



2010 **POST-BUDGET ROUNDTABLE**

ABOUT ICPAS

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Ahead of the Budget Announcement made by Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Finance, on the 22 February 2010, a very successful Inaugural 2010 Pre-Budget Roundtable was held by ICPAS Research on the 14 January 2010 - its first industry event.

Once again, on 1 March 2010, a distinguished panel of c-suite executives, business leaders, practitioners, entrepreneurs and academias from the business and CPA communities met to provide insights on the 2010 Budget. They discussed whether the Budget is of the right size, directed at the right objectives and making the right moves. The diverse viewpoints offered by the panelists provided depth to the discussion.

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Ms Ingrid The
Financial Controller
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Mr Michael Tien
Chief Executive Officer
Atlas Sound & Vision Pte Ltd

Mr Yeo Ek Khuan
Senior Partner, BDO LLP
Assistant Honorary Treasurer,
Association of Small and Medium Enterprises

INTRODUCTION

The 2010 Post Budget Roundtable begins with Dr Ernest Kan, ICPAS President, sharing with the panelists a quick review of the Singapore economy in 2009. He applauded the forecasted improvement in the performance of Singapore economy in 2010 announced by the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI).

Recalling that the Singapore economy contracted by only 2 percent instead of the 2.1 percent estimated earlier, the overall budget deficit for 2009 is now estimated at S\$2.9 billion as compared to the \$8.7 billion that was budgeted a year ago. This better-than-expected budget position can be accounted for by the better performance of the economy and the property market. It also reflects the return of confidence in our economy.

More encouraging news came just two days shy of the Budget's announcement: MTI announced that its 2010 growth forecast for Singapore will be raised from 3 to 5 percent to 4.5 to 6.5 percent. This comes against a backdrop of a stronger than expected global economic recovery, increased world trade flows, robust recovery in Asia led by China and a surprisingly strong improvement in the US economy. Such promising signs indicate that the worst is behind us and Singapore is recovering from "The Great Recession".

As we move out of the crisis, Ms Jessica Tan, Chairman, Government Parliamentary Committee for Finance and Trade & Industry recognised that there are "fundamental shifts in the market" and encouraged a mindset change



where the people "need to look at the long term. There is a need for growth and there is a need for a change within how we prepare ourselves for that and take advantage of that."

Amidst various discussions and mixed reactions about the Budget, Ms Jessica Tan reaffirmed the participants at the Roundtable that 2010 Budget is aimed at promoting the three long-term objectives of "increasing wages, ensuring that there are quality jobs with the growth and ensuring that it is productivity focused. The second is to ensure that companies that operate out of Singapore can be competitive and take advantage of the growth opportunities. And the third, is to ensure that the Budget is inclusive. Inclusiveness goes beyond economic policies and it also includes how we ensure, at society level, this inclusiveness is ensured."

As Singapore drives for long term growth, the key challenge is whether Singaporeans will be able to take advantage of the opportunities

available now, such that over the short term, Singaporeans are able to ride the recovery well. Though there will be some sense of pain brought about by the Budget measures, Singaporeans should take advantage of the measures and allow themselves to transit and grow over the long term.

RAISING PRODUCTIVITY

SKILLS, INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING

SHOULD RAISE IN PRODUCTIVITY BE INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC?

The ball started rolling at the Roundtable when Mr Song Seng Wun, Regional Economist, CIMB-GK Research Pte Ltd, suggested that Singapore can experience a swift increase in productivity by raising productivity in the construction and manufacturing industries.

For the last decade, the goods producing sector¹ has been the growth engine for Singapore. Construction, which constitutes 5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), has been one area within this sector that has been low on productivity. Mr Song Seng Wun remarked that, “given that we are forever re-making Singapore, it is important that [construction industry] be as productive as possible or keep up with technology as much as possible.”

Mr Song Seng Wun expressed his reservations on raising productivity levels in service- producing sector too fast.

“It takes longer for Singaporeans to change their mindsets about working in the service line. What we can do quickly [to raise productivity] is to focus on the goods producing sector. That one quarter of GDP can perhaps raise overall productivity quickly while we work along on the longer term service side.”

MR SONG SENG WUN



PRODUCTIVITY AND INNOVATION CREDITS - ONLY FOR THE WINNERS?

Mr Victor Tay, Chief Operating Officer, Singapore Business Federation, commented that the focus on productivity is the first step to the right economic direction. He substantiated that in mid 90s eminent economist of Stanford University, Paul Krugman, had stated in his papers “Myth of Asia’s Miracles” that Singapore’s growth based on total population growth is unsustainable. Productivity has to be the cornerstone of an economic growth.

He highlighted that the Productivity and Innovation Credits (PIC) are well aligned to promote activities which assist in increasing productivity and stimulate innovation. However, being a tax incentives it seems to benefit mostly profitable and/or high-growth companies.

He explained that PIC provides significant tax deductions for investments in a broad range of activities along the innovation value chain. Noting that many businesses have just emerged from the recent financial crisis and are either loss-making or breaking even, Mr Victor Tay was doubtful whether these companies have the financial means to invest in innovation and take advantage of the well intentioned PIC.

He commented that the some segment of business community is wondering if “these companies have been considered in the Budget or have they been overlooked.” He proposed that the Government take into account the liquidity issues that

most are facing at this juncture when formulating ways to help these companies partake in the nation’s drive for productivity and innovation.

Mr Choo Eng Chuan, International and Corporate Service Tax Partner, Ernst & Young Solutions LLP, on one hand agreed that the “PIC promotes winners”; on the other hand, he warned that the nobility of the scheme may not materialise if the implementation environment proves too daunting for businesses, forcing them to “throw in the towel.”



“Acknowledging that innovation takes time, requires full value chain [ie change should be holistic to include all interested stakeholders along the full value chain], companies cannot innovate on their own as it is extremely expensive and is not short-term.”

MS JESSICA TAN

Recognising that bread and butter issues remains the top priority for businesses, Ms Jessica Tan believes that businessmen would make a commercial move to undertake innovation if the need arises.

¹ Goods producing industries comprises of manufacturing, construction, utilities, and other good industries.
Source : Ministry of Trade and Industry

FOREIGN WORKER LEVIES

TOO MUCH, TOO FAST

RAISE IN FOREIGN WORKER LEVIES WILL INCREASE BUSINESS COSTS

Professor Chew Soon Beng, Professor of Economics, Nanyang Technological University Singapore, reminded the roundtable that the foreign worker levies (FWL) are an implicit minimum wage and, once raised, will lead to rising business costs.

