



HOW STAFF MEMBERS BECOME SELECTED AND WHY THEY LEAVE: A MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVE

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This case was written by Gelareh Aboodli and Azilah Kasim, Universiti Utara Malaysia. It is intended to be used as the basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a management situation.

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Prologue

On the 7th of July 2008, Malacca and Penang were jointly inscribed as World Heritage Sites by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). To commemorate the inscription of George Town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the municipal council of Penang organised a one-day celebration in 2008 and 2009. Encouraged by Penangites who were delighted by the celebrations in previous years, George Town World Heritage Incorporated, a state agency in charge of monitoring and planning Penang's heritage, planned a month-long festival. Joe Sidek was offered to direct Penang's George Town Festival (GTF), and he accepted the challenge. Consequently, Joe Sidek Production (JSP) SDN was established in April 2010 in Penang, Malaysia. Since its establishment, JSP has been creating and curating events and perhaps was best known for being the official secretariat of GTF in Penang from 2010 to 2018. JSP's success in placemaking and branding was noticed by major global press, such as The New York Times, New Strait Times, Al Jazeera, South China Morning Post and Asian Review. Chen May Yee from The New York Times, in the article 'Old Colonial City,' wrote 'the festival organisers set artists loose into historic buildings, pre-war shophouses and streets, turning the two-century-old city into a giant stage.' The company successfully managed different events, such as GTF, Kuching Rainforest Fringe Festival, Butterworth Fringe Festival and the world's largest short film festival Tropfest.

About Joe Sidek, Director of JSP

Joe Sidek, the man behind JSP, has played major roles in various forms of art expression from event management, art curatorship, restaurant ownership and even costume design before taking up the position of festival director. A lesser-known fact about Sidek is that he still runs his family-owned textile chemical factory. With his industrialist background, entrepreneurial nature and visionary passion for the arts, the festival had grown incrementally eight years after his appointment as the festival director of GTF in 2010. Alongside GTF in 2018, Sidek also directed the two-year-old Rainforest Fringe Festival in Kuching, having founded the festival in the previous year. He also helmed the Butterworth Fringe Festival for three years. In 2014, he brought Tropfest, the world's largest short film festival, to Southeast Asia and showcased the inaugural Tropfest Southeast Asia in Penang.

As festival director, Sidek is in charge of selecting and managing people of his team. One of the most distinctive characteristics of events is the management of the various people executing different tasks from the design and stage of festivals, exhibitions, street parades or competitions. Sidek, who also manages his family business, believed that an event is not an ordinary business environment. Other organisations give their employees years and months to socialise and adjust to the new working environment. By contrast, in the event environment, this duration may be from a few months to a few days or even hours. Sidek mentioned that a handful of individuals work as part of event planning teams and a large number of paid, voluntary and contractual employees work on temporary sites from a few hours to a few days. Therefore, managing and dealing with human resource issues in the event industry are of great concerns for Sidek.

The first experience of Sidek as a festival director started with organising GTF in 2010. He only had a few weeks to initiate, plan and execute the festival.

'When I received the contract, I only had six weeks to get the work done. I had to pull together a team. I already knew then that I wanted to have a permanent team to start with. Therefore, based on the budget, I thought about having a full one-year team and at the end of the year, renew their contract if I could receive another contract for a new event.'

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