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By BYRAVEE LYER



Robert Yap Min Choy

ASIA-PACIFIC - David Ketchum's newly launched venture Current Asia has hired Robert Yap Min Choy as chairman to drive partnerships with businesses, governments and industry stakeholders.

Current Asia will be hoping to tap Yap's involvement in the Southeast Asia business community. Yap has held management roles across content, technology, retail and transport sectors and also serves on the board of several industry organisations.

"We're looking for Robert to challenge the management team and focus on putting together great services and technology," said David Ketchum, Current Asia CEO.

Current Asia, which positions itself as a new breed "customer-centric" marketing agency, has recently come out of a "stealth mode" setup period to begin servicing marketers in the region.

"We want to work with clients that are reengineering the way they are marketing to put the customer at the center of the equation," said Ketchum. This requires the company to speak directly to people in the boardroom about how their marketing function is structured.

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Yap was most recently with DFS, where he was president of DFS Venture and a board member of the company. He was also a VP for the company's global business services. He has also been regional CEO for East Asia and CEO for strategic services at PSA International.

He is currently involved at a senior advisory level with the Singapore Business Federation ASEAN Business Group (vice chairman); Singapore National Employers Federation (board member); and Singapore Management University's Institute for Service Excellence (board chairman), and School of Information System Advisory Board (chairman).

According to Ketchum, Current Asia fills a gap between campaign-oriented agencies and global management consultancies. Unlike traditional marketing, which is driven by campaigns, Ketchum said, customer-centric marketing is driven by the customer journey: mapping out how they go from awareness to consideration to purchase and finally to CRM. "The kind of communication we send out wouldn't be geared to the launch of a product, but more about delivering the right content at the right time," he said.

For Ketchum, the other key differentiator is that its marketing technology isn't driven by paid media, but instead draws together clients' structured and unstructured data sets from social media, email, live events, publishers, search and web analytics. "This opens a whole other way of doing things."

He is certain that the company will be partnering and not competing with platform companies like Salesforce.com and Adobe.

The company initially has operations in Singapore and Hong Kong, because of the proximity to strong regional decision-makers. The ultimate plan is to roll out in Malaysia, China, Korea and Japan, with at least one or more of these operational by the end of the year. Ketchum said.