He recalled that, between 1979 to 1981, Singapore had significantly increased wages after having learnt that Deng Xiao Ping, China's then leader of the Communist Party, intended to introduce economic reforms to the mainland. In 1985, Singapore's exports became non-competitive due to rising business costs. In mitigation, CPF contribution rates were lowered from 25 percent to 10 percent and it was another eight years before the CPF contribution rates were reinstated.



“Is present-day Singapore prepared to have firms relocate to other countries? And if not, can the gear be reversed.”

PROFESSOR CHEW SOON BENG

SHORTAGE OF LOCAL LABOUR SUPPLY IN VOLUNTARY WELFARE ORGANISATIONS AND HEALTHCARE INDUSTRY

Mr Chang Che Hsien, Director of Corporate Development, National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, on behalf of Institutions of Public Character (IPC), expressed appreciation for the Government's move to extend the 250 percent tax deduction for donations to IPC for one more year. He commented that even though property prices are on the rise, he is doubtful that this has filtered to rising incomes and people's ability to donate money. He agrees that the increase in FWL is aimed at raising productivity levels and well-intentioned in the long run.



“But the immediate impact of increased FWL on care-giving institutions and Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) is going to be significant.”

MR CHANG CHE HSIEN

Because the “supply of local labour has been challenging in these sectors”, he proposed that the Government grant the healthcare industry and VWOs a special exemption as a transitional measure. He also recommended that the 250 percent tax deductibility for donations to IPCs should be extended to apply to property taxes because it currently only applies to income taxes.

Joining the discussion on healthcare was Ms Ingrid The, Financial Controller, The National Kidney Foundation, pointed out that the caregiving sector is labour intensive and some nursing homes employ up to 85 percent of foreign workers due to local labour shortage.

“We simply cannot replace manpower with automation.”

Ms Ingrid The supported Mr Chang Che Hsien's call for the Government to consider exempting the healthcare industry from the increase in FWL.

“With the increase in FWL, we have no choice but to increase the cost of treatment. At the same time, we are helping needy patients. We cannot pass on the increase to needy patients.”

MS INGRID THE

FOREIGN WORKER LEVIES

TOO MUCH, TOO FAST

Mr Foong Daw Ching, Managing Partner, Baker Tilly TFWLCL Singapore, also lent his voice to the healthcare sector, proclaiming that the institutions are not producing qualified healthcare personals fast enough.



“With the increase in the number of healthcare institutions being built, there really is a shortage of local labour. We will need to look out of Singapore to engage overseas personnel. But, language is yet another issue that we need to consider. There is no real ease of solution. But there may be a broader change in the healthcare landscape rather than just raising the FWL. ”

MR FOONG DAW CHING

REDUCING DEPENDENCY ON FOREIGN WORKERS

Mr Song Seng Wun stepped in to clarify that the purpose of increasing FWL is not to totally eradicate foreign labour but rather, to reduce Singapore’s dependency on lowly-skilled workers and boost overall productivity.

“Through innovation or use of knowledge, if we take away one foreign worker, the average growth rate of foreigners will be slower than the average growth rate for the whole country. And the overall national productivity improves, *ceteris paribus*. ”

MR SONG SENG WUN

Mr Choo Eng Chuan argued that “this is on the assumption that we can improve productivity.” He pointed out that the layman perceives that there is a shortage of medical workers and “taking one off the table means less care”.

Mr Song Seng Wun reiterated that the reduction of dependency on foreign labour is not targeted at the healthcare sector alone though he conceded that foreign labour will continue to be hired in labour intensive industries example: healthcare, construction and retail, which locals shy away from.

Ms Jessica Tan agreed with Mr Song Seng Wun’s comments that the aim of increasing FWL is to ensure that Singapore does not develop a high dependency on lowly-skilled foreign labour to grow the economy.

SUBSTITUTES FOR FOREIGN WORKER LEVIES?

Speaking on behalf of the business community, Mr Victor Tay revealed that the common grouse is that the Government always leverage on pricing mechanism as the key answer to business challenges and lacks creativity in dealing with these challenges.

The Government’s move to increase FWL will add to business costs. He observed that most companies choose to repatriate their foreign workers back to their home countries once the contracts have expired. Providing training and ultimately converting these workers to permanent staff were not on the cards as cheaper sources of labour are readily available.

Mr Victor Tay explored the possibility of substituting FWL with training credits or training-linked quota to incentivise companies to make the effort to upskill their workers. He explained that ultimately companies should retain experienced and knowledge workers inhouse and not let them go.

Hence, instead of relying solely on the ratio of local workers to foreign workers, perhaps, government should consider pegging total staff training hours as ratio to the foreign workers. Alternatively, more training credits can also be provided for companies which has invested heavily on workers training to offset the FWL.

While acknowledging that “foreign talent does not equal productivity”, Ms Jessica Tan further added that “when we do have that dependency, we must make sure it is high quality dependency.” Otherwise, Singapore will suffer from depressed wages and opportunities in time to come.

MISSING GREEN SPACE

Ms Susan Chong, Chief Executive Officer, Greenpac (S) Pte Ltd, shared with the roundtable that studies have shown that top-competitive firms in the world, like Nike and Google, possess three key drivers of growth: Innovation, Employee Talent and Corporate Social Responsibility. She explained that corporate social responsibility referred to green policy and pointed out that “in this budget, it was not touched on.” Ms Susan Chong argued that even though local firms may be as innovative and cost efficient as that of the Japanese and Korean, the absence of a green policy makes Singapore less competitive.



“As the Government has committed to reducing Singapore’s carbon footprint by 16 percent by year 2020, support should be given to build the infrastructure to prepare Small and Medium Enterprises to be ready to support the Government in the green initiative. ■■

MS SUSAN CHONG

OWNERSHIP OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

Ms Susan Chong described her experience when her company, Greenpac, approached A*Star for funds in innovation projects and was informed that A*Star will own the intellectual property rights if the project was successful. Drawing on this illustration, Ms Susan Chong

lamented how the current framework neglects the innovation efforts of SMEs. She urged the Government to recognise and reward SMEs for their innovation efforts and suggested that in cases of collaboration with the authorities, SMEs be allowed to own the intellectual rights to their innovation. This will encourage more SMEs to step forward and seek collaboration with the Government.

