

StarSpecial

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SOBA 2022

Elite enterprises show their mettle

SOBA participants this year impressed the judges with the quality of their submissions, showing how they tackle the economic challenges.



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Overcoming challenges towards success

WHEN the 13th Star Outstanding Business Awards (SOBA) 2022 began its journey last year, the country was transitioning towards the endemic stage for Covid-19.

During the launch in June last year, many industries strove to return to their pre-pandemic output levels.

To reflect that, the launch theme for the awards, which was organised by Star Media Group (SMG), focused on ensuring business resilience and agility.

By adopting the theme "SOAR", which represents the keywords "Sustain, Optimise, Accelerate and Resilience", the launch lifted off, while many companies faced a future that hinted rising inflation and the rumour of a recession looming ahead.

These were thankfully manageable, although strong measures needed to be taken by many SMEs.

But as SMG chief business officer Lydia Wang said, "With every challenge that presents itself, comes the opportunity to overcome them and discover new ways of doing things."

So, in the bid to urge businesses to face up to the upcoming challenges, SOBA 2022 introduced three new categories in Best in e-retail to SMEs that have successfully transitioned towards digitalisation.

It has also introduced the Best Halal Product or Service category and the Elite Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

It is backed by official sponsors, the Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia Berhad (CGC), Digi, PKT Logistics Group and RHB Bank Bhd, with Matrade as official trade promotion partner.

SOBA 2022 presents itself as a good platform for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to test their mettle, showcase their successes and stand among their peers who could potentially boost their business in the future via networking and collaborations.

During the launch, CGC president and CEO Datuk Mohd Zamree Mohd Ishak shared that SOBA's objectives are in line with CGC's aspirations, which is to be a partner for SMEs in their growth.

PKT Logistics Group Sdn Bhd chief marketing officer Kuan Eu Jin said that being a past SOBA winner back in 2012 and 2013 has benefited PKT by increasing its exposure and branding.

"Even in terms of ESG awareness, SOBA is a platform that should really be shared with every SME out there," Kuan added.

While RHB Bank Berhad SME Banking head Yip How Nang said that "SOBA is a very good platform for [SMEs] to measure themselves against their peers and get motivated to go forward."

He shared that businesses should put their financials into perspective first, then they need to know where to focus.

He also added that SMEs should understand that banks are there to assist them.

More inclusivity, better performance

With the previous year being the first time that SOBA has switched to a digital format in the judging process, feedback from business entrepreneurs were taken into consideration to make the judging more inclusive.

Wang added that comments from the judges to improve in this year's judging were also taken into account, resulting in a digital submission and judging platform that

SOBA 2022 wraps up with better quality submissions and networking opportunities



The SOBA 2022 judging team with SMG chief business officer Lydia Wang (in red). The judging process as been made more instinctive and easier for the judges to navigate. — AZMAN GHANI/ The Star



is more conducive and easier to use.

The judging event itself was an eye-opener for both Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) Strategic Planning Division senior director Raja Badrulnizam Raja Kamalzaman and International Trade and Industry Ministry (Miti) deputy secretary-general (investment) Datuk Bahria Mohd Tamil, who joined the SOBA judging panel this year.

"We are able to learn from them as well. The panellists are from different (sectors), some are from the government and some are from private," said Raja Badrulnizam.

He added that he was able to gather information on what the award participants do, what their challenges are and how they solve their problems.

"We can learn from them and provide some advice as well."

Bahria said that inviting ministries and government agencies to be part of the judging process allows them to share their insights but also keeps them informed of what is happening on ground.

The Association of Accredited Advertising Agents Malaysia president Andrew Lee pointed out that successful companies and brands have submitted more this year.

"Some companies have been exporting to 30 to 40 countries and this is very good."

Associated Chinese Chambers of



SOBA 2021 winners at the Gala Night. Soon, the 2022 winners will follow suit as they get on stage to receive their own awards. — GLENN GUAN/The Star

Commerce and Industry of Malaysia treasurer-general cum chairman of SME committee Datuk Koong Lin Loong the submitted presentations and the writing allowed the judges to understand the participants' businesses better.

"Furthermore with online submissions, we also can watch the video easily and that gives us different perspectives."

However, in terms of the participants' businesses, Koong noted that he did not detect much innovation.

"But, I am pleased to see a lot of entrepreneurship spirit and that also makes a difference."

Malaysia Entrepreneur Development Association national vice president Datuk Dr Teh Tai Yong noted that there are more new applicants joining SOBA and submission from outside Kuala Lumpur, such as from Penang, Johor and Melaka.

He said, "Integrating new technology in the submission process is

a contributing factor that probably allowed participants from outside Kuala Lumpur to take part."

There is still room for improvement, both in the participants' submission as well as their businesses.

"They need to cater their submission content and presentation to suit the particular category that they are taking part in," advised Lee.

While Koong pointed out that participants should follow the required criteria strictly when it comes to submissions as that acts as a guide.

"In terms of business, innovations and performance still count. The performance of business, especially the increase in revenue and profit are both important," he added.

Bahria reminded that businesses should pursue digitalisation more as that has become a way of life now.

"Also they need to get onboard with environmental, social and governance (ESG) as that is becoming more important in our industries."

"ESG helps when companies deal with overseas partners, especially ones in Europe," she said.

Raja Badrulnizam said that although the presentation period is short, it will test how well the participants can best deliver their key points all within five minutes.

Teh noted that SOBA's requirements are critical success factors for SMEs.

"The fact that the company has to sit down with a team to work to plan the submission is already a very good exercise as it helps them come up with ways on how to succeed."

All the judges agreed that the quality of submissions showed good improvement.

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By M. MAGESWARI
mages@thestar.com.my

RHB Banking Group is targeting to uplift 500 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic through the RHB #JomBiz social empowerment programme this year.

RHB Banking Group managing director and chief executive officer Mohd Rashid Mohamad said he found that the participants were appreciative of the programme.

"We want these micro, small and medium enterprises to reach a higher level so that they can eventually become SMEs. We are continuously mentoring these participants.

"This programme is not just focused on business, it also gives importance to the mental health of the entrepreneurs," he told reporters after the RHB #JomBiz awards ceremony 2023 held at RHB Centre, Kuala Lumpur.

Out of 141 programme participants who pitched their business ideas, the top 10 winners were selected and given seed funding which could be up to RM30,000 each. A total of 37 participants received a consolation prize of RM1,200 seed funding each.

Launched in 2022, this programme is in line with the group's sustainability strategy and roadmap. It aims to empower MSMEs through capacity building and provision of seed funding to help them re-start and boost their business.

Held in collaboration with Taylor's Community, the programme aimed to provide MSMEs in Malaysia with holistic entrepreneurship training plus business strategy and finance knowledge to power their growth.

"This programme to uplift small businesses is part of our community and CSR initiatives as well. We wish to support the vulnerable groups affected by the pandemic,"

Bank uplifting micro entrepreneurs

Programme provides training and seed money to grow business to next level



Mohd Rashid handing over the RM30,000 seed funding to one of the winners of the RHB #JomBiz programme, Azrina, at the RHB #JomBiz award ceremony 2023 held at RHB Centre in Kuala Lumpur, in the presence of RHB Bank Bhd group chief sustainability and communications officer Norazzah Sulaiman (left) and Ng (right).

explained Mohd Rashid.

He said they would also help upskill participants with digital capabilities and provide quality financial services through their Digital Bank to be launched by the end of this year or first quarter of next year.

RHB Group community banking managing director Jeffrey Ng Eow Oo said that RM500,000 had been allocated for the pilot programme, and that the fund would be reviewed as they wanted to make it an annual event.

Ng said that the participants of RHB #JomBiz underwent a rigorous management and business programme for about three months to get basic knowledge on "how to

run a proper business".

"They got a chance to pitch their ideas on how they think they can bring their business to another level from a strategic perspective.

"The participants needed to know their target market and show what they had learnt over the last three months. From there, we selected the top 10 winners for this programme," Ng added.

The participants were scrutinised carefully during the selection process with the focus on the B40 group.

RHB Islamic Bank Bhd managing director and chief executive officer Datuk Adissadikin Ali said they might also look for other training partners for the programme.

