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zation development. He helped publish the book "Winning Through Participation" (ICA Associates) which highlights foundational group facilitation and participation processes. A recently released sequel entitled "Participation Works" (Miles River Press) illustrates case study applications of methodologies of participation. Patterson incorporates these methodologies in his training and consulting services.



James Cheng, Managing Director of Hong Kong-based Meyer Aluminum, has sent over 15 managers and superintendents for this participation and leadership training. He found the methodology for objective thinking, analysis, and decision-making to be most useful. With the implementation of these new processes in communication, and the implementation of new information technology, to assist in collecting objective data, Meyer has overcome previous quality control problems. "Now we can quickly identify problem areas, and take corrective action which saves time and wastage of material," says Cheng.

Patterson feels that Hong Kong presents an interesting challenge for consultants since the economic mood is very different from that in Canada. "Here it's how do we structure ourselves to take advantage of the vast opportunities that present themselves. In Canada it's a different kind of challenge where it's downsizing and survival that become the question." He added that, "Culturally sensitive, competent consultants, if they are willing to be patient, and build up relationships, can grow a business in Hong Kong."

Communication skills are universal

This favourable economic mood in Hong Kong along with a real interest in self-improvement and effective communications training, both on a personal and business level, has contributed to a rapid growth of Dale Carnegie courses and consulting services.

Dean Gagne, Director of Marketing in Hong Kong, joined the company two years ago from Saskatoon. He says: "The market in Hong Kong for services is very good." A quick look at the figures shows that 15 years ago, Asia produced about five percent of the total business volume worldwide, whereas today it is around 15-20 per cent. "It is by far the fastest growing region...in Hong Kong this past year our sales have doubled and the staff size has grown by 80 per cent," says Gagne.

Clients to-date tend to be the multinational companies or the larger well-established local companies. Gagne says that currently about 50 per cent of the marketing budget has been shifted towards education aimed at the medium and smaller local owner-managed companies. He says, "...it involves changing the mindset from a centralized decision-making style to a more decentralized one."

In order to service the Hong Kong market, some tailoring of the training materials has been required, but it is not only a matter of translation. Gagne explains, "...part of the tailoring process is taking the material and rewriting it, culturalizing it, presenting it so that it is understandable in the local market."

However, he emphasized that the skills which are taught are universal and now used in over 80 countries in the world. "It's the communication skills and people skills which really drives our business...it's all about treating people with decency and respect, and that's equally applicable anywhere in the world," says Gagne.

Dale Carnegie courses, which originated in North America, have been presented in Hong Kong since 1965 by agents, and more recently by Patrick M Connor and Associates Ltd. In Hong Kong a range of services is available from standard public courses to customized corporate solutions and consulting.

Gagne says that in the last decade there has been a shift from context consulting to facilitation consulting where, "the role of the consultant is to facilitate the development of skills so that the organization can solve its own problems."

Entrepreneur counselling

Being a facilitator is a key role for "Entrepreneurial Counselling", a relatively new term for one of the services offered by the Pacific Rim Group. John Henderson, Managing Director, explains the consulting service he provides is very much driven by the role of the entrepreneur: "If that person is still active, really the driving force, the spirit, and the essence of what the business is, then that person typically needs somebody to talk to. I come in as the counsellor and friend and facilitator, and it is very personal."