

THE MAN WHO

LOVES TO KNOW

SHKP Deputy Managing Director & Executive Director Mike Wong has built a successful career on believing that you can learn anything if you set your heart and mind to it, writes May Chan Rhodes.

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For someone at the development helm of one of the largest property companies in the world, Mike Wong has a surprisingly strong belief in being humble and staying close to the hearts of those who work and live in the many buildings he has created.

The Deputy Managing Director of Sun Hung Kai Properties (SHKP), a company known for its premium residential and commercial landmarks, says that being successful is all about being able to deliver happiness to people.

Instead of seeing the millions of people who buy and rent the company's properties as a collective group, he prefers to think of his team as serving an individual millions of times.

"I would never make a decision based on my ego, or my so-called professional knowledge,"



says Wong, who joined SHKP in 1981 after a few years' stint as a building surveyor for the government. "It is always about the people. At SHKP, we believe in being truly market-driven."

Wong has much first-hand experience of how this philosophy has created breakthrough after breakthrough for the company. For example, in the 1980s, SHKP had won a bid for a piece of land on Old Peak Road to build its first-ever luxury residential project, Dynasty Court.

Without any prior experience in the luxury housing industry, Wong would spend his weekends together with the company founder's sons knocking on the doors of luxury homes on the Peak and asking whether they could have a look inside.

Sometimes they would be greeted with scowls and verbal insults – and even the odd door slammed in their faces – but Wong recalls that some of the friendlier residents, still in their morning gowns, would invite them in for a cup of tea and a chat about what they liked and did not like about living in luxury apartments.

They also had regular meetings with property agents who arranged field trips to other luxury homes. "We were able to get first-hand information on what works and what doesn't work for residents," Wong says. "Such as: What would I need if I have to drive and pick up my son after school? How would I want to be greeted when I arrive home? We asked lots of questions.

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"This is how we thought of incorporating a five-star service level, seen only in hotels at the time, into luxury housing projects – something that no one had ever thought about before in the market. And now this has become the benchmark for all up-market projects."

Although it has now become more difficult for Wong to make home visits without causing a stir – given the scale of the business and his considerable reputation – he works closely with his research team which makes regular home visits.

He also believes that one can learn anything if they put their heart and mind to it. If one is not afraid of learning new things, then the sky is the limit. This is how SHKP came up with the courage to bid for the International Finance Centre (IFC) project in Central in the late '90s.

The IFC project was as technically and commercially complicated as it could get. The second tower, reaching 415 metres, was at the time the tallest building in Hong Kong, boasting 4.5 million square feet of high-end office space. On top of that, the IFC also sought to provide

a total solution to the needs of people who worked and lived in the vicinity, adding dining, entertainment and shopping facilities to the list.

Again, the project was the first of its kind. Wong took up the task of flying to major international financial centres around the world where he spoke to corporate tenants, building experts, facility managers and property agents to get their insight. Among the stops on his itinerary were London and Chicago, the latter of which was considered the world's centre of excellence for high-rise construction at the time.

The tremendous success of IFC led to the International Commercial Centre (ICC) project in Kowloon. The ICC tower, at 484 metres high, was even more technically challenging. The bar was further raised by the addition of the ultra-luxury Ritz-Carlton hotel on the tower's upper floors, and the integration of green elements to tie in with the company's sustainability agenda.

"If you love to learn, you will always stay on top of the game," says Wong, who went back to school in 2002 to complete a master's degree in international real estate at Polytechnic University. (The university, formerly known as Hong Kong Polytechnic, was where he was trained as a building surveyor in his late teens.) "The man who knows is not as good as the man who wants to know; the man who wants to know is not as good as the man who loves to know.' This is one of my favourite Confucian quotes and it inspired me to keep on learning."

Born into a humble family, Wong grew up in a public housing estate where he slept on a

bunk bed with his siblings in the same room. He did not even own his own bed until he started working in his 20s. It is a far cry from his current life as one of the most successful businessmen in town.

"I was from a poor family, and my training was in building surveying. But today I am able to give directions to hundreds of people who are lawyers, bankers and architects on how to build and manage projects," he says.

"I want to tell young people that as you continue to educate yourself, work hard and take on new opportunities, life will take you to places that you have never imagined before."

Wong also urges young people to be disciplined with their personal finances, and be pragmatic in making long-term career plans. Such virtues would not only be helpful in organising one's life, but also in making wise business decisions. There are always opportunities for those who are well equipped and prepared – even in today's property industry and amidst all the market uncertainties.

"Buildings are like living organisms. They have their physical and economic lives within society," he says. "It is up to us to manage their longevity and well-being, and make them flourish."

"There are always buildings that need nurturing and maintenance. There are always different needs in society, and new ways to meet those needs."

