



Alumni on the move

PATRICK FUNG: BANKING ON THE NEW ECONOMY

By Christine Szustaczek

When **Patrick Fung** (MBA '73, BAsc '71) became chairman of Wing Hang Bank Limited in 1996 at the tender age of 49, he was the youngest person ever to take on this leadership role at any bank in Hong Kong. While Patrick credits his success as a leader with hard work, lessons learned from his father, and a first-rate education, he stresses that what most makes an outstanding leader is the ability to work with and motivate people. "If you've got the best people, and you give them a great environment to work in, your job as a leader becomes infinitely easier," he says.

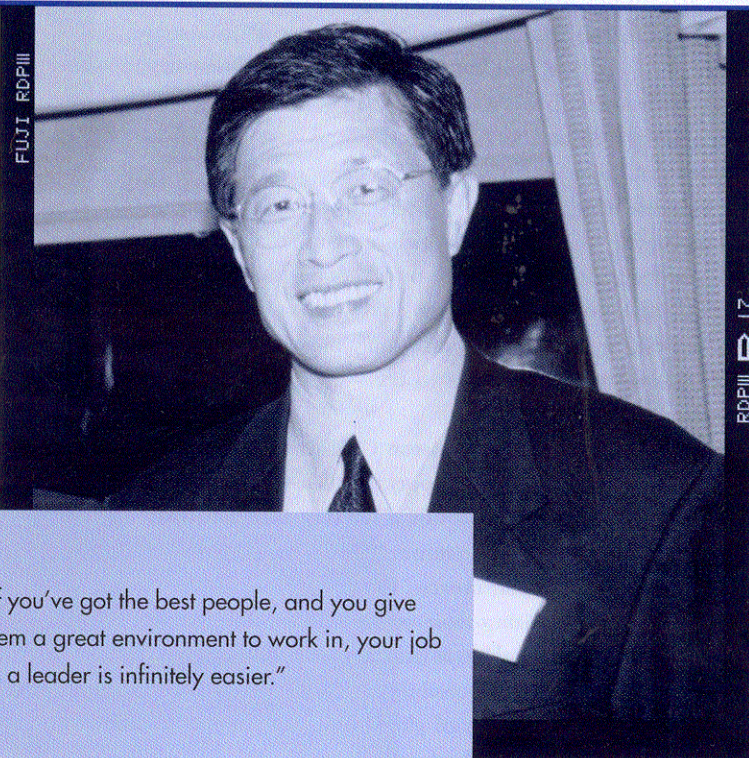
This philosophy has enabled Patrick to transform Wing Hang Bank's culture from an inwardly-looking, family run bank, to a globally-focused public institution, complete with new talent. Meshing the two corporate cultures and getting both camps to work harmoniously has presented a big challenge.

Patrick's father, Yiu King Fung, founded Wing Hang Bank in 1937 and remained its chairman until he passed away in 1985. In its early days, the Bank had about CDN\$120,000 in assets, employed 10 people (mostly family) and had one location in Hong Kong. Today, the full-service bank manages CDN\$10 billion in assets, employs 1,500 people, and has 40 branches in Hong Kong, Macau, and China. Wing Hang also has a partnership with the Bank of New York, a relationship that began in 1973 when Irving Trust Company, which later merged with the Bank of New York, bought into Wing Hang.

His father ran the Bank at a time when the head of a bank embodied the institution. In those days, it was seen as more prudent to hire people you knew and could trust than to hire based on ability. Patrick has built a culture in which employees, both new and old, are encouraged to contribute their ideas, continuously upgrade their skills, and become stakeholders in forming the company's strategy. He's also earned the trust of investors by diversifying the Bank's products and lowering the risk through concentration, which has helped Wing Hang weather Hong Kong's recent recession.

Despite his successes, Patrick has also faced many challenges. One is the perception that he 'inherited' his job, rather than earning it based on merit. To this he says, "Opportunities may come your way, but it is up to you to make the most of them. I've had to prove myself to our staff, shareholders, and partners – maybe more so than anyone else".

While he has risen to the challenge of managing people and proving his own worth as a bank chairman, his proudest achievement has been



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listing Wing Hang on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, something he accomplished only one year after assuming the position of CEO. "My whole life changed when we went public in 1993," he admits. "We went from a small, private family company to one that was constantly in the spotlight ... virtually overnight". Learning to market the Bank to a wider, global audience, and being in the media spotlight has taken some adjustment.

Despite his busy career, Patrick also makes the time to act as chairman of U of T's Hong Kong Foundation, which enables undergraduate students from Hong Kong with financial need to attend U of T. Patrick's own family gift to the Foundation, matched by U of T and the Province of Ontario, has established a million-dollar **Fung Yiu King Memorial Commerce Scholarship**. In his role as chairman he hosts many events, including one in May that brought together Rotman School alumni and friends in Hong Kong (see story, page 30).

What challenges lie ahead for the talented young chairman? "Steering the Bank successfully in an environment filled with mergers and acquisitions," he says. On the personal front, Patrick derives great satisfaction from his children. "I'm enjoying a late fatherhood, raising two sons, aged seven and one," he says. "At a time when my peer group is looking for universities for their kids, I'm looking for primary schools." **RM**