

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF INFRASTRUCTURE TO BUSINESS

基礎設施對企業的重要性

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People in business will agree with me that a city's infrastructure is vital to nurturing business growth and sustainability.

For Hong Kong, we are fortunate to be able to enjoy one of the best systems of infrastructure among the leading cities of the world. We have the world's most reliable power supply system, and one of the most reliable public transport systems. Our water supply is clean and safe, and available throughout the year. Though not all of us in Hong Kong appreciate this almost unique advantage, those in the know are grateful for this good fortune.

But why is a reliable and efficient infrastructure so important to a city's economic development?

Let us go back to basics. What makes a city tick?

Let me start with an imaginary schedule of a businessperson. He gets woken up by an alarm clock, switches on the light of the washroom, turns on the tap to get water to brush his teeth, and then grills his toast and makes his cup of coffee. He never thinks twice about these amenities as the electricity and water supplies are always reliable, safe and clean.

After getting dressed, he heads off from home, takes the elevator to the ground

floor and walks to the MTR Station. He then catches a train and arrives at work promptly, without any worry of train delays and interruptions, not even under bad weather, as most of our railway system is running underground.

All of these activities go like clockwork day in and day out, generally without interruption, because of our power system having a reliability of over 99.999% and our railway system with a reliability of over 99%.

We take all of these for granted as we seldom experience failures or interruptions. For an average family, power interruption probably occurs for less than a few minutes over a five-year period, and for an individual commuter, train journeys get interrupted for around two times a year. We complain about bad service and unreliability when it happens, but the chance of us needing to go through a bad experience is rather remote.

In London and New York, which most people recognize as the leading cities in the world, this level of reliability is just not there. Often when I travelled on the London Underground, there was a sudden interruption of the service ahead. I then had to figure out a Plan B to make it to my appointment, which involves a few kilometres of



walking, finding my direction and sometimes arriving at the meeting late. The characteristics of a good set of infrastructure in a city is akin to our bone structure. It is seldom seen, though it faithfully supports the body. But should any part of our bone structure be broken or weakened, our body movements will be hampered.

Let me also explain why our power system is more reliable than our railway system which is many times more reliable than our bus network. I can assure you that the design of this is to meet our demand, rather than by sheer accident.

In a bus break down, which is rare but occasional, we simply get off the bus and get on the next one. We would probably lose fifteen minutes of time, and experience some inconvenience, but we could get to our destination in the end without too much hassle. In a train breakdown, there may be more inconvenience if you are on it, but again, the MTR staff will get you to the next station to wait for another train through other operating lines or shuttle buses, with a five-minute wait. It would cause some inconvenience, but again, unlikely to put you in danger.

Now, let's think about the situation when you are drafting an important report on your personal computer from home, and the power suddenly fails. Most residence do not have uninterruptable power supplies. You stand to lose a few hours of work unless you habitually save your document every fifteen minutes. Meanwhile, the consequences of power interruption would be even more serious should you be taking the lift.


In a crowded city like Hong Kong, when most people work or live in tower blocks, taking the lift is an everyday affair. At any

one moment, there are tens of thousands in Hong Kong who are in a lift. So, if there is an extensive power breakdown affecting the entire city, I can safely say there will not be enough resources for the Fire Brigade to rescue everyone who is trapped. Thanks to our power utilities companies providing a 99.999% reliability, most of us do not remember the last time they experienced a power breakdown, and seldom get trapped in a lift due to power failure.

I pen this article, as I guess most of us take the reliability of our infrastructure for granted, and probably forget to thank the team that work tirelessly 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide this necessary infrastructure to us.

Our city will fail to boom if we do not look after and support our infrastructure, both in maintaining its ultra-high quality and expanding it to meet our growing needs.

In the same way as we expect a high level of corporate governance in a healthy company, we demand a high degree of reliability in our city's infrastructure.

Over the next few articles, I will further describe how our power, transportation and water infrastructure supports us, quietly but efficiently, in our daily life. 