"Some of the participants were referred to us by the Federal Territories Islamic Religious Council (MAIWP) because they identified the real B40 asnaf (underprivileged) group who wanted to be entrepreneurs to upgrade themselves.

"We want to identify those worthy participants," said Adissadikin.

In his speech at the awards ceremony, Mohd Rashid said the participants of the RHB #JomBiz programme came from various backgrounds. They included single parents, homemakers and new entrepreneurs.

Azrina Non, 40, one of the programme's winners who received RM30,000 seed funding, is in the frozen food business in Bentong, Pahang.

"The RHB #JomBiz programme has exposed me to new ideas to expand my business.

"I am looking to introduce ready-to-eat meals like fried rice and noodles soon for my customers with the funds received from the bank.

"I expect to enjoy an increase of 30% in income due to my participation in this programme," said Azrina.

Siti Mariam Tarman, 43, a sushi micro entrepreneur in Taman Maluri, Cheras, said the programme helped her to think out of the box and venture into the halal industry.

"I created various mixtures (inti) for preparation of sushi, and set up booths at various government agencies in Putrajaya five days per week to sell these sushi variations," she added.

Mohd Fadzil Ahmad Bahari, 37,

who sells nasi lemak in Jinjang, Kepong, received RM1,200 seed funding and said that the programme helped him to solve problems in business, and remain calm when facing challenges.

"I learned how to talk to clients and optimise social media platforms.

"I gained confidence to grow my business. Each entrepreneur has to be competitive," he said.

Tharani Periasamy, 50, who teaches crafts and tailoring, received RM5,000 seed funding.

She said the programme allowed her to help single mothers to learn new skills to earn a living while caring for their families at the same time.

"I cut the fabrics and pack them during the training sessions and the single mothers can stitch the tote bags within four hours. I also taught some of them how to stitch Punjabi suits," she shared.

"The programme is very interesting and allows me to network for my business too," said Tharani, who is now renting a space in Petaling Jaya for the business.

"Previously, I didn't know anything about pitching and financial aspects.

"This programme has helped me to communicate better using proper channels and how to go to the next level in business," she added.

The registration of the third cohort of this programme opens this month.

More announcements will be made through the RHB #JomBiz official webpage at <https://www.rhbgroup.com/JomBiz/index.html>

To thrive in business, networking is crucial

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But it is not just hard work that pays off, as great business opportunities are forged during relaxed and enjoyable get-together sessions.

As SOBA also aims to bring together and provided an avenue for SMEs to mingle among their peers and look into possibilities of business development and expansion, a special afternoon event was planned on Sept 2 last year to mark the Mid-Autumn Festival.

Organised together with the Malaysia Entrepreneurs' Development Association (PUMM) the "Business Empowerment Talk and Networking" event was held at Level 2, Menara Star, Petaling Jaya.

PUMM central committee deputy president Nelson Beh said it is important for businesses to network and get to know more people.

"We have a lot of professionals and industrial leaders who can brainstorm together and help each other become big corporations and public-listed companies.

"Networking is the most important and significant factor for entrepreneurial development.

"It helps grow some of the best ideas that can be shared and get inspired from," he said.

SMG chief content officer Esther Ng, said SOBA and PUMM are similar in that both are committed in supporting the growth of home-grown businesses, particularly SMEs.



The PUMM 'Business Empowerment Talk and Networking' session hosted by SOBA aims to get professionals and industrial leaders to collaborate and help each other. — LOW LAY PHON/The Star

"There is much that SOBA and PUMM can learn from and leverage each other," she said.

Similarly a socialising session was also organised on Feb 16 to pay tribute to past award winners all the way back to the first awards ceremony held in 2010.

Called SOBA Prestige 2022, the event was held at Skyhill International, in the Avante Hotel, and was attended by SMG chief executive officer Alex Yeow as well as Ng.

Also present were the SOBA 2022 sponsors, CGC chief risk officer

K. Perbagaran, Digi head of enterprise sales (SME) Steven Soon Kok Leng, PKT Logistics Group Sdn Bhd group chief executive and managing director Datuk Seri Michael Tio, RHB Bank Berhad, SME banking head Yip How Nang, TalentCorp group chief operating officer Siva Kumeren A. Narayanan and Matrade strategic planning division senior director Raja Badrulnizam Raja Kamalzaman.

Also in attendance were event sponsors, Carlsberg Marketing Activation assistant manager Anandel Khoo Chun Chiang and Rotol

Group (M) Sdn Bhd founder and group managing director Datuk Seri Garry Chua.

The specially curated event was initiated last year as part of the ongoing effort to bring together SOBA alumni, partners and sponsors for an enjoyable and fruitful networking affair.

In his opening speech, Yeow shared that, "through this gathering, we hope to reconnect, form new bonds that go beyond mere business and foster a new generation of thought leaders.

"It is also our way of expressing

our sincere thanks to all of you for being an essential part of SOBA."

SOBA 2022 is organised by SMG with Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia Bhd, Digi, PKT Logistics Group and RHB Bank Bhd as main sponsors, TalentCorp Malaysia as co-sponsor and Matrade as the official trade promotion partner.

Supported by Bursa Malaysia, it is audited by BDO, with 988 and Suria as official media partners.

For more information on SOBA 2022, call SMG Events at 017-231 1789 or visit www.soba.com.my

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20db Hearing seeks to improve the lives of the hearing-impaired

HUMANS are well known to be highly social. We have evolved to function in groups since our hunter-gatherer days.

The ability to communicate through hearing and speech enabled our ancestors to survive and thrive in even the most hostile of environments.

However, our sense of hearing is often taken for granted. Due to age, noise or other factors, hearing often declines over time, making it harder for us to participate in social events.

More than 20 years ago, founder Mok Yong Yaw, who is also the company's chief executive officer and senior audiologist, realised there was a vacuum in the field of hearing healthcare support across the nation.

This inspired him to establish 20dB Hearing, a private hearing centre, in an effort to empower the hearing-impaired community.

According to Mok, "Our goal has always been to elevate people's quality of life through hearing loss management and awareness."

Since then, the company has grown to become the largest player in the industry with a network of 33 hearing centres, spanning two countries and manned by over 70 certified audiologists.

20dB offers comprehensive audiological services. The healthcare provider specialises in hearing tests and hearing aid fitting for all ages.

Its hearing devices are imported from reputable manufacturers such as Unitron, Phonak, Advanced Bionics, Signia and Resound, which offer an unrivalled listening experience.

At 20dB, it is universally accepted that hearing well opens the door to more opportunities in life.



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20dB Hearing offers comprehensive audiological services and specialises in hearing tests and hearing aid fitting for all ages.

To achieve this in practice, they augment state-of-the-art hearing devices with world-class expertise from qualified professionals.

20dB aims to understand your needs and match you with the hearing solution that works best in your daily life.

The healthcare company complements its repertoire of services with a range of other duties such as speech language therapy, industrial hearing screening and cochlear implants.

This variety of services extends its reach to aid more people in need of hearing treatments.

Additionally, 20dB audiologists and speech therapists are based in their hometowns as they are familiar with local customs and

culture to better serve clients.

Having this bond between clinician and the client provides a natural and effective way to build rapport which can lead to better health outcomes.

In the previous year, 20dB had won the SOBA Gold Award for Best in Customer Service.

It leads the way as the first hearing centre to achieve QMS ISO 9001:2015 certification in Malaysia, which reflects its commitment towards enhancing clinical processes and delivering high-quality customer care services.

To safeguard the integrity and performance of its medical devices throughout the supply chain, the management has obtained



Mok: 'Our goal has always been to elevate people's quality of life through hearing loss management and awareness.'

the Good Distribution Practice for Medical Devices (GDPMD) certification.

All of these recognitions mean its patients can be assured of outstanding and consistent performance at every outlet.

In order to reduce waste and meet sustainability objectives, 20dB has developed an in-house lab that services hearing aids thus, ensuring speedy repairs and zero downtime.

Its hearing aids even come with their own Hearing Aid Protection Plan, which insures the devices and gives all clients peace of mind in the event of theft or loss.

Another special programme offered is a take-home hearing aid trial for up to 20 days so clients can experience the device in their natural environment with no strings attached.

Lastly, nationwide support is available to all clients from the numerous centres spread across Malaysia.



