



Asia-Pacific
Economic Cooperation

APEC CASES ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP

As an outcome of the APEC project "Innovations in Entrepreneur Development in APEC", a total of fourteen case studies were produced in 2003 describing entrepreneurial companies. There are two each from Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, Thailand, the USA, and Viet Nam, and one each from Malaysia and Singapore. They cover a wide range of experience and enterprise. Emphasis was placed on the character of the individual entrepreneurs rather than on the development of the businesses *per se*.

This paper does not attempt a full analysis of the fourteen cases but focuses on a number of contextual factors; it is therefore a synopsis rather than a synthesis. A study of the complete cases is indispensable in order to appreciate their full value in the classroom for encouraging and furthering the development of entrepreneurship.

At the end of the paper is a list of significant attributes which characterise the entrepreneurs in these cases to a greater or lesser extent. Meaningful discussion of the cases by students could focus on the definition and discussion of these and other characteristics they may identify and their significance in contributing to the entrepreneurs' success.

The cases are available on the APEC website (www.apec.org) and may be freely downloaded for use. A very brief abstract of each case is offered here

The Businesses

"Small opportunities are often the beginning of great enterprises"

Demosthenes

Martha Tilaar: The business of making women beautiful (Indonesia)

Martha Tilaar is an early starter in business. Her case is an interesting mix of traditional ways and family values while displaying great entrepreneurial drive. Accompanying her husband to the US, she is not idle in the strange new environment

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but starts a business and succeeds in earning US\$ 2,000 per month. With the proceeds, she studies at a beauty academy earning a state licence and then sells Avon cosmetics door to door. On her return to Jakarta, she sets up her own beauty salon chain. During a visit to Holland to study Western beauty practices she is encouraged to look within her own country and culture for inspiration rather than to the West, and this leads to new successes. She has soon established a substantial business with her sister and brother as shareholders, but it is clear that Martha is the driving force. The company diversifies into manufacturing and a variety of products. Martha's beliefs and principles play an important part in the running of her business.

Iman Abadi: An Entrepreneur who went back to school (Indonesia)

Iman Abadi has established a business manufacturing and selling cable trays, panel boxes, and related products. In managing his company he relies on intuitive reactions but is not always successful. His daughter has a management degree and challenges a number of her father's business decisions. He decides to take a management course himself. The case poses interesting questions regarding family involvement.

Healthy Pit (Japan)

Keiko Sugimoto starts her working career in a department store in Tokyo after training as a dietician. Asked to come up with suggestions to develop the business of the store, she proposes a health centre offering advice to customers on their diet and general health. This proves a success and after two years she resigns from the store to set up her own company. She recognises the emerging demand in Japan for dietary and health related advice as lifestyle and eating habits change. Her company establishes a variety of services to meet various identified needs.

Yokkaichi Switchgear (Japan)

The entrepreneur in this case, Hiroshi Kaneda, is a capable engineer with considerable ability in his field of specialisation. Although he develops a unique technically sophisticated device, the challenge for him in marketing it is to break into the established network of sub-contractors which are an essential part of major manufacturers' supply chains in Japan, and he finally succeeds. He then moves successfully into international business. He is not an administrator and encounters a number of problems as he develops his business. He employs his brother-in-law and later, a Filipino engineer. The case culminates in a crisis resulting from a clash between these two individuals which Kaneda has to solve.

The Accidental Entrepreneur (Malaysia)

Spencer Wing starts micro business at a very early age before striking lucky. He learns fast in a number of advertising agencies accepting the advice and guidance of a series of mentors. He 'works crazy hours' in all the agencies he works for and thus 'doubled my experience against those who kept the 9 to 5 routine'. He makes the most of opportunities that come his way (one example is a free ticket to London which he parlays into a six month assignment at a London ad agency). He has a knack for choosing the right people to work with and the wisdom to proceed slowly

and steadily in growing his business. He diversifies by focusing on specific market segments, and then turns his entrepreneurial energies to other businesses such as Chinese herbal remedies, mangoes and oxygenated water, with great enthusiasm.