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我認為一個城市的基礎設施對促進商業增長和可持續發展舉足輕重，相信商界人士亦有同感。

我們很幸運，因為香港的完善基礎設施體系是全球領先城市之中數一數二的，例如我們享有全球最可靠的電力供應和公共交通系統、源源不絕且清潔安全的食水供應。在香港，未必所有人都體會到自己享有這種幾乎

可說是獨有的優勢，但心裡明白的人都會為這份福氣感恩。

為什麼可靠高效的基礎設施對一個城市的經濟發展如此重要？

要體會這點必須先了解基本情況，就是一個城市依靠什麼運作？

讓我以一個商人的假想日程說起。這位先生依靠鬧鐘喚他起床。起床後他到洗手間開燈、開水龍頭取水刷牙漱口，然後烘麵包弄咖啡。他視這一切為理所當然，因為電力和清潔安全的食水供應永遠不缺。

換好衣服後他便離家上班。他乘搭升降機到地面步行往地鐵站，地鐵將他準時送到辦公室，即使在天氣惡劣的日子亦完全沒有列車誤點或中途停頓的煩惱，因為香港大部分鐵路系統都在地底行駛。

這些活動無中斷地每天周而復始，全憑香港電力系統的可靠度超過99.999%，鐵路系統的可靠度亦超過99%。

正因為這些供應罕有失靈或中斷，故我們視之為理所當然。按五年計算，一般家庭經歷停電不足數分鐘，個別乘客一年大約只有兩次車程被中斷。當遇到這些情況我們會抱怨服務欠佳，但實際上經歷這些情況的機會頗微。

倫敦和紐約雖被廣泛認同為全球領先城市，但仍難達到這樣高度可靠的服務。我在倫敦乘搭地鐵時，車程突然中斷是常有的事。遇到此情況我得另覓方法赴約，往往需要步行數公里且沿途不時尋找正確方向，有時候更會因此而遲到。

一個城市的良好基礎設施好比人體骨骼，這副平時看不到的骨骼時刻忠誠支持人體，任何一部分折斷或弱化都會令身體無法活動自如。

香港的電力系統較地鐵系統更可靠，而地鐵

系統又遠較巴士網絡可靠，我會解釋箇中理由。我可以肯定說，這並非純粹巧合，而是為滿足我們需求的刻意設計。

當巴士偶爾在途中失靈，我們會下車等候下一輛，雖然可能損失15分鐘時間及造成不便，但不用大費周章亦可到達目的地。乘搭地鐵時如果列車失靈造成的不便可能會更大，但地鐵人員會以其他行車線或穿梭巴士送您到下個車站等候下一班列車，等候時間大約五分鐘。同樣，這可能造成不便但不會置您於危險。

現在試想像你正在家中利用個人電腦草擬一份重要報告但突然停電。由於大部分住宅都不提供無中斷電力供應，除非您習慣每15分鐘儲存文件，否則您會白忙了數小時。如果您當時正在乘搭升降機，電力中斷的後果更加嚴重。


在香港一類地小人多的城市，大部分人都在多層大廈工作或居住，故每天都必須乘搭升

降機。在任何一個時候，香港都有成千上萬的人在乘搭升降機，因此若全港停電，我肯定消防部門沒有足夠資源救出每個被困升降機的人。全賴香港電力公司的可靠度高達99.999%，大部分人才不致經常受停電之苦，更罕有人因為停電被困升降機。

我撰寫本文是因為我相信香港大部分人都視香港的可靠基礎設施為理所當然，大家大概忘了感謝為提供這項必要基礎服務而一年365天每天24小時辛勤工作的團隊。

如果沒有人悉心打理和支援香港的基礎設施，保持超優質素和不斷擴展以滿足我們日漸增加的需求，香港就無法繁榮起來。

跟我們希望穩健的公司有高水準企業管治一樣，我們都期望香港的基礎設施高度可靠。

在往後的數篇文章，我會詳細說明香港的電力、運輸和食水基礎設施在日常生活中如何默默地高效支援我們。 

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