for desirable actions. It is widely accepted that motivated employees generate higher value and more substantial levels of achievement. Empowering and encouraging staff to do their best helps create job satisfaction, as well as lowers turnover. Hence, the management of motivation is a critical element of success in any business.

4. How to motivate employees?

"Harnessing internal know-how by engaging staff in problem solving and improvement activities is one of the fundamental reasons why Toyota and affiliated companies are so successful. They created a culture and mind set of improvement."

Workplace motivation is a necessity of a highly motivated and engaged work force to ensure the success of their endeavours. However, it is not often taken into consideration when planning and developing continuous improvement frameworks.

Creating a corporate culture based on quality and efficiency is a daunting task that can lead to frustrations rather than a feeling of satisfaction and accomplishment. Continuous process improvement and transformation is key to success and innovation but the question is how the top management inspires and structures employee participation in improvement activities.

Managers can easily become swayed and distracted by lean/six sigma tools and analysis that, although good in principle and certainly have their place, do not incite staff to actually engage in improvement and efficiency initiatives. A lack of workforce motivation in any improvement activity is a serious threat to positive and sustainable outcomes.

3.1. Kaizen leader

A Kaizen leader heads up a team committed to identify quality improvement processes within an organisation. He is responsible for a group of people, who will be working towards identifying quality improvement processes in the organisation. The leader will assist in directing the team towards identifying waste in an area, and focuses on eliminating it in the best way possible. These leaders are typically going to have a significant experience working in lean environments, and participating in Kaizen groups. They will also be responsible for planning and helping to facilitate any Kaizen events for the team. "These events will focus on a specific area of improvement, and can be a great way to make rapid improvements in the organisation". The success of these events relies largely on the guidance of the Kaizen leader.

A good Kaizen leader can truly make the difference between success and failure for any Kaizen activities. Thus, it is important that the top management appoints the right individual that can fulfill the role and meet the expectations.

3.2. Employee engagement

"Truly engaged employees are attracted to, and inspired by, their work ("I want to do this"), committed ("I am dedicated to the success of what I am doing"), and fascinated ("I love what I am doing"). Engaged employees care about the future of the company and are willing to invest the discretionary effort – exceeding duty's call – to see that the organisation succeeds."

Employee engagement affects the mindset of people. Engaged employees believe that they can make a difference in the organisations they work for. Confidence in the knowledge, skills, and abilities that people possess – in both themselves and others – is a powerful predictor of behaviour and subsequent performance.

A critical task for a leader is to create a climate that enables employees to unleash their potential. It is "not the job of a CEO to make employees listen to what you have to say; it is about setting up the system so that people want to listen". The combination of the right environment and a culture that creates wants

instead of requirements places few limits on what employees can achieve.

The 10 C's of employee engagement are summarised below.

- (i) **Connect:** Leaders must show that they value employees. Employee-focused initiatives such as profit sharing and implementing work-life balance initiatives are important. However, if employees' relationship with their managers is fractured, then no amount of perks will persuade employees to perform at top levels. Employee engagement is a direct reflection of how employees feel about their relationship with the boss. Employees look at whether organisations and their leader walk the talk when they proclaim that, "Our employees are our most valuable asset."
- (ii) **Career:** Leaders should provide challenging and meaningful work with opportunities for career advancement. Most people want to do new things in their job. For example, do organisations provide job rotation for their top talent? Are people assigned stretch goals? Do leaders hold people accountable for progress? Are jobs enriched in duties and responsibilities? Good leaders challenge employees; but at the same time, they must instill the confidence that the challenges can be met. Not giving people the knowledge and tools to be successful is unethical and demotivating; it is also likely to lead to stress, frustration, and, ultimately, lack of engagement.
- (iii) **Clarity:** Leaders must communicate a clear vision. People want to understand the vision that senior leadership has for the organisation, and the goals that leaders or departmental heads have for the division, unit, or team. Success in

life and organisations is, to a great extent, determined by how clear individuals are about their goals and what they really want to achieve. In short, employees need to understand what the organisation's goals are, why they are important, and how the goals can best be attained. Clarity about what the organisation stands for, what it wants to achieve, and how people can contribute to the organisation's success is not always evident.