MCJ Beauty Sdn Bhd

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Mr. Lo Kok Hooi, Ms. Lo Sze Ying & Mr. Chin Choong Foo

— Director —



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MCJ was established in 31st May 2019 in Selangor. We are strategically located in Wisma MC. We are specialized in leveraging online channel to constantly provide high quality and premium beauty products. With the deep know-how in leveraging online platform, we are the industry leading beauty company in the live streaming platform. With a successful proven record of online sale, MCJ will be expanding towards physical stores to provide walk-in sales.

Our founders, Lo Kok Hooi, Lo Sze Ying and Chin Choong Foo, shares the same vision. They are strongly dedicated towards promoting various usage and treatments of the beauty products.

Our products is known to many in healing health too, It promotes good energy flow and helps one to get rid of the body and mind negative energy. It is seen as an essential in challenging times, it helps us generate and spur positive energy. Whenever a person faces difficulties or depressed in life, it will play a significantly important role to uplift their bravery and courageous. It contains the force of positivity that could effectively influence a person tremendously.

Our team is dedicated in serving the very best variety of products to our customers and delivering the best customer service experiences by making sure all enquiries of our customers

are being assisted. With the proven record of our signature product "Magic Cleansing Body Wash" and the excellent customers reviews, we have successfully attracted more than hundred thousand loyal customers up-to-date.

MCJ takes the quality of our products as the utmost priority, we believe that all our customers' needs and wants are part of our primary responsibility. We strive our best effort to consistently innovate our offerings, and with our highly efficient management team, we strive to stand out among competitors and continue in sharpening MCJ competitive edge.



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Building the local talent ecosystem



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IN supporting Malaysia's journey to achieve high-income nation status and improve the overall well-being of Malaysians, Talent Corporation Malaysia Berhad (TalentCorp), an agency under the Ministry of Human Resources, offers key initiatives that work to attract, nurture, and retain the best and the right talent needed to fulfil the country's talent needs.

"Talent is key to driving knowledge-intensive and innovation-led activities that will stimulate economic growth and propel the country towards progress," said TalentCorp's group chief executive officer Thomas Mathew.

By working together with industry partners, academia and the government, TalentCorp builds and strengthens the local Malaysian talent ecosystem by driving talent interventions and refining policies to address immediate critical skills gaps and talent shortages within the industries.

"Our approach involves advocating for progressive policies and forging strategic partnerships to create a comprehensive and forward-thinking Malaysian work, workplace and workforce," Thomas added.

TalentCorp's initiatives are developed for local and global talents, including students, graduates,



Thomas: 'Our approach involves advocating for progressive policies and forging strategic partnerships.'

working professionals, career comeback women, Malaysians abroad, high-skilled expatriates, employers and stakeholders in the industry and academia.

To ensure graduates are employable and ready for work befitting employers' requirements, TalentCorp addresses the underlying need for the industry and academia to be on the same page via



TalentCorp in partnership with Kulim Industrial Tenants Association (KITA) organised the Industry-Academia Collaboration Workshop for the Electrical and Electronics sector. The workshop outlined and identified workforce and talent-related issues faced by the industry and shared insights on how to overcome these challenges.

the Industry-Academia Collaboration (IAC) platform.

It enables industry players, academicians and professional bodies to find solutions and craft implementation measures for them to jointly nurture students' academic journey in alignment with industries' needs.

As a reinforcement measure, TalentCorp encourages employers to provide meaningful and relevant internships for local students through the National Structured Internship Programme (MySIP).

While the company leverages the opportunity to groom and build its talent funnel, they are also eligible

for a double-tax deduction on expenses incurred on interns' allowances, logistics, data and communication and training.

MySIP has benefitted over 102,000 university students and has been expanded to include Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) students.

To get matched to potential interns, employers can participate in TalentCorp's mynext initiative for upcoming talent that may fit their requirements.

TalentCorp recognises the importance of global competitiveness in the Malaysian work environment

as the world becomes more interconnected.

To attract and retain talent, TalentCorp advocates for the adoption of future work methods such as flexible work arrangements and optimal work-life practices.

Its FWA@Workplace initiative, introduced in 2022, is a three-step programme that helps employers to understand and implement Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA) in their company in line with the Employment Act 1955 (Amendment) 2022.

For more information, log on to www.talentcorp.com.my



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We are Team Biomed, a total channel partner on a mission to raise the quality of healthcare standards & facilitate medical breakthroughs in Southeast Asia. We achieve this through partnering with many world-renowned brands in the biomedical and life sciences industry, while actively developing our own expertise and abilities. Throughout this journey, we never forget what truly makes us tick. It is our dedication to improve the quality of life and well-being of people. One person at a time.

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- Multi-talented team with diverse background
- Continuous improvement culture
- In-depth knowledge and experience





CelcomDigi's combined scale, unique competencies and broad ecosystem of solution partners provide the right expertise and resources that will help to advance MSME's digital capabilities.

Supporting the digitalisation journey

CELCOM and Digi have merged, and as of Dec 1 last year, CelcomDigi was established with the aim of bringing the best of both networks, products and services, customer experience and innovation, to meet its customers' needs now and in the future.

"What this means is that we're now able to leverage our combined strength to provide greater support for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) in Malaysia, particularly in helping them digitalise," said CelcomDigi's SME enterprise sales head Steven Soon.

Trusted digital partner for SMEs

Built on more than 60 years of combined track record in innovation and connecting Malaysians, CelcomDigi today is powered by over 4,000 industry experts and has the widest and highest capacity network, putting it in a strong position to serve the diverse needs of consumers and businesses alike.

"Digital transformation looks different for every business and organisation," Soon shared.

"It is important that we understand the needs of each business to determine the right tools and digital solutions that can help improve their operations and grow their business."

Through CelcomDigi's combined scale, unique competencies and broad ecosystem of solution partners, it has the right expertise and resources that will help to advance MSME's digital capabilities.

"This reinforces its commitment to be the trusted digital partner for MSME, growing alongside them in their digitalisation journey," he affirmed.



Soon: 'Digital transformation looks different for every business and organisation.'

Leveraging technology for business growth

Many MSME have realised the benefits of digitalisation, more so in the past few years when the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

While businesses from various industries had turned to digital solutions to sustain their operations, many continued to leverage

technology to improve and expand their businesses post-pandemic.

A brick-and-mortar boutique faced an unprecedented challenge when there was zero footfall to the shop due to prolonged lockdowns.

The boutique owner was quick to pivot to e-commerce solutions, setting up an online store to keep its business afloat.

Through this experience and with the help of Digi Business' suite of digital solutions, the boutique not only weathered through the pandemic, it continues to thrive today, as leveraging technology to bring its business online has helped expand its customer reach and improved its sales by 10-fold.

Another example is a home-grown bakery-cum-café that has adopted Celcom Business' digital solutions to help create a seamless process of managing online orders, payments, and deliveries by using an integrated digital platform.

This allowed its staff on the frontlines to focus on improving other aspects of running the café, such as efficient customer service.

"MSME must learn from the pandemic that technology is the 'now' norm, and that it needs to be adapted and integrated into their business model and operations, to stay relevant and compete in today's digital age," Soon advised.

He added that businesses that are hesitant to digitalise their operations will lose out in the long run, as it is more expensive to not digitalise.

Knowledge and growth mindset to support digitalisation journey

Soon believes that having a growth mindset and continuous learning are fundamentals to businesses embarking on digitalisation, as technology evolves rapidly.

"As we've witnessed, having the right growth mindset of finding opportunities amid a crisis is crucial in driving an effective digital transformation and ensuring business sustainability for MSME."

He added, "Besides embracing technology, it's important to stay

updated on new technologies as well, and start thinking about adopting these technologies into their operations to improve efficiencies and grow their income at the same time."

One way to gain more knowledge and broaden their horizons is by actively participating in forums, networking and business matching sessions, technical workshops and so on.

"For instance, we recently kicked off the CelcomDigi Business Tech Week series, where MSME can gain insights and experience a wide range of use cases on display from our industry partners.

"It covers technology and innovation topics such as 5G, Cloud, IoT, Cybersecurity, Fixed connectivity solutions, among others. These activities are part of our efforts to consult and engage with MSME, helping them discover and identify the right technologies and digital solutions for their businesses," Soon commented.

