

**CEO's Laptop: All set for a most prestigious event**

By **David Wong**

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It is not often that Malaysia gets to organise one of the biggest ICT shows in the world. But come May 18 to 21, we will have the rare privilege of hosting the most anticipated event of the year — World Congress on Information Technology 2008.

WCIT 2008 is the world's most prestigious biannual ICT conference that attracts the globe's who's who in ICT business, government and academia. Often billed as the "Olympics of the IT world", the planning, organising, and staging of WCIT 2008 have taken Malaysia through a whirlwind of activities that mobilised an extensive network of people, time and resources. Just as the Beijing Olympics Torch Run made its way through the streets of Malaysia recently, the organisers of WCIT 2008 were in a race of their own, and that was putting the final touches to hosting an event of such scale.

It should be noted that Malaysia is the first country in Southeast Asia to host this world-class event. Looking back, it was not an easy win as Malaysia needed to edge out strong contender nations like India as host country. The win obviously signalled Malaysia's arrival in the league of "ICT-powered" nations.

**Pikom-MDEC smart partnership**

From the very beginning, the government has been incredibly supportive of Pikom's bid to host the congress. Right after the win back in 2004, the organisers, comprising the Association of the Computer and Multimedia Industry of Malaysia (Pikom), Multimedia Development Corp (MDeC), with the support of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, formed WCIT 2008 Sdn Bhd and appointed Dan E Khoo, an ICT industry veteran and vice-president of MDec, to lead and organise the largest ICT event ever to be held in Malaysia.

In addition, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi led a delegation of over 300 executives to visit the 2006 World Congress held in Austin, Texas. Needless to say, the organisers were tremendously impressed by the commitment of the Malaysian government.

The success of organising the WCIT 2008 will once again demonstrate the strong commitment and capabilities of the local ICT industrial leaders, in collaboration with the government, to set the stage to show that Malaysia is indeed at the forefront of adopting and promoting ICT development at global level.

**Mapping the blue ocean strategies**

From a strategic point of view, the 16th edition of Witsa's World Congress on Information Technology (Witsa's WCIT 2008) is conceived using the "blue ocean" strategy methodology. WCIT 2008 is constructed from the ground up to be similar to previous editions, primarily from the point of view of its focus on the global impact of ICT. Yet it is significantly different because of the collection of multiple events that are held concurrently. The former gives it continuity while the latter brings additional depth to an outstanding series that started with the first World Congress in 1978.

Creating "blue oceans" is a dynamic process of strategising and execution. It is also about doing the right thing at the right time. At first, the organising committee needs to establish the ultimate goals, which must be achieved within a realistic time frame. Overall, there are three phases of development, which span two years. The phases include fundraising, programme formulation and production. At each phase, there are specific strategies being worked out and execution plans being carried out based on the "eliminate-reduce-raise-create" grid.

This "E-R-R-C" grid mapped out the ultimate "blue ocean" framework for organising the WCIT 2008. With this framework, the organising committee managed to work out a unique WCIT 2008 strategy canvas for achievements. The strategy set out action plans to eliminate whatever that is redundant, outdated and trivial to the overall organisation of the event. It also eliminated many challenges to minimise operating cost and, at the same time, raise overall quality and create unique value propositions.

#### From strategies to results

In fact, WCIT 2008 scored several firsts in terms of sponsorship and attendance. From the funding perspective, WCIT 2008's cash and in-kind sponsorship topped US\$10 million (about RM32 million), the highest yet surpassing all previous records. This was made possible by successful sponsorship deals with over 70 institutional partners. The response has been overwhelming, with ticket sales closing three weeks before the event. Confirmed attendance stands at 3,000 from over 80 countries, which exceeds the original target of 2,500.

Considering that the World Congress traditionally attracts an average of 1,800 delegates, Malaysians can be proud of this achievement. With over 100,000 sq ft of exhibition space sold out, the stage is now set for the world's most prestigious ICT conference.

This year's WCIT 2008 will also host the inaugural great debate, where experts from all over the world will discuss current ICT issues and challenges facing the industry. And for the first time, we can look forward to the CIO-CEO panels, where vendors and buyers get to meet together in one forum. There are four other core events — the International Multilateral Partnership Against Cyber Terrorism World Cybersecurity Summit, the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development Global Forum, the 11th MSC Malaysia International Advisory Panel and the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation e-Governance Asia Forum. There will also be eight satellite events catering for the diverse needs of policymakers, businesses and civil society in the ICT world.

Indeed, the stage has been raised for a remarkable set of events that will collectively meet the diverse needs of policymakers, businesses and the global tech community.

#### Moving forward

No doubt, WCIT 2008 will be the launching pad for Malaysia to position itself as the world's preferred ICT hub. Hopefully, this will enable the nation to attract the much-needed foreign direct investments from multinational ICT corporations as the foreign investment landscape has recently become more competitive. More importantly, this is also an opportune time for Malaysian ICT companies, including small and medium enterprises, to forge strategic alliances with global companies to gain access for their products and services.

With a global audience of about 550 million representing the print, broadcast and online media, Malaysia is thrust into the global spotlight. It is now time to showcase the country to the entire world.

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