- (iv) **Convey:** Leaders clarify their expectations about employees and provide feedback on their functioning in the organisation. Good leaders establish processes and procedures that help people master important tasks and facilitate goal achievement. Good leaders work daily to improve the skills of their people and create small wins that help the team, unit, or organisation perform at its best.
- (v) **Congratulate:** Many surveys repeatedly show that employees feel that they receive immediate feedback when their performance is poor or below expectations. These same employees also report that praise and recognition for strong performance is much less common. Exceptional leaders give recognition, and they do so a lot; they coach and convey.
- (vi) **Contribute:** People want to know that their input matters and that they are contributing to the organisation's success in a meaningful way.
- (vii) **Control:** Employees value control over the flow and pace of their jobs and leaders can create opportunities for employees to exercise this control. Do leaders consult with their employees with regard to their

needs? Are leaders flexible and attuned to the needs of the employees as well as the organisation? Do leaders involve employees in decision-making, particularly when employees will be directly affected by the decision? Do employees have a say in setting goals or milestones that are deemed important? Are employees able to voice their ideas, and does leadership show that contributions are valued?

- (viii) **Collaborate:** Studies also revealed that, when employees work in teams and have the trust and cooperation of their team members, they outperform individuals and teams which lack good relationships. Great leaders are team builders; they create an environment that fosters trust and collaboration. Surveys indicate that being cared about by colleagues is a strong predictor of employee engagement. Thus, a continuous challenge for leaders is to rally individuals to collaborate on organisational, departmental, and group goals, while excluding individuals pursuing their self-interest.
- (ix) **Credibility:** Leaders should strive to maintain the organisation's reputation and demonstrate high ethical standards. People want to be proud of their jobs, their performance, and their organisation.
- (x) **Confidence:** Good leaders help create confidence in an organisation by being exemplars of high ethical and performance standards.

Leaders should actively try to identify the level of engagement in their organisation, find the reasons behind the lack of full engagement, strive to eliminate those reasons, and implement behavioural strategies that will facilitate full

engagement. These efforts should be ongoing. Employee engagement is hard to achieve and if not sustained by leaders it can wither with relative ease.

3.3. Work environment

The optimum effectiveness of Kaizen results from an appropriate mix of the social and technical systems. It is common practice to emphasise the technical aspects of improvements, such as those related to machines or computer, with less emphasis on people and their roles in the process. Improving quality and productivity to achieve competitiveness emphasises the need for an organisation to capture the potential inherent in the workforce by enabling each employee to do his or her job right the first time. This requires the top management to demonstrate to all employees that it is personally committed and continuously pursuing efforts to improve quality.

The organisation must provide an environment in which all employees will voluntarily cooperate to achieve the organisational objectives. This requires that management accept the idea that employees can and want to contribute. Management thus flows down ideas and goals and encourages the flow of ideas upward.

3.4. Suggestion systems

One of the most frequently discussed aspects of Kaizen, as it is practiced in Japan, is suggestions and proposals system, as a part of the Kaizen constituents. Through suggestions, employee participate in continuous improvements activities in the workplace and play a vital role in upgrading standards. Employee suggestions or ideas management systems serve a duality of purpose. Firstly, it severs as a productivity enabler, and secondly, as a culture change enabler.

Suggestions or proposals start from a problem perception and recognising the need to solve it. The problems inside an organisation are the sources of any kind of proposal systems. But employees inside the organisation do not perceive problems in the same way.

There are 5 levels of problems perceived by employees in an organisation:

Level 1: People deny that there are problems or do not want to see them.

Level 2: People admit that there are problems but find excuses, for not being able to solve them.

Level 3: People accept the fact that there are problems but unable to solve them because they do not know how to tackle them.

Level 4: People want to see potential problems for this and try to visualise them. They will tackle them by learning proper methods.

Level 5: People know their problems, methods to solve them and how to involve all the people to tackle them. They are ready to tackle any problem and to change their organisational practices, if needed, after solving the problem.

It is management's main target to move organisation's status to level 4 and level 5. Hence, a kind of suggestion or proposal system should help in this direction.

The effectiveness of the suggestions management system can be evaluated by a combination of results-oriented criteria (i.e. suggestions submitted per employee, benefits per suggestion etc.) and by process-oriented criteria during idea processing (i.e. employee morale).

3.5. A continuous improvement culture

(i) Challenge the status quo

Fundamentally, improvement activity challenges the current operating style of the organisation. Continuous improvement is a conscious and informative change to what is currently practiced with the goal of operational efficiency in mind. Clearly, the staff is most able to offer improvement advice for a particular job function. A

manager cannot be expected to expertly improve the procedures of the entire workforce. Engage the staff on improving their own procedures with efficiency as the target. Appropriate application of continuous improvement activity is engagement of staff in the appropriate change of the status quo with smooth flow of operations in mind. Continuous improvement is about relevant and small changes to a work function that serves to improve smooth functioning of their duties and minimise errors passed on to the next process/procedure.

