

Daring to dream, Chris Chen achieves remarkable success in the industry

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ERA Advisory Group Division Director Chris Chen is a veteran in the real estate industry, having started his career in 2002, but it wasn't the first thing on his mind after graduating from Western Michigan University.

From the drudgery of a desk-bound job to an exciting career in real estate

With a degree in Telecommunications Management, he initially began in a desk-bound position working in Michigan and Chicago but soon found himself limited by both the compensation package, and the fact that he was far away from his ageing parents. He eventually decided to work in Singapore due to its many job opportunities, its strong currency relative to the Malaysian ringgit, and geographical proximity to his parents. But even after relocating, he found himself bogged down by the long hours in the office and unfulfilling prospects. And so, at 24, he quit his job without having another opportunity lined up for him. It was a risky move, but one that has changed his life forever.



With the world's opportunities now available to him, he discovered the real estate industry through his friend and

now-mentor. Success came quickly after joining the industry: within his second year as a real estate agent, he managed to repay his parents his university school fees, provide a comfortable lifestyle for them, and take them on long overseas holidays! Being a real estate agent also allowed Chris to achieve financial independence and the resources to invest in properties of his own. After several years, he moved into a managerial role which he found even more fulfilling.

Learning to adapt quickly and lead confidently during Covid-19

In 2020, Chris faced the most challenging period of his career, which forced him to step out of his comfort zone and quickly adapt to the ever-evolving situation. Closely watching the situation unfolding all over the world, he had the foresight to ask his agents to take photos and videos of their existing listings in anticipation of a possible lockdown in Singapore—which eventually happened.

While he was fearful that the situation would continue to deteriorate and the real estate industry would face further challenges, he was also aware that as a leader, he had to project confidence and become the pillar of stability for the agents under him in HexaGroup and ERA.



To keep his team motivated through that difficult period, he created a simple kit of daily activities for his team to complete, which included checking in with their clients, tenants, and landlords to update them on the current situation and to understand their difficulties at the time. Additionally, Chris also took the opportunity to re-train his team, conducting IT and video editing courses to impart digital skills such as conducting a virtual viewing on Zoom. By the end of the circuit breaker, his agents were well-versed in selling their listings effectively on Zoom, including the use of effective camera work to show off their listings in the best way possible. It's no small feat to be able to turn challenges into opportunities, but Chris knew that it was important to continue inspiring his agents and empowering them to adapt to the quickly evolving situation. Chris' leadership certainly speaks for itself, having been the Top Number 1 Champion Team in the

whole of ERA from 2018 to 2020; and being the Top Number 1 Champion Team worldwide in 2018. In 2018, Chris also won the most number of awards as a director.



Chris didn't initially want to start a team, but after years of success in the real estate industry, and a string of accolades from ERA, he started to think that it would be a waste to not share the valuable skills and knowledge that he acquired over the years. He faced some challenges in doing so, but persevered and fine-tuned his mentorship program into a bespoke model for each agent that he took on. Even though this is a time-consuming model, he finds it fulfilling, and likens it to taking care of a bonsai tree. "Caring for a bonsai requires a lot of patience, time, and attention. It takes at least 20 years for a bonsai plant to become a bonsai tree," he said.



Chris' division, the Catalyst HexaGroup, is certainly the product of many years of careful calibration. Many of the team members are members of senior management teams in other companies who have established careers and are passionate about real estate. Most of them are property investors and joined the real estate industry as a secondary career. There are also new agents in their early 20s and 30s. Chris describes the culture as being approachable and down-to-earth. They take pride in their work and aim to do their best for their clients. This can be seen in the glowing testimonials they receive from satisfied clients, their continued referrals, and even gifts of appreciation!



The working environment is also open and allows the agents to share ideas, collaborate, and help one another. Furthermore, with wide expertise across different property segments, the HexaGroup can leverage a broad base of skills, ensuring that the business model is able to meet the needs of their customers. When asked how he plans to grow his team, Chris shared that he is looking for agents who are service-oriented, and genuinely interested to help their clients in the long-term, through their changing needs with asset purchases and progressions. HexaGroup is also looking for up-and-coming leaders who have the same mindset as they do. They are proud of their personalised bespoke training offered to agents, which helps them develop their own unique success strategies. Chris assures that every agent that joins the HexaGroup will be in good hands!

The underestimated value of grit and hard work



Despite having joined the real estate industry at the tender young age of 24, with little knowledge of

Singapore, or its real estate market, he still manages to succeed and win big. He credits this to his work ethic and his belief that one must dare to dream big and have specific milestones that they would like to achieve. Even though he is now living comfortably, and has even purchased his dream home, he continues to work hard every day because of his continued commitment to his agents in ERA and the HexaGroup. He is also glad that can provide a comfortable lifestyle for his elderly parents and his family. When asked for advice for new real estate agents, he gave two specific pieces of wisdom. "An agent must be willing to invest in marketing to stand out from the rest of the competition. Branding has long-term positive returns! And if they have limited financial resources for marketing, they should seriously consider leveraging on resources such as 99.co and the SRX Analyser, which can help them achieve their professional goals more easily."