HIGH PATENT FEES

Ms Susan Chong proposed that the Government provide bridging loans for SMEs to embark on patenting. Drawing from her own experience with patenting, she shared that “patent fees covering eight key countries averages \$250,000” and this constitutes a significant portion of the total cost of patenting. She questioned how many SMEs actually have “deep pockets to go ahead” with patenting.

She believes that SMEs who are brimming with innovation but short on funds will choose trademarking over patenting due to cost considerations. She added that banks are not willing to extend loans to SMEs for patents as there are no collateral or guarantee in relation to the patents. She suggested that the Government provide bridging loans for SMEs to embark on patenting. Such loans will serve to tighten the commitment bond between the business community and the authorities in working towards innovation.

GROWING GLOBALLY COMPETITIVE SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

SCARCITY OF TALENT IN SMES

Good talent goes a long way in raising productivity. Recalling his experience in a recent recruitment drive by SPRING Singapore in collaboration with the local universities, Mr Michael Tien, Chief Executive Officer, Atlas Sound & Vision Pte Ltd, commented that SMEs face an uphill task in attracting talent and needless to say, retaining them. His solution to this challenge: build in-house talent by sponsoring staff on continuous education.



“Currently, we can get grants up to diploma course; we can also now get grants for masters through SPRING. However, there is no grant for basic degrees. This is the talent pool which we need to build for middle management. Perhaps, we can look into grants and incentives for SMEs.”

MR MICHAEL TIEN

Ms Susan Chong also pushed forth for investment in people as a means to raise productivity. She rationalised that there are no strong grounds for SMEs to invest in automation for obvious reasons: mass production has moved out of Singapore, lack of economies of scale due to the current low volume but high product mix, and increased machinery downtime with changes in products.

“It is probably best to invest in the people looking at innovative ways to increase productivity rather than looking at automation solely as an alternative.”



Weighing in on the topic of investing in people, Mr Yeo Ek Khuan, Senior Partner, BDO LLP and Assistant Honorary Treasurer, Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, stressed that Singapore is competing against other giants like China and Korea and therefore, it is important that “we should train our people to think positively and be street smart.”

MR YEO EK KHUAN

CAN CORPORATE AMALGAMATION FRAMEWORK BE EXTENDED TO ENTERPRISES TOO?

With the introduction of the Corporate Amalgamation Framework in 2009, the framework had significantly reduced the tax burden when a company acquires another. In 2010, Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) is made even simpler with more tax incentives being introduced - a one-off tax allowance scheme and waiver of stamp duties on transfer of unlisted shares will help to defray qualifying acquisition cost.

“If we are to promote SMEs to grow - as an alternative option - to encourage M&A, maybe we can go beyond the Companies’ Act Framework by extending these incentives to enterprises and not just companies, e.g. sole-proprietors and partnerships, so that the tax benefits are actually flowed down to the smaller players.”

MR DAVID LEE

ALLOW GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN FUNDS FOR BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS

Mr Victor Tay noted that one of the Government's initiatives to grow globally competitive companies is the commitment of \$100 million over the next five years to scale up its support for business associations, to drive productivity at the industry level and facilitate international market access for their members. The details of the initiative have yet to be disclosed.



"I doubt that the associations can pool together even \$50 million – assuming a copayment ratio of 70:30 – in order to consume the \$100 million Government funds."

MR VICTOR TAY

In principle, he agreed to the emphasis on trade, associations and chambers as industry leaders to upgrade the business community. He also cited the furniture and fashion industry in Italy to exemplify the strong connection between the economy and business associations.

He explained that Government currently uses Local Enterprise and Association Development (LEAD) programme to strengthen the industry association through a 70 percent to 30 percent co-funding principle. Mr Victor Tay welcomed the emphasis on Trade Associations and Chambers to lead industries and play a larger role in nurturing globally competitive companies, he expressed concern that most business associations in Singapore are not-for-profit organisations with minimal revenue generating activities.

Considering that the activities engaged by the business associations are predominantly non-revenue generating, Mr Victor Tay proposed that Government consider providing 100 percent funding for development activities such as background research conducted on new industries, activities performed to promote new industries, branding campaigns and positioning efforts.

HELPING SMEs

Rounding up the discussion on the challenges that lie ahead of SMEs, Mr Adrian Chan, Honorary Secretary, Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, shared with the roundtable how to lift SMEs out from a low productivity and labour-intensive situation.

First, there is a need to educate SMEs on the objective of the Budget. With little free cash in their coffers, most SMEs cannot afford automation. Hence, Government should create awareness on the schemes, grants and assistance available in the market which they can make use of. If not, SMEs may opt to relocate their businesses overseas, merge with other business or make their staff multi-task to raise productivity.

Second, Government should delay the increase in FWL.



"SMEs do not think they are prepared for the changes brought about by this Budget. With the taking away of the Jobs Credit Scheme in June and the removal of the SPUR initiatives (Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience), the feedback is 'why is there then an increase in the foreign worker's levy in July?' Many feel that this is a deliberate attempt to give a double whammy."

MR ADRIAN CHAN

CHANGES MADE TO THE TAX SYSTEM

GOOD OR BAD?

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ICPAS RESEARCH 2010 POST-BUDGET ROUNDTABLE

INDUSTRIAL BUILDING ALLOWANCES

With effect from 1 July 2010, businesses in nine industry sectors will be allowed tax deductions on qualifying building costs.

Several speakers had spoken out against the abolishment of the Industrial Building Allowances (IBA) at the roundtable. Some were concerned that the spelling out of the qualifying sectors under the new Land Intensification Allowance (LIA) were too restrictive; others expressed skepticism on whether the LIA is capable of increasing land productivity among industrial users.

SHOULD IBA BE MAINTAINED?

Mr Choo Eng Chuan questioned the effectiveness of the LIA in raising land productivity. He commented that the qualifying sectors spelt out in LIA had invariably made many businesses who support the core sectors ineligible for tax deductions on their building costs.

“In the past, if you qualify for IBA, you get tax deductions [on the building]. Going forward, unless you carry on activities that are in one of the nine sectors, your building costs will no longer be allowed.”

