

EVENTS WATCH

Highlighting family-friendly concept in Christmas charity events

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For current students and alumni of some of Hong Kong's top postgraduate business programmes, taking part in this year's MBA Challenge for Operation Santa Claus (OSC) is an ideal opportunity to put their management skills and entrepreneurial abilities to the test.

Their mission over the next few weeks is clear: raise as much money as they can for one of Hong Kong's most popular and successful annual charity campaigns.

Along the way, this will involve aspects of strategy, marketing, operations, financial management and other classroom subjects. It will also call for teamwork, networking and salesmanship. But members of the team representing Manchester Business School are up for the task and determined to hit their targets, knowing that their efforts will help to make a long-term positive difference to the lives of many less fortunate members of the local community.

"We see the MBA Challenge as a great way to help dreams come true," says William Chan, chairman of the Manchester Business School Alumni Association (China). "It is a chance to apply our knowledge and marketing know-how for a very meaningful purpose, and that coincides with one of the association's objectives, which is to find ways to support the broader community."

The Manchester team's basic plan is to create a series of fun events in the run-up to Christmas to attract participants - and donations. In marketing terms, the main target segment is families.



William Chan, chairman of the Manchester Business School Alumni Association (China), serves as leader of the MBS team.



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Lau says, "It is also very important to increase general awareness [on the idea of OSC]."

Therefore, the various fundraising events will be packaged as family-friendly, encouraging parents, children and grandparents to get involved.

There will be, for example, a “street party” booth at Island East in Quarry Bay offering instant face painting and photo taking. OSC-themed merchandise – notable hats and T-shirts – will be on sale nearby. And with an eye to different tastes and a more specific “demographic”, there will be a mini-auction at the alumni association’s own Christmas party, with all proceeds going to the appeal.

“We want to promote the idea of OSC from different angles, while also highlighting the range of beneficiaries on this year’s list, which includes children, the elderly, and people coping with disabilities,” Kaiser Lau, small group leader (Family Outing), says. “It is also very important to increase general awareness.”

With limited time available, the six members of the core team will clearly divide responsibilities to make best use of their diverse experience and individual strengths. For example, current student Vivien Chu, small group leader (Street Party Booth), has helped to design a promotional Web page and alumnus Sam Ho is acting as overall project manager.

In addition, a back-up group of volunteers will be on hand to offer ideas, advice and practical support as and when needed.

“Social media channels can help to spread the message, so we have created a new Facebook page with specific requests to ‘like’ and ‘share’ and brief information about the campaign,” Chan says. “To publicise our efforts, we have also sent a promotional email ‘blast’ to MBS students and alumni to make full use of that platform and the networks our members have.”

Joint events with UK-based alumni groups and the parent-teacher associations of international schools in Hong Kong are intended to add another string to the bow – and another potential source of funds.

“The motto of the Manchester Business School is ‘original thinking applied’ and the MBA programme focuses on the efficient management of profit-oriented enterprises,” Chan says. “By adapting those principles, the MBA Challenge offers us a unique opportunity to take part in a campaign for a non-profit organisation. It is also a chance for all of us to gain further experience in events management, while contributing to the community, making new friends and, no doubt, having some fun.”