

A game-changing talent strategy in Greater KL

Turner Construction Company (Turner Construction), one of the largest construction management companies in the US, expects its Malaysian talent to eventually spearhead its brand and lead the Turner operations in the country. The North American-based international construction services company completes approximately US\$10 billion of construction on 1,500 projects around the world each year. Over the years, Turner Construction has gained a global reputation for undertaking large, complex projects, fostering innovation and embracing emerging technologies.

Turner International (Turner), the international arm of Turner, established its Southeast Asian regional headquarters in Greater KL in 2013. "We established a presence in Southeast Asia in 2006, and after seven years with our regional headquarters in Vietnam, we re-evaluated our position and decided that Malaysia offered the most opportunities in terms of the magnitude and prestige of upcoming developments, rapidly increasing foreign direct investment and a friendly business environment. These were all positive factors and indicated that we could find suitable project opportunities while attracting the right talent as we grow," says Michael Doring, Turner International Malaysia Sdn Bhd's Vice-President and Regional Director for Southeast Asia.

While Turner can construct buildings in any industry, most of its projects in this region have been residential, commercial, hospitality and aviation buildings. In Malaysia, Turner is involved in some of the more complex buildings such as the Merdeka PNB 118 mega-tower project, Four Seasons Place in Kuala Lumpur and Menara Etiqa in Bangsar. Notable projects in neighbouring countries include Taiwan's super tall skyscraper, Taipei 101, China Central Television (CCTV) headquarters in Beijing's central business district and JW Marriott Hotel, VietinBank tower, Bitexco Financial Tower and Pullman Saigon Centre in Vietnam.

Developing global leaders

Turner has approximately 8,500 employees around the world, including 200 in Southeast Asia. In Malaysia, Turner currently has a headcount of 84; consisting of 57 Malaysians and 27 expatriates. Doring adds that Turner's company philosophy of 'continual improvement' is practiced in its local operations. "This philosophy has taken hold more so in Malaysia than anywhere else in the region. Our long-term view is that as a Malaysian business, Malaysians should lead it. So, it is our expectation and goal that the Turner brand in this country reflects a locally grown talent base, i.e. employees that have grown into leadership roles."

To achieve this, Doring aims to increase the ratio of local employees to expatriate staff. "We had 14 employees at the start of 2014 and quickly increased the headcount to the number that we have now. Managing growth is always challenging. Our initial approach was to bring to use expatriate staff for lead roles. This allows us to develop our local staff so that they can eventually take over the roles held by our expatriate employees. It usually takes one or two project cycles for them to gain enough experience and know-how to take on these senior roles," he says.

Much like other highly skilled industries, it has not been easy to find the right people for the company. However, Doring believes that Turner's reputation and experience tend to attract suitable talent. "The construction market in Greater KL is robust now and there is a lot of competition for good talent. However, the local talent pool has a lot of diversity and this bodes well for all industries including construction. Furthermore, a large number of Malaysians that we have interviewed have been educated and/or worked overseas. This augments the benefits offered by this diverse workforce. Our approach towards recruitment is to hire the brightest and the best university graduates that we can find and develop them internally," says Doring.

Part of Turner's training programme includes annual seminars by the company's subject matter experts. Topics range from sustainable construction, lean principles, building information modelling and others. "We have also started an exchange programme where our best employees here are sent to our offices in the US to learn and exchange ideas for a year. This we placed our staff in strategic positions for them to learn the best practices in other markets. It is our belief that this will enable us to better serve the Southeast Asian market in the future," says Doring.

Going beyond Greater KL

Turner's local operations currently support its regional human resource, finance and business development functions. Meanwhile, Doring is responsible for the company's operations in Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand. "Malaysia's strategic location makes it an ideal hub to support our other offices in Southeast Asia. It is easy for us to travel within the country and around the region. Greater KL is an attractive place to work. It has good infrastructure, connectivity, many good restaurants and shops. All this makes it a very liveable city," says Doring.



“The construction market in Greater KL is robust now and there is a lot of competition for good talent. However the local talent pool has a lot of diversity and this bodes well for all industries including construction.”

— Michael Doring, Turner International Malaysia Sdn Bhd's vice-president and operations manager for Southeast Asia

Turner's local projects are currently based in Greater KL but Doring says that the company is looking to expand outside of Greater KL under the right circumstances. "Our experience as a contractor in the US differentiates us from other construction management firms. Since labour cost is significantly higher in the US, we place emphasis on pre-planning activities, coordination, productivity and aim to do things right the first time. Safety standards are higher in developed countries and we have been promoting more stringent standards, heightened awareness and full engagement of safe work practices for all project stakeholders in this region. There is a lot of work to be done, but our initial results have been encouraging as we have been able to reduce the time it takes to construct a floor (in a building) and our high-rise projects have an excellent safety record," says Doring.

Turner

North American-based
International Construction
Services Company

8,500
employees globally,
200 are in
Southeast Asia

Completes
1,500
projects worth
**US\$10
billion**
around the world each year

One of the
Largest
Construction
Management
Company
in the US

WHY GREATER KL?

Rapidly
Increasing
FDI

Business Friendly
Environment

Right
**Talent
Pool**

BENEFITS TO THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Established its
**Southeast
Asia Regional
Headquarters**
in Greater KL

Employed **84
Local Talents**
and to Grow
Local Talent Base

Aim to **Push
Local Talent**
to Lead the
Company's
Operation
in Malaysia

Looking at
Company's
Expansion
in **Other States**
in **Malaysia**

Brought to you by



InvestKL is a government initiative to attract and facilitate global multinationals investment into Greater Kuala Lumpur