Mei Hao - Entrepreneur (Philippines)

Mei Hao starts doing business at a very early age, continuing through school and college. Immediately upon graduation from college, she is invited by a friend to become a partner in a small retail garment business. The case records Mei Hao's progress as she learns all about the garment business on the front line. She recognises that she cannot compete by offering 'me-too'¹ designs and is successful in creating unique products which sell well. She next realises that manufacturing will give her greater flexibility in controlling quality, enable her to achieve savings through cost reductions, and help maintain exclusivity, so she sets up her own manufacturing operation. Later she goes even further by manufacturing textiles. Moving into the retail markets, she establishes her own brand and finally, expanding out of her own accountancy department she sets up a professional consulting group.

Metro Industries: A business founded on fair play (Philippines)

Leo Ang works from an early age to support his family. He soon proves he has a keen nose for business, identifying demand for a particular type of bolt and then manufacturing and selling it. Recognising his own flair as a salesman, he abandons his college education before completing his degree and starts to work full time. His nut and bolt business is a success but he perceptively recognises a more promising future in the chemicals industry and takes a job selling in that business. His sales skills enable him to sell a warehouse full of printing ink, a task in which all other salesmen had failed, and he performs a number of similar sales feats. He finally feels that he has learned enough to set up his own business. There are many obstacles and setbacks but he overcomes them and finally branches out into other businesses. Leo's philosophy and Buddhist beliefs govern the way he manages his business and his staff.

Winson Lan - Entrepreneur (Singapore)

This is the account of Winson Lan's development of a substantial printing business in Singapore. He is a rebellious youth who, after a number of false starts, finds his niche in the printing business. He is a highly successful salesman, but turns down an offered partnership in the company in which he achieves his success. He instead becomes a partner in a joint venture but soon gives this up after one successful deal, and starts a food stall chain (a popular feature of Singapore dining culture). Again, he is successful, but finally succumbs to repeated calls from his former printing clients and after some further dabbling takes the plunge and returns to printing. His marriage to the capable Angeline is a significant step up for him, and she eventually gives up her high-flying job in a multinational to join his company. His activities expand to Japan and into a variety of other enterprises focusing on various software programs related to printing and publishing. Handing over the day to day running of the business to his wife and colleagues in 1997, he sets off around the

¹ Me-too denotes products or designs which merely copy previous items devoid of innovation

world 'travelling economy class and staying in inexpensive hotels' in search of new opportunities.

Saowaluck Shimada and Thai Tatami Products (Thailand)

Japan is the key to Saowaluck's business enterprise. She has been to the university in Japan and returns to work in a Japanese company in Thailand which soon fails. However, she marries the Japanese director and together they start a business in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, opening the region to Japanese tourists. When that market suffers because of the Gulf war effect on air travel, they develop a business based on growing *tatami* rushes intending to export them to Japan for use in *tatami* mats², but this is not viable. Instead, they successfully develop a range of *tatami* based handicrafts using village households as workers.

Prasert and Sunan of Korat Sangsuwan Pottery (Thailand)

This case again features a couple working together. Sunan is a teacher and Prasert has a dump truck and a few cows. It is hard to make a living and they open a restaurant, but it is not a great success. They then recognise the value of the traditional Dan Kwian pottery of their hometown and succeed in reviving and upgrading the brand and developing an export business based on it. They establish close relationships with their workforce so that 'they do not have to closely supervise them, and could not afford to do so either'. Their refusal to cut corners demonstrates their commitment to absolute quality: 'Cracked products or production defects could be retouched and would not be noticed but Korat Sungsuwan never ships such products to customers'.

Hastings & Pleadwell, LLC (USA) and Mommies Only Club, LLC

Two women, Barbara A. Hastings and Barbara A. Pleadwell, start their own PR and communication business in Hawaii. One is a well-established journalist, the other was her student at Chaminade University and their business partnership develops from that encounter, the older woman initially acting as mentor to the younger. They attribute their success to their insistence on high standards, not only in their own company, but in their clients. They place great emphasis on constant learning and innovation. The woman in the second part of the case, Maria Chan Plourde, takes a wide variety of jobs in the textile industry in order to learn thoroughly all aspects of the business and achieve her goal in creating her own company. She succeeds in finding a niche in the maternity clothing sector.

