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INTERVIEW: Mr Francis Leung, Senior Vice President ASEAN, AS APAC, dormakaba, Shares His Role & Plans For The ASEAN Region



Francis Leung takes over as dormakaba ASEAN's new SVP, as of July 2021. (Photo credit: dormakaba)

In July 2021, dormakaba appointed Mr Francis Leung as Senior Vice President ASEAN, AS APAC. Prior to this appointment, Francis was the Senior Vice President of dormakaba China North Asia, AS APAC, and was based in Hong Kong. He moved to Singapore to join the local office and to carry out his new leadership role. SEAB connected with Francis to learn more about him and his plans for the ASEAN region.

SEAB: It's great to speak with you Francis. Would you tell us a little about yourself?

Francis: Thanks for having me. Well, I've been with dormakaba since 1992, so about 30 years now. It has indeed been exciting! As you mentioned, I am from Hong Kong, and I previously headed dormakaba China North Asia. During my time there, I oversaw the successful expansion of dormakaba in the China market. Today, there are more than 20 offices across China serving the region. I also had the privilege of being at the forefront during the merger between DORMA and Kaba in 2015 – an unforgettable experience as two giants in the industry became one dormakaba.

Of course, it is difficult to handle work without play. Outside of work, I enjoy farming and scuba diving. My wife and I rented a very small plot back in Hong Kong, and it was truly amazing to see life burst forth in this tiny space in the middle of the concrete jungle.

SEAB: It's been about 6 months since you've taken over the role at dormakaba ASEAN. How has the transition been?

Francis: I took over the role in July 2021, and formally moved to Singapore in the later part of October. My wife came over from Hong Kong recently as well. Moving to Singapore began a new chapter in my life, right from the flight! It was the first time I had been able to travel since the pandemic began, and the multiple COVID tests and nearly-empty plane made it quite an experience.

First and foremost, I made it a priority to familiarize myself with my team, business partners, and customers. The diverse locations within the ASEAN region made virtual meetings a necessity. Indeed, I spend most of my days in Teams meetings!

Singapore is of course, not new to me, having travelled here many times in the past, both for business and for pleasure. However, there's a world of difference between being a tourist, and actually living here. In the past months, I've enjoyed going to the many shopping malls in Singapore, looking for good food, and going for walks and exploring the city. I am a firm believer that the fastest way to assimilate into a new environment is to experience its culture. I have had the opportunity to experience the Chinese New Year celebrations in Singapore, and they are so very different from Hong Kong. In Singapore, we gift oranges and bakkwa. In Hong Kong, we focus our gifts on cookies and snacks. It has definitely been interesting so far, and I'm looking forward to more of such experiences in the near future.

SEAB: What do you hope to accomplish for the domestic market and the ASEAN region?

Francis: dormakaba ASEAN has spent the last months strategizing and planning for increased and sustainable growth for the road ahead. With the new growth strategy in place, we hope to ensure our products and solutions are curated and adapted to our local needs, and in doing so, solve our customers' pain points, and increase our market share in both vertical and horizontal markets.

SEAB: What major challenges do you foresee facing, particularly as we are still feeling the impact of the pandemic?

Francis: Unfortunately, COVID19 is still a part of our lives, and has led to a lot of business and economic uncertainty, particularly in the hospitality market as travel has been greatly limited by the pandemic. In addition, planning, and implementation of strategies has been dependent on virtual meetings. Fortunately, dormakaba has a strong, dedicated IT team to support this, so we have managed, for the most part. However, I believe that face-to-face workshops and customer/partner meetings are irreplaceable in building relationships and rapport, and I hope that in-person meetings can soon resume in the near future.

SEAB: What innovative products can we expect to see from dormakaba over the next few years?

Francis: The pandemic has spurred the development of touch-free solutions. In order help reduce the rate of infection and safeguard lives, dormakaba has embarked on this journey as well. Another recent focus has been digitisation, particularly when it comes to IoT technology. IoT technology can allow for remote monitoring, access, and maintenance. One such product is our EntriWorX Ecosystem which simplifies collaboration

between all trades and optimizes processes throughout the entire building life cycle.

SEAB: Are there particular guiding principles in your life you would like to share?

Francis: I firmly believe that there can never be "too much" communication. Communication is essential for success, and is crucial in any community, from large multinational organisations to small teams.

I also value team achievements over an individual's success. As they say, we are worth more than the sum of our parts. As a leader in the organisation, I strive to lead by example, promoting openness, transparency and fairness.

I provide multiple avenues through one-on-one discussions, fireside chats, and townhalls to encourage my team to make their voices heard. I also encourage continuous improvement. Sticking to the status quo and keeping to our comfort zones is detrimental to growth. As a strengths coach myself, I strongly advocate trainings for my team, be it in sales, product expertise, or leadership.

I am fortunate to have inherited such a motivated and capable team. With excellent planning and timely execution, I am looking forward to the results that our new strategies will bring!



dormakaba's EntriWorX Ecosystem optimizes processes throughout the entire building life cycle. (Photo credit: dormakaba)

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