Moving towards a digital nation

MSME are integral to Malaysia's economic growth, and as the nation accelerates its digital economy agenda, digitalisation is no longer an option for MSME.

Soon said, "We recognise that high costs, effectiveness of digital solutions, and the lack of know-how in digitalising are some of the common concerns preventing MSME from digital transformation. We are here to allay these concerns and assure MSME that digitalisation is both a step in the right direction and a necessity."

"We are ever ready and committed to support MSMEs in their digitalisation journey," he concluded.

Improving global trade

Matrade to drive exports through coordinated efforts with other ministries and agencies

MALAYSIA has established itself as one of the most trade-friendly countries in the world, exporting a competitive range of products to more than 200 global markets. In 2022, Malaysia's trade registered a historic performance with trade, exports, imports and trade surplus reaching an all-time high. Last year, the country's trade to GDP ratio stood at 159.3%.

But in an increasingly competitive world, countries that were once lagging in their performance have recently surpassed us.

Given the current global and domestic challenges, the Malaysian government has committed to rejuvenate and reposition Malaysia in the global economy under the 12th Malaysia Plan 2021-2025.

Being the national trade promotion organisation, the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (Matrade) complements the efforts in realising these aspirations.

Considering the significant contribution of trade to Malaysia's economy, a National Trade Blueprint (NTBp) was commissioned by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (Miti) and developed by Matrade.

It is a five-year plan to enhance the nation's export competitiveness through strengthening the business ecosystem and position Malaysia as a leading exporting country.

Under the blueprint, eight working groups were established to address and enhance particular areas within the business ecosystem in order to strengthen the capacity and capability of Malaysian exporters.

WG1 – Trade Facilitation, which aims to reduce the business costs by improving regulatory processes and efficiency.

WG2 – Standards and Conformance to help reduce the cost of conformity and assist Malaysian exporters to meet international



regulatory standards.

WG3 – Trade Promotion and Market Access, which will develop the Single Information Portal for Export (SIPE), to provide information across the export value chain that helps Malaysian companies in global trading.

WG4 – Sustainability and Innovation focuses on establishing a sustainable manufacturing centre, addressing forced labour issues and other unethical practices.

WG5 – Digitalisation and Technology aims to drive export competitiveness by increasing the adoption of digitalisation and B2B e-commerce in order to penetrate new export markets.

WG6 – Investment seeks to diversify the basket of export products through export-oriented investment.

WG7 – Branding, which nurtures SMEs in product branding and increases the visibility of Malaysian brands in regional and international export markets.

WG8 – Logistics, where the Ministry of Transport revised its policy to allow sharing of prime movers and trailers within the same group of companies. This will reduce capital and operating cost by 10%-20% and resolve the issue of high ancillary charges.

The NTBp aims to take Malaysia's trade ecosystem to the next level and future-proof it for the challenges that lie ahead.



Biomed's team of experts during its most recent Kick-Off Meeting.

Advancing healthcare standards in South-East Asia

AS a channel partner on a mission to raise the quality of healthcare and facilitate medical breakthroughs in South-East Asia, Biomed Global partners with many world-renowned brands in the biomedical and life sciences industry, while actively developing its own expertise and abilities.

Its services range from providing medical diagnostics solutions, to ensuring that researchers have the necessary reagents to advance scientific research.

Since its inception nearly two decades ago, the company has been providing leading medical solutions to its stakeholders.

It achieves this by ensuring its expertise and category knowledge is second to none, establishing a strong supply chain network, having a strong maintenance and support team and most importantly, ensuring a robust regulatory and quality assurance framework.

Its experience and expertise were especially invaluable during the Covid-19 pandemic where it leveraged upon its strong relationships between principals and supply chain partners to provide essential solutions to its customers.

As the world transitions out of the pandemic, there is the need to restructure its organisation by further developing its expertise and enhancing the well-being of its stakeholders, both internally and externally.

Biomed's restructuring focuses on a few broad themes, mainly in terms of sustainability, digital transformation, and talent.

Sustainability

Adopting sustainable practices is something it is prioritising, especially with the impact of unsustainable practices manifesting in various forms in recent years.

The company is gradually shifting its organisation from solely thinking about profitability, to one that considers the long-term good of society, by "making sustainable practices part of our DNA".

Digital transformation

Realising the need to provide a good experience to its stakeholders with lesser resources, the company is investing in a new digital "operating system".

Its plans include incorporating various automations and innovations that have become available in recent years, and a total revamp of some legacy systems that are deemed obsolete.

They also require the company to question the status quo and be prepared to accept innovative ideas.



For its talents, this presents a wonderful opportunity to upskill and gain familiarity with the latest digital technologies.

Talent development

Having talent with passion, strong expertise, team spirit and experience is an essential part of its organisation.

It is an essential ingredient to support its stakeholders, and the company continuously provides various programmes to develop its pool of talent.

In addition, it always welcomes talents with strong expertise, drive and curiosity to join.

To ensure competitiveness, Biomed also periodically reviews its rewards and remuneration among the industry.

It has also upgraded its work environment to ensure it is conducive for talents to do their best work while accommodating a hybrid workplace model.

Ready for the future

With so many initiatives and transformations ongoing, the company is at an exciting phase, with many avenues for its talents to take charge of their learnings and grow together.

These initiatives allow Biomed to optimise its cost without compromising on the experience provided to its stakeholders.

More importantly, these initiatives will improve the organisational resilience, allowing the company to deliver innovative medical solutions to customers in unforeseen circumstances.

All these efforts will come to fruition, when Biomed is recognised as the Gold Standard brand and platform for healthcare and life sciences solutions in South-East Asia.

Its tagline "Empowering partners, Enriching lives" serves as a reminder that it enables lab technicians, clinicians, and researchers to do their best work, indirectly helping to save lives.

That is what inspires the company to strive every day, it is more than "just a business" – it is a reason for being.

To know more, visit www.biomed-global.com

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Adding pizzazz to the pizza experience

How US Pizza became an over 100-outlet chain with regional expansion plans

FROM its humble beginning in Penang in 1997, US Pizza has grown from a single outlet to more than 100 in Malaysia and Indonesia.

Its owner Jeremy Hiew attributed the success of the company to its innovative products which caters to the locals' palate and the creativity on the fusion of western and Malaysian flavours.

"We have engaged Redzuawan Ismail better known as Chef Wan, who is a popular Malaysian celebrity chef, television host, actor, restaurateur and entrepreneur, to be our brand ambassador in 2021.

"He came up with two new pizza varieties, namely Wan-derful Prawn Pizza and Spicy Vietnamese Chicken Pizza, inspirations from the famed chef's favourite recipes, and presently, we have his Masala Pizza.

"We also have seasonal pizzas with durian and cempedak toppings, which have proven to be quite popular, and even a chendul pizza. For now on our menu, we have the Chipsmore Pizza.

"The thing about Malaysians is that they love 'gimmicky food' and we find that our customers love our pizzas with unusual toppings. They try our pizzas and take pictures with them to later upload onto their social media pages thus creating a buzz," he said.

Jeremy added that he has a team of chefs that helps them to create these unusual pizzas, and they even created a 'hype and trendy pizza' called the Bomb Pizza which is flammable.

"Our pizzas are popular as they



Hiew: 'It was crucial that we stay focused, persistent and committed to the business during trying times.'

merge the flavours of Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam and Thailand."

He remembers buying over the US Pizza brand in 2015 when got to know that Donald Duncan, the American founder of the company, had wanted to sell the business with the hope that a passionate investor would continue to carry on his devotion in the pizza business.



"I decided to be that investor despite having no experience in the food and beverage industry as I was an investment banker by profession.

"I knew the quality of the products as I used to patronise the outlet in Greenlane, Penang when I was young and enjoyed the food there," he said.

Jeremy said there was only one outlet with three staff in 2015, and now the company has over 100 outlets all over Malaysia and two in Indonesia, with a third to open next month (April).

"Our next stop is Singapore by the end of the year followed by the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam at a later date.

"We managed to grow the company from three workers to about 800 within seven years, creating more job opportunities for the workplace," he said.

Over the years, US Pizza has added on more delicious combinations and even local pairings on their pizzas to suit every palate.

