

BUSINESS CLASS

MAGAZINE

NEW DEVELOPMENTS WITHIN THE BUSINESS CLASS GROUP

In what can only be described as a challenging year for most investors and business people, at Business Class Group we are delighted to be able to share some good news in this otherwise *annus horribilis*.

First, we are pleased to announce the launch of Lifestyle Properties. Providing all the benefits and professionalism you associate with the Lifestyle brand, Lifestyle Properties are opening their first office in Singapore.

Lifestyle Properties takes a different approach to other agencies around the region, with the stated objective of providing property as an asset class that delivers an excellent return on investment. As Phil James, Managing Director of Lifestyle Properties PTE Singapore explains "while there are many property agencies in the region that focus on both local and international properties, the directors feel that very few firms conduct the required level of research and have the experience to identify what makes a sound property investment...consideration needs to be given to other factors such as finance and tax, market volatility, exit strategy and of course capital returns and yield."

Given the harmonious mix of proven real estate professionals and investment consultants that head the operation, Lifestyle Properties is well placed to achieve these goals. In fact, under the Lifestyle Brokers brand, the team has been already providing part of this service for a number of successful years. To find out more, turn to page 4.

Second, Business Class Thailand is beginning what will be a first for expatriates in Thailand – an expatriate retainer service. With this service, expats in Thailand will have a reliable partner who they can trust for all their personal, business and financial administration needs.

According to Richard Jackson, Sales and Marketing Director of Business Class Thailand, "The BCT Retainer Service is based on a long-term, ongoing relationship with our dedicated Account Managers, Specialists and Clients. Our goal at BCT is to be a friendly face and source of reliable ongoing advice to make sure that everything is taken care of for our Clients."

For a small fee and with three different levels of service from which to choose, the retainer service provides peace of mind for expats in the sometimes difficult environment of living overseas. Covering such essentials as family medical care and insurance, asset protection, property sourcing and financing, and personal and corporate financial services, the retainer service will source the best deals and remove any middle man commissions. For more information, please turn to page 9.

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How do you **feel** about your uk pension?

A UK pension is much like a ball and chain. When you reach retirement age the UK Government forces you to take an annuity and then charges you tax. That annuity will continue to pay you an income until you die, after which your partner will receive a maximum of 50% pension and ultimately zero to your siblings.

There is a solution. A pension transfer which is approved by the UK Government and gives you 100% ownership. You control how and where it is invested and it grows tax free with no IHT liability.

Contact us today and set yourself free.


PLATINUM
FINANCIAL SERVICES LIMITED

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

ems@businessclassgroup.com

PROPERTY

THE PHILIPPINES – A COMPELLING INVESTMENT CASE BY CLAIRE BROWN REALTY...



Claire Brown Realty was formed in 2004 and has since become the leading South East Asian real estate investment house. The company has a well earned reputation for sourcing compelling investment opportunities; delivering candid, unbiased market information to clients; conducting exhaustive due diligence on all aspects of developments and having an unparalleled level of local knowledge of real estate projects across the region.

Claire Brown Realty operates in Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines and Indonesia. These are the countries it deems to be the most 'investor friendly' whilst offering excellent growth potential. In 2008 collective GDP growth in South East Asia was 5.62%, whilst Europe and America collectively grew by a paltry 1.48% - so South East Asia at the most basic level presents a superior "parking place" for funds.

Headed up by Claire Brown, who has nine years of experience working on residential and resort projects across the region, the company is truly pioneering in its mission to bring the freshest and most exciting opportunities to its clients. From colonial refurbishments in Phnom Penh (Claire Brown Realty was the first foreign company to be delivering Cambodian properties to the international market place, one of many 'firsts' for the business), to an eco-chic resort in the relatively un-chartered territory of Palawan, to million-dollar villas at the tip of Borneo, Claire states there are always the same common denominators linking the projects she elects to work on, "solid project fundamentals, originality, great design, sensible pricing, accelerated growth potential, healthy yield projections, an identifiable exit strategy".

