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Sharing Views

Corona Virus Impact: The New Normal

The current buzz word is Corona Virus. We cannot see it but it is all around us. **Vivienne R Reich** has penned a nice poem to describe Corona Virus entitled **The New Normal Life**,

“Never have I seen such a mess in life.

The air is pure but wearing a mask is mandatory.

Roads are empty but it is impossible to go on long drive.

People have clean hands but there is a ban on shaking hands.

Friends have time to sit together but they cannot get together.

The cook inside you is crazy, but you cannot call anyone to lunch or dinner.

Those who have money have no way to spend it.

Those who don't have money have no way to earn it.

There is enough time on hand but you can't fulfil your dreams.

The culprit is all around but cannot be seen.

A world full of irony! So be positive and stay negative...”

Below are some sharing by various HAAM members on how the current pandemic has affected them and how they are coping with it.



Mr. CK Woo

Chairman of Sunway Nexus
Management Corporation

I help businesses grow by providing conducive space to entrepreneurs for office, meetings, training, workshops, seminars, networking, product launches, events, retail, bazaars, F&B and more. (One company just got successfully listed). Enrolled in a professional digital marketing course during MCO last year and now helping companies improve their businesses via online and social media capabilities and opportunities. Please call/PM me at +6012-3191668 and let's grow together.



Mr. Tony Hoe

Henley Business School Alumni
(2020)

Hi, my name is Tony Hoe and I graduated with my Henley Business School Executive M.B.A. in 2020. It is indeed an honour for me to be part of HAAM. and to attend its recent A.G.M. where I met with fellow Henley Business School alumni in Malaysia.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused numerous challenges and obstacles for most of us such as economic slowdown, loss of income or loss of friends/loved ones to the pandemic and I am no exception. I am currently leading a development team in a property development company, developing a new township in Iskandar Puteri, Johor Darul Ta'zim. With the pandemic, the company's sales have dropped significantly; most people tend to hold big-ticket purchase/investments, particularly buying new homes or properties, during an economic downturn. We have to unlearn what we had learned and relearn new techniques to bring in new customers for our products.

"Necessity is the Mother of Invention". On the one hand, the pandemic had caused numerous headaches for the company; on the other hand, the pandemic has caused the staff in the company to embrace digitalisation and digitisation methods in a big way. Now, we can conduct meetings via virtual platforms, increase the use of digital documents, reduce the use of paper, and have better collaboration between departments using collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams and Microsoft Office 365.

Moreover, with the current M.C.O. lockdown, I can work from home and spend more quality family time with my loved ones as I do not need to spend any time travelling to and from work! However, working in a home environment does blur the line between working life and family life at times which I need to carefully balance. Finally, while my family and I are patiently waiting our turn for the COVID-19 vaccination, I hope that everyone reading this will continue to stay safe, stay happy and stay sane always. Cheers!

Tony Hoe
+6012-7201149



Mr. Francis Lee

Henley Business School Alumni
(2016)

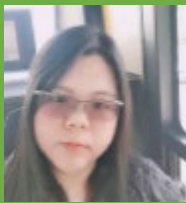
Hi, my fellow alumni,

It's Francis Lee here. I am a DBA (2016) graduate of HBS. Currently based in Penang. I am running a construction firm in northern Peninsula Malaysia. Our company mainly involves in residential developments and industrial construction projects.

Unsurprisingly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, our company experienced a steep decline in construction activities and productivities. For example, the council and various government agencies' approval process for new projects has been very slow indeed as the government has encouraged the work from home since the movement control started. Furthermore, the restriction on interstate movement of our subcontractors and suppliers has also hampered the work progress.

Let's hope that the roll out of the vaccination program around the country can be expedited so that we are free to move around again like pre-pandemic.

It was a great pleasure to be able to catch up with all of you during the conference call and see familiar faces. Take care and stay safe everyone. Many thanks to the organisers.



Ms. Otelli Low

Henley Business School Alumni
(2017)

Hi! I am Otelli Low Chen Yee and I graduated from Henley Business School, University of Reading Malaysia in 2017. I started my new venture during the Covid-19 pandemic. I quitted my job in May 2020 right after the start of the Movement Control Order (MCO) and started my own business with a few of my ex-colleagues.

We started our own brand name; CT Kitchen, focusing on frozen and ready-to-eat foods such as a variety of Paper-Wrapped Chickens and through our CT Gift Stores, we also sell festival hampers and gift boxes.