For the upcoming Ramadhan, US Pizza will be the first fast food chain restaurant to launch the

US Pizza serves a wide variety of American-style pizzas infused with local taste, ranging from savoury to sweet, satisfying the tastebuds of Malaysians.

cheapest Pizza Ramadan Buffet in town.

The US Pizza Ramadan Buffet promotes the "eat all you can" dining experience at only RM39++ (early bird price) featuring over 20 types of food, from appetisers to sides, and pizzas to pasta, as well as drinks and dessert.

Bookings can be done via the US Pizza app: <https://bit.ly/USPizzaMalaysiaApp>

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For more information, go to <https://uspizza.my/>

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Platform to trade halal products

DagangHalal.com B2B halal e-marketplace to export eight star products within the region

WHEN supplying halal-certified products to the Muslim community, it is vital to establish a convenient and reliable supplier channel.

The best resource to accomplish that goal is through DagangHalal.com, the largest halal-certified supplier online channel in the world.

It facilitates international halal trading sales transactions via online-to-offline mechanisms with:

- > more than 4,300 active suppliers from 85 countries all over the world
- > more than 13,000 registered business-to-business (B2B) buyers
- > a focus on business matching for Full Container Load (FCL), Less Container Load (LCL) and mixed containers
- > a solution to acquire distributors and wholesalers for target markets
- > a focus to export eight halal-certified products to the global and regional market.

As a supplier of halal products, it may be costly to attract potential buyers. Participating in an international trade fair can be expensive and require extensive planning. What you want is a channel that connects you to buyers worldwide, without the high costs and the inconvenience of maintaining your marketing efforts.

DagangHalal.com offers a platform for global buyers to source for quality halal products

and suppliers online. This enables a large and global buyer audience for halal products.



The B2B halal e-marketplace accomplishes this by building extensive commercial networks and partner relationships around the world with:

- > regional distributors and wholesalers' connections from international trade fairs as well as registered buyers from DagangHalal.com
- > connections and partnerships with International Food and Beverage Trade Fair organisers
- > regional trade finance institutions for invoice financing
- > halal certification bodies and ISO certification bodies for export compliance
- > government bodies and semi-government agencies for customs declaration and clearance.

Recently the company intends to export eight star products within the region, seven from Malaysia and one from Mongolia (halal beef and lamb).

Trading in Mongolian halal meat globally

In due course, Malaysia will

have access to delicious Mongolian meat.

This is attributed to a joint venture DagangHalal founded with mid-tier companies to import and also to become a hub for regional distributors within Asean countries for halal beef and lamb from Mongolia.

Under this initiative, Malaysians can indulge in unique and delectable cuisines as halal Mongolian meat is not widely available in the local Muslim community.

The famous Japanese wagyu beef needs no introduction.

Considered one of the most exclusive and expensive cuisines available today, it stands out in contrast to other meat variants due to its extensive marbling, creating an opulent, buttery suppleness that would satisfy taste buds.

The Mongolian beef and lamb, on the other hand, do not fall short in terms of quality.

Being sold for a fraction of the cost is among its advantages when compared to the likes of more prestigious meat available, whose enriching flavours also make Mongolian beef and lamb a main



At the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Collaboration are (from left) MECIP Global Engineers CEO Mahmood Azmy Muhammad Shukri, MNCCI Secretary General Bayasgalan Saranjav, MCMTTC president Callum Chen, German Standard CEO Battulga Davaalkhumbе, DagangHalal chief operating officer Tony Er, MNCCI president Amartuvshin Otgondavaa, Global Brand Synergy CEO Martin Ang and Solar Alert executive director Datuk Ismail Salleh.

contender against the wagyu.

The imported halal meat will be aimed at wholesalers and retailers in the regional market.

It will be packaged and refined for sale to hotels, restaurants, and cafe operators within Asean coun-

tries, particularly Indonesia as it is the largest Muslim-majority nation in the world.

For more information, log on to www.daganghalal.com or call the sales hotline at 011-2066 1150.

Providing HR solutions in one place

Great Pyramid adds value to clients' human resource management using innovative solutions

TALENT management is an important element in any organisation that when implemented strategically, can help enhance the business's overall performance.

In fact, it can even help it maintain its competitiveness through time. But sometimes, talent management can be difficult to manage, especially for smaller companies that are trying to scale up their operations.

Being a leading one-stop human resource (HR) service provider in Malaysia, Great Pyramid Sdn Bhd focuses on providing individuals and organisations with innovative solutions to manage complex end-to-end HR processes.

With more than 15 years of experience, the company has provided high value-added services to assist clients in expanding their business operations on a local and global basis.

The solutions it provides assist clients in reducing costs, adding focus on core business and gaining valuable market knowledge.

Co-founded by chief executive officer Tejvinder Singh and chief finance officer Gurdev Singh, Great Pyramid aims to provide the highest quality HR solutions at competitive rates with the dedication for building strong partnerships and solid commitment to its clients worldwide.

"Our vision is to bridge the gap between employers and talent. We want to be an enabler in solving the lack of talent in Malaysia," said Tejvinder.

He added that the company's recruitment strength is in roles



that cover accounting, finance, C-suites, HR, information technology and oil and gas.

"We are one of the largest Employer of Record (EoR) providers in Malaysia."

He further elaborated that the EoR helps solve the unemployment issue in Malaysia as it allows Malaysians living in the country to be remotely working for employers abroad.

This instantly increases the number of available jobs in Malaysia.

Backed by an empowered, dynamic and innovative workforce, Great Pyramid creates a strong synergy with its clients' organisation and is dedicated to excellence in service and commitment to standards of high quality.

The company is rooted in its core values, which are based on agility, integrity and professionalism.

It currently has more than 500 clients locally and around the

world that have expressed satisfaction for the quality of service it has offered.

These include immigration and mobility, such as processing employment and dependent passes for expatriates and foreign talents working and living in Malaysia, professional visit passes, Malaysia My Second Home programme application and more.

It also offers recruitment services, namely identifying permanent placements and on-site talent partners, as well as in workforce management, such as contract staffing, payroll management and the employer of record mechanism.

Great Pyramid also assists its clients by providing them employee benefit schemes, such as on-demand wage access and financial planning.

It has supported over 500-strong employees locally that have signed up with the company due to its



Tejvinder aims to provide the highest quality HR solutions at competitive rates.

experience, quick support, easy digital access and that it has no hidden fees.

Great Pyramid stands out because its consultants understand the needs of every HR team and are able to bring rich experience in human resource management and provide the right solutions to its clients.

The company offers a dynamic pricing that enhances the client's cost management without any hidden charges.

"Also as a firm believer in people, our consultants are ever

ready to lend an ear, to communicate and change accordingly," mentioned Tejvinder.

Looking at the future, Great Pyramid plans to expand into Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam.

It hopes to engage more employers to enable the on-demand wage access model for their employees and make it an industry standard. This will be facilitated by a new product called Onde.

To know more about Great Pyramid's full HR services, visit www.greatpyramid.com.my

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Inder Aesthetics champions life improvements through beauty transformation

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Klinik Dr Inder located in Petaling Jaya has excellent attributes and more with a goal of facilitating beautiful transformations, with the power to change lives for good.

Founded by Datuk Dr Inder who has more than 25 year's experience in aesthetic medicine, Klinik Dr Inder is more than a place to get aesthetic or hair restoration treatments.

Her clients have the opportunity to match their outward appearance with their inner vitality.

It's a resource for life-changing information and boosting their confidence supported by a family of professionals devoted to helping the clients express themselves.

In other words, Klinik Dr Inder specialises in world-class tailor-made solutions for her clients.

"The mission at Klinik Dr Inder is simple," said Dr Inder, "simply glow with confidence."

The Klinik Dr Inder Aesthetic team wants everyone to be able to glow with the confidence that comes from knowing their outer beauty matches their inner beauty.

By boosting patients' self-image and self-esteem with the pinnacle of modern cosmetic treatments, the team strives to give their clients the tools to make positive life changes.

Each team member has undergone rigorous training and is deeply compassionate, all to help their clients achieve their fullest potential.

Put simply, Klinik Dr Inder's ultimate goal is to bring change to their clients' life, as Klinik Dr Inder believes that beauty is



KLINIK DR INDER
Redefining Beauty & Health

everyone's right.

