

# Going for the best

> GO Communications CEO Michael de Kretser has set down his almost 40 years of life experiences as a PR man in his book, *GO For It!*, the proceeds of which will benefit the National Kidney Foundation

THREE years ago, Michael de Kretser (*below*) was approached by an international publishing company to write a textbook on public relations for university students.

This former journalist-turned-PR man and, currently, the chief executive officer of GO Communications, has almost four decades of experience in the industry.

While he may have many case studies to share with students, de Kretser opted instead to write a book about his life experiences.

"I was sitting and having a drink with my son, Peter, and he asked me why don't I write something. I said okay and he said: 'Go for it'.

"That started the adventure of writing this book," said de Kretser, referring to his book, *GO For It!* which is published by MPH and is available in major bookstores at RM32.90, the proceeds of which will go towards the National Kidney Foundation of Malaysia.

It took de Kretser about six months to complete the book.

In it, he talks about setting up his first public relations company, MDK (after his initials), why he moved to Kuala Lumpur and also his early days as a journalist.

He also devoted a chapter on being almost sucked into an international incident in Malta; his campaign to get the Singapore Girl waxwork model on display in Madame Tussauds; and about the famous people he met who turned out to be very nice in real life.

de Kretser said he could have written the book in many ways, including a textbook version. But he wanted to write a story about communication and public relations.

"Within the book, within the real-life adventures, are case

studies [and] campaigns that I was involved in. There are stories about how to succeed and general stories about life's adventure. It all rolls into one.

"The stories were on my mind and so I knew what I wanted to write."

When de Kretser spoke about his successful campaigns such as the Singapore Girl in Madame Tussaud's, his unconventional idea was something his client, Singapore Airlines, embraced.

However, clients these days tend to go with tried-and-tested ideas rather than embrace new ones.

"Most clients are conservative by nature, particularly in Asia. When we are in discussion, they would say give us an idea at first.

"But when we come up with an idea that's unique - that no one had done before - they will say no, let someone else do it first and then we will do it.

"It's all about going to the clients two or three times, convincing them that it is a great idea, that it will build their brand and explaining to them the benefits they can get [out of it].

"At the end of the day, we have to be salesmen as well."

After selling MDK, Kestner started again from scratch with GO Communications. It was his son who convinced him to return to the helm.

"The opportunity to work with my son was a blessing and I thought let's give it a go."

GO Communications has

several offices around Asia, including Sri Lanka where de Kretser grew up.

"When I started in PR, there was no mass communication degree and now, every university is offering one. We obviously employ a lot of young people and 80% are under 30.

"They come with mass communication degrees from all over the world. They know about the academic theory but they have difficulty translating that into real life.

"We have to mentor them to produce campaigns in the real world. And that is the big gap - jumping from theory to the practical.

