



Towards the 21st Century

by
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Finally, the cabinet approved the new pay structure for the civil service. The outcry regarding prestige still persists but the issue will probably now go away again for a while. However, I predict that within a year there will be more debate on this subject, not about prestige this time, but when the Government wakes up to realize that they have lost all the most capable people to the private sector.

I am convinced that the Government should immediately call bids to conduct an "intensive scientific study on pay reform". Such a study should make a comparison between the public and private sector both in Thailand and internationally, looking closely at such issues as job responsibility, job size, job security, welfare and manpower shortages.

In fact five years ago when I was chairman of the government's Labour Advisory Council we received cabinet approval to conduct such a study. Unfortunately, the Chatchai Choonhavan government didn't last long enough to implement it. The bid was won by Hay Management Consultants, which is one of the world's leading consultancies for this type of study. These days it is strange that the present Government relies so heavily on consultants to conduct engineering studies, but where issues like management and human resources are concerned they leave the matter in the hands of incompetent bureaucrats.

Don't get me wrong, I am not against the bureaucracy. In fact I always endeavour to support and develop the capability of government officials. But in Thailand we do not train bureaucrats to do research and conduct analysis. The best combination is to bring in outside experts to work closely with the bureaucracy and this has already worked well in several government departments.

Last week, I was very busy with a visit from my good friend Dr Thomas Leung who is with Hay's office in Hong Kong. I generally visit him perhaps 3-4 times a year and he comes to Bangkok with about the same frequency. We are currently working together on an organizational climate survey which the Human Resources Institute at Thammasat University was commissioned to carry out by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT). The credit for taking this initiative must go to TAT's Chairman Dr. Savit Bhotiwihok and former governor Mr. Dharmnoon Prachuabmoh. I hope that once the survey's recommendations are implemented they will enable some significant improvements to be made at TAT. I know the TAT staff are hoping that something can be done to provide them with additional support and incentives. Dr. Thomas previously conducted similar studies on several occasions in both Hong Kong and Singapore. With the TAT we discovered that, like most government departments, it suffers from too much red tape. By comparison its counterpart in Hong Kong is permitted much greater independence.

The survey also looks at prioritizing TAT's vision and goals for the future and establishing what its "core activities" should be. It seems that while everyone at the TAT works hard their direction is unclear. From our findings we deduced that the TAT's prospects over the next five years were not very good as it is increasingly hard to attract the best and brightest people to work for it. Dr. Thomas and I will do what we can, and if any of the TAT staff should read this article, please do everything you can to support us too.

Since Thomas was in Bangkok I took the opportunity to interview him for this column. He talks about 3 important issues;

- pay structures
- the role of consultants,
- the outlook for human resources in Thailand

I think you will find his experience and views interesting. I very much enjoyed working with him and found that we were able to combine our particular comparative advantages very well. He also stirred my own interest in consultancy and as a result I expect to further expand my activities in this field. I especially liked his view that government and business leaders should think of people as a "strategic resource" in which they should invest and manage as best they can. In the future people and their productivity may be the only comparative advantage left for any business.

Finally I would like to underline three principles which ensure the success of consultants such as myself. To be a successful consultant in Thailand one must;

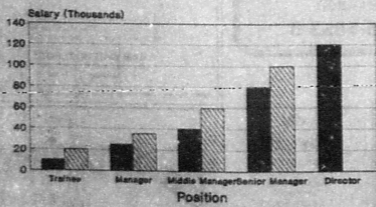
- bring in systems and technology from abroad;
- blend them with the local situation;

and last but not least,

- win the trust of top management in both the government and private sectors.

See you next week...

Range of salary in private Sector in general



Source: A.P.C. Co., Ltd.