

TAKING A PERSONAL INTEREST IN WSH

CASE STUDY

SANWAH CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD

SUMMARY

Mr Anthony Ong, Founder & Managing Director of Sanwah Construction Pte Ltd has close to 15 years of experience in the construction industry. Familiar with construction to be high-risk due to a dynamic and rapidly evolving work environment, Anthony knew that the top management had to have a personal interest and knowledge in workplace safety and health (WSH) matters to be able to manage the site well. Sanwah Construction has been awarded with the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award in 2014 by the WSH Council. The company has also been recognised for achieving operational integrity, outstanding accomplishments and performance in the business field, and was a recipient of the SMEs Asia Award (Singapore) and Singapore Entrepreneurs' Award in 2013.

OBJECTIVE

- ❖ To demonstrate the personal safety leadership of Mr Anthony Ong, the Founder & Managing Director of Sanwah Construction Pte Ltd.

ABOUT SANWAH CONSTRUCTION PTE LTD

In 2012, Sanwah Construction was established by three dynamic construction professionals from Singapore, Mr Anthony Ong, Mr Ho Heng Whye and Ms Woo Boh Chun. The company works on design and build, build only, and project management contracts with a clear focus on partnership, health and safety, quality finishes and sustainability. It is primarily engaged in construction, development of commercial and residential projects and public-private partnerships in Singapore. It is BCA registered under GB1 (General Builder, Class 1), CW01 – C3 (General Construction), CW02 –C3 (Civil) and CR01 (Minor Construction Works).

ABOUT ANTHONY ONG

Founder & Managing Director | Sanwah Construction Pte Ltd

Anthony Ong has close to 15 years of experience in the construction industry. He started as a project engineer with a local building contractor, rose up the ranks to be its project manager while it became a prominent A1 building contractor in Singapore. He subsequently joined another public listed A1 contractor and became its senior project manager. He was last a general manager of a local construction company before setting up SANWAH.

Mr Ong's expertise resides in business development, project management, contracts and structural works, design and build, management and fast track projects. He also possesses certifications in ISO 2000 Management Systems, ISO EHS Internal Auditor for ISO 14001 & OHSAS 18001, CONQUAS 21, and Construction Safety for Project Managers and Risk Assessment.

BACKGROUND

Mr Anthony Ong was familiar with the construction industry when he founded Sanwah Construction Pte Ltd with two partners in 2012. He had personally experienced workers being injured in the past, and was determined to implement a vision where safety and health was readily embraced by all employees and not a matter of mere compliance.

MAKING SAFETY A PRIORITY

1. Taking a personal interest

Recognising construction to be high-risk due to a dynamic and rapidly evolving work environment, Anthony knew that the top management had to have a personal interest and knowledge in safety matters to be able to manage the site well. This role could not be delegated to a safety officer. Hence, he championed for the management and even head office staff to be certified auditors for the Quality, Environment, Health and Safety Management System.

“We believe that the best safety precaution is for management to be personally armed with an interest and knowledge on safety matters.”

Mr Anthony Ong | Founder & Managing Director

2. bizSAFE – being part of a like-minded community

Within the first six months of its establishment, Anthony signed up Sanwah Construction for the bizSAFE programme by the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) Council. He was committed to achieve the highest level, i.e. a bizSAFE Star certification, which will require his company to implement an effective safety and health management system. This was no easy feat for an SME but not only did he achieve that, Sanwah Construction was even awarded the bizSAFE Enterprise Exemplary Award in 2014 by the WSH Council.

The bizSAFE Award was a recognition to small and medium enterprises who were committed to achieving an outstanding safety and health performance. More importantly, this placed Sanwah Construction in a circle of like-minded business leaders and corporate organisations. They were part of a community that was able to share the latest information on WSH matters so they could ensure the most effective approach would be implemented within their operations.

Anthony had a firm belief that by adhering to such high WSH standards, it will result in higher productivity and enhance the company's reputation within the industry. This belief was confirmed when Sanwah was bestowed the SMEs Asia Award (Singapore) and Singapore Entrepreneurs' Award in 2013 for achieving operational integrity, outstanding accomplishments and performance in the business field.

“Being part of bizSAFE community and winner of bizSAFE exemplary award 2014 helped us gain recognition from the industry and put us in the circle of like-minded individuals and corporate organizations. It has given us better business opportunities by making us a contractor of choice for like-minded developers.”

Mr Anthony Ong | Founder & Managing Director

3. Visible leadership and ownership by workers

While the sites are managed by the Project Manager, Supervisors and WSH Coordinators, Anthony emphasises that the top management has to be visible on the ground and even lead weekly safety initiatives. This has led workers to recognise the value of WSH due to the senior management's visible safety commitment and leadership. Anthony has also made sure that the team develop a safety policy that is easily communicated, understood and embraced by all workers.