Body and Soul (USA)

Tao Miller is an irrepressible entrepreneurial spirit. By the age of 33 he already has 20 years of business experience (despite being in the USA, he mentions that his youth is sometimes a handicap). He establishes many types of business, but also learns a great deal working in a number of companies as an employee. He trades successfully with Japan capitalising on a fashion there for used jeans. He then establishes his own retail clothing outlet in Honolulu under the name Body and Soul,

² *tatami* mats are rush covered straw mats which are traditional Japanese floor coverings.

and goes on to use the same name to launch a brand of cosmetics which expands globally and becomes his main business. His success seems to come from his gift for understanding fashion trends and identifying consumer desires.

Anh Cao Co. Ltd. - The winner in a case against the clock (Viet Nam)

The political acceptability of private business in Viet Nam has been uncertain in the past; in fact, in 1976 it was totally banned. The environment has therefore been very difficult for entrepreneurs historically, and although it has become progressively easier for individuals to start their own companies since the late 1990s, a number of obstacles remain. The career of Nguyen Kiem of Anh Cao reflects the progress of private enterprise development. His career from 1975 to 1991 was in the state owned freight forwarding company Vietfracht. As the case notes, the state ownership system militated against efficient management and Vietfracht was no exception. The success of his own forwarding company, Anh Cao, founded in 1993 stems from his understanding of the shortcomings of state owned companies. He emphasises quality of service and the importance of the customer. He recognises the processes which cause most delay and anxiety to shippers and receivers of goods and concentrates his efforts on improving them. He constantly goes beyond the narrow scope of his company's function to offer advice on marketing, currency sensitivities and other issues of which Vietnamese clients still had little experience.

Pham thi Loan - The desire to create a famous Vietnamese trademark (Viet Nam)

Pham thi Loan trains as a teacher but starts her career in a state owned company. Foreign companies were rapidly moving into Viet Nam at the time, and there was great demand for English speakers. Loan moved to Hyundai, the Korean *chaebol*³ and thence to ABB the electrical and industrial group. She was held in high regard and was sent on a number of training programmes overseas. Greatly impressed by what she sees in other countries, she determines to develop manufacturing and marketing skills in Viet Nam. She starts a trading business and then moves into manufacturing electrical equipment and transformers despite the counsel of her friends who warn her that it is far too hard for a woman to run a factory. The case describes her success.

Characteristics Of Successful Entrepreneurs

The cases suggest that successful entrepreneurs display some of a number of characteristics, and there are surely others.

A sense of service	Integrity
Ability to assess risk	Market awareness
Ability to judge people	Passion
Acceptance of failure	Patience
An urge to innovate	Perseverance

³ *chaebol* - Korean corporate group

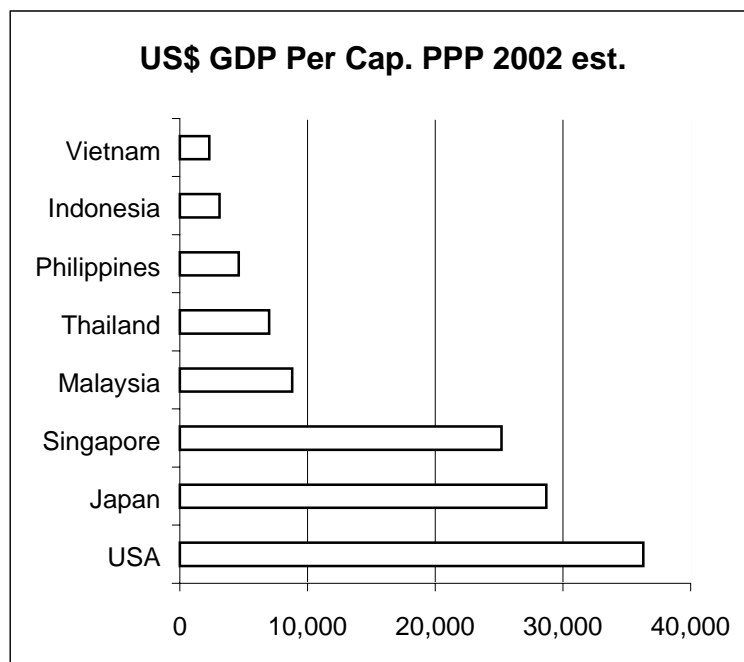
Appreciation of a fair and beneficial working environment	Readiness to capitalise on good luck
Charisma	Recognising opportunity
Commitment	Self-belief
Confidence	Thinking 'out of the box'
Courage	Understanding the importance of the customer
Diligence	Willingness to accept risk
Drive	Willingness to learn
Enthusiasm	Willingness to trust
Hard work	
Humility	