“Government should think of ways to allow tax depreciation on big items like properties, taking into consideration that there is no capital gains tax. Not allowing claims on buildings will increase business costs and that costs will be passed on to individuals.”

MR CHOO ENG CHUAN

Mr Chia Nam Toon, Chief Financial Officer, Ascendas Group, said that as a business park developer, Ascendas is concerned with the clustering effect of industries - where core industries are supported by SMEs that may not fall in the same sector.

“In a business park, it is not possible to get entirely all the specific sectors that you [Government] want to promote for two reasons; (i) there is a gestation period to fill the park with the right players; (ii) for the park to remain commercially viable, space is rented to interim users who may fall outside of the core industries.”

MR CHIA NAM TOON

With the LIA, the clustering mechanism is disrupted. Ancilliary businesses that fall outside of the core sectors are not induced to rent space in a business park since they are not entitled to building allowances. In turn, businesses in core sectors will not be attracted to the park.

Mr David Lee agreed that the phasing out of IBA runs contrary to the strategy of nurturing industrial ecosystems. Concerned that the LIA may result in key industries being excluded, he also questioned whether the Government had considered the contributions of industries like port, energy plants, warehouses and telecommunications which “are part and parcel of our economic growth”.



CHANGES MADE TO THE TAX SYSTEM

GOOD OR BAD?

BUILDING ALLOWANCES ARE TAX INCENTIVES FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS AND SMEs

Apart from growing globally competitive local companies, Mr David Lee cautioned that foreign direct investment (FDI) remains one of the key ingredients for economic growth and Singapore should not neglect it.

Comparing Singapore and Hong Kong, he said that the latter appeared more investor-friendly as it offers attractive IBA of up to 40 percent. On top of that, Hong Kong also allows tax deductions on offices and commercial buildings. He commented that tax deductions on buildings remain a key attraction for FDI as well as SMEs.

Mr Victor Tay suggested that the Government “remove the restriction on only nine qualifying sectors, and by merit of whichever businesses which can value add or surpass the top percentile of industry benchmark, be allowed to claim LIA.” He reasoned that the restriction is rigid to administer and as the economy evolves, the core sectors today may become sunset industries in the future and burgeoning industries may become the new lifeline for Singapore.

Mr David Lee supported these recommendations as this allows more business to enjoy the benefits of building allowances. He also proposed that additional schemes be introduced to promote the core sectors.

Having heard the sentiments expressed over IBA and LIA, Ms Jessica recognised that the concern lies in “not just the abolition of the IBA but also the inclusiveness of LIA.”

MORE FOR THE LOCAL ENTERTAINMENT SCENE?

It was recommended by the Economic Strategies Committee on the 1 February 2010 that efforts be devoted to strengthen Singapore’s competitiveness as a hub for the arts by creating new, original and innovative art forms and entertainment content, and enhancing the collections of Singapore’s major cultural institutions. However, very little of this was mentioned in the Budget.



“Whilst the Esplanade welcomes the reduction in withholding tax for non-resident public entertainers from 15 percent to 10 percent, can we also consider the tiered tax systems in some jurisdictions where there are different tax rates for commercial groups vis-à-vis arts groups. If we look at the cash-flows of [some entertainment companies] e.g. the Integrated Resort which has a very different type of cash-flow from the arts groups, it would help if there can be differentiated withholding tax rates instead of a single tax rate.”

MRS CLARA GOH

CHANGES MADE TO THE TAX SYSTEM

GOOD OR BAD?

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ICPAS RESEARCH 2010 POST-BUDGET ROUNDTABLE

LOOSEN TAX RULES OVER REPATRIATION OF FOREIGN-SOURCED INCOME

To achieve the Economic Strategies Committee's vision for Singapore to be a "Global and Asian Hub" and the Budget's goal of growing Singapore into a "Global Business Hub", Mr David Lee believed that it is important "to make Singapore an even more attractive place for multinational companies (MNCs) and local companies moving overseas to base their headquarters here."

Competition for FDI is heating up in the region with Hong Kong competing fiercely with Singapore. Malaysia is also playing catch-up game and has adopted tax schemes similar to that of Singapore.



"To give Singapore an edge over tax-friendly Hong Kong, we should provide greater flexibility in terms of the repatriation of foreign-sourced income for companies with headquarters in Singapore."

MR DAVID LEE

Recalling how beneficial the 2009 temporary tax exemption on remittance of foreign-sourced income was to businesses, Mr David Lee suggested that "perhaps this can be extended for more years, maybe over a five years period, and at some point, totally remove tax charges on repatriation of foreign-sourced income in order to put Singapore in a more competitive level compared to nearby countries such as Malaysia and Hong Kong."

Mr David Lee reasoned that "when companies base their headquarters in Singapore, Singapore becomes the managing centre for their treasury and finance functions. Funds are directed into Singapore from the region and then redeployed to other countries where they are expanding. This flexibility in repatriation of foreign-sourced income is particularly important to Singapore if we are to build up expertise and also anchor Singapore as a hub."

SHIFT TO CURRENT-YEAR TAX SYSTEM

One great miss in this Budget was not moving to the current year basis of assessment tax system, says Mr Choo Eng Chuan.

Under this system, the income earned by individuals and companies is assessed to tax on a current year basis. Tax is paid based on the income for that year, rather than income of the preceding year – which is the current system in Singapore. For salaried individuals, the tax amount may be withheld by the employers on a monthly basis from their salaries and then paid to the tax authority. For companies, tax may be paid by instalments.

CHANGES MADE TO THE TAX SYSTEM GOOD OR BAD?

On the benefit of the current year tax system, Mr Choo Eng Chuan pointed out that this can make businesses be “a bit little more on-top of their P&L”. In fact, Mr Choo Eng Chuan believed that this is a good way to make the smaller businesses improve their Management Information System so that timely information will be available for them to drive their business and decide how much tax they have to pay. It will indirectly result in an upgrade for businesses. This in turn will result in a massive improvement in productivity.

Mr Victor Tay said that “the merits of a current year tax system are well-understood, but from the implementation point of view, to minimise tax collection losses, this has to be implemented after a crisis year. He pointed out that this is a timely year to implement. If we have miss out this window of opportunity, then we have to wait for the next economic cycle.”

