

An affair of the mall



You would expect them to make the worst of friends. Caught in the same arena that is the shopping centre management industry where competition is often hot and heated and the battle for survival dependent on who can best outwit the other, you would expect them to jealously guard whatever they know for the sake of one-upmanship.

But that, apparently, is immature thinking. Being selfish can only take you so far. Pooling resources and sharing wisdom is the way to grow. For by coming together to exchange ideas, relate experiences and offer guidance, an educational process begins that will ultimately benefit not only you, but the community you are in.

To take the first step, however, you've got to be part of an alliance that has the passion and motivation to want to seek improvement. It's not what your bosses say you must do; it's what you tell yourself you have to do in order to progress.

And that's essentially how the grouping of some friends in various disciplines of shopping centre management over lunch and after-work drinks to discuss problems became the Shopping Centre and Highrise Association of Malaysia, or PPK.

It's not a body formed by some Government directive; it's not a board that was born after a high-powered think-tank session. Its humble birth was the result of like minds with like problems having the like passion to want to be the best in their industry. They all wanted to have an affair with their malls, so to speak.

That was 20 years ago and today, the 16 key council members in the PPK alliance have a combined experience of 170 years in the shopping centre arena. That probably makes the unit one of the most erudite

in the property industry - a fact that finds credence in PPK's membership roster which boasts 70 per cent of all the shopping centres in the country. No where else in Malaysia can you find specialists in fields such as marketing and promotions, building management and even security, car-parking and fire prevention all in one roll-call.

PPK is important to you and me, even if we aren't in the shopping centre management industry, simply because their air-conditioned domains are where we head to when we want to escape from our work-home routine as well as soaring temperatures. Which, if you think about it, makes the term "shopping centre" a misnomer given that we don't just go there to shop, but also to eat, watch movies, play games and socialise. They have become our community parks; the urban equivalent of the village green.

That being the case, the management and maintenance of these places is of crucial importance, for doing it wrongly would lead to deterioration of the built environment and thus, degeneration of standards such as safety, comfort and convenience. It is on this basis that we welcome PPK onboard our editorial team.

Starting this week, it will have regular presence within our pages to give its views on the state of the retail industry, the mechanics of managing malls and the direction that has to be taken in order to meet future expectations. Through PPK's contribution, another channel in the education process has been opened, and is yet another example of the association's proactive commitment to improve the arena it is in. For sure, no other entity, Government or otherwise, has similar resolve to do this.

In our centrespread today, PPK's president Richard Chan introduces us to the world of retail operations with a discussion on what is a complex manager. Without further ado, let the learning process begin!

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