Many of these traits cannot be formally taught, but may be learned or acquired through experience.

Referring to these cases, students should be asked to identify the character traits which contribute to the entrepreneur's success in each instance. They may then be asked to consider which of these may be developed through formal learning or experience and which are more likely to be acquired at birth. The list is not intended to be complete or definitive; indeed, participants in class discussions should be encouraged to identify additional attributes or characteristics which might be added to the list.

Context

The members of APEC contributing to this project represent widely differing economic, political, and social backgrounds. The following chart vividly illustrates the economic disparities and income levels among the members which contributed cases.



Source: CIA World Fact book

In both Martha Tilaar of the eponymous group, and Iman Abadi of P.T. Nobi Putra Angkasa, the rich culture and religious significance of Indonesian society influence both entrepreneurs significantly in the way they run their companies. Martha comes from a Chinese/Javanese background and is a devout Christian; Iman is from a Muslim background. Both run their companies in accordance with the principles of their beliefs. They represent the middle to upper level of Indonesian society having educated parents although neither is especially wealthy. They develop their businesses to cater largely to the more prosperous levels of society - Martha through beauty salons and cosmetics, Iman by manufacturing for commercial and industrial enterprises.

The Japanese entrepreneurs face different but no less difficult challenges. In such a highly developed society, the entrepreneur must look for new or 'niche' areas in which to expand. At Healthy Pit, Keiko Sugimoto identifies a market in Japanese society for dietary and day to day health advice. As society ages, the population grows more affluent, and adopts less healthy western dietary habits. Hiroshi Kaneda of Yokkaichi Switchgear follows his technical instincts in developing new sophisticated electrical devices, but finds that large companies already have developed networks and relationships which are difficult to penetrate. He encounters problems when employing a capable foreign staff member touching on the topical issue of the role of an immigrant workforce in Japan.

Spencer Wing in Malaysia comes from a poor family and tries many small businesses before finally discovering his creative talent. This leads him into advertising which becomes his main trade. Benefiting from the growing affluence of Malaysian society, he spins out one idea after another and plunges into a variety of businesses.

Both Philippine cases illustrate comprehensively the drive of committed entrepreneurs in the hurly burly of the Philippine market economy. Mei Hao and her garment enterprise thrive in the combative front line of the retail trade catering to the middle and upper levels of society. Both entrepreneurs come from affluent backgrounds, but Leo Ang of Metro Industries is deprived of his inheritance after the premature death of his father and is well acquainted with hardship. His commercial chemical business develops as he displays his business acumen and talent for sales.

Winson Lan from the wealthy city-state of Singapore is a driven soul. His background was relatively poor but his sometimes rebellious energy and entrepreneurial talent open many possibilities for him and form the basis for his success. In the Singaporean environment, there are many opportunities and he makes much of them, and successfully seizes the opportunity to expand abroad into the difficult Japanese market. He does not hesitate to take advantage of various schemes offered by the Singaporean government for assisting growing businesses.

The cases from Thailand concern developments in the north of the country. Saowaluck's business in Chiang Mai develops around her connections with Japan where she attended university, and with the help of her husband, himself a Japanese. They first identify an opportunity to develop Japanese tourism in that part of Thailand and then develop a business making products from *tatami* rushes. Initially they intend to export *tatami* mats to Japan, but when that fails, they use the rushes to make a wide

range of handicrafts for tourists, employing many households in the process. After trying a number of ways to make a living, Prasert and Sunan succeed in reviving for export traditional pottery in the relatively poor north eastern town where they had been born. In both cases, Thai government advice and assistance play an important part in the entrepreneurial success although it does not involve direct financial assistance.