SUNSET CLAUSE FOR TAX CONCESSION

Mr David Lee challenged the effectiveness of introducing a new sunset clause on tax concession for offshore insurance business. Under the new tax treatment, in order for approved insurers to enjoy a concessionary tax rate of 10 percent on qualifying income derived from offshore insurance business conducted from Singapore, these insurers have to undergo a review subjected to a sunset clause of five years till 31 March 2015. If the insurer qualifies for the concession, the incentive will be awarded for a period of ten years subjected to a new headcount requirement for incentive recipients except for captive insurers.

“Though I understand that the purpose of the sunset clause is to align this with the broader financial service’s incentives, this clause will create a bit of an uncertainty and discomfort, especially in those companies who are here for the long haul. If Singapore wants to anchor them here, probably the message should be that this ‘sunset clause’ is only for the purpose of realignment i.e. there is no expiry date. If not, these players will start to look around and probably move their businesses quickly to other jurisdiction. ”

MR DAVID LEE





Raising Productivity Quickly – To raise overall productivity levels quickly, Singapore should focus on the goods producing sector as it makes up a quarter of the GDP. The service-producing sector will take a longer time to increase productivity as it involves a mindset change in the local labour market.

Productivity and Innovation Credits Scheme – This is a tax credit scheme benefiting only the cash-rich and profitable companies. Companies who are loss-making or breaking even do not have available finances to invest in innovation, thereby unable to take advantage of the scheme. The Government should provide a conducive environment for cash-strapped companies to innovate.

Impact of Increasing FWL – The purpose of increasing FWL is to reduce Singapore’s dependency on low-skilled foreign workers. Healthcare industry and voluntary welfare organisations are highly dependent on foreign labour due to the lack of local labour. The nature of work is labour-intensive and cannot be easily replaced by automation. The increase in FWL will hit companies’ bottom-line. It is suggested that FWL be substituted with training credits to encourage companies to train their manpower to increase productivity.

Green Space – The Government should start to build the infrastructure to prepare SMEs to be ready to support the Government’s commitment to reduce carbon footprint by 16 percent by year 2020.

Intellectual Property Rights and Patent Fees – To encourage SMEs to embark on innovation, the Government can provide bridging loans and, in cases of collaboration projects with the Government, to allow SMEs to own the intellectual rights to their innovation projects

Scarcity of Talent in SMEs - Good talent goes a long way in raising productivity. SMEs should consider grooming in-house talent. As part of the Continuous Education and Training system, the Government should consider providing grants for basic degrees.

Abolishment of Co-Payment on Partnerships with Government – In its efforts to scale up its support for business associations, Government should not request business associations to co-pay for the scheme.

Mergers & Acquisitions – To promote SMEs to grow through M&A, the tax incentives under the Corporate Amalgamation Framework should be extended to sole-proprietors and partnerships

LIA Overly Restrictive – By spelling out the nine industrial sectors eligible for LIA, businesses that support these industries yet fall outside the same sector are disadvantaged. FDI is important for economic growth and a key attraction for FDI is tax deductions on significant items, example buildings. The Government should address the impact of LIA carefully.

Withholding Tax for Entertainers – It is recommended that the Government implement a tiered withholding tax rate system instead of a blanket tax rate for commercial groups vis-à-vis arts group.

Repatriation of Foreign-Sourced Income – To make Singapore more tax competitive in the region, the Government should consider extending or alternatively, abolish the tax on foreign-sourced income.

Current-Year Tax System – The shift from a preceding year tax basis to current year tax basis will result in SMEs investing in high-powered management information systems to produce up-to-date information, thus driving productivity across the board.

CHAIRPERSONS' PROFILE



DR ERNEST KAN
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Institute of Certified Public
Accountants of Singapore

Dr Kan, a Practising Member of ICPAS with over 25 years of professional experience, is also a Chartered Accountant (FCA) of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England & Wales, a Chartered Certified Accountant (FCCA) of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) UK and a FCPA of CPA Australia. His academic qualifications include a PhD in Business Administration, Master of Philosophy and BA Degree in Accountancy Studies.

Currently, Dr Kan is Chief-of-Operations (Clients & Markets) and Head, Global IFRS & Offerings Services at Deloitte & Touche LLP. Dr Kan also serves on the firm's Executive Committee and is a Board Member of the Deloitte Global Chinese Services Group.

Dr Kan holds numerous positions in various statutory boards in Singapore. He is a Board Member of the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority (ACRA) and a Member of its Public Accountants Oversight Committee (PAOC). He is also appointed to the Board of JTC. In addition, he is a member of the Government Parliamentary Committee Resource Panel (Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Trade & Industry) and a member of the Committee to Develop the Accountancy Sector (CDAS) in Singapore, set up by the Ministry of Finance.

As the Chairman of the Punggol North Citizens Consultative Committee, Dr Kan actively contributes to the community at the grassroots level. As a result, he received numerous awards, including the Singapore National Day Award - Public Service Medal (Pingat Bakti Masyarakat) from the President of the Republic of Singapore in 2008.

Being a Council Member of the ASEAN Federation of Accountants (AFA), Dr Kan is no stranger to the AFA Regional Conference as he has been a regular speaker, having been invited to speak at the 12th AFA Conference in Singapore (2001), the 13th AFA Conference in Bangkok (2003), the 14th AFA Conference in Hanoi (2005), the 15th AFA Conference in Jakarta (2007) and the most recent 16th AFA Conference in Brunei (2009).



MS JESSICA TAN
Chairman
Government Parliamentary
Committee for Finance and
Trade & Industry

As Managing Director for Microsoft Singapore, Jessica is responsible for developing and driving growth strategies for the Microsoft's business in Singapore, as well as deepening relationships with partners, customers and employees.

She also focuses on leading Microsoft's ongoing corporate citizenship efforts in the country which includes Microsoft's efforts to becoming a trusted industry partner who works with businesses, communities and governments to help advance social and economic well-being.

Jessica joined Microsoft five years ago as General Manager for the Enterprise and Partner Group in Asia Pacific and Greater China Region. She was responsible for driving Microsoft's business with large customers in the region as well as partnerships with key Industry Solution Vendors, Service Providers and Business Partners as they relate to the Enterprise customers. In this role, she nearly doubled the business in three years.

In 2006, she took on the role as General Manager Customer, Partner and Employee Experience for the Asia Pacific Region, rose to the challenge of re-invigorating the Customer and Partner Relationships in the Asia Pacific Region. She also drove initiatives around Employee Readiness and Diversity to develop and attract the best talent pool for Microsoft and continue to make Microsoft a company where people can do their best work.

