

Joint Media Release

Workshop for SMEs to address costly impact of cross cultural differences when doing business in Malaysia



Wednesday March 8, 2017. Connect Malaysia principal consultant Mr Joe Perri and Cultural Synergies founder Dr Tom Verghese have announced an extensive cross-cultural workshop for SMEs, with a focus on the importance of understanding Malaysian culture and its impact on the commercial success of Australian business owners. The workshop will be held on Saturday May 6 2017.

Mr Perri commented, “Malaysia is one of Australia’s top ten trading partners and the prospects for business has provided a beacon for SMEs to expand their operations into Malaysia. The country’s strategic geographical position and access to the markets of ASEAN is a further incentive for SMEs.”

“However, many ventures have been cut short by cross cultural blunders in matters such as language, etiquette, non-verbal communication and general indifference to local customs and norms,” affirmed Mr Perri.

Dr Verghese added, “A poor understanding and appreciation of Malaysian culture might on the surface appear trivial – even humorous by Aussie standards, but the cultural mistakes made in areas such as management, marketing, advertising and during negotiations have resulted in devastating financial consequences”.

Cultural Synergies and Connect Malaysia have joined forces to provide a workshop on this subject on Saturday May 6. The **Understanding Malaysian Culture for SMEs** workshop is supported by **MATRADE**, Malaysia’s external trade agency. The **MATRADE** office at 432 St Kilda Road Melbourne will be the venue for the event.



MATRADE Director Ms Noor Hayati said, “Malaysia is a multi-cultural and harmonious society comprising three distinct groups – native Malays, as well as large populations of Chinese and Indians.”

“Like Australia, Malaysian SMEs play a vital role within the nation’s economy with the sector comprising nearly 97.3% of the country’s businesses. We are very pleased to support initiatives that bring Malaysian and Australian SMEs together to develop long-term mutually beneficial commercial undertakings,” said Ms Hayati.

The workshop program has been developed and will be presented by Malaysian-born Dr Tom Verghese, an internationally renowned expert, consultant author and main platform/workshop presenter on cross cultural awareness and Cultural Intelligence (CQ).

To illustrate some often-misunderstood cultural mistakes that will be covered in the workshop, Dr Verghese provided some examples:

Business Card Etiquette

- Business cards are exchanged after the initial introductions.
- Use two hands or the right hand only to exchange business cards.
- Examine business cards you receive before putting them away as the respect you show someone's business card reflects the respect you will show them in business.
- Never write on someone's card in their presence.

The Concept of Face

Malays, Chinese and Indians all strive to avoid shame both in public and private. This is known as "Face" and embraces an individual's qualities such as a good name, character, and being held in esteem by one's peers.

Face can be lost by putting someone on the spot, criticizing, insulting, challenging someone in authority, refusing a request, not keeping promises or disagreeing publicly with someone.

Gift giving to Malays

If invited to someone's home for a meal, bring the hostess pastries or good quality chocolates, but they must be Halal... and definitely no alcohol. Present the gifts with the right hand only or both hands.

Do not wrap the gifts in white wrapping paper as it symbolizes death and never give the children toy dogs or pigs.

Meeting and Greeting

- The best approach is always friendly, yet formal.
- Within a team environment, introduce the most important/senior person first.
- Foreign men should always wait for a Malaysian woman to extend their hand. Similarly, women should also wait for a Malaysian man to extend his hand.
- It is important to use professional titles i.e. doctor, professor, Dato, etc. Malays and Indians use titles with their first name while Chinese use titles with their surname.

The ***Understanding Malaysian Culture for SMEs*** workshop will conclude with presentations from representatives from banking, government and business facilitation consultancies. The cost will be \$240, and include lunch and refreshment breaks.

"Being able to work in cross cultural environments is a necessary skill for SMEs and the intensive program developed by Dr Verghese will assist business owners to understand the Malaysian culture and importance of cross-cultural intelligence for business success," concluded Mr Perri.

NOTE: For enquiries and registration please contact Cultural Synergies by email at enquiries@culturalsynergies.com or telephone 03 9909 7456

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