



Mr Tan Tong Hai

Another highlight for me of the 2017 Asia Sustainability Reporting Summit was listening to the keynote of Mr. Tan Tong Hai, StarHub's CEO and Executive Director, and hearing from Jeannie Ong, StarHub's Chief Strategic Partnership Officer in the closing plenary panel.

StarHub is Singapore's first fully integrated info-communications company offering mobile, Pay TV, broadband and enterprise services to millions of customers in Singapore region employing close to 3,000 people. StarHub was the 2016 Winner of Asia's Best Sustainability Report within Annual Report at the Asia Sustainability Reporting Awards and also the 2015 Highly Commended Finalist of the Asia's Best Community Reporting at the Asia Sustainability Reporting Awards.

StarHub integrates sustainability information in its annual report - check out the 2016 report here. The sustainability information is a report within a report, 37 pages of GRI Standards Core option content, including, of course, a set of material priorities.

In his opening keynote, Tan Tong Hai shared his experience of being appointed CEO and

being "taught" that the value of business was to deliver (financial) value for shareholders. But, it did not take him long to realize that this is no longer the full story. "Over the years, I think the role of business in society has changed. It's no longer just to create value for

shareholders, it's now about creating value for stakeholders. Stakeholders include employees who you need to generate the wealth, customers who use your services and your business partners who help you in the whole supply chain, and also the regulatory framework and the society we live in. When I looked at our vision statement, it was rather technical, so we gathered our employees together to create a new vision statement - "Creating Happiness, Inspiring Change". Creating happiness first for our employees, and for our customers, partners and all citizens."

You will note that Tan Tong Hai first refers to employees. Those that know me and remember my book, "CSR for HR: A necessary partnership for advancing responsible business", may be reminded of the point that CSR begins at home - with the first stakeholders of any business. Since that publication in 2010, I have heard very few

CEOs put people first, and read very few Sustainability Reports that truly reflect a culture where employees are engaged,

empowered and equal. Tan Tong Hai's reflections on his approach to business were a breath of fresh air in this respect. He chose to talk FIRST about employees as he has chosen to put them FIRST in his business.

"I believe that you can't have happy employees if you don't have healthy

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Owning the Space at StarHub

employees. Health is wealth. We have generated a lot of health activities for employees and of course I participate in those too. How we create happiness by helping others is also important. We encourage our employees to help in society by helping disabled people to use information skills to prepare them for work in society. That is what we mean by happiness - getting employees involved, knowing that happiness is not only their own health but also helping others. That's one part of how we create value."

Tan Tong Hai also referred to the way StarHub creates value for customers - not

only through the products and service offering StarHub sells, such as unlimited viewing - but also through the way StarHub pioneered in 2012, an inclusive and extensive electronic waste recycling program, providing receptacles for customers to send their

electronic items for recycling. Since 2012, more than 150 tons of electronic waste have been handled in this way. "You can create value by helping customers to become more responsible and helping them dispose of electronic waste."



Jeannie Ong

Jeannie Ong, StarHub's Chief Strategic Partnerships Officer, also referred to this program in the closing plenary panel session. The program is called RENEW (REcycling Nation's Electronic Waste) and it is now an award-winning initiative aimed at encouraging the public to recycle their e-waste. In collaboration with logistics provider DHL and waste recycler TES-AMM, the RENEW program provides a public service free of charge to collect e-waste from the public (not just from StarHub's customers) through 325 collection bins (in 2016) in Singapore. 59 tons of e-waste were collected in 2016 alone.

Jeannie explained: "We were very honored to be ranked in Corporate Knights top 100 Sustainable Corporations for the last five years and the highest-ranking Singaporean company. We studied the criteria to understand why.. it has got a lot to do with, believe it or not, NOT your sustainability reporting, it is about how sustainable your business is. Reporting is just a tool - it is really how you are able to embed sustainability into your operations and performance that is key. I don't have a secret recipe, but I believe it's because in our approach, we try to own a space. For example, looking at environmental issues some years ago, I looked at our business - we are a technology company and a media company, and one issue that stood out was that we are the source of a lot of electronic waste. We sell devices, set-top boxes, modems, routers etc.. at home, people don't have good possibilities to dispose of electronic waste. When I looked at all this, I founded the electronic waste project six years ago. We decided to own that space. Till today, electronic waste is a space StarHub owns in Singapore. For your line of business, look at where you make an impact and own that space. Own something that you uniquely have in your line of business and as you do that, it shows in your entire sustainability journey. It also helps you win awards 😊."

Solid advice from Jeannie supported by practical action and much success. Both Tan Tong Hai and Jeannie Ong talked about much more than I can repeat here, and shared fabulous insights, including perspectives on

the Sustainable Development Goals, the future of work, the Internet of Things and the challenges of the reporting process. StarHub's contribution to the 2017 Asia Sustainability Reporting Summit was tremendous and earned much respect from attending delegates.

I asked Tan Tong Hai if he would be open to being cloned about 5,000 times and placed strategically in corporations around the world. While he considers his response, we will have to be content with the enlightened leadership he shows at StarHub and learning from him and his team at conferences, and reading StarHub's annual sustainability report.

I will therefore leave the final word to Tan Tong Hai:

"As a service provider, we play a key role but we must also participate in the whole system with employees, customers and partners, and play a key role helping Singapore become a smart nation but also a responsible nation."

Written by

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The write-up first appeared on Elaine's blog at <http://csr-reporting.blogspot.sg>

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