(ii) Walk the talk

There is no greater motivation killer than a leader not walking their talk. A leader who believes in improvement, change and collaboration, must show it and do it. There should not be an expectation of perfection of anyone, as this is impossible and will lead to disappointment. However everyone should strive to do the best they can. Mistakes will happen and errors will occur. The key point of continuous improvement is to take these mistakes and errors as an opportunity to identify their cause and eliminate the chance of re-occurrence. If and when an error reoccurs, go back to the drawing board: identify its cause and take action to eliminate the possibility of recurrence. Walking the talk is not about being a shining example of perfection. It is about demonstrating the commitment to becoming better and better at what you do and who you are.

iii) Engage in the team's activities

Show an interest in the team's continuous improvement activities. Congratulate them on their successes, keep the momentum alive and avoid criticising.

Top management need to also work on making people shine; i.e. making others successful. By raising the team to higher and higher standards of work performance, one will be more successful than any person who only tries to succeed based on his or

her own individual efforts. Taking an interest in the staff's improvement efforts and initiatives serves to keep the workplace positive and conducive to change.

It is better to clarify facts and prevent recurrence of mistakes than to criticise and reprimand. The key reason is quite simply to allow the staff the space to come to you when they have made an error rather than trying to cover mistakes up. People are not perfect and are bound to make mistakes. It is a statistical certainty that errors will occur. Leaders cannot command the team to expose their mistakes. They must create a supportive environment where staff feel safe to discuss their errors and work towards corrective action and prevention of recurrence. This is the reality behind efficiency theory. Humans are not motivated by efficiency and perfection targets and do not function as computers or robots. They must be treated as human beings and valued as an integral part of continuous improvement activities.

5. Rewards and recognition

The reward system reflects the corporate philosophy: democratic and innovative or autocratic and bureaucratic. Promotion and rewards reinforces employee commitment to corporate values and to the corporate culture.

Employees will have higher motivation if they work in organisations that are consistent in their rewards and recognition process and the workers will perceive management initiative as a fair effort by management. This will extend the feeling of trust, and create a strong sense of belonging in the organisation.

Perks and other rewards are an important part of any compensation package. Additionally, positive reinforcement is also one of the most effective ways to motivate employees. This includes simple tools such as Employee of the Month recognition, calling attention in a staff meeting to an employee's job performance or recent achievement, and using and crediting staff members' ideas when instituting changes or new policies.

Rewarding and recognition of employees has a significant impact on motivation. "Free" recognition and virtual rewards have become increasingly important in



today's workforce over tangible, high cost rewards. More than that, a strategic approach for rewarding and recognition drives business results. Therefore some companies have already started with programmes to support and increase the motivation of their employees. Motivated employees are more engaged and this is one of the key drivers for productivity and growth.

Top management can look into having "built in" recognition strategies to motivate team members and accelerate cultural change to adapt their company to future challenges. Some of the new trends and hypes, such as gamification and social media integration, may also be incorporated in these recognition strategies.

Case Study

J D Wetherspoon

J D Wetherspoon owns and operates pubs across the United Kingdom and is one of U.K.'s fastest-growing company. It provides customers with good-quality food and drink at reasonable prices, served by well-trained, friendly staff. Many of the company's pubs are successful conversions of formerly disused premises. Each has its own individual character but has the same high standards to meet.

A distinguishing feature of Wetherspoon pubs is that they are music-free so as to encourage conversation. All have substantial no-smoking areas. Meals are served from opening until one hour before closing and account for over 25 percent of sales. They also specialise in the sale of cask-conditioned beers from Britain's regional brewers.

In modern service industries, friendly, motivated employees who are willing and able to provide the required level of customer service can make all the difference between success and failure. J D Wetherspoon employs more than 26,000 either full or part-time employees, of which around 4,000 being in management positions. The company is convinced that the high performance of its staff is a direct result of its approach to staff recruitment, training, development and motivation.

Wetherspoon operates in a highly competitive market in which it is important to stay ahead of rivals who are themselves improving. Often the people best placed to suggest improvements are the front line staff responsible for operations. Enlightened firms show trust in their employees and display a willingness to learn from their experiences. With its open approach, Wetherspoon actively encourages its staff to challenge existing ideas and practices in pursuit of continuous improvement. This often involves adjusting many things a little, rather than making a sweeping change. Suggestions mainly come from employees, based on their experience at work. Ongoing improvement includes identifying 'best practice' within parts of the organisation and applying it throughout. Only an open culture fully achieves this sharing of good practice.