黃植榮

求知不倦

世上無難事，只怕有心人。憑著這份信念，他開創了成功的事業。他，就是 May Chan Rhodes 筆下的新鴻基地產副董事總經理兼執行董事黃植榮。

May Chan Rhodes

黃植榮任職全球最大的地產商之一，負責統籌工程策劃事務，卻深信謙卑之道，堅持聆聽那些在他建成的一幢幢樓房中生活和工作的的人的心聲。

新鴻基地產（下稱「新地」）以建造優質住宅和商業地標著稱。身為新地的副董事總經理，黃植榮表示，成功是源自造福人群。

雖然新地旗下物業的業主和租戶多達數以百萬計，但黃植榮的團隊並沒有視他們為一個單一整體，而是數百萬個獨立的服務對象。

「我從來不會專憑個人之見，或者根據我所謂的專業知識作出決定。以人為本是我的原則。新地相信的是真正的市場主導。」在1981年加入新地之前，他曾擔任政府樓宇測量師數年。

黃植榮憑藉這些處世之道和信念，協助新地締造一次又一次的突破。上世紀八十年代，新鴻基購入舊山頂道地皮，發展新地首個豪宅項目「帝景園」。

由於缺乏發展豪宅的經驗，每逢週末，黃植榮都會和公司創辦人的第二代一起走訪山頂豪宅，叩門請求入屋參觀。

他們遇過一臉怒容或是破口大罵的屋主，甚至吃過閉門羹。但黃植榮亦憶述有一些友善的屋主，身穿睡袍邀請他們入屋喝茶，暢談他們所居住的豪宅的各種利弊。

他們亦會定期與負責安排客戶實地參觀豪宅的地產經紀會面。黃植榮表示：「這樣我們就可以掌握第一手資料，瞭解住戶的喜惡。譬如，如果我要開車接兒子放學，我會對房子有甚麼要求？我回家時想得到怎麼樣的待遇？我們問了很多問題。」

「我們就這樣萌生了要將五星級服務引入豪宅項目的想法，這種酒店式的服務在當時的市場前無古人，而現在已經成為豪宅項目的基本要求了。」

今時今日，隨著新地規模日益龐大、黃植榮名聲鵲起，再去敲門拜訪難免引起哄動，但他會與研究團隊密切合作，由團隊定期去登門拜訪。



黃植榮亦相信世上無難事，只怕有心人，只要肯學，就有無限可能。憑著這點，新地在九十年代後期毅然出手，競投位於中環的國際金融中心（下稱「國金」）項目。

無論在技術還是商業方面，國金項目都是個複雜的難題。國金二期樓高415米，是當時全港最高的建築物，設有多達450萬平方呎的甲級寫字樓。此外，國金有意營造一站式的環境，增設餐飲、娛樂及購物設施，迎合附近的上班族和居民的需要。

這在當時又是一個前無古人的項目。黃植榮負責飛赴世界各地主要國際金融中心，聽取企業租戶、專業建築師、設施管理人員和地產經紀的意見。他曾到訪倫敦和芝加哥，而芝加哥是當時世界優質摩天大樓的集中地。

秉承國際金融中心的成功，新地再下一城，取得九龍環球貿易廣場項目。環球貿易廣場高達484米，技術難度更上一層。既有麗思卡爾頓酒店進駐頂層，盡顯奢華，亦要融入環保元素，以配合公司的可持續發展計劃，建築要求因此難上加難。

黃植榮認為：「只要肯學，自然無往不利。」2002年，黃植榮重返校園，在香港理工大學攻讀國際房地產理學碩士學位。香港理工大學原名香港理工學院，黃植榮年少時曾在理工學院修讀樓宇測量師課程。「『知之者不如好之者，好之者不如樂之者』，這是最喜歡的一句孔子名言，是我不斷學習的動力。」

黃植榮出身草根，於屋邨長大，一直和兄弟姊妹分睡上下舖，直到二十歲後投身社會，才有屬於自己的睡床，與今時今日作為香港成功商人的他有著天壤之別。

「我出身貧寒，修讀樓宇測量出身，今日卻可以指導律師、銀行家、建築師等數以百計的人，教他們怎樣起樓、怎樣管理地產項目。」

「我想告訴年輕一代的是，你們只要繼續學習、不斷努力、把握機遇，生命中自然會有意外收穫。」

黃植榮亦勸勉年輕人謹慎理財，規劃事業時亦要講求務實，這樣不僅有助人生規劃，亦有助作出明智的商業決定。目前的樓市雖不明朗，但機會總是留給有能力又已準備好的人。

「建築物就像生物，它們在社會中有自己的物理壽命和經濟壽命，它們的壽命、幸福和前途就靠我們來實現。」

「有些建築物固然需要保育和維修，而各種社會需求亦會不斷萌生，社會也總會有新辦法迎合這些需求。」