The Three Women featured in the US case all start from disadvantaged situations; two as immigrants and one as a single mother. They are typical examples of people who prove that with hard work and dedication there are rich opportunities in the United States. Tao Miller of *Body and Soul* grows into adulthood in relative poverty in rural Hawaii and achieves great things by identifying key factors in the burgeoning consumer society around him. Maria Chan benefits from a Hawaiian government loan programme and assistance from the Women's Business Center in Honolulu but is driven by her own ambitions to establish a successful garment company.

The two cases from Viet Nam symbolise the freedom gradually being given to private businesses in the country. After forty years of destructive war and a further twenty years of economic isolation under the trade embargo, Viet Nam had established an economy based upon state-owned enterprises and collectives. In 1986, the introduction of the *doi moi*⁴ policy signalled a loosening of state control, but private businesses remained at a considerable disadvantage in many respects. Nguyen Kiem sets up his freight forwarding business, Anh Cao, after recognising the poor performance of the state owned forwarder in which he had been employed. He develops his business to the point where he actually takes advantage of a number of state owned companies' inefficiencies and underutilised assets. Pham thi Loan, on the other hand, gains experience in foreign companies and then uses her knowledge and experience there to build her own business in the Viet A company. Both entrepreneurs have to overcome entrenched bureaucratic systems hostile to private companies in order to establish themselves.

Childhood

To the question; is the entrepreneur born or can you create one, the equivocal answer might be "both". The cases provide some useful insights into the question and provide abundant material for class discussion.

The case of Martha Tilaar in Indonesia is interesting. She had been sickly when born, to the extent that it was feared that her intellectual development would be slow, and her mother 'specifically trained Martha in various skills to make up for it'. Martha was however not spoiled and was told that if she wanted money she would have to work for it. She also enters the commercial world at a very young age by selling to her schoolmates.

Kaneda of Yokkaichi Switchgear also lost his father when he was very young and had to help support his family from a young age.

⁴ *Doi moi* is the term used to describe a series of economic steps introduced in December 1986 by the Sixth National Congress in Viet Nam to promote economic renewal.

In Malaysia, Spencer Wing has a very similar start in life devising and selling small items from an early age.

Both Mei Hao and Leo Ang of Metro were born in the Philippines into relatively well-to-do families in Manila, and although Leo's family fell on hard times when he was 11, the acumen he demonstrates in later life seems to have come from within him rather than as a result of hardship. Mei Hao starts her own business while still at school.

In Singapore, Winson Lan neglected school in order to develop small projects to earn pocket money. As a young employee, he was rebellious.

In the US cases, the two immigrants come from entrepreneurial families so one might argue that business is in their blood. Barbra An Pleadwell starts an early business selling to her classmates while still at school in Guam. Maria Chan starts her sewing business while still a student. Hastings lost her father at an early age and was herself a single mother. Tao Miller from Body and Soul did not come from a rich family and commented: 'if I wanted something like a new bike, I had to go out and earn the money'. He was brought up in Sweden until he was 15, he then moved with his parents from Sweden to rural Hawaii on the island of Maui.

Family and Friends as Partners or Employees

The significance of family is considerable in many of these cases, sometimes negative, and sometimes positive.

Martha Tilaar benefits from the support of her husband although he is not involved in the business. He nevertheless plays an important supportive role behind the scenes; on the other hand, her business relationship with a close friend breaks down. In the other Indonesian case, Iman Abadi is greatly influenced by one of his daughters who introduces him to a number of modern management principles, and inspires him to take a management degree himself. This daughter and her husband join the company, while another does not. Iman hopes that his 14 year old son will eventually join the company.

In Healthy Pit in Japan, Keiko Sugimoto and her husband meet in the early stages of her company's development. He takes early retirement from his employer to run the sales side at Healthy Pit which has been very successful. On the other hand, Keiko's six friends who joined her in the establishment of Healthy Pit decided to pull out when the company was required to increase its capital base. Hiroshi Kaneda at Yokkaichi Switchgear does not benefit from the support of his wife, and comes to regret the employment of his brother-in-law.

