



“Listening to owners, I look at things from different angles, not just from a manager’s viewpoint.”

Mok Sew Wah

CEO
Sunway Technology Sdn Bhd
Member since 1994
VCE-1

VISTAGE VETERAN

Mok Sew Wah is one of nine members who pioneered the first TEC Group (TEC-1) of CEOs in November 1994. The professional manager says he has never been bored over the close to 25 years in TEC/Vistage because of the ample opportunities to learn about issues and perspectives of CEOs from different industries with no vested interest. Moreover, the presence of many owner-operators in his group enables him to see things from the business owners' perspective.

Mok Sew Wah, CEO of Sunway Technology, recalls that he was initially sceptical of the effectiveness of a group of business leaders from different industries meeting monthly. He reveals that he joined TEC Asia in 1994 partly because he was introduced to it by his boss Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr Jeffrey Cheah (founder of the Sunway Group) and also because he wanted to support his friend Richard Wong (founder of TEC Asia) who was starting the new venture.

Being a young professional manager in his 30s then, Mok thought “there is nothing much that I do not know” about managing a business and harnessing the power of group meetings. He was a certified accountant and already Senior General Manager – Group Operations assisting the Managing Director – Group Operations to oversee companies from several industries then.

His early expectations were mainly to meet new people and learn from resource speakers. However, as time passed by and the trust within his group grew, it was much more than he had expected.

The first TEC Group had nine members with Richard Wong as Chair. Mok believes that the pioneer members had good experiences under Richard's coaching. They spread the word and attracted more business leaders. The size of the first group grew quickly to 16, the maximum at that time.

Mok remembers that most of the members were business owners in the pioneer group. In the beginning, members were hesitant and guarded in what they expressed and shared during the meetings. But later, as they got to know each other better, there were more open discussions. Mok states that one of the first lessons he picked up was opening his eyes to the “business owners' perspective.” “I learnt about what bothers business owners,” he explains. This helped him to see the bigger picture on corporate directions, noting that “Listening to owners, I look at things from different angles, not just from a manager's viewpoint.”

Over the years, Mok has remained loyal to both the Sunway Group and Vistage. He points out that the Sunway Group grew rapidly and diversified into many industries, but it always gives emphasis to staff training and personal development in various areas.

“I learnt to clarify issues, understand the background and alternatives available before addressing problems rather than being judgemental upfront.”



Mok Sew Wah in action at Vistage Golf Challenge



Celebrating Success

(L-R): Dato' Liew Sew Yee, Heah Kok Soon, Mok Sew Wah, Richard Wong & Dato' Lim Seng Kok

Still, he found value in the Vistage methodology because of the unique features of real life issues and no vested interest amongst the peer group. “When you attend a Vistage meeting, it is not a class, there are new things to learn always, the issues and situations are never the same,” he explains.

Following the TEC process, Mok learnt many soft skills. One of these is the processing of business issues. “I learnt to clarify issues, understand the background and alternatives available before addressing problems rather than being judgemental upfront.” He enjoys participation in issues processing and the opportunity to give constructive criticisms in his group. “We can poke holes in a strategy or help fortify an idea,” he elaborates. Questioning answers is also a common phenomenon within his group.

On the whole, he believes he has become a better manager. He has fine-tuned the art of delegation without losing sight of the vital signs, become a better listener and achieved a more balanced lifestyle.

As his confidence in the Vistage approach grew, he adopted TEC's methodology of "One-on-One" sessions with his direct reports for their personal development. He also tapped his second Chair's (Heah Kok Soon) expertise by asking him to conduct talks on business and management topics for his staff's benefit. Where relevant, he requested permission from his group to allow some of his managers to attend presentations of peer members and talks by Resource Speakers engaged by Vistage or his group.

Over time, Mok believes he absorbed many lessons from TEC/Vistage meetings that has enabled him to be a more effective CEO. Presently, he helms the IT arm of the Sunway Group and oversees eight ICT companies in Malaysia as well as Singapore and Indonesia. The group of companies work with renowned technology partners and offer wide-ranging solutions, such as digital connectivity, smart community platform, performance management, digital transformation, cyber security, e-procurement, e-polling, and turnkey development.

Besides the monthly Vistage meetings, Mok adds that external activities related to Vistage have also enriched his personal life. Examples are the Spousal Retreat, visits to members' offices, golf and social outings.

The veteran Vistage member also relishes the strong relationships he has forged with current and former members in his group. He makes it point to catch up with several former TEC-1 group members. Three former CEOs are now in a special Vistage group called Vistage Trusted Advisors (VTA-1) for alumni members chaired by Richard Wong.

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Mok Sew Wah has recently transferred his membership to VTA-1, joining Vistage members who have either retired or have passed the business reins to their children or professional managers.