Jessica has nearly 20 years in the IT Industry, including 14 years with IBM, serving in various leadership positions in sales, services and strategic business development roles in Singapore and the Asia Pacific Region.

In May 2006, Jessica was elected as Member of Parliament in Singapore for the East Coast GRC. She is Chairman for the East Coast Town Council. Jessica is also Chairman for the Finance, Trade and Industry Group Parliamentary Committee (GPC) as well as Member of the Manpower GPC.

Jessica graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1989 with a Bachelors of Social Sciences (Honours). She majored in Sociology and Economics. Jessica is married and has three children. In her free time, she enjoys jogging and cooking.

PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE



MR ADRIAN CHAN
Honorary Secretary
 Association of Small and
 Medium Enterprises

Adrian is Head of the Corporate Department and a Senior Partner at Lee & Lee. He joined Lee & Lee in 1989 and has been a partner there since 1995. He is recommended as a Leading Individual for Corporate/M&A in Singapore by Chambers Global in The Client's Guide to the World's Leading Lawyers for Business, which describes him as a "heavyweight [who is] a great favourite with his many corporate clients" and who is "a serious lawyer doing an excellent job".

He has served for more than ten years on the Corporate Practice Committee of the Law Society of Singapore. He is also a director of Lovells Lee & Lee, the joint law venture between Lee & Lee and the international law firm, Lovells. He is the Non-Executive Chairman of AEM Holdings Ltd and is an independent director on the Boards of United Pulp & Paper Company Limited, Isetan (Singapore) Limited, Oniontech Limited, Yoma Strategic Holdings Ltd and Global Investments Limited, all of which are listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange (SGX).

He serves on the Governing Council of the Singapore Institute of Directors and sits on the Listed Companies Committee of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce. He has been appointed to the Audit Committee Guidance Committee, established by the Monetary Authority of Singapore, the Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority and the Singapore Exchange as a panel that has been set up to develop practical guidance for audit committees of SGX-listed companies and raise corporate governance standards.

He has also been appointed to the Corporate Governance and Directors' Duties Working Group of the Steering Committee that has been established by the Ministry of Finance to review and rewrite the Companies Act of Singapore. In addition, he has served on the Lemon Law Taskforce set up by the Ministry of Trade & Industry and CASE to determine if there is a need for lemon laws in Singapore and to make recommendations to the government on the scope and form they should take. He has also served on the Taxpayers Feedback Panel of the Inland Revenue of Singapore.

He has served with the Executive Council of ASME since 2004 and is currently ASME's Honorary Secretary.



MR CHANG CHE HSIEN
**Director of Corporate
 Development**
 National Volunteer &
 Philanthropy Centre

Che Hsien has been with National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre since 2005 as Director of its Corporate Development Division responsible for providing support and corporate services to the organization including HR, administration, IT and finance. Prior to joining NVPC, he worked in various finance and investment positions since 1982 in Singapore, the US and Hong Kong and earned a Master of Science in Finance degree from Suffolk University, MA.



**PROFESSOR CHEW
 SOON BENG**
Professor of Economics
 Nanyang Technological
 University Singapore

Professor Chew is Professor of Economics and Industrial Relations at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He received his Ph. D. from the University of Western Ontario, Canada. He is author of Small Firms in Singapore (Oxford University Press), Trade Unionism in Singapore (McGraw Hill), Employment-Driven Industrial Relations Regimes (Avebury), Values and Lifestyles of Young Singaporeans (Prentice-Hall), and Foreign Enterprises in China: Operation and Management (in Chinese). He has also published in journals such as the Singapore Economic Review, the China Economic Review, Review of Pacific Basin Financial Markets and Policies, and the Journal of Advances in Pacific Basin Business Economic and Finance. His current research interests include trade unionism, labour markets analysis, globalisation and entrepreneurship.

He has received many awards including Honorary Professorship, Institute of Legislation "Khalkh Juram", Mongolia 2001; Honorary Professorship, Moscow External University of the Humanities, 1997; Singapore National Book Prize, 1996 and his paper in Journal of Enterprising Communities has been awarded Highly Commended Paper in 2009.



MR CHIA NAM TOON
Chief Financial Officer
 Ascendas Group

As the Group Chief Financial Officer, Mr Chia is responsible for leading Ascendas' finance organization and providing strategic financial leadership for Group. His responsibilities include formulating financial policies, strategies and plans, and overseeing the financial and reporting functions.

Mr Chia is also concurrently the Executive Vice-President (Portfolio, Asset & Risk Management) and he oversees the Portfolio & Asset Management and Risk Management functions.

Before joining Ascendas, Mr Chia was the Finance Director and Acting Chief Operating Officer of PEC Tech Group, an engineering and forestry services business division of a large regional conglomerate. Mr. Chia has extensive Asia Pacific experience having spent 12 years with ICI Plc, a major specialty chemical company in various senior roles in finance, corporate planning, and general management based in Kuala Lumpur, London and Singapore. He had also spent 4 years with F&N Coca-Cola in Malaysia.

Mr Chia is a Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants UK (FCCA), a Fellow of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Singapore, and holds a Diploma in Commerce from Tunku Abdul Rahman College, Malaysia.



MR CHOO ENG CHUAN
Partner, International and Corporate Tax Services
 Ernst & Young Solutions LLP

Eng Chuan graduated from the National University Singapore with a Bachelor of Accountancy degree. He is also a member of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Singapore (ICPAS)

Eng Chuan has over 23 years of experience in tax and has consulted with local and multi-national companies on both inbound and outbound investment into and from Singapore.

His main areas of expertise are in international cross-border taxation and restructuring of groups prior to a public-listing of companies' shares.

He has advised a range of clients from MNCs, large local corporations including shipping enterprises and government agencies.



MS SUSAN CHONG
Chief Executive Officer
 Greenpac (S) Pte Ltd

Susan is the Chief Executive Officer of Greenpac (S) Pte Ltd ("Greenpac"), a knowledge-based company that specialises in re-engineering, designing and distributing innovative, environmentally friendly packaging products and solutions. Since starting the company in September 2002, Susan grew Greenpac from a one-woman start-up into a thriving multimillion dollar company. Today, Greenpac serves Fortune 500 companies and is the market leader for environmentally friendly packaging solutions in Asia.