Spencer Wing in Malaysia also works closely with his wife. She gives up a long government career to open a retail business and together they make a success of it. Is it too far-fetched to suggest that giving birth to a company has a special significance for couples?

In Manila, Mei Hao gets her first break from a friend who offers a partnership, but seems thereafter to take charge of her own business, and does so with great success.

In Singapore, the energetic Winson Lan marries a high-flying professional against her family's wishes. Initially continuing her own career, Angeline is finally persuaded, when her third child is due, to join the company as vice-president to upgrade its computer systems and to obtain ISO certification. She delivers both objectives and adds a certain stability to the company. Winson credits her with 'keeping his employees happy and willing to work for him for a very long time'.

In both Thai cases, the couples cooperate closely together to make their enterprises work, each making an important contribution. Considering Tao Miller's warning in the next paragraph about family and friends, the main point seems to be that such people should only be involved in the business if they can make a real contribution, not simply because of family connections or friendships. In both the Thai cases, the couples seem well balanced, each partner playing an important part.

In *Body and Soul*, Tao Miller represents both sides of the family dilemma. His Japanese wife helps the business actively with design and with Japanese connections. On the other hand, his attempt to bring his father into the business fails, and he is forced to get rid of a good friend whom he tries to help out by giving him a job. His pragmatic comment raises a useful caveat: 'I take the responsibility for hiring persons who were not qualified. Having friends and family involved is very difficult. Business is business and family is family..... Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.... I wouldn't recommend it'.

At Anh Cao in Hanoi, Nguyen Kiem's school classmates ask to join his company when he establishes it, but: 'it is not easy to manage a company with many co-founders; I would like to start my own business first'. So he turns them down and shares the company only with his wife, although she plays no active part in the management. On the other hand, he employs both his son, educated in the US, and his daughter, trained in tourist management, to run parts of the business, for which they are qualified. Pham thi Loan at Viet A learns the hard way that involving her brothers in the business does not work. However, she recognises her familial duty and supports them indirectly, while she employs her sister in her finance department.

Gender

There will be no surprise at the success of female entrepreneurs in the USA where the advancement of women has been the subject of attention for some time, both socially and politically, and has been given wide publicity.

However the cases of Keiko Sugimoto, Mei Hao, Martha Tilaar, Pham thi Loan, and, alongside their husbands, Saowaluck and Sunan, offer unequivocal confirmation that female entrepreneurs can be at least as successful in traditional Asian society as in the West. These cases will reward examination and analysis of the extent to which being female helped or hindered in practice the women's development of their businesses within their respective societies, and provide material for fruitful discussion. The gender issue, however, was not in itself specifically singled out for

coverage in these cases, although it was stipulated that, where possible, a case of one male and one female entrepreneur should be contributed by each member.

It is not simply a matter of looking at the gender issue in a broad Asia-Pacific context. The situation in each economy in the region is distinct. For example, in Japan, women still find it difficult to break into the networks which govern the country; in Viet Nam, women are active politically and professionally; in Singaporean business, women play an essential role, especially in the professional services.

It is an issue which requires much greater discussion than these cases were able to provide, and it is to be hoped that further research will take place to add to the existing literature.

Education of the Entrepreneurs - Formal and 'OJT'⁵

The role of education in the broad sense is critical to the success of many of the entrepreneurs. Several feel the need for formal education in order to channel and shape their entrepreneurial instincts after they have started their businesses and as they start to grow, others base their success on OJT and direct experience. In none of the cases does education to be an entrepreneur precede the entrepreneurial activity. It may be concluded that formal business education does not create the entrepreneur but may play a valuable role in channelling entrepreneurial drive and instinct, and also in inspiring would-be entrepreneurs by demonstrating what others have done, as in this case collection.

