

Mr Hans Michael JEBSEN

Citation

In the annals of Hong Kong's long-term success stories, Mr Hans Michael Jebsen and his forebears are among the city's finest examples. A fourth-generation scion of the 120-year-old business group that bears his Danish family name, Mr Jebsen is a remarkable representative of Hong Kong's uncanny ability to foster those with the enterprising vision to succeed amid changing times. He in turn shows next-generation entrepreneurs how to blend business acumen and beneficence without fanfare and to the betterment of all.

Mr Jebsen moved from school days and tertiary education in Europe to Hong Kong in 1981, joining Jebsen & Company Ltd while still in his mid-20s. He became Chairman at the start of the millennium, heralding both a continuation of tradition and a zest for new horizons. Young but prescient and equipped with east-west vision, Mr Jebsen took on board the challenges and huge opportunities of the 1980s and 1990s to evolve the family business from its shipping and trading roots into a marketing and distribution multinational giant, with a strong presence in the Mainland. Leveraging long-established partnerships with brand names from Porsche to Pentax, the Group embraced and advanced the consumer boom powered by Asia's rising middle class. Equally significant, it fueled regional economic development through the supply of essential equipment stretching from automotive parts to food machinery.

The Jebsen Group now encompasses the world, with an annual turnover of HK\$15.2 billion in 2014. Despite such widespread success, Mr Jebsen has worked equally hard to guard the sense of family and the values of trust, responsibility and commitment instilled by its 19th-century founders. The company is still privately owned and still headquartered in Hong Kong, where Mr Jebsen, his wife and five children live. While staff number in their thousands, he is clear that individual effort and loyalty counts in business sustainability down the decades and strives to create a corporate environment that encourages people to do their best as well as share with and learn from others. "Success to me is when our employees regard the Group as their home not just a workplace," he has said.

Indeed, his own leadership philosophy - to listen before speaking, think from the other person's perspective and motivate not mandate - was derived from what he learned from veteran staffers and senior management during his transitional years before taking over the helm.

Nor should the entrepreneurial spirit be solely applied to one's own business in Mr Jebsen's view. It involves sustainability of the community as a whole through exercising vision, a generous heart and sense of responsibility to others. This is a goal he has conscientiously worked toward across different sectors as a member of the Hong Kong European Union Business Co-operation

Committee of the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Trustee of the World Wide Fund for Nature Hong Kong, and Chairman of the Friends' Committee of the Asian Cultural Council Hong Kong, among others.

In 1995, as part of the company's centenary celebrations, he set up the Jebsen Educational Foundation and established a scholarship program at HKUST. This year is the 20th anniversary of this program. Brought together initially by a shared drive for excellence and innovation, the University has been fortunate to receive Mr Jebsen's insights in many different ways. He is currently a Court member and a member of the School of Business and Management's Advisory Council, and has also served as a Council member and Chairman of the Institutional Advancement and Outreach Committee. Donations and sponsorship have also supported two prestigious Named Professorships and forums enabling HKUST academics to share their latest innovation and technology research with the Hong Kong business community.

Although he never seeks the limelight – quite the opposite in fact – Mr Jebsen's endeavor, humanity and respect for different cultures have been recognized in Hong Kong and beyond. Among his many awards, he is a holder of the Bronze Bauhinia Star from the Hong Kong SAR Government and a Knight of 1st Class of the Order of Dannebrog. He was awarded the Cross of the Order of Merit by the Federal Republic of Germany in 2008 and the title of Hofjægermester from the Queen of Denmark in 2011. Mr Jebsen is also an Honorary Citizen and Municipal Economic Advisor and Committee Member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee of Jilin City. We are delighted that today HKUST

can recognize this quiet high achiever, who has bridged the centuries, east and west and economic change to show that cutting-edge entrepreneurs not only create but also conserve.

Mr Council Chairman, on behalf of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, I have the high honor of presenting to you, Mr Hans Michael Jebsen, BBS, Chairman of the Jebsen Group, for the award of Doctor of Business Administration *honoris causa*.