Susan was awarded a string of prestigious business awards in 2008 and 2009. Below is the list of awards that Susan and Greenpac have received:

- Entrepreneur of the Year 2008 – Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (ASME) and Spring Singapore
- Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2008 for Innovation (sub-category)
- Enterprise 50 (E50) 2008 (ranked # 4th) & 2009 - KPMG and Business Times
- Singapore Packaging Star Award 2008 & 2009 – Environmental Sustainable Packaging category by Singapore Manufacturing Federation
- SEC-Senoko Power Green Innovation Award 2009 – Singapore Environment Council
- Outstanding Entrepreneurship Award - Asia Pacific Entrepreneurship Award 2009
- Green Leadership Award - Asia Responsible Entrepreneurships Award 2009
- Sustainable Manufacturing Certification 2009/2010 - Singapore Environment Council
- Asia Packaging Star Award 2009
- World Packaging Star Award 2009

Susan is still active in community projects in spite of her busy schedule and is a founding member of a private sector-led initiative to promote engineering as a course of study. The Creators of Tomorrow is a group that aims to ignite a passion for engineering among Singaporean youth. In her quest for continuous self-improvement and learning, she is also currently pursuing an Executive MBA with the NUS Business School.



MR FOONG DAW CHING
PBM
Managing Partner
 Baker Tilly TFWLCL
 Singapore

Mr Foong has more than 30 years of audit experience in Singapore and England with 6 years of audit experience at a senior level in an international firm in Singapore.

Experience in Initial Public Offerings, Internal audits, Special Investigation Work, Financial Due Diligence, Litigation Support (including rendering reports and giving evidence as Expert Witness in court or in arbitration), Insolvency (including court winding up and judicial management), Valuations, Mergers and Acquisition studies, Improvements in Accounting and Reporting Systems and Assisting Clients' Formation and Organization Structures.

He has been awarded the Public Service Medal (PBM) by The President of Singapore in 2003 and the Merit Award by the ICPAS in 2000.

Mr Foong is the Chairman for CPE Advisory Committee, ICPAS, Board member of Baker Tilly International as well as Chairman of Baker Tilly International Asia-Pacific Region. He is also member of the:

- Accounting Standard Committee of Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Singapore (ICPAS).
- Accounting Advisory Board, National University of Singapore
- Committee for Commercial Entities, Accounting Standards Council, Singapore
- Committee for Charities, Accounting Standards Council, Singapore

Mr Foong is the Director & Chairman, St Luke's Hospital, President of Tung Ling Student Care Centre & Tung Ling Community Services and Board Member of St Luke's Eldercare Ltd and Jurong Health Services Pte Ltd.

Mr Foong is a

- Fellow, Institute of Chartered Accountant in England and Wales
- Fellow, Institute of Certified Public Accountants, Singapore
- Fellow, CPA Australia
- Chartered Accountant, Malaysian Institute of Accountants
- Certified Management Consultant, Singapore



MRS CLARA GOH
Chief Financial Officer
 The Esplanade Co. Ltd

Before joining The Esplanade as CFO in late 2006, Clara was with the Popular Group of Companies for 12 years, rising through the ranks from Accountant to Regional Finance Director, overseeing the group of over 40 related companies. Prior to that, Clara started her career in audit with one of the Big 4 audit firms before having a stint in the bank.



MR DAVID LEE
Executive Director, Tax
 KPMG

David is an Executive Director in KPMG Tax Services, Singapore. He is the director-in-charge of KPMG Singapore's insurance practice and a member of KPMG's global insurance industry network. He is also in charge of the Merger and Acquisitions and supply chain groups in Singapore and part of KPMG's global networks for these specialist areas.

David has more than 25 years of regional and Singapore tax experience, having been part of the corporate office management team of major multinational groups with tax management responsibilities for the Far East. He has been involved in a broad array of projects, including mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures and investments in various countries in the region. In KPMG, David was extensively involved in assisting GLCs and multi-national groups in various restructuring, asset securitisation and other projects which required liaison with and making representations to the tax and other government authorities for rulings and clarifications.

He has also been involved for a number of years in the compliance and advisory aspects of Singapore taxation and has had exposure and experience with a diverse portfolio of clientele in KPMG, from a broad spectrum of industries including fund management, growth funds, insurance, manufacturing, trading and investment companies.

David has a Bachelor of Accountancy (National University of Singapore) and is a member of the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Singapore.



MR SONG SENG WUN
Regional Economist
CIMB-GK Research Pte Ltd

Mr Song is the Regional Economist in CIMB-GK Research Pte Ltd. Mr Song holds a Master of Arts in Econometrics from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He started his career as an economist in Malayan Banking Bhd in 1984. In the early 1990's, he moved to Singapore and worked as a Regional Economist with various major multi-national financial institutions such as Smith Newcourt (now part of Merrill Lynch) as well as Hoare Govette (now part of ABN Amro). He is a familiar icon in South Asia's news media as he has greatly contributed his professional views on the regional financial markets.



MR VICTOR TAY
Chief Operating Officer
Singapore Business Federation

With the Singapore Business Federation (SBF), the APEX Business Chamber, Victor acts as the Chief Operating Officer (COO) overseeing enterprise capacity building (comprising of National Business Continuity Management, Business Intelligence, Financial Assistance, Credit Management, Sustainable Development Group), corporate communications, membership and research services.

Prior to joining SBF, Victor was a Director with SPRING Singapore looking after the development of key industries ranging from Transport, Logistics, Environmental and Engineering Services, Biomedical and Healthcare, Chemicals, Education and Business Services. He also assists in strengthening growth-oriented enterprises across the spectrum of finance, land, technology and management resource needs.

Before his stint with the public services, Victor had been a management consultant advising multinationals in the high-tech sector in Asia Pacific region. He was based in Greater China for 3 years and had worked with 3 of the big 5 management consultancy firms, namely PricewaterhouseCoopers, Coopers and Lybrand and KPMG Peat Marwick Management Consultants.

Victor is currently researching on the critical success factors of entrepreneurs of fast growing SMEs under a Doctorate programme with Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He has a Master degree from National University of Singapore,

and a Bachelor degree from Curtin University of Technology, Australia.

