

# No task is too small ...

## SUCCESS: THE INSIGHT STORY

**Property developer Ireka Corp Bhd's director of strategy & corporate development Chan Chee Kian tells SunBiz readers to find joy and a sense of accomplishment in every job that they do.**

**What have the highlights and challenges been during your tenure at Ireka?**

One of the highlights has been building and cementing Ireka's reputation as a developer that understands and excels in hotel development. I was fortunate to have been involved in a number of hotel deals/projects that have involved us investing, developing, operating and eventually successfully exiting, from The Westin KL to the Aloft KL Sentral, and now The RuMa Hotel ... and I am sure there will be more to come.

Challenges are aplenty... the 2008 global financial crisis was a big learning experience in dealing with global investors as we had just floated our Aseana Properties on the London Stock Exchange.

**How do you maintain work/life balance?**

I am an avid runner, so I run at least five times a week, and running gives me time away, both metaphorically and physically, from work. But, interestingly, every now and then, work problems or new ideas are thought of during a run, which I credit to having that clarity of mind when I embark on a run. And I also cherish my weekends, when I am able to spend quality time with my wife and family.

**How has mentorship made a difference in your professional and personal lives?**

Coming from a management consulting background, I have been fortunate to have a number of great mentors and leaders

during my professional life. They have never been too afraid to expose me to important meetings and have given me the opportunity to work with C-level executives very early on in my career. And they have never been selfish about knowledge and tricks-of-the-trade, and more importantly they are also never too "important" or smart to learn/hear from me when I provide suggestions.

So now, I try to approach my mentorship and leadership style in the same manner.

**What advice can you offer to entrepreneurs/youths who want to start their career/own business?**

Again, I would credit this to the great mentors/leaders that I have had during my career... at every stage of your career, there is never a task that is too small or too menial for your position. If you can't even handle a small task well, how would you expect to be entrusted with bigger things by your leaders, peers or customers?

**Best piece of advice you ever got on your career?**

One of my earlier bosses told me that I shouldn't focus too much on my monthly pay cheque. Find joy and a sense of accomplishment in every task that you do, and the money matters will take care of themselves.

**Most-admired business leader? Why?**

Warren Buffett. His business acumen is legendary, but what really amazes me is his humility and reminder on how little luxuries one needs in life even when he is one of the richest men in the world.

**What was your**

**biggest failure and how did you learn from it?**

I think I would say that my first big failure/setback is the "biggest" failure that I have had ... and, as innocuous as it sounds, it is actually my failure to get into a university of my choice.

Of course, there have been greater failures since then, but looking back, what you quickly learn is that what might seem like an Everest of a failure back then is no more than a molehill once you conquer and surmount it.

So at different stages of life, there will be different curveballs to deal with, but with persistence, diligence humility and a dose of prayer, there isn't much that cannot be overcome.

**Malaysia's greatest brand?**

I would love to be able to one day say it is Ireka! But we will have to work harder for now. I admire Royal Selangor for being able to successfully blend tradition, prestige and innovation in such a competitive global market for gifts and ornaments.

**Blue or red ocean strategy? Or neither? Why?**

Neither. With the advent of technology and the internet and fast-changing consumer behaviour, it is almost impossible to stay in a blue ocean for too long. Rather than spend waking hours trying to figure out what is the next blue

ocean strategy, time is better spent working hard on perfecting our craft, taking a block-by-block approach in building a strong foundation, and listening to our customers to meet their lifestyle needs.

**A must-read for every business owner/manager is ...?**

*Too Big to Fail* by Andrew Ross Sorkin, in order to understand the crazy world of finance and economics that is shaping our business world today.