In these cases a number of the entrepreneurs see formal education for themselves as a means of refining and refreshing their developed enterprises. So Mei Hao was 'excited to get back to her business and implement strategies with new found vigor and excitement', and Angeline, Winson Lan's wife sees the master in entrepreneurship program as 'an opportunity (for Winson) to see whether your ideas and business development plans stand the test of a structured academic program'. Equally significant however is the clear understanding of several of the entrepreneurs of the great value of formal education for others and they provide it for their staff (Pham thi Loan, Prasert and Sunan, and Martha Tilaar in particular offer good examples of this).

The entrepreneur is able to grow and thrive independently but may need discipline to channel and bring order to the company he or she has created as it grows through success. Iman Abadi offers a good example of this. The task of managers and staff is not primarily to innovate and break new ground (although they should always be encouraged to do so as in-house entrepreneurs); rather, their task is to ensure the smooth and efficient running of the enterprise, to keep it healthy and up-to-date. For these people, formal management education can be of real benefit. Consider the dictum of Robert G. Ingersoll that, "Colleges are places where pebbles are polished and diamonds are dimmed"; perhaps managers and staff are 'pebbles' and entrepreneurs are 'diamonds'?

⁵ On the job training

In Japan, both Keiko Sugimoto at Healthy Pit and Hiroshi Kaneda at Yokkaichi Switchgear base their companies on the skills they acquired in their early formal education and learn thereafter 'on the job' as their companies develop.

Spencer Wing in Malaysia leaves school early and takes a variety of jobs having first 'witnessed at first hand how his mother's business could be transacted so simply yet so successfully'. A lucky break comes when his 'elaborate drawings' on song request forms catch the attention of an influential disc jockey who introduces him to a friend in the advertising business. Spencer clearly has natural artistic talent and quickly establishes himself. He benefits from a succession of practical rather than academic mentors, learning constantly from them through observation and this serves him very well. The simple comment at the end of the case "No experience is ever useless or wasted" may be a commonplace but deserves consideration by all would-be entrepreneurs.

In Singapore, the case opens with Winson Lan's wife Angeline suggesting that he sign up for a Master in Entrepreneurship program allowing him to 'test his ideas and to benefit from the mentorship of the instructor'. This takes place when Winson is 43 years old and has already created and expanded his business both in Singapore and internationally. Meanwhile, he enjoys passing on his knowledge and experience and acts as a mentor in an Economic Development program to help aspiring entrepreneurs in Singapore.

The cases from Thailand and the Philippines feature entrepreneurs who have college education but have basically learned their skills on the job as their businesses develop. Mei Hao enrolls in a master course for entrepreneurs similar to the one Winson Lan is being urged to take by his wife. The effect is to stimulate and inspire her to new efforts and directions in her business. Martha Tilaar from Indonesia takes the opportunity to study while in the USA but there is no suggestion that this is anything other than a specialised beauty course, the entrepreneurial drive comes from herself. Iman Abadi qualifies as a civil engineer, but only decides to study business formally long after he has established his business. He is in fact motivated to do so by his daughter after she has herself graduated from a management program and asks him penetrating questions about his equipment investments.

Barbara Hastings drops out of university but learns a great deal from a variety of jobs in journalism, winning a fellowship to Stanford. She later moves into public relations and starts to teach at Chaminade University where she meets her eventual business partner, Barbra An Pleadwell. Pleadwell works her way through college and registers her first business at the age of 20. She completes college degrees at both Chaminade and the University of Hawaii. Maria Chan graduates with honours from two institutions, but then undertakes an almost dizzying number of jobs. She needs to earn a living, but does so in a whole variety of fields which give her invaluable experience when she comes to develop her own business. Tao Miller at Body and Soul has had twenty years of business experience by the time he is 33, all of it in hands-on occupations of various kinds and has learned through both good and hard times. He actually disdains formal education and once walked out of a class on small business when he learned that the instructor had never been an entrepreneur himself.

In Viet Nam, Nguyen Kiem at Anh Cao seems to have followed his own instincts in building up his business while Pham thi Loan at Viet A participated in many management courses to build up both her management expertise and her technical skills. At one point she had considered doing an MBA overseas, but was unable to pursue the idea.