Many of Wetherspoon's initiatives stem from ideas put forward by its 'Associates': employees who are paid an hourly rate. For example, Kitchen Associates are encouraged to suggest ways of improving menus or food preparation, or to advise the company on which products to promote. Often the best ideas are glaringly obvious in retrospect but may be missed by a higher level manager who is not interacting with customers on



a day-to-day basis. Associates are encouraged to communicate their ideas for improvements to their line manager. Good ideas are then rapidly implemented, normally within weeks.

Every two weeks the company holds a 'Big Meeting'. Over 100 employees attend, including the company chairman and directors, pub managers and some associates. These meetings consider company performance and ways to improve it, ranging from small operational decisions to major strategic plans. For example, the marketing manager might present a selection of posters proposed for a promotional campaign and the meeting decides which ones to use.

As employees are included in decision-making, many of Wetherspoon employees have a high level of commitment to the company and are proud to work for it. The company firmly believes that a key factor that differentiates it from rivals is the quality of customer service that comes from having committed employees. There are no hidden secrets in Wetherspoon's approach. It is based on an understanding of, and belief in, some key ideas about human motivation.



Articles can be retrieved from NLB's e-Resources –
<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg>

Books are available at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library.

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Module 2: Productivity Tools, Techniques & Management Systems (Duration: 3 days) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Excellence • Productivity Measurement & Analysis • Process management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cost of Quality ▪ Lean Six Sigma ▪ Process Mapping & Analysis • Integrated Management Systems 	
Module 3: Innovation & Service Excellence (Duration: 3 days) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge Economy & Innovation • Service Excellence • Team Excellence 	
Module 4: Critical Success Factors (Duration: 1 day) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Commitment • Managing & Sustaining Change • Overcoming Resistance to Change • Training and Education • Planning for Implementation and Control of Productivity Improvement Programme • Briefing on project assignment & Role of Productivity Practitioner 	

As part of the CPP curriculum, participants are required to start a productivity improvement project upon completion of the in-class component. Project guidance will be provided by a professional consultant assigned for this purpose and is for a total of 2 man-days.

Funding & Payment

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Food:

January 2014		
Date	Module	Time
Wednesday, 8 January 2014	Module 1	9-5 pm
Friday, 10 January 2014	Module 1 & 2	9-5 pm
Monday, 13 January 2014	Module 2	9-5 pm
Thursday, 16 January 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 21 January 2014	Module 3	9-5 pm
Friday, 24 January 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 28 January 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 29 January 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

February 2014		
Date	Module	Time
Wednesday, 5 February 2014	Module 1	9-5 pm
Friday, 7 February 2014	Module 1 & 2	9-5 pm
Monday, 10 February 2014	Module 2	9-5 pm
Thursday, 13 February 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 18 February 2014	Module 3	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 19 February 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 25 February 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 26 February 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

March 2014		
Date	Module	Time
Wednesday, 5 March 2014	Module 1	9-5 pm
Friday, 7 March 2014	Module 1 & 2	9-5 pm
Monday, 10 March 2014	Module 2	9-5 pm
Thursday, 14 March 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 18 March 2014	Module 3	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 19 March 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 25 March 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 26 March 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

Retail:

January 2014		
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Wednesday, 8 January 2014	Module 1	9-5 pm
Friday, 10 January 2014	Module 1 & 2	9-5 pm
Monday, 13 January 2014	Module 2	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 15 January 2014		9-5 pm
Tuesday, 21 January 2014	Module 3	9-5 pm
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Tuesday, 28 January 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 29 January 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

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Monday, 17 February 2014	Module 2 & 3	9-5 pm
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Monday, 24 February 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 26 February 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

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Monday, 10 March 2014	Module 2	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 12 March 2014		9-5 pm
Monday, 17 March 2014	Module 2 & 3	9-5 pm
Wednesday, 19 March 2014	Module 3	9-5 pm
Monday, 24 March 2014		9-5 pm
Wednesday, 26 March 2014	Module 4	9-5 pm

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MR. LAM CHUN SEE

B. ENG IN INDUSTRIAL & SYSTEMS ENGINEERING (UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE)

Chun see manages his own consultancy practice, Hoshin Consulting and is also an associate consultant/trainer to the PSB Corporation and Singapore Productivity Association. Prior to running his own practice, he has had years of experience as an industrial engineer with Philips, and trainer and consultant with the then National Productivity Board, APG Consulting and Teian Consulting. He was conferred the Triple-A Award in 1989 for helping to transfer Japanese know-how, particularly in the area of 5S, into local programmes and packages. Throughout his years of consultancy experience, Chun See has assisted many businesses in analyzing their productivity and quality objectives and performance; primarily through the application of the PDCA technique and basic QC tools.