So where should we be considering making

investments this year? Claire's radar is firmly planted on the **Philippines**. She believes the country presents a unique opportunity for shrewd investors: a locally driven real estate market (prices still at a very low base), combined with rapid economic development, massive increases in foreign direct investment, a booming tourism industry, a stable banking system, strengthening currency and a rising middle class.

A look at the country's performance over 2008, the worst year on record for most, paints a very compelling picture:

- banking system remains sound – ample liquidity (cash adequacy levels generally circa 30% compared with circa 7% for UK banks)
- robust economy
 - commercial loans up 24% in 2008
 - real estate market least affected by the credit crunch (CBRE Feb 09 report)
 - residential house prices climbed throughout 2008 and predicted to continue to do so throughout 2009 (Jones Lang Lasalle Philippines Outlook 2009)
- rising middle class
 - domestic automotive sales up 10% in 2008
 - housing loans up by 18% in 2008
 - real estate sector grew by 22% in 2008

Also worth noting, the GDP growth rate in the Philippines has been consistently over 5% YOY since 2001. The country is a genuine Asian tiger - rising domestic consumption and strong export capabilities both within the Asean group of countries, and Europe and the US, bolster the

economy, whilst the young workforce, widespread use of English and low taxes are making Manila the city of choice for multi-nationals setting up trading posts in South East Asia.

THE TIME TO INVEST IS NOW!

Here is a selection of solid investment opportunities within the Philippines, hand picked by Claire Brown Realty:

- A 5 star condo tower in the CBD of Ortigas, Manila with **70% interest free finance** on all properties so just \$21k USD required to buy in... excellent yield potential
- An iconic **international hotel** brand comes to Makati, Central Manila offering luxury residences for sale...
- Designer villas on a **private island eco-chic resort** in Palawan with 60% financing and prices starting at just \$280k USD
- A super prime 5 star **beachfront condo development** in Cebu with 60% financing and **guaranteed yields of 16%...**

For more information please contact
ems@businessclassgroup.com

PROPERTY

PURCHASE LONDON PROPERTY FOR ONLY



Hong Kong & Singapore based investors can now buy new-build off-plan property in the UK without having to tie up large amounts of their own cash as deposits with developers.

The Xbond (www.thexbond.com) makes it easier for buyers to purchase a property in the UK (and certain other European countries) where demand for new-build properties has taken off again.

Property values have witnessed a marked increase in the UK as the credit crunch peters out; especially since the banks have started to relax their strict lending criteria.

Prices in London have risen almost 5% in certain locations over the last three months and National Developers are of the opinion that the 'Property Deposit Guarantee' (PDG) is a breath of fresh air.

The new PDG scheme, which has been set up by some of Europe's largest Insurers, is aimed at customers who want to delay paying a cash deposit - which on a new-build home can easily be more than £20,000 - until their property has been built.

It allows homeowners to buy a property deposit guarantee for a fee (around 1% of the purchase price). Under the scheme's terms, developers accept the guarantee secured by an insurance bond in place of a cash deposit. The scheme has been running in the UK since last year and has now been extended to customers in Asia.

All the leading developers in the UK, including

Persimmon Homes, Barratts and Charles Church have signed up to offer the guarantee scheme to their customers and there are about 110,000 new homes in the UK where the guarantee can be used.

The scheme helps customers who may not be able to afford the entire deposit immediately, who do not wish to tie their cash up for several months or are maybe even concerned about a developer's liquidity.

Typically buyers of new-build homes must pay a cash deposit of around 10% of the value immediately - even though the property may not be built for six to nine months.

The guarantee will make it easier for purchasers to turn a wish into a reservation by removing the main barrier to a purchase - a deposit. Instead of having to find the cash for a deposit straight away a guarantee is purchased from an Insurer at a fraction of the deposit sum; the purchaser is then ready for exchange. This allows confident property reservation. It is as good as cash.

What is the Property Deposit Guarantee?

