

# KK Wong: Being Responsible Pays Off

## 王國強：盡責有好報

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**A**s a private company, the Kum Shing Group (KS) could keep board matters strictly within the family, forget about risk management, turn its back on social and environmental issues and pass the top position to the next generation as a matter of course. After all, only listed companies are held liable to regulators and investors.

So why is KS a shining example of sustainable management? It is because Chairman and CEO Ir Dr Peter Kwok Keung Wong truly believes that practising corporate responsibility is rewarding for the company. Hence he invited independent non-executive directors to the KS board, introduced “safety first” as an operational focus, initiated the “Community Relations Ambassador” programme to address public concerns at worksites, encourages all staff to give back to society, cascades downwards strategic planning initiatives and lets his children decide on their own career paths as their interest dictates.

Dr Wong (popularly known by his initials “KK”) has proven to be right. Numerous professional awards that the integrated engineering and construction group won over the years bear testimony to his personal conviction in accountable management. The latest award that he won added yet another feather to the cap. Last December, The Hong Kong Institute of Directors (HKIoD) bestowed



on Dr Wong the Director Of The Year Award in the category of executive directors for private companies. The judges praised him for his dedication to continuing professional development, his efforts in strengthening governance and risk management as well as his vision in succession planning.

### **Build Partnerships**

When he agreed to take the baton from his father Mr Kam Fai Wong to run KS in 1985, Dr Wong put the concept of

sustainability to good use. “My father had to do it the hard way – build something out of nothing,” he recalled. “I didn’t want to do that.” So he had to beat a new path. “I kept thinking: what kind of path should I take? Should I follow my peers – those other small construction companies – to just grab any job that came along and live from hand to mouth?”

“I decided to find a ‘good client’ that I could count on to build a long-term partnership,” he said. “This would have to



▲ Ir Dr Wong receives a Director Of The Year Award 2014 from Ir Edmund K H Leung, Deputy Chairman of HKIoD.  
 ▲ 王國強博士工程師獲香港董事學會副主席梁廣瀨工程師頒發2014年度傑出董事獎。

be a major company with sound financial backing. It also would have to show a strong sense of social responsibility.”

His target was CLP Power Hong Kong Limited, the electricity generation, transmission and distribution company that supplied power to most of the territory. The company his father founded had been laying transmission cables and installing street lamps for CLP. At the risk of putting all his eggs in one basket, he went all out to offer vertically integrated services to this electricity giant, including buying equipment specific to CLP needs. His calculated bet turned into a “partnership” that still grows strong 30 years on.

Dr Wong built “partnerships” with other stakeholders also.

Suppliers are treated as “team members” and paid on time. “When one supplier had a cash flow problem, we didn’t hesitate to lend it some money so it could pay its workers,” Dr Wong said.

The general public is another stakeholder group that gets the company’s attention. Well aware that cable laying might cause inconvenience and pose a potential safety hazard to pedestrians, KS pioneered the use of plastic covers in lieu of wooden planks to use over the cable trenches. “It’s more expensive but safety comes first and it is also environmentally friendly,” Dr Wong said.

A socially responsible type, he founded the Kum Shing WKF Education and Charity Foundation in 1996. Among other charity work, the foundation had helped set up over 100 schools across the border and offered scholarships to needy rural students to study at the best Chinese universities.

Profit sharing also helps bind to KS the 2,000-plus-strong workforce. Dr Wong allocates profit using his “one-two-three-four formula.” Each year, charity gets 10 percent (or a ratio of one in 10) of profit; he and his father, 20 percent; the company’s development fund, 30 percent; and employees, 40 percent. “If KS were

listed, then I probably wouldn’t be able to let staff share 40 percent of the profit,” he said, explaining why the company has yet to seek listing status.

### Stay Ahead

Yet Dr Wong adopts a listed company’s management style in more ways than one. “I believe in staying one step ahead of the game,” he said. KS was the first in the industry to use ISO (International Organisation of Standardisation) workforce safety standards. Placing high importance on transparency, he structured the management hierarchy into five tiers to communicate policies all the way down to the general staff. And far from keeping policy making within the family, he includes among board members non-executive directors and senior professional managers.

