



Finding Mr Right

The talents a good shopping centre manager should possess

■ By Richard Chan

Last week, we focused on what good shopping centre managers must know and what they should be made of. However, how does a complex owner pick out the right person for the job when interviewing potential candidates?

The curriculum vitae (CV) can be "made" to look impressive and even one's track record can appear favourable. Then, there is charm and good public relations - there are those who speak so well that they are employed just for this!

A prominent retailer once told me that it is the track record of success one must consider when hiring a centre manager, not the record of years in service.

For those conducting interviews, there's another important factor: Are you very clear about who or what you are looking for? In the first place, if the centre owner is personally hiring, does he

or she know anything at all about managing a shopping centre?

There have been cases where shopping complex retailers/tenants have likened the change in managers to "the changing of underwear" - meaning that their centre has been through two to three managers in a year! Is this a case of managers who are not good or bosses who are bad? Or both?

This situation needs serious attention, because today so few good managers are around that some centre owners have resorted to recruiting greenhorns. There's nothing wrong with greenhorns - I was one 24 years ago.

However, competition among shopping centres was not so hot in those days, and besides, we had a wider berth for mistakes and much more tolerant tenants. Today's scenario is very, very different. There

is very little room for indecision or error - and time lost can be very expensive.

Recruiting centre managers based on their CVs without checking out their references can have disastrous consequences, for the track record can be misleading, as in the case of "rabbits" - managers who hop from job to job.

After going through six to eight jobs in three years, they would have a reasonable track record - but how good are they, really? It is people like these who can give shopping centre management a bad name - and that includes some so-called "consultants" even though they may have many certificates.

The Shopping Centre and Highrise Complex Management Association or PPK Malaysia conducts certificate courses to improve the professional competency of shopping centre managers and staff.

These certification courses are conducted in the form of seminars and classroom lectures, with compulsory on-the-job training at the employees' shopping centres, followed by workshops and examinations. Even with such training, it



Track record: A good shopping centre manager contributes greatly to its success.

does not mean that a candidate is automatically certified: He or she still has to undergo an interview, which will, hopefully, instil in him or her the right aptitude and attitude.

PPK Malaysia offers this training not to centre managers alone but also to those in senior positions in various departments of a mall, including maintenance, engineering, car-

parking, marketing as well as advertising and promotions.

Shopping centre owners must keep their eyes open. They should know and understand what their needs are before engaging help.

Even today, I am told of instances where people dare to apply for senior posts in a shopping centre, even though they may not

have managed one before. Yet, they go ahead for these jobs, arguing that they have ample experience and knowledge in management.

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