It is a financial guarantee made to the property developer on your behalf. It removes the need for you to pay a large deposit for your yet-to-be-built property. Instead, you simply pay the whole property price when the house is finished and ready to move into.

How much does it cost?

The cost depends on the amount that you need to guarantee and for how long. Based on the length of time between exchange and completion we will work out a guarantee term for you. Guarantees are available in fixed terms of 6 months to 5 years. Please contact us to obtain a quote.

Anything else I need to consider?

Most importantly the guarantee does not replace the need for a deposit; you still have to find the money to complete on your new property when the time comes. If you do not complete you will still owe the insurers for the full amount of the guarantee.

As it costs money to buy the guarantee and you can't get this money back, you need to be sure that the benefit of holding onto your savings now is not outweighed by this one-off cost. Also, if it takes longer than anticipated to build your new property, you may need to extend your Property Deposit Guarantee. There would be an additional fee for this renewal service.

We'd love to talk to you about utilizing the Property Deposit Guarantee to increase the size of your property portfolio.

For more information please contact Mark Cowan at ems@businessclassgroup.com

BUY LONDON PROPERTY FOR ONLY 1%!

- No need to tie up big deposits with developers
- Nothing more to pay until completion
- The most cost efficient method of buying investment property today

Why invest in London?

- London prices up 5% in 2009
- Prices from £161,500 to £2.2 million
- Favourable exchange rates
- 40% discount on 2007 prices
- Prices locked in today
- 2 year rental guarantees available

To lock in today's discounted prices and find out how to secure your London property call 3115 7617

info@lfsbrokers.com
www.lfsbrokers.com

 Lifestyle
Brokers Limited

PROPERTY LISTINGS

PURCHASE ANY OF THE BELOW LONDON PROPERTIES FOR ONLY 1%



BALTIMORE WHARF, DOCKLANDS, LONDON



- Located in London's sought after Docklands area
- Features a 45-storey building containing 1,111 residential units
- In the tower will be a 19-floor hotel comprising 143 rooms and 105 serviced apartments
- Shops and restaurants will be based on the ground floor
- Includes the first marina and river dock to be built on the Thames for 50 years

For more information please contact
ems@businessclassgroup.com



HIGH POINT HAYES, MIDDLESEX



- Located near Stockley Business Park and Heathrow Airport
- Adjoins Hayes and Harlington Railway station – just 26 minutes to London's West End
- 1,2,3 bedroom apartments
- Extensive facilities

For more information please contact
ems@businessclassgroup.com

INTRODUCING LIFESTYLE PROPERTY SINGAPORE

Opening of Lifestyle Properties in Singapore

Lifestyle Property PTE Ltd, a boutique property agency, will soon commence business in Singapore (to be closely followed by Hong Kong) to promote international properties from around the world to its Asian investor base.

The company will be fairly unique in the real estate business sector and while there are many property agencies in the region that focus on both local and international properties, the directors feel that very few firms conduct the required level of research and have the experience to identify what makes a sound property investment.

Lifestyle properties will not bring hundreds of properties to the market but a select few that match a quite specific list of investment criteria. While, as the company name states, there will be a Lifestyle element to many of the properties that it will market such as in the Asian resort destinations

of Phuket, Samui and Bali, it will also market developments that offer its regional client base an excellent potential for capital and income returns from established markets such as the USA, UK, France and Australia.

Coming from varied investment and real estate backgrounds, all the partners in Lifestyle Properties see any property purchase by a client as part of a wider property and investment portfolio. "While we will have clients that buy individual properties through us, our aim is actually to work with individual clients to put a solid property portfolio together over a number of years. We look at traditional investment criteria such as diversification, market volatility, finance costs and tax, exit strategy as well as capital returns and yield."

The Directors of Lifestyle Properties will also be offering a "Premier" service to high net worth individuals, funds and corporate bodies. This

will focus on large investments such as multiple unit purchases, land and hotel acquisitions and private Islands. There will also be a one-stop-shop consultancy service for "Premier" customers whereby we will undertake all aspects of a property purchase from identification of suitable properties through due diligence, acquisition, construction costs and material specification analysis to completion, handover and possibly lettings.