MR. LEE KOK SEONG

M.SC. IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING (IMPERIAL COLLEGE, LONDON UNIVERSITY), B.SC. IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING (NATIONAL TAIWAN UNIVERSITY)

Kok Seong has accumulated vast experience in the areas of productivity training and management consultancy throughout his 30 years of experience with the Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board (SPRING). He has provided consultancy assistance and training for numerous organisations both within and outside of Singapore in the areas of Productivity Management, Operation and Production Management, total Quality Management, Total Productive Maintenance, Shopfloor Management, Occupational Safety Management, Industrial Engineering Applications and Supervisory Management. He has also been greatly involved in the pinnacle Singapore Quality Award (SQA) initiative since its inception in 1993. his track records include the assessments and site visits of award recipients like Micron Semiconductor (formerly Texas Instruments), Motorola, Baxter Healthcare, Philips Tuner Factory and Teck Wah Industrial Corporation Ltd. Mr. Lee is currently a certified SQA Senior Assessor, as well as a resource person for Basic and

Advanced Training Courses for Productivity Practitioners, a position he has taken on since 2007.

MR. LOW CHOO TUCK

M.SC. IN INDUSTRIAL ADMINISTRATION (UNIVERSITY OF ASTON, UK); B.SC. IN PHYSICS (NUS); DIP IN QUALITY CONTROL INSTRUCTORS (INTERNATIONAL QUALITY CENTRE, NETHERLANDS); CERTIFICATE IN PRODUCTIVITY DEVELOPMENT (JAPAN PRODUCTIVITY CENTRE); CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT (INSEASD)

Choo Tuck currently provides training and advisory services in productivity and quality management to businesses and government in the Asean region and Middle East. He was previously the Executive Director of the Restaurant Association of Singapore as well as the Singapore Productivity Association, and was also the Director for Strategic Planning in SPRING Singapore. During his many years of service with SPRING Singapore, he gained wide experience in productivity training, management consultancy and productivity promotion, and has helped more than a 100 businesses in improving productivity, quality control and business excellence, including organisations such as Cycle & Carriage, Motorola, PUB and DBS. On top of that, he has also served as an Asian Productivity Organisation (APO) expert on Productivity for several APO member countries, and was part of a team of experts engaged by the Singapore cooperation Enterprise to provide productivity expertise to the Government of Bahrain in 2007 and 2008.

MR. QUEK AIK TENG

B.ENG (HON.) IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING (UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD); DIP. IN BUSINESS EFFICIENCY (INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING_ (PSB- ACADEMY); CERTIFIED MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT (CMC); PRACTISING MANAGEMENT CONSULTANT (PMC); MEMBER, INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS (IMC) SINGAPORE

Aik Teng currently manages his own consultancy, AT Consulting Services. One of his most recent projects includes being the LEAD Project Manager for the Singapore Logistics Association. Prior to running his own consultancy, he has been with SPRING Singapore for 20 years, and was the Head of the Organisation Excellence Department from 2004-05. He was also

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SQA Lead Assessor and Team Leader up till 2008 and has been involved in the SQA initiative since its inception in 1993. tasked to start up the consultancy unit within the then Productivity & Standards Board (PSB) to provide training and consultancy services to organisations, his consulting team assisted close to 30 organisations during that period. He was also involved in a project coordinated by the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) to assist the Bahrain Labour Fund in their Labour Reform strategy, which included helping the Bahrain government to initiate a Productivity Movement as well as develop the productivity of the local enterprises. In addition, he was appointed as Project Manager to assist the Government of Botswana to implement a national Productivity Movement, from 1994 to 2003. Botswana is currently held as a model of Productivity in the Pan-Africa region.

MR. WONG KAI HONG**MBA IN STRATEGIC MARKETING (HULL), BSC (NUS)**

Kai Hong is a business consultant, management trainer and company director. He has spent almost 2 decades in the consumer products industry, having worked with retailers like Isetan, Metro, Royal Sporting House, The Athlete's Foot and Sunglass Hut; brands like Reebok and Doc Martens; and technology group Wearnes Technology. He has been involved with various functions including operations, business development, project management, human resource, training, marketing, logistics, budgeting and general management. He has developed businesses in Singapore and many Asian cities such as Seoul and Beijing.

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