It is quite challenging to start everything afresh especially during a pandemic as there are so much uncertainties and challenges but I am fully convinced that there is a big potential for ready-to-eat foods especially during the MCO period when many people would not want to venture outside their home in order to stay safe and food delivery to your doorstep is becoming a norm. I find my new venture a very interesting learning process as this is a very unique time for our country and for the world and most of us have not lived through a pandemic such as this before.

Besides, we also plan to launch a "Kampung 新村" concept restaurant in Johor and bring our signature dishes outside Malaysia. However, as the JB market is very dependent on visitors from Singapore, the plan is put on-hold for the time being.

This pandemic makes me realize that everything can change without warning. We have to focus on what is important and essential to us to succeed.



Ms. Annie Ong

Henley Business School Alumni
(1995)

Hi, I am Annie Ong, a graduate of Henley MBA in 1995. After graduation and armed with the extra MBA qualification, I got myself into my dream career which was branding and product management. I spent the last 20 years of my working career in the FMCG industry where I created brands, developed personal care, oral care and food products, managed the whole aspect of sales and marketing including advertising and promotions of those products.

Presently I have my own small set-up, a branding training and consultancy firm to provide OEM consultancy services for those interested to start a new food or personal care line of products, trademark and branding works plus the product sales and marketing management.

Covid-19 or coronavirus was a new word that suddenly became so famous globally. In Malaysia, we experienced our first Movement Control Order (MCO), a total lockdown of the country on 18th March 2020 where only certain essential businesses were allowed to operate and everyone had to follow the following new normal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) whenever they leave the house:

- Wear mask
- Social distancing at least one metre apart from another person
- Always wash hands with soap

Since then, many businesses had to close-down. Food & Beverage outlets suffered as people could only pack drinks and food, no sitting and dining in were allowed. During the pandemic, we had various phases of the MCO which included Conditional, Enhanced and Recovery MCO subject to the risk assessments by the Health Ministry. Total lockdown was imposed for areas when the incidence of continuous high new cases was detected. We are currently under total MCO lockdown again which started since 1 June 2021.

The effects of Covid-19 pandemic has caused much hardship to many people. Most people have to work from home. All are encouraged to stay safe, stay at home. Many lost their jobs as affected companies suffered cashflow problems, risking bankruptcies and causing business declines and closures. Since business are affected, many have to endure income and salary cuts and job opportunities are limited. Those who caught the virus and became very sick risked losing their lives. Many lives were lost.

My companies were not spared. We could not conduct any face-to-face meetings and classes. Being a Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) Training Provider and as a Branding and Soft Skills Trainer, I could not carry out my normal business activities as planned.

Even using zoom or video conferencing was not easy as people were not used to spending long time learning online. In addition, regulations on the SOPs set by HRDF were not consistent and it was not easy to adapt and adopt to new regulations from time to time.

What should I do during this seemingly depressing time?

I had to learn new competencies to carry out new businesses or enhance my current business. So during the MCO period, I indulged in obtaining the following:

1. Online or Digital marketing up-skill – I learnt video making and editing for social media activities, invested in a zoom package for business use, attended many zoom sessions on various digital marketing techniques and platforms. Embarked on digitalisation, leverage on eCommerce.

2. Carried out some translation assignments - from English to BM and vice versa.
3. Learned to be a Blog writer.
4. Learned and registered as a Real Estate Negotiator. Where there is crisis, there is opportunity. I managed to sell a house in May 2021 and have a listing to work which keeps me busy despite the lockdown. I was delighted as it was akin to able to “sell ice cream during winter!”
5. I am glad that we can still generate some Passive Income during this pandemic through:-
 - * Dividend income from equities.
 - * Rental income from properties.
 - * Capital gain from commodities.
 - * Profit income from biz revenue.

The Covid-19 pandemic is forecasted to last for at least two years. During this time, many businesses have been reset to zero. Everyone will need to plan and implement new strategies and maintaining the SOPs for the very near future. I am geared and ready to move on, helping those who need my services in trademark, branding, product development using OEM manufacturing, and using social media and blog writing to do advertising and promotions. All are welcome to enquire further by emailing to annieventuressales@gmail.com.



Sr. HT Ong

Henley Business School Alumni
(1990)

Hello everyone, this is HT Ong (Sr) from Kuala Lumpur, a Henley MBA graduate in 1990, then via Brunel University, Uxbridge whilst undergoing the RICS professional training and working in London, after completing my degree in Building Economics and Quantity Surveying at Heriot Watt University in Edinburgh, Scotland. I now manage a multidisciplinary consultancy services, specializing in construction contract management, claims, alternative dispute resolution and related advisory and support services (see www.entrusty.com).

