

HEART to HEART with Asian Leaders

Exclusive Interviews
on Crisis, Comebacks & Character

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John Ng • Alvin Foo

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John and Alvin have a unique disarming ability to get leaders to speak about the most difficult issues and challenges of leadership and get them willing to go public on it. These conversations with leaders represent a peek into the psyche and emotions of leaders as they process through their journey in leadership. It is a priceless set of insights valuable to any student of leadership. A must read.

Mr. Sam Lam
President and Managing Partner of Linkage Asia

This volume is the result of John's relentless curiosity in learning from the successes and challenges of game changers in Asia. You will find honesty, humility and determination as the icons interviewed share their minds and hearts. A mandatory reading for those willing to learn from others.

Mr. Peter Chao
Founder, Eagles Communications

John, an evergreen human motivator, draws critical life lessons from several business and thought leaders who have gone through the feast and famine in their journeys. The easy prose style of the book makes it a warm book. I commend this book.

Judge (Ret) Richard Magnus
Expert (IBC) Member of UNESCO
Alumni of Network Agenda Council
World Economic Forum

If the earlier book was the Dim Sum, this is the entree, the substantial meat. When the topmost leaders of brand name organizations speak and tell you the value of great leadership principles and beliefs in their corporate and personal lives, you will have much to chew on.

Professor Ang Peng Hwa
Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
President-Elect 2015/16
International Communication Association

This book provides the platform for readers to engage not just with leaders of their own country but also those from the nearby region. No leadership can escape trials. They say iron sharpens iron — what better way than to spend time learning from those who have triumphed!

Mdm. Hannah Yeoh
Madam Speaker of the Selangor State Legislative Assembly, Malaysia

The true stories of these great leaders are so powerful and enjoyable. Reading “Heart To Heart”, I have learned so much from their experiences, wisdom and practical advice. I strongly recommend the book to everyone who wishes to be a great leader. Enjoy it, learn from it, and become a great leader.

Dr. Somjin Sornpaisarn
CEO of TMB Asset Management

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the interviews and the thought-provoking comments made by these Asian Leaders.

Mr. Lucas Chow
Chairman of Health Promotion Board Singapore
Member of Board of Trustees of the National University of Singapore

A must-have book for all leaders. Read and learn from those who have gone through tough times and made triumphant comebacks.

Mrs. Suwanna Eiampiikul
CEO of Bertram Chemical (1982) Co. Ltd., Thailand
CEO and Founder of Peppermint Bike Park, Thailand

This book contains much wisdom that comes from the practical insights of leaders as they reflected on the choices they made, the struggles they went through, and the outcomes they achieved. I was touched by their humility, and inspired by their faith and deep convictions. This book is an invaluable resource for all leaders.

Professor Neo Boon Siong
Nanyang Business School
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

In their intimate interviews with these 28 Asian leaders, John and Alvin have given us a portrait of authentic leadership. These leaders were never about power, prestige or position but principles, praxis and perseverance. Their stories inspire me to be a wiser person and a better leader.

Mr. Michael Tan
President of Eagles Communications, Singapore

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John Ng
Alvin Foo

 **World Scientific**

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OUR GRATITUDE

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Francis Yeoh

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Sandra Lee
Stephen Riady
Tan Cheng Bock
Tanri Abeng

FOREWORD BY AMNUAY TAPINGKAE

There is a general consensus that East, South and South-east Asia are going to have an increasingly large role in world affairs as the 21st century continues.

No longer are we going to be clients, customers and colonists. We are to be protégés and proprietors of significant natural resources and production capacity, as well as the majority of the world's human resources. Our new roles will involve leadership initiatives on a scale barely imagined two generations ago. It is apparent that models of leadership in Asia are distinctive. What's more, it is becoming obvious that leadership models inherited from elsewhere are not going to work well here and are not working as well as they used to elsewhere either.

In the coming few decades our Asian perspective will be critical and salutary, as long as it remains engaged in the whole world and not isolated by cultural barriers. It is clear that we have been impacted by world powers throughout the past century, but this has not disabled us. Rather, it has informed us if we will learn the lessons of collegiality that were implicit in our experience rather than be rankled by sour memories of subjection and colonization. We do know how to interact with Europe and North America and this is the first century in which we can do that from a level of parity. The key to our opportunity, the opportunity, indeed, of our grandchildren, is how our leadership is manifested.

Asian culture is diverse. In that diversity there is immense potential. We must overcome our historic tendency to gravitate toward cultural monism or, worse, domination. We must call forth our more basic tendency to 'expand our clan' and apply Asian family values to our enterprises and relationships, especially those which are now cross-cultural, inter-generational, and global.

If the potential of the 'Asian Century' is to be realized, we must have astute and open-minded, fully-empowered, and self-motivated leaders. In the world now

coming into focus, the most effective leaders are those who are multi-lingual, fluent in at least two languages, and functional in several cultural milieus. They will be visionaries who are thoroughly grounded in their home cultures but impressed by a world beyond. They will be technologically capable, but especially adept at recruiting allies with cutting edge competence. And most important of all, they will have such respect for human dignity that they are set apart and admired in this regard. It is immensely important that we develop this sort of leaders.