In several of the cases, Hastings and Pleadwell, Body and Soul, and Spencer Wing, mentoring plays a significant role. Thus Tao Miller 'tries to learn as much as possible from his older colleagues and draws many mentors from amongst them'.

Company Culture

Martha Tilaar in Jakarta 'always feels like a mother to her employees. She truly believes that the ideal relationship between employer and employee should be like that of mother and child', but insists that professionalism should always underpin relationships in the company. She puts her principles into practice and reaps a reward when 'her employees did not protest when their salaries were not increased during the economic crises. They were willing to understand that the company needed the money to pay its foreign exchange debts'. She has created an in-house "DJITU"⁶ philosophy based on her family traditions which she says, 'has really become a working program in our company, not just a symbol or document'.

Spencer Wing places great emphasis on the development of his team, and recognises that the 'key to success is to invest in the right people'. 'I was very mindful not to grow it too fast. We need to build in better resources and structures before we expand further.'

In the Philippines, like Martha Tilaar, Leo Ang practices his personal philosophy in his business: 'I try to be constantly fair with my employees and my customers as prescribed in the teachings of Buddhism. If I'm fair to them, they will be fair to me'. He reaps benefits in return. For extending goodwill gestures to the front line telephone operators, secretaries, warehouse keepers, while a salesman, 'he got tips for potential clients and pointers for selling'. As the CEO of his own business, he treats his employees with kindness and consideration. After a fire destroys the company office and adjoining warehouse, 'Employees huddled around Leo expressing words of encouragement and, more importantly, commitment to work harder and help rebuild the company'.

In Singapore, Winson Lan comes across as a somewhat volatile character. His long time secretary deplores his aggression, impatience, and bad language, but notes that he demonstrates a great deal of care for his employees. He has the wisdom to recognise the value of his wife's role in 'keeping his employees happy and willing to continue working for him for a very long time'; perhaps he is a 'rough diamond'.

In Thailand, Saowaluck also understands that good relationships with her village suppliers are essential to her business. She has to 'work with them to have better understanding'. But the corporate ethic reaches beyond business; she states

⁶ DJITU means 'sharp' or 'great' in English and is an acronym for *Disiplin* (discipline) *Jujur* (honesty, *Inovatif* (innovative), *Tekun* (persevering, focused), and *Ulet* (persistence, assertiveness).

simply: 'We strongly believe in fairness, with our employees, business partners, customers, and communities.....We at Thai Tatami Products are always active in social activities'. Prasert and Sunan adjusted their employment practices to suit their local environment, forming independent production and finishing teams rather than creating one big factory. Despite this, they 'have very close personal relations with their workers', and provide an impressive array of benefits, loans, scholarships and other welfare for their employees as well as participate in external social activities.

There is an interesting line in *Body and Soul* where Tao Miller says: 'I feel that I'm here to get something started, like I'm catching the fish and bringing it home to my team to prepare or nurture it, then I'll go after the next fish. I'm here to find new products, new opportunities, and they'll take care of it from there'. He sees his team as a vital part of the entrepreneurial process he himself has initiated. This neatly encapsulates the distinction between the 'diamonds' and the 'pebbles' and suggests the creative synergy they are able to generate together. For Miller 'staying successful means being loyal and seeking loyalty, and staying successful means having the right team of people'.

In Viet Nam, Nguyen Kiem's company culture revolves around providing excellent service to customers, and he recognizes that this is impossible without the full compliance of his staff with that principle. He gives his staff shares in the company as a bonus, and most remain with him and contribute to the company in return. However should some of his staff wish to start up on their own, he offers them advice, even taking shares in their company. Pham thi Loan at Viet A resembles Martha Tilaar, emphasising the importance of creating a family atmosphere in the company, looking after her workers well and providing them with education and training.

Conclusion

Despite the wide disparities between the APEC members from which these cases originate, many aspects of the entrepreneurial successes illustrated are of universal value and application, and are certainly not confined to the economies in which they are located. Would the entrepreneurs featured have created their own enterprises wherever they were based, or were there reasons which gave them some peculiar advantage? This question is in itself one of many which, it is hoped, will stimulate useful discussion in class.