



The Cisco Asian Affinity Network Cultivates Critical Relationships for Business Development

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Senior Manager, Cisco

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Director, Cisco

Cisco’s commitment to attracting and retaining a diverse workforce ensures we have the talent and skills we need to extend our leadership positions, enter new markets and explore new technologies. We strive to unlock the valuable expertise and perspectives of our employees and help them develop the skills and connections they need to excel professionally.

“We are dedicated to fostering a culture of inclusion and an environment that encourages employees to develop and maximize their contributions to the business,” said Jacqueline Munson, senior manager of Inclusion and Diversity. “Cisco’s Employee Resource Groups (ERG) provide a framework to help employees identify ways to better leverage the talent and connections within their organizations. We then challenge them to use those connections to drive innovation and business opportunities.”

The Cisco Asian Affinity Network (CAAN) is one such group. Under the ERG umbrella, CAAN has typically focused on creating opportunities for its 1000 members to network, learn about different aspects of the business, and build skills that could help them advance their career. But they have also been looking for ways to use these relationships and skills to cultivate business. A pending visit to Silicon Valley by Vincent Lo, Founder & Chairman of the Shui On Group, the largest publicly-traded real estate company in China, seemed to be a perfect fit.

Lo, number 19 on Forbes 2010 Hong Kong’s Richest list, is currently developing a knowledge and innovation community (KIC) in Shanghai’s Yangpu district designed to be “the heart of creativity and enterprise where you realize your dreams and vision.”¹ He envisions the city of the future as “an environment that fosters a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in China,” one that “offers a modern lifestyle, blending work, living, recreation, and cultural facilities.” Sound familiar? It certainly calls to mind Cisco’s vision to “change the way we work, live, play and learn.”

Given the synergies, CAAN approached Gary Moore, SVP and co-Leader of Cisco Services about sponsoring a business development opportunity and hosting Lo at Cisco’s Executive Briefing Center (EBC). Moore readily agreed, seeing it as a great opportunity to support Cisco’s Inclusions and Diversity objectives and to highlight Cisco’s Smart+Connected Real Estate and Communities initiatives.

“This event allowed us to create an even stronger relationship,” said Moore, “both at a personal and a professional level, with one of the foremost business leaders in China. It facilitated a great dialogue that gave us an understanding of what success looks like to Vincent and his organization, and gave Lo the insight into the strategic value of a partnership with Cisco to help Lo achieve his vision quickly, seamlessly, and effectively through the network. Lo gave us an insider view of the massive opportunities in the fastest



growing nation in the world, with a clear view of the places where Cisco can enable his vision, thanks to our Smart+Connected Communities Solution.”

“In most Asian cultures, relationships come before business,” said Derek Mak, senior director of Cisco Services and chair of CAAN Leadership Development Committee. “Being able to play a part in cultivating strategic relationships and fostering an environment of networking amongst business leaders are the essence of what CAAN’s Leadership Development is all about.”

CAAN partnered with the Asia America Multi-Technology Association (AAMA), who made the initial invitation to Lo through their membership base, which has representatives from more than 2000 companies, to co-sponsor the event. The echelon of attendees was impressive; with leaders from Cisco and Shui On Group, as well as San Jose City officials and AAMA executives, such as Wells Fargo, Silicon Valley Bank, Deloitte & Touche and NEC.

“Events like this are critical for Cisco because they position us in the community as a thought leader with broad business capabilities, far beyond connectivity,” said Elisabeth Zornes, director of Advanced Services. “It was amazing to get the real-life color on how working with local officials and dealing with China’s unique growth dynamics is really playing out. It was a great opportunity for us to understand how they are creating these communities and how our technology can play a role in accelerating their objectives.”

“We all have benefitted from the opportunity to network and hear Mr. Lo share his views on China’s current economic landscape, the business opportunities arising from China’s fast growing

market, ways to tap China’s market opportunity, and how to build an international innovation platform,” said Wai-Kin Wong co-chair of CAAN. “We were also able to demonstrate firsthand Cisco’s differentiation and open doors to fruitful follow on conversations.”

In fact, the event is expected to create further dialogue between Cisco’s Greater China team and Lo’s Shui On Group in China around the Smart+ Communities solutions. In addition, Lo has extended an open invitation for Moore to visit the next time he is in Shanghai.

The event also served to cement the relationship between CAAN and AAMA. The groups have since discussed making AAMA’s mentorship program available to Cisco employees and possibility of sharing career development and apprenticeship program resources. They have also started meeting regularly to identify additional synergies.

CAAN plans to continue to strengthen the group’s connections within the Asian community, provide a unique perspective on what is going on in the region, and recruit, retain and develop talent to strengthen the impact of the group’s membership. They plan to use the success of this event to fuel additional activities that can bring in new business opportunities or spawn business innovations that support Cisco’s growth.

“We are always looking for ways to enhance the benefits of membership to our group,” said May Tran, co-chair of CAAN.

“Extending programs with our partners in turn increases the reach and wealth of expertise available to all participants and represents a great mutual benefit to the Asian community as they develop and advance their careers in companies around the world.”



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