I had related my Covid-19 close encounters and experience to my business acquaintances and friends on how I lucky I was to have averted infection from the said contagious disease having had and met in evening drinking events with four different Covid positive persons, each

on separate drinking occasions consecutively within the same week in early May 2021. I had credited it to my regular natural and holistic Vedic practices of Sunyoga (see www.sunyoga.info) and Agnihotra (see www.agnihotra.org), local practitioners whom I have also shared with and affirmed the benefits of such regular practices in averting such pandemic disease and other adversities. I have been asked to relate my unprecedented and unusual encounters in a written narrative, which I hereby do, below.

Recently, on Monday(3rd), I had a meeting and lunch with the ADR Chair of a professional institution and next day, Tuesday(4th) evening drinks with him at a local pub in Taman Desa. The next two days, before the CMCO announcement and imposition of no dining, etc. on Friday (7th), I had separate evening drinking events, on Wednesday(5th) with my Chinese client's local manager and Thursday (6th) with several business acquaintances in three local pubs. My son, Shinji who worked with me and was with me on 3 of the 4 events, was unfortunately infected by the virus. Unknowingly, on every single evening event, I was in direct contact with a different Covid positive person (without any symptom), each from different infection source (it became apparent later).

It was only on Friday(7th), that I was informed by the aforesaid Chinese local manager that he was diagnosed Covid positive (infected from his earlier contact with his project site worker) and was advised to do a Covid test then. Shinji and I forthwith went for PCR test on the same afternoon and the test result next day showed, him positive, but me, negative. The aforesaid ADR Chair whom I met on Monday and a close business acquaintance met on Thursday, both were tested Covid positive on Sunday (9th) and were admitted to hospital subsequently due to complications. It was certainly an eventful, yet unfortunate week. What followed subsequently, was indeed scary and stressful, particularly when my immediate family members were involved in such unprecedented and uncalled for experience, which I would caution anyone, who is ignorant and still in disbelief about the seriousness of such unprecedented pandemic disease, as the last time a disease of such pandemic scale occurred was the “Spanish Flu” about a century or 100 years ago and in a smaller regional scale, the “H1N1” incidence in 2009.

On Friday (7th), after our aforesaid PCR test, Shinji decided unilaterally that he will self-quarantine in his own room the same evening, as he was starting to have sore throat and fever. On Saturday (8th) morning, my result was negative, but Shinji’s positive result was only released late afternoon, by then he was already confirmed with Covid symptoms, and the My Sejahtera apps was duly informed following his positive test result. The everyday strict routine thereafter was to ensure all his meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner were left at his room door for his own collection. All his food utensils were sanitized with sanitizing soap liquid and his daily worn clothing was likewise soaked and kept in his own bathroom, attached to his bedroom. Also, to ensure his regular self-health status checks, he was given temperature and Oximeter scanners, where he had to regularly checked on daily basis on his Covid infection symptoms and progress, initially just flu, fever and sore throat, then developing into lost of smell and taste.

On his 5th day (Tuesday, 11th), MOH had directed that he quarantined either at a government center or a designated hotel due to old folks (my parents in law, above 60 years old) at home. We decided on his hotel quarantine at the designated Saujana Resort, which provided all meals and inhouse medical doctor to monitor his Covid infection and recovery progress. In doing so, the hotel quarantine had somewhat lifted the scary and stressful period during which anyone in contact could be infected. In fact, since Shinji stayed with me and worked in my office, both my office and home had to be sanitized by officially recognized government sanitization company. Fortunately, no one else was infected then and subsequently since it takes about 5-10 days for the infection to develop and manifest itself.

Shinji spent six days in the said hotel, during which his daily recovery routine was monitored closely. Upon his discharge after the 10th day, he had to visit the Government’s Covid center to remove his “pink coloured Covid bracelet”, which was tagged on his 5th day, before he checked into the aforesaid hotel. He continued with his home quarantined until 14th day, which happened to be his 24th birthday. The irony is, Shinji, who was studying in Minnesota University, Minneapolis, USA in 2019 was concerned with Covid spread there in mid 2020 under Trump’s presidency, decided to take a gap year to “escape” from the said infection, but only to be confronted with it in his home turf, metaphorically saying, “You can’t run from it”.

Lessons learnt from the aforesaid unprecedented and unfortunate close encounters and experience with Covid-19 viruses and such diseases are that never be complacent, as it can infect anyone without any discrimination in race, religion, relation, region, etc. Covid viruses seem to only respect disciplined social distancing, masking and healthy or holistic practices. The war against these invisible cross border enemies, attacking indiscriminately, is about effective vaccination against them so as to overcome the severe human, social and economic distress and tragedies, worldwide.

Therefore, please do really take care and stay safe !!!

Sr HT Ong
27 June 2021