The aim of the clinic is to be the clients' most trusted partner in this journey together with them.

As the founder and leader of Klinik Dr Inder, Datuk Dr Inder is innovating the way to help her clients achieve natural-looking results.

With more than 25 years of professional experience, she is diplomate of the American Board of Hair Restoration Surgery, a fellow of the International Society of Hair Restoration Surgery, a master injector with a passion for continuing education in the aesthetics and hair restoration field in order to provide her clients with the highest quality of care.

Dr Inder believes in teamwork. Not only does she have the passion for the aesthetics medicine field, she is also passionate to train an equally capable team to release her mission.

The team at Klinik Dr Inder makes the difference as it does it all – from pleasant welcoming staff, the services to the doctors.

Its professionals are committed to help its clients reach their personal wellness and beauty goals.



Dr Inder: 'Simply glow with confidence.'

From domestic brand to regional powerhouse

Julie's Biscuits takes on Asean with its quality and adaptability



The exposure that Julie's Biscuits have even in Thailand shows how well the brand is accepted overseas.

HOME GROWN Malaysian biscuit company Julie's Biscuits has successfully expanded to the international market with unique product offerings and ambitious growth strategy.

The company has captured markets in over 80 countries since 1985, with its strongholds being in Singapore, Thailand, China, Taiwan and increasingly Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines.

It produces a variety of biscuits that cater to both local and international taste preferences, including traditional Malaysian treats and modern offerings.

Its ability to adapt its products and branding to different cultures has been a key factor in its success in different markets.

Julie's Biscuits faced challenges when



expanding to new countries, including language barriers, cultural differences, and complex regulations, but has managed to build a strong global presence by investing in marketing and distribution and developing new products.

Looking to the future, Julie's Biscuits plans to continue expanding its presence in the global market by developing new products.

It has attended many trade shows that can



Julie's Biscuits' participation in the China International Import Expo (CIIE) in Shanghai, November last year, proves the company is able to cater to different regions.

provide valuable networking opportunities and insights into the latest industry trends and innovations. One such example is the Gulfood tradeshow in Dubai.

In addition to adapting to many international markets successfully, another key factor behind Julie's Biscuits' success is its commitment to producing high-quality products.

The company uses only the finest ingredients and adheres to strict quality control standards to ensure that its biscuits are of the highest quality.

Additionally, it also has a wide range of products, from crackers to wafer rolls.

For more information, visit www.julies.com.my



Julie's Biscuits attends many trade shows that can provide valuable networking opportunities and insights, like the Gulfood tradeshow in Dubai, last month.



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From office mental wellness to ESG

Serbajadi Horticultural Solutions expands reach with innovative offerings

SERBAJADI Horticultural Solutions (Serbajadi), a gardening products supplier founded in 1988, is branching out beyond gardening by offering innovative solutions in office mental health and ESG (environmental, social and governance) challenges.

Over the years, the company has built a strong reputation for providing reliable gardening products to home gardeners and landscapers and agricultural products to farmers across the country, including Nestlé Paddy Club.

In recent years, it has extended its services to provide fun interactive gardening workshops for kids at schools and events, helping to nurture a love for nature among the younger generation.

In addition to its efforts in promoting sustainable gardening practices among children, Serbajadi has also extended its reach to the corporate world by offering its services to HR departments to enhance mental wellness at the workplace through horticultural therapy.

Many companies have been struggling to find ways to address the mental health of their employees, especially in light of the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

According to Serbajadi's chief operating officer, Woo Man Yee, "We are aware of the increasing mental health issues in the workplace, and we believe that horticultural therapy is a natural and effective way to alleviate stress and anxiety."



Woo promotes mental wellness at the workplace through horticultural therapy.

"Being engrossed in such an activity and caring for plants helps employees to decompress while strengthening rapport and camaraderie."

Horticultural therapy

Horticultural therapy uses plants and gardening activities to promote healing, improve mental health and well-being.

It has been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety, improving cognitive function and enhancing overall quality of life.

Serbajadi's horticultural therapy services provide companies with an innovative way to promote mental wellness and create a more positive work environment for their employees.

The company works closely with



human resource departments to develop bespoke programmes that cater to the specific needs and challenges of each organisation.

Biochar as an ESG tool

Apart from promoting mental wellness, Serbajadi is also taking a proactive approach to addressing ESG challenges by offering biochar as a tool for sustainable agriculture and landscaping.

Biochar is a type of charcoal made from organic waste that is gaining attention as a potential solution to a range of environmental, social and governance (ESG) challenges.

One of the main environmental benefits of biochar is its ability to sequester carbon in the soil.

By adding biochar to agricultural

fields, forests, or other landscapes, carbon can be stored for centuries or even millennia, reducing the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Biochar is not just a carbon sink – it also has the potential to enhance soil health, water retention and nutrient cycling, which can improve crop yields and reduce fertilizer use.

This, in turn, can promote more sustainable and resilient farming systems, especially in regions affected by climate change, soil degradation or food insecurity.

Serbajadi's biochar is made from sustainable and locally sourced plant-based material and is designed to meet the needs of farmers and landscapers who are looking for sustainable and envi-

ronmentally friendly ways to improve crop yields and reduce the environmental impact of their farming and landscaping practices.

Serbajadi's expansion beyond gardening is a testament to the company's commitment to innovation and sustainability.

Its horticultural therapy programme and biochar offerings are just a few of the many ways in which the company is making a positive impact on society and the environment.

With its continued dedication to providing reliable and effective solutions, Serbajadi is set to become a leading player in the field of ESG solutions and mental wellness in Malaysia and beyond.

The company's initiatives are timely, given the growing awareness of the importance of sustainability and mental health, and they are likely to find favour among those who seek to create a more sustainable and equitable future.

For more information, visit <https://serbajadi.com.my/> or scan QR code



Born out of the pandemic

Goldsome Innovation overcomes odds to achieve golden success



The Goldsome team behind Masdora's success.

By CATHERINE CHONG

LOCAL jewellery brand Masdora, a Covid-19 pandemic baby, had achieved e-retail success by turning obstacles into opportunities and venturing onto the road less travelled.

Established under Penang-based Goldsome Innovation Sdn Bhd, the brand is now one of the top sellers on e-commerce platforms such as Shopee and TikTok.

Goldsome managing director Poon Wai Kit said people had ridiculed him when he wanted to kick-start Masdora on social media and online marketplaces.

"They were saying nobody would buy expensive items on Shopee, which is widely known for

its low prices. But we were badly hit by the pandemic back in 2020. Goldsome was dealing in jewellery wholesaling then and business was non-existent.

"Looking at the situation, we strongly believed that e-commerce was the way to go to promote our products with its wide reach of audiences across the country.

"Considering that the jewellery industry is one of high integrity, we decided to start with Shopee which has high visibility and trust with

buyers open to leave their reviews."

He said Masdora, which translates into Gift of Gold (Mas is gold in Malay and Dora gift in Greek), initially targeted the e-retail savvy age group of 25 to 44 years.

"We were ecstatic that the brand was so well received just a few months into its debut on Shopee. We even had a record-breaking single transaction of about RM20,000.

"Our reputation was built from



The best-selling Mandela gold bars sold over 10,000 pieces on livestreams.

customers' rave reviews and good ratings. We gained their trust with our authentic, trendy and brilliantly designed jewellery that are on par with international grade and quality," he enthused.

Masdora was recognised with the Best in Marketing (Gold Award) in the Star Outstanding Business Award (SOBA) 2021 and is a finalist for Best in e-Retail in SOBA 2022.

The Best in e-Retail award is to honour local enterprises that achieved exceptional online sales performance in addition to demonstrating commitment and strong market leadership and true innovation to excel in online retailing platforms and providing the best online shopping experience.

Masdora was also accorded the

Star Role Model in the Malaysia Role Model Enterprise Awards (MRMEA) 2022.

Poon said the achievements were a great acknowledgment of their sacrifices and hard work and will further drive the business to greater heights.

He added that Masdora is also on a mission to educate the younger generation on the high return value of investing in gold jewellery.

