

Memoirs of a PR mastermind

Michael de Kretser, CEO of GO Communications and author of *GO For It! A roller-coaster Public Relations adventure*, offers a peek into his life and experience as a PR guru

MICHAEL de Kretser, a public relations veteran and the CEO of GO Communications, has penned his memoirs in a book entitled *GO For It! A roller-coaster Public Relations adventure* that reflects his 'GO For It!' mindset and the wacky ride he experienced in setting up his first PR agency with only one US dollar.

Dubbed the Wizard of Whizz and the King of Spin, de Kretser has over 30 years of experience in this field. He founded MDK Consultants, which was based in Singapore, and is currently teamed up with his son, Peter, in the operation and expansion of Petaling Jaya-based GO Communications. The company has set up offices in Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, China, India, the Philippines, Laos and Cambodia in just over six years.

He shares his experiences in this interview.

Tell us about your book.

GO For It! is the story of how I have travelled the globe to establish offices in various countries as well as to set up my wild and wacky, but thoroughly effective, campaigns for some of the biggest brands in the world.

What message are you delivering through this book? Who is your target reader?

The book is an exciting read for anybody in the communications business. It is informative and a road map of experience for anyone wanting to set up a business. It shows that everybody has great ideas.

How long did it take you to write it?

Six months, on weekends, on holidays, but I knew the story. It was my story.

What did you learn from the experience?

I learnt to stick to the positive, leaving out negative aspects of people like the greedy people and the shockers. The book is better without them in it.

What would you say is your interesting writing quirk?

It was like reliving a dream. I was lucky I could recall the people I have met, the places I have been. I am lucky I have a memory like an elephant!

Were you influenced by any particular author or book?

Ian Fleming. He was a brilliant writer and he had created a personality liked by both men and women. Everybody wanted to be James Bond.

You were the ex-CEO and founder of MDK Consultants, which was based in Singapore. What made you choose Malaysia as the headquarters for GO Communications?

I believe if you are setting up a company, if you cannot make it here, you cannot make it anywhere.



by Maygelah Siva



photo by DD Hoe

Malaysia has got great potential and attributes to be a power house not only in Southeast Asia but also in Asia.

You started MDK at a very young age. Do you have any advice to young entrepreneurs who are just making headway?

If you have a dream and the willpower, you can make it but do not get put off by setbacks. Say 'I can do it!'

You have expanded your PR empire through most of Asia-Pacific. Where would you consider the hardest to do business in?

Every country in Asia is different. As long as you understand the people, the culture, the rules and regulations, you can be successful. It is a matter of respecting each country and the way it works.

You have worked on various missions with a variety of companies and across industries such as the Sarawak Tourism Board, International Herald Tribune Investment Forum in Asia, the World Halal Forum, etc. Which was the most challenging task for you?

Every client has a challenge and that is what makes it exciting. It is being able to market the brand in a very exciting way where you communicate with your audience, because that is business, any business.

You even managed to get the Singapore Girl into the world-renowned Madame Tussauds of London for Singapore Airlines' 21st anniversary. How did you do it?

It was their (Singapore Airlines) 21st anniversary, and their brief was simple publicity. Anniversaries are a usual press conference, with a few words about the CEO and a singer, and you get publicity the next day. I wanted to do something exceptional, and over a few drinks, I had an idea to get the Singapore Girl into Madame Tussauds – you cannot pay for it and there were no commercial figures in Madame Tussauds

at that point of time. I made a simple presentation of 10 slides to the Madame Tussauds management. The management discussed it with the board, and with a little bit of luck, we got it in! It was on the front page of every publication in the world. Rather than being a typical 24-hour publicity campaign, it really said something about the airline that money could not buy.

What three things do you need to be successful in this industry?

You have to have an extroverted

personality. You have to be a good writer. You have got to be able to think creatively – and you will be a star.

Who is the most inspiring person you have met and how did he or she inspire you?

Without a doubt, it was Sir Edmund Hillary, the first man to climb Mount Everest. He was a conservationist. One day, we were having one too many gin and tonics and I asked him if he would climb Mount Everest again, and he said no way. According to him, when he did it the first time, he had no fear but once he had done it, mentally, he could not do it again. I also asked him what it was like being famous and without qualms he said that he would have given it all up to play one game for the All Blacks New Zealand rugby team.

I thought, wow, because that was his dream.

Can we expect another book from you in the future?

This is a unique book because it is a personal story. I would like to write another one, but it has got to be a story that I believe to be equally intoxicating. [FocusM](#)

Royalties from the book have been pledged to the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia

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– Michael de Kretser

