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## Your Industry

### Connecting the dots at The Link

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update on Saturday, May 31, 2014



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To know someone, you have to walk with them. Students Wayne Fong and William Lam from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology had the privilege of job-shadowing George Hongchoy, CEO of The Link Management, for two days, and experience first-hand what it is like to run some 180 shopping malls.

"Because of the presence of our properties in neighbourhoods throughout Hong Kong, The Link is at the heart of many communities, and this makes it an interesting, yet challenging, job to be the CEO," Hongchoy says.

"It is always interesting for youngsters to talk to experienced people like me as it helps them better prepare for their future careers. Being young is a huge advantage - they have potential and flexibility. Just as The Link, which is almost nine years old, has evolved over its short life to adapt to changes and rise to meet different challenges, this growth process is always exciting - be it the life of a corporation or one's career."

Running a large and diverse rental portfolio while adjusting to fast-changing retail markets and consumer behaviour can be demanding, so Hongchoy gave the students an orientation, as he does with new staff.

On day one, he took Fong and Lam to visit the company's Lok Fu Market property. After a hearty lunch, he invited them to a seminar where he talked about the importance of sustainability. On day two, the two students were taken to a site visit in Tuen Mun, with Hongchoy showing them his asset-enhancement initiatives, followed by a workshop.

Fong recalls a challenging moment when he was asked to list the reasons behind the mall's successful factors, but he could name only a few because he did not know much about the industry. "I lacked direction to start with, and could only express opinions randomly," says the quantitative finance student. "Under the guidance of the facilitator, I made use of the income and cost approaches to organise my thoughts and present my ideas in a structured way."

Fong was impressed with Hongchoy as a chief executive due to his time management and multi-tasking skills with subordinates and partners. "You have to be prepared for anyone coming to you with a challenging question regarding your company," he says. "It is a test of both your mental abilities and your responses ... you have to be knowledgeable enough to put together interesting stories, daily life examples and experience in your response."

Lam, a finance and information systems student, says he learned the importance of presentation skills and preparation. "During my conversations with George, I discovered that he used a lot of simple examples to deliver an abstract idea," he says. "The most interesting advice he gave me is how to

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associate ideas and examples in a speech. This definitely helps, because public presentations are inevitable."

Hongchoy hopes that the experience was interesting for the students and also a good opportunity for them to better understand the business. "I am glad to see the students demonstrate a good understanding of The Link, enabling them to see well beyond how the general public perceives us," he says. "Things are not always simple and straightforward. The students were quick-witted, and they have certainly learned to see the many sides of a story."

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