The premium yet affordable brand, showcasing collections such as Emirate Star, Sparkling and its bestselling Mandela gold bars, is also available on PGMall, Lazada, www.masdora.com and a physical store in Butterworth (Pusat Perniagaan Oren).

MASDORA

JEWELLERY

A passion for telecommunication devices

Swap Asia Group came to be via need for services, support in distribution



Tan drove the company from a multi-million ringgit revenue company to a multi-billion ringgit one.

ANDY Tan has always been passionate about telecommunication devices, even during the early days of oversized phones, the size of a one-litre water bottle.

With a love of telecommunication devices and an entrepreneurial heart, he started his mobile business in 1994 as a telecommunication retailer in Puchong, Selangor.

As a telecommunication retailer, he noticed a lack of services from his distribution partners supplying telecommunication devices.

Traditionally, distributors have been box movers with no added value services or support to their customers and manufacturers.

That inspired him to start his distribution business in 1998, focusing on bringing value-added services to retailers and manufacturers.

With that passion, he secured distribution rights for Sagem, Philips, Mitsubishi and Motorola.

In June 2006, he went into a joint venture with Brightstar Logistics Pte Ltd, a subsidiary of Brightstar Corp, and in less than five years, he grew the business from 10 to over 200 employees and obtained distribution rights for BlackBerry and HTC.

He also secured a long-term

procurement and supply, forward and reverse logistics contract with a leading operator in Malaysia.

In 2014, he secured the Apple iPhone and iPad distribution rights in Malaysia, successfully implemented a supply chain fulfilment contract with a leading operator in Malaysia, and introduced Malaysia's first trade-up and device protection services for an operator.

In just 10 years, Tan drove the company from a multi-million ringgit revenue company to a multi-billion ringgit one and successfully powered the industry's first device annual upgrade programme in



Swap Asia focuses on bringing value-added services to retailers, manufacturers, and mobile operators.

Malaysia with an operator.

2021 marked another milestone for Tan when he acquired 51% equity interest in Brightstar Malaysia Group of Companies, making it a 100% local Malaysian entity and renaming it to Swap Asia Group of Companies.

Even today, the company, which began its distribution business in 2005, continues to innovate and adapt to the demand of the digital age.

One of the biggest challenge during the acquisition was the accumulation of a number of "legacy"

applications built on technologies that – although not outdated – were harder to maintain due to the complexity and effort to support changes, as well as the increasing scarcity of skilled developers.

A decision was made to use "low code" or "no code" technology, which is a visual approach to software development that enables faster delivery of applications through minimal hand-coding.

The main advantages of using low code include flexibility to cover new requirements, low learning curve for new employees and

compliance with security requirements.

Tan continues to drive his passion and ideas outside of Malaysia, with regional offices in Singapore, Taiwan and will continue to grow within the Asia region.

Swap Asia Group brings expertise and technology platforms into the supply chain fulfilment and distribution environment providing consultation, management and automation of businesses.

It is also the distributor of Apple products, Harman Kardon, XGIMI and Zens in Malaysia.

SBH offers free financial education to millions



SBH Financial Consultancy (SBH) is honoured to be selected as a finalist in Star SOBA's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) award.

This recognition will no doubt solidify SBH's resolve to continue being relevant to the local community and meeting their needs.

In Malaysia, high household debt and bankruptcy remain one of the key issues affecting everyday Malaysians.

Malaysians are in dire need of good financial and banking knowledge, which is why the company believes so strongly in providing financial education and consultation.

It is here to fill the need for more established and authoritative financial literacy providers.

Financial education and consultation as core CSR

Financial literacy is essential because it empowers individuals to make informed decisions about managing their money effectively.

People who possess financial literacy skills are better equipped to budget, save, invest, and plan for their future financial goals.

This is why SBH has made financial literacy its core CSR goal, via various financial education programmes.

Thus far, its consultants have collectively spoken in more than 100 seminars, including offline and online sessions, which have impacted millions of audiences.

They have also been invited to give talks



SBH Financial Consultancy founder Sam Tsen speaking on money management and banking literacy at an event at Nexus Hotel in October, 2021.

by various universities including UUM, UPM and UTAR with the intention to educate the younger generation about financial management and avoid mistakes in debt issues.

Secondly, the team has also taken creative efforts with a truck called Beep Beep to provide financial consultancy to local residents with fun interactions and games.

One of the company's core services is to provide free financial consultation to anyone who needs it on a walk-in basis at Wisma SBH in the heart of KL's golden triangle.

Thirdly, it has raised financial awareness through social media platforms.

The company is constantly providing effective financial knowledge to its followers on TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Overall, its efforts in promoting financial literacy have made a significant impact on

individuals by providing them with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively.

Reaching out with other community initiatives

SBH Group is also committed to CSR initiatives that promote community service and social entrepreneurship.

The company's community CSR activities are done through the SBH Hearts programme, including distributing food for the needy through i-Hainan Kitchen and assistance for orphanages and elderly homes, both financially and through acts of kindness.

It also sponsors various cultural and community events with future plans to offer financial services and educational outreach



SBH has made financial literacy its core CSR goal, via various financial education programmes.

to help the needy, reinforcing good values and creating measurable change.

Additionally, SBH Group's three Pak Kopi franchise trucks donate five cents from every cup sold to charity.

Inclusivity in SBH's CSR initiatives

Inclusivity in financial CSR is crucial as it ensures that marginalised communities have access to financial services, opportunities, and resources.

This helps promote economic growth, reduces inequality, and empowers individuals to become financially independent.

In turn, SBH hopes to foster a more equitable and sustainable Malaysia for all.

For more information, call 03-2779 2799 or 017-278 3519.

Helping SMEs digitalise their businesses



DIGITALISING a business can be a daunting process for many small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs).

When it comes to information technology (IT), there are many jargons and terms that are completely foreign to many people.

Wilstech Sdn Bhd makes IT solutions more accessible to SMEs by breaking the digitalisation process down into smaller, more manageable steps.

The IT solutions that Wilstech provides are tailored and holistic. Being a start-up company, it is very aware of the business needs of SMEs.

Established in 2016, the Wilstech team has a combined experience of more than 35 years.

It provides a one-stop IT solution for its clients, offering a wide variety of services, such as ecommerce functionality, human resources, accounting and customer relationship management solutions, infrastructure and hardware services or software, as well as mobile app development.

In addition to its existing IT services, Wilstech strives to bring technology from overseas to add to its overall IT offerings.

It also partners with the Selangor state government in the Selangor SME Digitalisation Matching Grant as the official IT

solutions provider, and together, will help 200 SMEs in digitalising their businesses.

Tailored service

Delivering comprehensive IT services is important for Wilstech. It goes beyond quoting and servicing what the clients request; but also advising clients on the most suitable solutions for their business.

"We don't stop at a quotation for the client's request for service. We also provide free consultation on the IT infrastructure necessary for the client's business. Sometimes clients would propose IT solutions that may be excessive, Wilstech would advise the most cost-effective and efficient solutions for them," says founder and chief executive officer Wilson Low.

"For most SMEs, money is one of the biggest considerations when deciding to digitalise their business. We prioritise bringing IT solutions that ensure a good return on investment," he says.

After implementing IT solutions for the client, Wilstech will monitor the client's growth with the data that it has. It will suggest new or improved solutions when the current IT system is no longer suitable for the client.

"We don't just provide a one-off service for our clients. It is very important that clients trust our ser-



In line with their vision, Low (left) and chief operating officer Ernie Tan strive to provide effective digital solutions for SMEs.

vices and stay with us throughout. We have many clients that have been with us since day one of their digitalisation journey," says Low.

Additionally, Wilstech provides IT service with a human touch. IT languages can be difficult for many SME owners. With Low's previous background in business development and operations before he started Wilstech, he can explain the proposed IT solutions in a way that is understandable to his clients.

The importance of digitalising businesses

After being in the IT industry for many years, Low finds that education about the importance of digitalising a business is much needed.

"Many SME owners have a mis-

understanding about the digitalisation of businesses. Some think that it is a one-off process, such as setting up a website or a web store. This is a misconception, as digitalising a business takes time, and it is a step-by-step integration," says Low.

"Others overly emphasise that every sen invested in digitalising a business must have a visible return. Due to this calculative nature, they tend to delay implementing IT systems in their business. They also worry that digitalising their business would replace their manpower.