He is prudent yet philosophical about succession planning. “All three of my kids did not resist joining the company but I let them follow their interest to find their own niche,” he said. He proudly noted that second son Rex Siu Han Wong has brought “embryonic changes” to KS after joining in 2008. An architect with international exposure, the junior Mr Wong kick-started urban renewal development and investment projects on mainland China and championed sustainability through total quality management. In the grooming process of this heir apparent, Dr Wong wants to “be informed without intervening.” “I just want to make sure that Rex has the analytical power to make wise decisions,” he said. “When prospecting for a new project, I insist that we get satisfactory answers to three questions. First, is it worth it financially? Second, can we deliver in terms of resources? And third, do we have a sound supervisory system in place?”

### Keep Going

Dr Wong will step down – or rather, step aside – but not until he obtains his Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) in 2017. “I’m a professional civil and structural engineer so the




▲ Under the leadership of Dr Wong, Kum Shing is committed to the promotion of social responsibility. The picture shows that Dr Wong (front row, third from the left) and his staff from Kum Shing has engaged in "Walks for Millions" organised by The Community Chest of Hong Kong.  
▲ 在王博士的領導下，金城致力於宣揚企業的社會責任。圖中可見王博士(前排左三)和同事一起參加由香港公益金舉辦的百萬行籌款活動。

business-related course materials and terminology are quite alien to me," he said. To help pick up vocabulary in papers and essays, he uses his iPhone as a portable dictionary.

So why would he want another Doctor Degree when he already has an honorary doctorate title? It would have to be his fighting spirit. He has a record of not giving up in the face of adversity.

He recounted various setbacks during his formative years. He flunked the Use of English in the Hong Kong School Certificate Exam despite scoring among the top in his class. So he entered the three-year Higher Diploma In Structural Engineering Program of the Hong Kong Technical College (HKTC), PolyU's predecessor, in the hope of obtaining a higher diploma and then work for his father's company. But this hope was dashed when he missed the passing grade in Thermal Dynamics by a mere 0.6 points. He entered Chu Hai College for the part-time civil engineering degree course while working full time for his

father. Three years later, he went on to the University of Saskatchewan for his graduate studies and obtained his M.Sc. degree in Geotechnical Engineering. But not long after he obtained his M. Sc. degree, the British Professional Engineering Institutions rescinded its recognition of his B Eng degree from Chu Hai. Undaunted, he did one year of intensive studies at the University of Calgary, scored a grade point average of 80 and got another B Eng degree.

The rest is history; he went on to build a business empire. Nowadays, he prefers to devote more time to giving back to society via community service and charity work. 

**作** 為一家私人企業，金城營造集團大可以只讓家族成員處理董事會的事務，也可以漠視風險管理，把一切社會和環保問題拋諸腦後，並理所當然地將掌門之位傳給下一代。畢竟只有上市公司才須向規管機構和投資者負責。

那為何金城是可持續管理的楷模？究其原

因，是因為集團主席兼行政總裁王國強博士工程師堅信，實踐企業責任對集團來說最為有利。因此他除了邀請獨立非執行董事加入金城的董事會外，還引入「安全第一」作為經營重點之一，在地盤推行「社區關係大使」計劃，鼓勵所有員工回饋社會，確保策略規劃措施可上傳下達，以及放手讓子女根據興趣決定自己的職途。

事實證明，王國強博士（人稱「KK」）堅持實施具問責性的管理模式是正確的，這從金城集團多年來贏得的無數專業獎項也可見一斑。去年12月，王博士更錦上添花，獲香港董事學會頒發「傑出董事獎」（類別：私人公司——執行董事），表揚他一直追求持續專業發展，努力加強企業管治和風險管理，以及在公司傳承規劃上擁有卓越的眼光。

#### 建立伙伴關係

當他於1985年答應父親王錦輝子承父業，接手經營金城時，便已善用可持續發展的概念。「父親要白手興家，所以只能埋頭苦幹，但我不想這樣做。」王博士憶述說。因此他要開闢一條新路。「我一直在思考：我應該走一條怎樣的路？小型建築公司都是有工開工的，我是否應該跟隨他們這種朝不保夕的做法？」



▲ Dr Wong and his family is devoted to repaying the society. The HKBU WKF Secondary and Primary School is one of the institutions which received continuous donations from the Wongs family.  
 ▲ 王博士及其家族熱心公益。香港浸會大學附屬學校王錦輝中小學是其中一家受王氏家族持續捐助的學院。

