

## FROM THE EDITOR

### On the fascination with uncertainty: Life in interesting times

Probably every generation considers itself as living within a vortex of change, but these last few months must be particularly challenging, even for futurists, let alone CEOs and business practitioners. As our author, Florian Kohlbacher, notes, of the eight major megatrends mentioned in a recent survey, executives assigned the most importance to those changes stemming from globalisation, technological progress and digitisation of the economy. For many of them, embracing change amounts to embracing digital life. Some have and some haven't.

One of the most interesting advancements in technology involves the use of smart technologies to transform our cities into smart cities. However the process is not without its risks, reveals Steven Miller. Those responsible for implementing these smart systems must have the organisational capacity to monitor and supervise how they work and then prudently manage the risks. But even in innovation and the digital space, some issues remain eternal. Despite the newfangled business models and market game changers, says Gerard George, the old axiom of industry continues to ring true, that, in any successful innovation, leadership matters.

This month I met with former Secretary of Finance for the Philippines and Chair of the Economic Development Cluster from 2010 to 2016, Cesar V. Purisima, who tells me the greatest opportunity and challenge for the Philippines is in the technology space, with a particular challenge being the maintenance of policy continuity, difficult in a U.S.-style democracy like the Philippines with its six-year administrations. Still on the challenges of policymaking, Julie Kozack writes of the need to build capacity in Asia. Policymakers will need the skills and tools to implement macroeconomic and financial policies prudently and nimbly, she says.

When it comes to managing the fallout from the global impact of changes in U.S. trade policy, prepare for tectonic shifts, warns Jagdish Sheth. Heralded as the next big economic partnership, the Trans-Pacific-Partnership (TPP) was dealt a setback when U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the pact on his very first day assuming office. This is also an indication of significant changes to come in global trade policies, and not just in the U.S., Sheth adds.

Consumers might be changing the rules, but technology is changing the game in the digital era, note Rick Smith and Adina Wong, as they relate the globalisation of a one-stop travel portal's business model to the use of proprietary search technology.

Meanwhile, management education is the focus of Howard Thomas's recent research, which explores whether a distinctive African management education model is possible, achievable

or even advisable. And for Jovina Ang and Jochen Reb, the keys to the corporate kingdom lie in the hands of sponsors. Often confused with mentors, sponsors perform a different set of tasks for rising talent: while mentors *give*, sponsors *invest*.

By 2050, the global population distribution is projected to change—Asia will comprise 54 percent of the world's people, while Europe will account for only around 7 percent. An interesting study from Sarah Harper reveals how Asia can take advantage of the changing demographic by harnessing its 'youth bulge'. She notes that 20th century institutions will not suffice to solve 21st century problems.

In a similar vein, Tomáš Klvaňa identifies two social groups that will shape the attitudes of people towards business in the near future: young people between 18 and 25 (the so-called 'millennials'), and active seniors who are a naturally growing slice of developed societies, referred to as the 'silver wave'. Both groups can play a key role in lifting CSR out of a perceived public relations function, he concludes.

These are indeed interesting times, and this issue offers many examples of the changes that are afoot. The insights of these authors provide a glimpse into the future and help us to prepare management strategies to tackle the challenges.

I am reminded of Carl von Clausewitz, the Prussian general and strategist, who said, "Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating." The 'fog of war', often attributed to von Clausewitz, covers unexpected developments that are unfolding—including incomplete, dubious and often completely erroneous information and high levels of fear, doubt and excitement—which all call for rapid decisions by alert commanders. Written in a pre-social media era, it has a familiar ring to it even today.



**DR PHILIP C ZERRILLO**  
Editor-in-Chief  
Asian Management Insights  
pzerrillo@smu.edu.sg