Victor sits at the following industry associations, institutions and councils:

- Advisory Member, Manpower, Skills and Train Council, Workforce Development Authority
- Advisory Council, Sustainable Energy Association of Singapore
- Advisory Council, Centre of Innovation (Marine and Offshore), Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- Advisory Council, Centre of Innovation (Environmental and Water Technologies), Ngee Ann Polytechnic
- Member, Mechanical Engineering Academic Advisory Board, Institute of Technical Education
- Chairman of Business Continuity Management and IT committee, Association of Persons with Special Needs (APSN)

Victor has also co-authored the "Best Industry Practices for Manufacturing Enterprises" published by NUS-PSB Best Practice Centre and has spoken at many conferences.



MS INGRID THE
Financial Controller
The National Kidney
Foundation

Ingrid joined the NKF in October 2006 as Financial Controller. Prior to joining the NKF, she was working in a health care institution as its Finance Manager and Company Secretary.

She graduated from Australia with a degree in Bachelor of Business Studies majoring in Accountancy. She is a member of both the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Singapore and CPA Australia. She is also a member of the Institute of Internal Auditors.

She started her career in Australia as an auditor with one of the major accounting firms. She proceeded to work with a few companies and MNCs in various areas such as internal audit, budgeting, costing, project financing, tax planning, policy setting, treasury, and financial accounting.



MR MICHAEL TIEN
Chief Executive Officer
 Atlas Sound & Vision Pte Ltd

Michael restarted the family business in 1986 after the former company, Atlas Sound Pte Ltd fell victim to the 1985 recession. As the company grew progressively, he invited his parents to rejoin the business to help him cope with the growth and expansion of the company.

He was actively involved in its post recession reorganization and reestablishment. He was instrumental in co-developing the framework for the company's structured product demonstrations and customer engagements that are the hallmark of the Atlas experience. For this, Atlas has the honour of being presented with the only 'Best Retailer in the World Award' by the Bose Corporation in 1996.

Michael is also one of 40 original Bose trained and certified Auditioners. Skilled in designing and installation of professional sound systems using the patented Bose. Modeler® and Auditor® software, he has worked extensively on significant projects at the National University of Singapore, Jurong Bird Park, Singapore Zoological Gardens, Sunway Lagoon Resort and St Regis Hotel, to name a few.

In 1993, he took on the role of Director of Technical Sales, a position he held till August 2003. With the passing of the founding and Managing Director, the late Mr. A. B. Tien, he assumed the position of Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director of Atlas Sound & Vision. Under Michael's stewardship, Atlas Sound & Vision expanded into the heartlands, opening three suburban stores in Bishan, Choa Chu Kang, and Jurong. He was also responsible for the successful development of Atlas Professional which provided business and hospitality solutions and the setting up of a channels distribution strategy for the company.

His vision to transform the family business into an enterprise was reflected in the implementation of an ERP system and documented work flows and processes, which led to Atlas Sound & Vision being ISO9001 certified in 2005. Atlas was involved with SPRING Singapore, the Singapore Workforce Development Agency and other SMEs in the HR Capability Package pilot project which was launched on October 7th, 2008.

Later in the year 2005, Michael oversaw the rebranding of Atlas Hi-Fi Pte Ltd to Atlas Sound & Vision Pte Ltd. In its first year of rebranding, Atlas Sound & Vision was awarded the Singapore Promising Brand Award in 2006 and subsequently the Singapore Prestige Brand Award – Established Brand in 2007, 2008 and 2009. Atlas Sound & Vision was recognized as a Singapore SME 500 company in 2008 and 2009. In 2009, Atlas was ranked 20th in the 2009 Enterprise 50 awards.

He instituted "In Harmony with Education" in 2005 -- an interdisciplinary children's music program developed by jointly developed by Bose and The National Association for Music Education in America. Convinced that it is an excellent tool to motivate students in their studies and contribute to their holistic development, he pledged to give 10 percent of Atlas' annual profits to bring it to Singapore schools for free, and even engaged a full-time staff to run the program.

Michael is married with three children and has recently completed his Advanced Diploma in Pastoral Care with the Asian Pastoral Institute. On May 20th 2007, in recognition of his entrepreneurial achievements, he was conferred an honorary doctorate (PhD) in Entrepreneurship. In October 2008, Michael was recognized as one of Singapore's Top Entrepreneur in The Entrepreneur of Year Award 08 – A Rotary-ASME AWARD. He is currently pursuing a Masters in Business Administration with Manchester Business School.

He is currently a member of the Pro Enterprise Panel (PEP) and is also a member of the MCYS 2nd Youth Expedition Project (YEP) Advisory Panel (2008 to 2010) since November 2008.



MR YEO EK KHUAN
Senior Partner,
 BDO LLP
Assistant Honorary Treasurer
 Association of Small and
 Medium Enterprises

Mr Yeo is presently a Senior Partner of BDO LLP. He is a Chartered Accountant of Australia by training and a practicing Certified Public Accountant of Singapore. He has more than 40 years of experience with international auditing firms before joining BDO LLP in 2001. His experience includes auditing of multinational, listed local companies and small and medium enterprises.

Mr Yeo was a member of ICPAS' Auditing Practices Committee from 1978 to 2006. He is currently serving in the Financial Statements Review Committee, as well as the Accounting Standards Committee. He has also served as a member of the Advertising Policy Committee (Ad Hoc) and the Structured Practical Audit Training Committee. Besides his involvement in ICPAS' committees, he also served in the Membership Committee and is a panel member of Inquiry Committee of the Accounting & Corporate Authority. He was the chairman of Grant Thornton Asia Pacific Auditing and Accounting Committee from 1986 to 1990. Mr Yeo is also active in the Association of Small and Medium Size Enterprises (ASME), Singapore. He is currently the Assistant Honorary Treasurer of ASME, and he has served as First vice-President, Second Vice-President, Honorary Treasurer and Council member of ASME. Mr Yeo has also served as the Honorary Treasurer and as a Board member of the Singapore Heart Foundation. Currently, he is appointed as the Chairman of the Audit Committee of the Singapore Heart Foundation. He is also a member of the Chinese Development Assistance Council Finance Committee. Currently he also serves as a panel member of the Medical Complaint Enquiry Committee.

In recognition of Mr Yeo's dedicated and significant service to the accountancy profession and the community, he was awarded the ICPAS Silver Medal Award in 2008.