"However, this is another mistaken mindset. Digitalising a business may not immediately show a visible profit or increase in business, and it will not take over exist-



'It is our vision to assist all Malaysian businesses in moving towards digitalising their business,' says Low.

ing manpower. Rather, it is for long-term planning. IT solutions are a supporting partner in businesses," he says.

IT infrastructure will ease business operations, enabling businesses to maximise their resources and redirect them to other areas.

Additionally, the IT system can provide necessary data that gives beneficial insights, such as customer behaviour, which can improve businesses.

"Malaysia is advancing in the world of technology. However, we are still behind in our mindset. Many SMEs don't see the value in digitalising their businesses yet. It is our vision to assist all Malaysian businesses in moving towards digitalising their business," concludes Low.

UNLOCKING 1 MILLION FUTURES

INSPIRING DIGITAL TALENT TRANSFORMATION

THE Covid-19 pandemic has changed the world in countless ways, and one of the most profound impacts has been on businesses. Many have struggled to adapt to the "new normal" and have been forced to digitalise their products and services to survive. However, while some saw their dreams fading away, one group of innovators has been working tirelessly to create opportunities for the next generation of digital talent.

PEOPLElogy Group, led by founder Allen Lee Chin Min, has discovered an initiative under the banner of "Build A Future Team." These initiatives are designed to help businesses and individuals thrive in the face of external risks like pandemics, economic downturns and technological disruption. By leveraging the power of digital transformation, Build A Future Team is creating a sustainable ecosystem that aggregates businesses, talents and partners in both the private and public sectors.

One of the core goals of Build A Future Team is to create the largest sustainable community in South-East Asia through the integration of Industry 4.0



Build a Future Team unveiling the top three technology trends that will shape the next decade.

technologies and practices. Build A Future Team is leading a movement to empower individuals and businesses to reach their full potential by forming strategic partnerships with like-minded organisations.

Allen Lee and his team believe in giving back to the community, with education at the heart of their mission. Through self-discovery programmes and partnerships with government and non-governmental organisations, Build A Future Team has provided training

and job placement opportunities to thousands of young scholars and working professionals.

From 2020 to 2022, the initiatives had a remarkable three million digital reach, with 3,000 participants attending webinars and additional 800 distinguished thought leaders attending highly engaging and influential conference and connect events.

Looking ahead, the goal of Build A Future Team is to impact one million



Allen Lee Chin Min
Founder of PEOPLElogy

lives throughout South-East Asia in the next three years. These include ambitious study tours for C-suite executives, engaging conferences for top management, podcasts for managers and executives, and digital outreach to millions of people across the region. Scholarship opportunities will be available via the Build A Future Team initiative for sustainable talent development in South-East Asia.

Join the Build A Future Team initiative today and take the first step towards unlocking your future potential. By building a team that is committed to digital transformation and innovation, you can help create a brighter future for yourself and millions of others.

To learn more about Build A Future Team and how you can get involved, visit its website at www.buildafutureteam.com

Initiative by:



AS a homegrown e-commerce digitalisation enabler, Rurutiki has assisted many emerging brands to embrace digital tools for omnichannel success.

With over 80 years of professional experience in trading, the company works hand-in-hand with brands to manage their e-commerce operations through its proprietary systems and frameworks.

Having worked with local and international companies, including brands such as Nestle and Unilever, Rurutiki help to simplify the most complex e-commerce front and back-office processes through real-time technology, easy store management, warehousing, order fulfilment and all-encompassing brand management solutions.

To date, the company has worked with multiple brands from various sectors, ranging from FMCG grocery food brands, chilled and frozen brands, beauty care brands, as well as food health and wellness brands.

In fact, it is Malaysia's only appointed e-distributor for Nestle Malaysia's full range of offerings as well as managing and operating Nestle Malaysia's e-stores across multiple online platforms including Shopee, Lazada, PG Mall, Youbeli and many more.

Rurutiki's name originated from the founding family pet horse. When it was first adopted, the former racehorse was weak, but regained its vitality after years of love and care. The horse's attitude of resilience, fortitude and determination inspired the founding values of the brand as it reflects the ability for the company to bounce back in any circumstance.

Also, "Rurutiki" is a Mandarin saying that means "all paths are blessed".

The company leveraged its longevity to garner strong brand awareness alongside its extensive history of proven excellence.

The brand relies on its experience and strong track record to aid businesses embrace e-commerce, thus elevating its success.

End-to-end omnichannel services

Rurutiki offers a complete range of services that cover:

- > e-commerce and digitalisation solutions

Fulfilling digital ambitions

Rurutiki's innovative knowledge helps businesses transform digitally



The company prides itself for its advanced, human-powered, tech-enabled solutions that are designed to simplify the e-commerce process for clients.



Rurutiki simplifies complex e-commerce front and back-office processes.

- > IT integrated warehousing and order fulfilment, such as pick and pack, logistics
- > stock and store management, which covers general warehouse and air-conditioned storage, inventory management, as well as real time stock and order.
- > omnichannel distribution
- > customer support and analysis.

With extensive industry knowledge and proven ecosystem, Rurutiki provides businesses with the right know-how to enter the e-commerce space.

The company prides itself for its advanced, human-powered, tech-enabled solutions that are designed to simplify the e-commerce processes for clients. Combined with the collective experience of the Rurutiki team, it actualises strategies into reality.

Through its intelligent supply chain management and integration systems, its clients can cultivate their digitalisation strategies with ease, creating an efficient way for



businesses to identify their unique requirements as they establish a substantial e-commerce presence.

Rurutiki also help to creates a transparent omnichannel distribution that covers each touch point of the e-commerce process, from e-distribution to IT-integrated warehouse access directly.

All in all, its integrated supply management systems and proprietary tech suites offer unparalleled productivity, marketing automation and data-driven actionable insights to help clients' businesses to optimise their e-commerce strategies effectively.

Over the years, Rurutiki has won multiple

industry awards, such as the 2021 Super Golden Bull Award Winner, JCI Ten Outstanding Young Malaysian 2022 Honouree (Business Category), JCI Creative Young Entrepreneur Award Top 10 (2022), the SME100 Awards 2021 Top 10, 2022 Asia Pacific Enterprise Awards (APEA) (Fast Enterprise) MY and the Shanghai International Prestige Business Award 2022, to name a few. Most recently, Rurutiki has been awarded Gold in the Asia eCOMMERCE Awards 2022 as Agency of the Year, beating many other regional players.

Every business, especially budding ones, deserves roaring success and Rurutiki aims to play its part in aiding them down the path to excellence, through creating an extensive array of services, while providing knowledge and expertise that helps simplify the e-commerce adoption process.

After all, it's about enabling them to thrive and make a sustainable impact on the world.



TalentCorp
GROUP OF COMPANIES



FUTURE-PROOF YOUR BUSINESS

Find out how our signature initiatives can help your business

We offer over 30 key initiatives for students, graduates, working professionals, career comeback women, Malaysians abroad, high skilled expatriates, employers, and stakeholders in the industry and academia.

WHAT WE OFFER?



Free Advisory Services
Retain your best talents by adopting better work-life integration to meet future demands, including flexible work arrangements (FWA) with **Work-Life Practices (WLP)**



Double Tax Deduction
Provide meaningful and relevant internships to train local talents for the workforce with **National Structured Internship Programme (MySIP)**



Round Table Discussions
Be part of the conversation in shaping the industry with **Industry-Academia Collaborations (IAC)**



Internship Candidates
Match up with internship candidates befitting for your company at www.mynext.my

About Us ⓘ
We are an agency under MOHR mandated to drive Malaysia's talent strategy towards becoming a dynamic talent hub.

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PARTNER FOR MSME GROWTH ACROSS LIFE STAGES

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GOLDEN JUBILEE
1972 - 2022

Credit Guarantee Corporation Malaysia Berhad (CGC) was established on 5 July 1972 and was mandated to be an effective financial institution dedicated to promoting the growth and development of competitive and dynamic Malaysian micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

As we celebrate our Golden Jubilee, CGC reaffirms its commitment to being the catalyst of growth for MSMEs. We take pride in partnering with our MSMEs across their life stages by offering them end-to-end holistic support, both financial and non-financial assistance.

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