

Philip N L CHEN

Citation

The Hong Kong aviation industry has come a long way, as has Mr Philip N L Chen. Today we honour this industry leader not only for his many achievements in aviation but for his many contributions to the community. Philip Chen has forged a reputation in both public and corporate arenas.

At the end of the year, Philip Chen will become the first ethnic Chinese chief executive of Cathay Pacific. Born in 1955, he graduated from the University of Hong Kong (HKU) in 1977 with an honours degree in Political Science and History. He also holds an MBA degree from HKU. He joined Cathay Pacific that year and subsequently moved to Beijing as Chief Representative and General Manager of Swire China in 1989.

By 1992 Philip Chen was Regional General Manager Southeast Asia for Cathay Pacific based in Singapore. Then in 1994, he moved into the hot seat at Hong Kong Dragon Airlines, as Chief Executive. Under his leadership Dragonair made major profits.

Returning to Cathay, he was appointed Deputy Managing Director in 1997 and Chief Operating Officer in 1998. Since 1998, the airline has gone through the turbulence of the Asian economic downturn, 911 and the SARS crisis.

Those then are the bare bones of Philip Chen's impressive career. But there is more to this man than a straightforward corporate success story. Look at his many wide-ranging appointments and you will discern the hand of an innovator at work.

When Hong Kong was struggling under the effects of SARS, Philip played a leading role in the We Love HK campaign that encouraged us to "get out and spend".

He also organised Cathay Pacific's 'The World's Biggest Welcome' campaign, offering ten thousand free tickets for Hong Kong residents to invite friends and relatives living overseas to visit Hong Kong after 911. More than 1,000,000 names went into the lucky draw.

Cathay Pacific Airways has gone on to link Hong Kong to the other parts of the world and has long been committed to strengthening the territory's position as the leading aviation hub.

When questions were asked as to how to make Hong Kong a world city, Philip Chen spoke up for its position as an aviation center with a pragmatic aviation policy. His well known "Great Cities Theory" argues that all great cities today are air hubs. It is important for Hong Kong to continue to be a competitive global aviation hub and the predominant gateway to the Mainland if it has to develop itself as a "world city", and a strong home carrier is required to build up an effective network for the hub.

Philip has been actively involved in industry affairs, and also in promoting tourism to Hong Kong but he has also assumed numerous public duties.

For instance, he is involved in the 5th East Asian Games Planning Committee, is active with the Community Chest Hong Kong and helps the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) frame its community relations work. He was Chairman of Ocean Park from 2001 to 2003, during which the company turned continued losses into profits. He is also an Investment Promotion Ambassador with Invest Hong Kong.

In recognition of his contributions to society he received the Silver Bauhinia Star in 2002 and was appointed a Justice of the Peace in 2000.

The call of higher learning has remained strong throughout Philip Chen's career. He holds advisory or visiting positions at the Civil Aviation Administration of China's Institute of Management, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Chinese Management Centre of the School of Business at HKU and at HKUST Business School. He serves on the University Grants Committee and its Strategy Subcommittee. He was a Governor of the Singapore International School Hong Kong and remains a Director of their Foundation. He was a member of the Council of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) from April 1996 to April 2002. He is also a Beta Gamma Sigma Honoree of our own University. He has served on our own Council for nine years, and was once the Vice-Chairman of the Council, during which he has made invaluable contributions to HKUST.

Mr Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present to you, on behalf of the University, Philip N L Chen, industry leader and community supporter, for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration *honoris causa*.