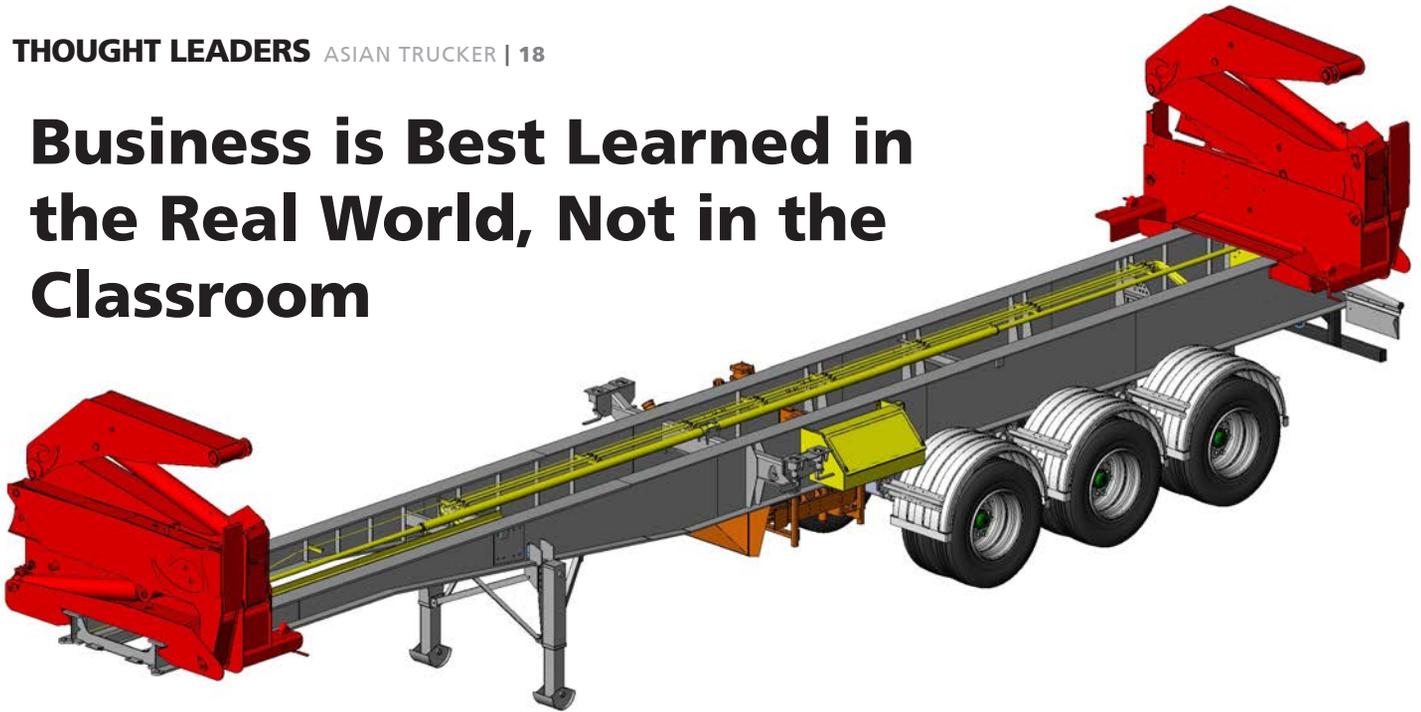


Business is Best Learned in the Real World, Not in the Classroom



A former lecturer, Steelbro's Regional Manager for South East Asia, Andy Ersalle shares his experience and aspirations in the equipment industry.



In 2004, Ersalle worked as a lecturer at Sunway University for two years but thought that position made him feel stagnant. "Everything was just theory for me. I always considered myself a businessman and as a businessman, I wanted to go out and do things, so I looked for a conglomerate and got the opportunity at UMW Toyota Motor Sdn Bhd." There, he took up many challenges and described working with the Japanese as a tough experience as their culture is very field-oriented. Ersalle was in the after-sales team. "The Toyota way of running business is the kind of real-life situation that you need to be trained as a businessman," he said.

"You cannot just study business in a classroom. You have to go out and do things, get things done, make profit, and experience it. That is what a real businessman does."

Although he was himself a student of Business Administration at the University of Lincoln in United Kingdom where he obtained a master's degree in 2002, Steelbro Container Handling Solutions (Steelbro) Regional Manager for South East Asia, Andy Ersalle had always believed that hands-on experiences are the best teachers. During his master's degree programme, he went through a management training programme at an Ivy League group company where he was the personal assistant to the managing director.

"I gained a lot of experience and knowledge in the business industry from working with him. We did a lot of business projects and negotiations with local and international projects, as well as government ventures. I also learned to manage up to 400 manpower, which is something you cannot learn in university. I was lucky to learn all of this from someone whom I consider a mentor, for five years," he told Asian Trucker.

After that Ersalle ran his own equipment business before coming across the opportunity to join Steelbro in 2012 where he started again from the ground level. He had helped to transform the company and initiated a sustenance programme which included financial support, after-sales services, production and spare parts. Steelbro also managed to control its credit collection through a new system and stock programme. "Steelbro used to be focused more on dealership, no after sales, but we have to be current and applicable to the Malaysian market," he said.

Before becoming the Regional Manager, Ersalle managed sales

operations where he brought in a new sales team. The business was then 40 percent sales and 60 percent after sales and parts. His team was careful about their expenses, ensuring that they did not spend on unnecessary things. "If cost was high, we would burden our customers. We always think about our customers but at the same time try to benefit our shareholders as well," he added.

Although the brand has been in Malaysia for over 20 years, sideloaders were not very popular in the general market but Ersalle and his team have been convincing transport operators on the importance of sideloaders not only for their businesses but for the nation's economy, too. Today production has increased and Ersalle is looking for a bigger space and planning to grow his team.

He acknowledged that the industry is not a glamorous one that attracts the younger generation but for the aspiring businessmen and businesswomen who love the challenge, Ersalle said that the transportation and equipment industries are the places to be. "This is hardcore business. People tend to look at the luxurious side of business, but it can be gruelling. In the car business, you deal with the general public, they are your customers but here (equipment business) you deal with other business people in the market, they are hardcore business giants. Working with them is a real adventurous journey. This is better than any certificate. Whether you win or lose, the experience is yours. People can take things away from you but not your experience.



"If our youngsters want to be real business people, they should venture into this industry. It took me a while to understand the concept, but it has enhanced my soft skills as I managed our limitations in order to achieve our target. These challenges shape a person and increases critical thinking skills. At Steelbro we solve at least 10 problems a day without compromising our target. The service industry market is such that everything is urgent, and every decision is money. Also, of course, this industry can offer you big packages. If you are good at what you do, you can really make money here," Ersalle said. **T**