Anthony shared that in-house monthly trainings are also held by workers who are trade specialists within the site to showcase the safety aspects of their trade (electrical, scaffolding, piling

etc). These trainings not only serve to build up the safety knowledge of workers but involve them in the delivery of safety initiatives for greater ownership.

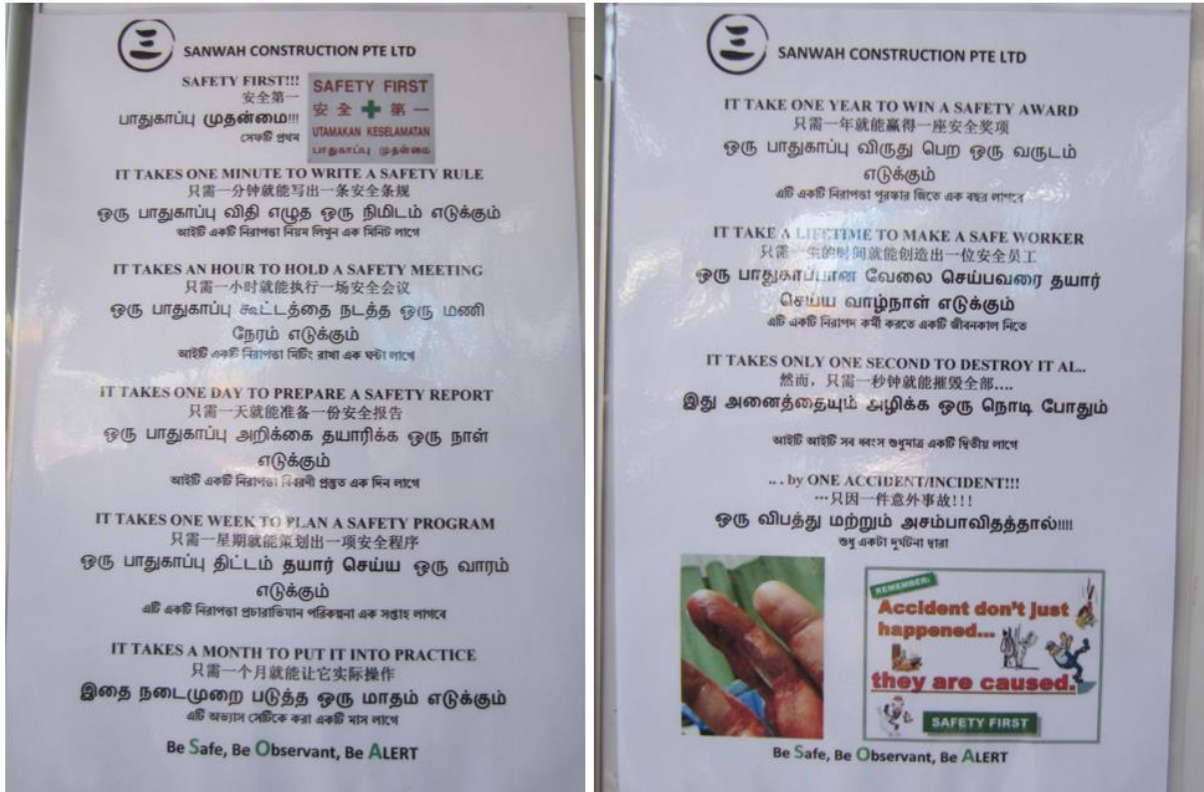


Figure 1: Sanwah’s WSH policy

CLOSING REMARKS

Winning the bizSAFE Award has not made Anthony rest his laurels. He is determined to search for newer and more effective ways of performing their operations more efficiently and safely. This has led Anthony to embark Sanwah Construction on the CultureSAFE programme by the WSH Council. To Anthony, his vision of being contractor of choice – delivering projects timely, safely and with excellent work quality, is a journey and a challenge he has enthusiastically taken on.



Figure 2: Mr Anthony Ong, Founder & Managing Director, Sanwah Construction Pte Ltd (3rd from right)

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RECOMMENDED CASE DISCUSSION (TBD with bizSAFE trainers)

1. What do you think are the significant decisions/actions that Anthony took to achieve an outstanding safety performance for Sanwah Construction?
2. What do you think is the role of top management in workplace safety? If you were in Anthony's position, would you have done anything differently?
3. What are the business benefits that Sanwah Construction achieved from improving their safety outcomes and performance? Do you think the benefits can be replicated in your company? Why or why not?