I am grateful for the opportunity to write the foreword to the book, *Heart to Heart with Asian Leaders — Exclusive Interviews on crisis, comebacks and character*.

Dr. Amnuay Tapingkae
Founder, Friends of Asia Foundation
Former President, Payap University, Thailand

PREFACE

The 21st century world is full of success stories, but is short on tales of facing up to failure and overcoming major setbacks. Social media posts and smartphone chat messages are fast-growing, but intimate face-to-face engagements are becoming increasingly rare.

It is in this new social climate that we set out to write this book: exclusive interviews with 28 illustrious Asian leaders. All 28 of them have been specially selected for the values they represent, their character as well as their ability to recover from crisis and mount comebacks. Great pain has been taken to choose leaders from a range of countries across different arenas — ranging from the corporate world to academia and politics, from those who inherited family businesses to those who built their careers from scratch.

Our interviews were conducted over a period of four years from 2012 to 2015. We have met and have spoken extensively and exclusively with each of the well-known personalities across Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, at their homes and offices. We hope this book will give readers the feel that you are having an engaging and personal chat with each leader over a meal.

The questions posed to each leader were specially crafted and are intended to flesh out the challenges of modern leadership, as well as examine issues of personal adversity peculiar to certain leaders. A question-and-answer style was chosen to make the chapters more reader friendly and provide a more intimate feel. We have intentionally preserved each interviewee's cultural nuances and personality types, so that you can appreciate their different communication styles while maintaining editorial integrity in the language and grammar used.

Three central themes — *crisis, comebacks and character* — form the book's backbone.

The past decade has seen crisis come and go with increasing frequency. Many of the leaders have led through memorable events such as the 1997 Asian Financial

Crisis to the 2008 Global Financial Crisis and even the 2011 European debt crisis. Discover how they cope personally and galvanize their organizations and followers during these trying times. Most of them not only survived but also emerged stronger and wiser post-crisis.

The ability to recover from huge setbacks also differentiates leaders who thrive in the long haul from run-of-the-mill ones who swiftly fade away. We chat at length about how they bounce back from the tragic loss of a loved one, repay a mountain of financial debt or cope with the near-collapse of their businesses.

The strength of character can make or break a leader both in times of prosperity or adversity, and we examine the traits which make them tick. Ethics-related issues such as dealing with corruption and the challenges of upholding one's personal integrity are also addressed. Each interviewee shares his or her vulnerable side with us as well, speaking candidly and truthfully about his or her respective weaknesses while providing priceless practical advice for the next generation of leaders.

The next decade promises to be an eventful but also turbulent one for planet Earth, with natural disasters, political and social unrest and economic turmoil becoming more prevalent. The only certainty we have is uncertainty itself. However, eagles have been known to thrive in storms, as they are able to soar above the grey clouds by catching the extra wind that usually accompanies the bad weather. In contrast, almost all other birds go into hiding during these times of adversity.

We hope this book will serve as an invaluable tool for you in these tough times, enabling you to soar high above and overcome these difficult circumstances — a useful resource for both the board room and the living room; office or school.

May you glean many nuggets of practical leadership insights from the collective wisdom of these 28 individuals as you feel their pulse and hear their heart beats through the following pages.

John Ng and Alvin Foo

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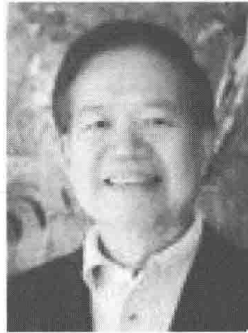
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“

The heart of education
is the education of the heart.

”



**AMNUAY
TAPINGKAE**

The Educator
of the Heart Leader



“The heart of education is the education of the heart.” These wise words form the basis of Dr. Amnuay Tapingkae’s core beliefs about education and leadership.

The academic is the Founder and Chairman of the Friends of Asia Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand, beginning in 2009. This foundation was established to:

1. Promote co-operation and cordiality among the peoples of Asia
2. Promote social development activities and a good quality of life, and to provide services to the community
3. Operate charitable activities
4. Avoid engaging in any political activities

These organizational goals truly encapsulate Dr. Amnuay’s aspirations for our region and for education in our region — to teach our youth to reach out to their neighbors and help as best we can — to truly provide ‘the education of the heart’.

Among his many previous leadership roles in institutions of higher education are serving as Dean of the Education Faculty at Chiang Mai University, as well as being the Director of the inter-government Regional Institute of Higher Education and Development based in Singapore.

His most prominent work, however, was serving as the founding President of Payap University in Chiang Mai from 1972 to 1993, leading the institution as it expanded from 200 students to more than 6,000. Established in 1974, Payap University is a private institution founded by the Church of Christ in Thailand. It became the first fully accredited private university in Thailand in 1984. It now offers 22 Thai language undergraduate degrees in 12 faculties, as well as four international undergraduate degrees in English. The university also runs several master’s degree courses.

Dr. Amnuay studied for his undergraduate education at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois, in the United States from 1956 to 1959. He was then awarded the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship in 1963 and obtained his graduate education from the University of Washington. Dr. Amnuay holds a Master’s degree in Educational Psychology and a Doctoral degree in Educational Philosophy. He has also received a certificate in Educational Administration from the University of Pittsburgh, as well as one in Higher Education Management from Harvard University.