"Public relations is still a young

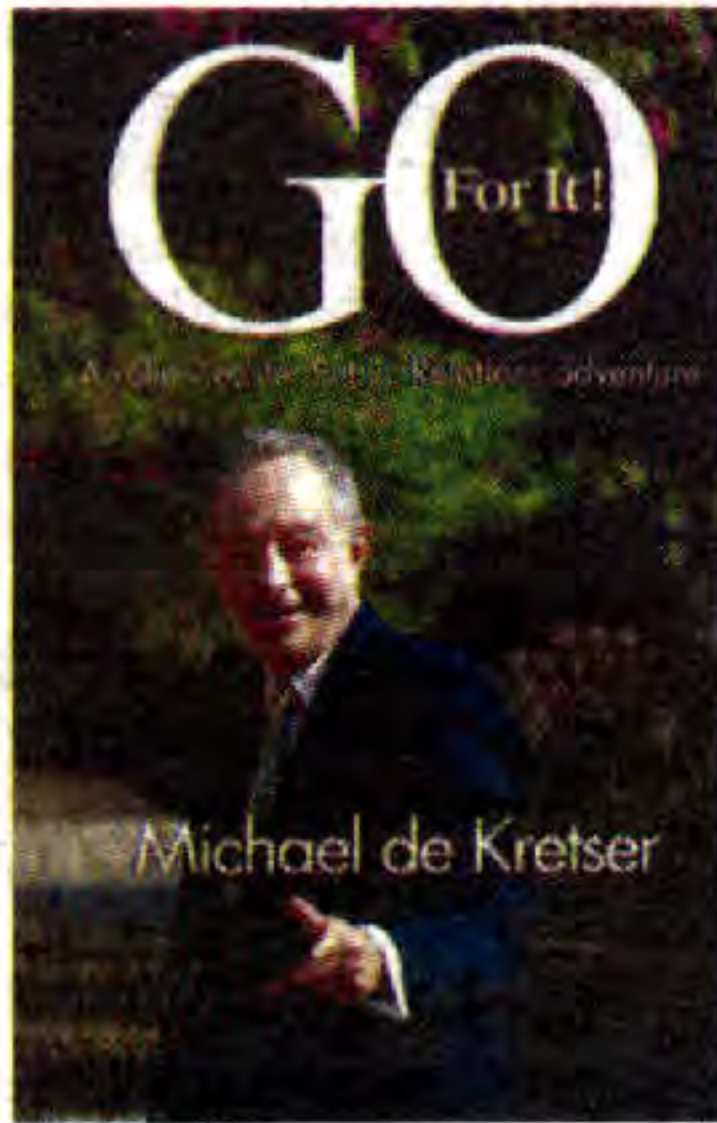
industry in Asia compared to the West. That's changing dramatically over the years."

However, de Kretser said there is no division between advertising, public relations and events management. A client should be advised on what is best for his brand from all aspects.

As for what he wants to be remembered for, de Kretser said: "It is nice to have a legacy but I think after being in this industry in Asia for over three decades, I'd like to think that

I've mentored and taught many people about public relations and communication.

"Many have gone on to become superstars in the industry, having started off as



interns in my company. It is just fantastic to see them grow and flourish."

When asked if he has plans for a second book, de Kretser said if he were to write another book, it will be something along the lines of the 10 greatest public relations campaigns in the world and the 10 greatest failures.

"It will be one theme rather than this one which is a total adventure."

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- Lang Leav
2. **FIRST PHONE CALL FROM HEAVEN** - Mitch Albom
3. **NAZI GORENG**  
- Marco Ferrarese
4. **THE BOOK THIEF**  
- Markus Zusak
5. **EYE OF GOD**  
- James Rollins
6. **HOW TO FALL IN LOVE**  
- Cecelia Ahern
7. **FIVE STAR BILLIONAIRE**  
- Tash Aw
8. **ROSIE PROJECT**  
- Graeme Simsion
9. **CUCKOO'S CALLING**  
- Robert Galbraith aka J.K. Rowling
10. **MR PENUMBRA'S 24 HOUR BOOKSTORE**  
- Robin Sloan

### Non-Fiction

1. **ANWAR IBRAHIM: EVOLUTION OF A MUSLIM DEMOCRAT** - Charles Allers
2. **WHY WE WANT YOU TO BE RICH** - Donald Trump
3. **SERIOUSLY I'M KIDDING**  
- Ellen Degeneres
4. **100 USEFUL HERBS OF MALAYSIA & SINGAPORE**  
- Joseph Samy
5. **MANDELA** - Martin Meredith
6. **NEW DIGITAL AGE**  
- Eric Schmidt
7. **POWER OF HABIT**  
- Charles Duhigg
8. **WTF 23 PROPERTIES BY 30**  
- Faizul Ridzuan
9. **ALEX FERGUSON AUTOBIOGRAPHY**  
- Alex Ferguson
10. **WILLPOWER INSTINCT**  
- Kelly McGonigal