「最終我決定找一個值得信賴、可建立長期伙伴關係的『好主顧』。」他說，「這得是一家財政穩健、同時也樂於承擔社會責任的大企業。」

他的目標是中華電力有限公司。當時其父創立的公司一直有替這家向本港大部分地區供電的發電、輸電和配電公司敷設輸電纜和安裝街燈。冒着把雞蛋都放在同一個籃子裏的風險，王博士盡全力向這家大型電力公司提供一站式綜合服務，甚至根據中電的需要而訂購設備。他這次深思熟慮的選擇為集團贏得一個30多年來不斷壯大的「伙伴關係」。

與此同時，王博士也會與其他持分者建立「伙伴關係」。

他視供應商為「伙伴」，亦會準時支付款項。「曾經有供應商周轉不靈，我們便毫不猶豫地借款給它支付工人的薪金。」王博士說。

廣大市民也是金城關注的持份者。金城深知敷設電纜會為行人帶來不便及安全隱患，於是率先捨棄木板，改用塑膠蓋來覆蓋電纜溝。「這個做法比較昂貴，但安全第一，同時也環保。」王博士說。

1996年，充滿社會責任感的王博士創辦了金城王錦輝慈善教育基金會，其慈善工作包括在內地開辦了超過100所學校，以及向有需要的農村學生提供獎學金到中國的頂尖大學就讀。

王博士也透過分享利潤的方法來凝聚集團超逾2,000人的團隊，分配方法便根據他的「一二三四方程式」：集團每年利潤的10%（或以一比十的比率）會用於慈善用途；20%歸他和父親；30%撥入公司的發展基金；而員工可得40%。「假如金城是上市公司的話，那我大概不能讓員工分享四成利潤。」他在解釋為何公司沒有上市時說。

#### 保持領先

儘管如此，王博士在多個方面都採取了上市公司的方式來管理金城。「我認為在市場上必須要快人一步。」他說。金城是行業中第一家實施ISO（International Organisation of Standardisation，國際標準化組織）的。王博士也很着重公司的透明度，為此他訂立了五層管理架構，讓公司的政策可下達至一般員工。同時他不會把公司決策當成是家族事務，反而在董事會中加入了非執行董事和高級專業人員。

在繼任規劃方面，王博士雖然保守但亦順其自然：「我的三名子女並不抗拒加入公司工作，但我會讓他們依循自己的興趣尋找合適的工作。」他自豪地說，二子王紹恆是擁有國際視野的建築師，於2008年加入金城後便為集團帶來了一些徹底的轉變，包括在內地開展市區重建發展及投資項目，以及透過全面品質管理，在集團內倡導可持續發展。

玉不琢，不成器，王博士只要兒子紹恆適當地知會他便可，不會干預太多。「我要培養他的分析能力，確保他可以作出明智的決定。」他說。「在尋找新項目時，我堅持要解答到三個問題：第一，從經濟上來說，這個項目值得投資嗎？第二，我們有足夠資源完成這個項目嗎？第三，我們是否已有完善的監察制度？」

#### 繼續邁進

王博士計劃於2017年，待他考獲香港理工大學工商管理博士學位後便退休（更確切地說是淡出）。「我是專業的土木及結構工程師，所以與商業相關的教材和詞彙對我來說有點陌生。」他說。為了掌握論文的遣詞用字，他會利用他的iPhone作為隨身字典。

其實王博士本身已擁有一個榮譽博士銜頭，為何他還想多考取一個？這就關乎他的拼搏精神了，因為他永不會向逆境低頭。

他細訴了成長階段遇上的挫折。在香港中學畢業會考英語運用科考試中，一向在班中名列前茅的王博士卻不合格，唯有進入理大的前身香港工業專門學院，修讀結構工程學高級文憑課程，以求在考獲高級文憑後進入父親的公司工作。然而，由於他差0.6分才能在熱動力學一科中考獲合格成績，這個希望最終破滅。於是他一面在父親的公司做全職工作，一面修讀珠海書院的兼職土木工程學位課程。三年後他負笈加拿大莎省大學（University of Saskatchewan）修讀研究生課程並考獲土木工程理碩士學位。然而，就在他考獲理碩士後不久，英國專業工程學會取消承認珠海書院的工學士學位。但王博士沒有氣餒，再負笈加拿大卡加里大學（University of Calgary），修讀為期一年的密集式課程，其間的平均成績點（GPA）達80分，最終考獲另一個工學士學位。

此後的故事人盡皆知——他建立了一個商業王國。而今天，他則希望多做社區服務和慈善工作，以回饋社會。

