

Springboard to growth

Awards like SOBA will motivate winners to climb the ladder to success

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KUALA LUMPUR: The atmosphere at The Royale Chulan Kuala Lumpur on Thursday turned lively when the names of the winners of the inaugural Star Outstanding Business Awards (SOBA) 2010 were announced.

There were cheers among colleagues and elation among the winners. It was a night of achievement for those that won in various categories, indeed a reflection of their hardwork and dedication.

Unlike other awards which pay tribute to well-known enterprises and public-listed companies, SOBA took a different stand.

The participants were smaller companies, many even unheard of. Some of them are Kedai Kasut You Sdn Bhd (Gold Award winner for Community category) and Webse Sdn Bhd (Platinum Award winner for Technology/ICT) and Asia Pacific Flight Training (Platinum Award winner for People's Choice of Outstanding Malaysian Brand).

With more than 90% of all businesses comprising small and medium enterprises (SMEs), awards like SOBA will motivate winners to work harder and carve a name for themselves, spurring the SME industry to a higher level.

It will also provide a platform for some to seek listing on the local bourse and as a springboard to expand businesses abroad. There were 10 categories for SOBA, of which the judges awarded six Platinum awards, nine Gold awards and eight Silver awards.

The event was organised by The Star with Maxis as presenter.

»Companies are already taking

those initial but necessary steps towards making their businesses stand out«

DATIN LINDA NGIAM
Standard Chartered Sadqil gold sponsor, BMW as official car, The Royale Chulan Kuala Lumpur as official hotel, Shang Hai as official business magazine and RedPM, S88 and SuriaPM as official radio stations.

It was supported by Bursa Malaysia and audited by BDO. Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Husni Mohamad Hanadzlah was invited to grace the event.

Star Publications (M) Bhd group managing director and CEO Datin Linda Ngiam in her speech commended the participants for their sheer hard work and patience in the compilation and accumulation of relevant data for submission.

She said the panel of esteemed judges, overseen by auditors BDO, had a tough time sifting through the entries that came from both known and lesser-known companies.

Commenting on the path that SOBA had set out to do, Ngiam said: "To unearth the diamonds in the rough in our midst, companies which, though small and relatively unknown, are already taking those initial but necessary steps towards making their businesses stand out."

Admitting that the judging process had been rigorous and meticulous, Ngiam said she concurred the panel that setting high standards right from the start would ensure the quality and integrity SOBA.

That means a SOBA winner could stand taller than winners of other similar Awards, she noted.
At the event Ahmad Husni said

the SME industry had contributed much to the country - providing opportunities to its supporting partners as well as its employees.

"We have small companies right across the country having corporate social responsibility programmes - touching the communities they are operating in."

"Above all, the SME industry fulfils its moral responsibility in its provision of pride, honour and a sense of useful purpose to the members of the families that own it, a sense of purpose to the employees who dedicate their careers to it," he noted.



(From left)
Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Bhd CEO Osman Morad, Maxis Bhd senior vice president and head of business services Fitri Abdullah, Peter Ng Tong Se, Datuk Seri Ahmad Hsni Mohamad Hanadzlah and Datin Linda Ngiam at the awards presentation.

WEBSE SDN BHD

Platinum Award: Technology/ICT
Silver Award: SME of the Year

I think SOBA is meaningful and quite different from other awards which we have won as it goes right down to the criteria and emphasises on the quality of specific areas.

The award is a stepping stone and a platform for us to move on and meet our business objective, that is to create the world's number one halal portal.

Self-improvement, professionalism, communications and PR are important for one to succeed. There is no room for complacency.

Calvert Wong (CEO)



STEEL RECON INDUSTRIES SDN BHD

Platinum Award: Global Market
Silver Award: Best Use of Media
Silver Award: Community

This (winning the Platinum Award: Global Market) is something unexpected. We submitted four categories and we received three awards and it is very flattering. I think SOBA was fair and challenging.

It is a good awards for the SME industry. It is new but I think we will definitely participate next year and The Star should continue to organise this awards and encourage more SMEs to participate.

We manufacture fire-fighting equipment and are exporting to 60 countries. We are in Europe right now and will like to broaden our presence.

Kuek Shih Year (international sales & marketing manager)



UCSI EDUCATION SDN BHD

Platinum Award: Entrepreneur of the Year

Well, of course I feel very happy winning this award. I am a little surprised as I did not quite expect to win. I don't have a success formula but I always believe in integrity, hardwork, perseverance and always look at things in a positive way.

My advice for the younger generation is to aim high, work very hard and always believe that nothing is impossible, just go for it.

Our next phase will include the development of five-star hotels, a hospital and an international school.

I think SOBA is brilliant, thanks to The Star, as it will encourage entrepreneurs to go extra miles to try new things and achieve greater heights.

Datuk Peter Ng Tong Se
(group president)



SMART READER WORLDWIDE SDN BHD

Platinum Award: Best Use of Media
Gold Award: SME of the Year
Gold Award: Outstanding Malaysian Brand
Gold Award: Entrepreneur of the Year
Gold Award: People's Choice of Outstanding Malaysian Brand (for Smart Reader Kids (franchised brand of Smart Reader Worldwide))

SOBA is a very encouraging platform for companies to compete and puts us on a higher pinnacle to move on to the next level. We have won a number of awards and this will help us to strive for excellence and to maintain our quality standards.

Dr Wang Kim Ha
(group executive director)

At the moment we don't have plans to get listed on the local stock exchange but maybe in the near future. We certainly have a lot of expansion plans in line now. The next step is to come out with our very own primary school, possibly the first evergreen school in Malaysia or even in South-East Asia.

Our secret to success is hard work, dedication, commitment and passion. Creativity and innovation also play a big part as we have been focused in these areas in carrying out our businesses.

Dr Richard Ong (CEO)



Dr Wang Kim Ha and Dr Richard Ong