The company will hold regular "informal" property shows around the region starting in Singapore and Hong Kong this year.

The Singapore office will be open on the 1st September 2009.

For more information, please contact Phil James at ems@businessclassgroup.com

PROPERTY



Walton
International Group

Investing on Solid Ground™

The Walton Difference

Now is the Time for Walton

Walton International Group has been in the land business for over 30 years, focusing solely on pre-development land asset management for over 23 years.

Walton is well positioned to execute its business model in the current economic environment, with the tremendous opportunity to acquire strategically located land.

Walton clients acquire their landownership on an all-cash basis, providing our clients with a tangible asset that avoids leverage.

Our lands are strategically located properties in three U.S. target areas identified as high growth regions through our exhaustive research and due diligence process (Arizona, Texas and Georgia).

During the slowing economy, while others may put their projects on hold, we continue to manage our land planning activities in preparation of regional growth and future development.

When the economy improves, it is anticipated that our projects will be "shovel-ready" for leading developers.

We are proud of our extensive **30 year** track record that has produced a **28.98%*** simple annualized or **15.43%*** compound, weighted average rate of return for our clients.



Northpoint Residential
Exited 2007

Picacho View

Southfork

Silverado
Exited 2007

www.waltoninternational.com

* Audit performed by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (Canada) dated March 17, 2009. The complete audit report may be requested through your Walton representative or is available online at www.waltoninternational.com

For more information, please contact ems@businessclassgroup.com

FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

ENSURING SOUND FINANCIAL ADVICE



Mark Kirkham
Operations Director
Business Class Group

In this quarter's article we sit down with Business Class Group's Operations Director, Mark Kirkham who is based in Hong Kong.

As well as overseeing the day to day operations of all companies within the Group, Mark is the registered Managing Director & CEO of Platinum Financial Services (PFS) who are headquartered in Hong Kong and authorised to transact Insurance Business by the Hong Kong Confederation of Insurance Brokers. www.hkcib.org

In his 'spare time' Mark also sits on the General Council of the Independent Financial Advisors Association (www.ifaa.com.hk) which is committed to promoting professionalism, competency and legitimacy of IFA practices in Hong Kong and the region.

For the benefit of Public and consumer awareness we asked Mark about the role of financial advisers, the regulatory framework that exists within Hong Kong and the standards that he applies to advisers within the group.

Q: What is an IFA?

Independent Financial Advisers (IFAs) are practising professionals who offer independent and unbiased advice on financial matters to their clients. They recommend suitable financial products from the whole of the market.

Independent means that the practitioners are working independently for their clients and will, at all times, act on behalf of the client. This is fundamentally different to someone who is known as an 'agent' and who is tied to any one financial institution such as a bank, insurance company or fund house. This independence means that IFAs have a much wider product range available and are



able to find the product that is most suited to their client's needs.

Advice on financial matters shall include, but is not limited to, advice on investment planning, insurance planning, education planning, retirement planning, inheritance tax planning and business succession planning.

What does an individual have to do in order to become authorised to give advice in Hong Kong?

To practice as an IFA in Hong Kong it is necessary to be both professionally qualified as well as being legally qualified – both are statutory requirements. The professional qualifications come first, they are obtained by passing certain industry exams relevant to the advice that advisers will ultimately be giving. The 'legal qualification' along with an individual registration number is obtained once the authorised company applies on behalf of the qualified individual to the relevant regulator and is approved to operate.

What does the regulatory framework in Hong Kong consist of?

There are a number of regulatory bodies in Hong Kong which regulate the different type of activities that Companies and Individuals undertake. The main three are the Securities & Futures Commission, the Hong Kong Confederation of Insurance Brokers and the Professional Insurance Brokers Association.

Each of the regulators has its own set of rules but the basis of the regulatory system is to give confidence to and protect clients. This is achieved by setting standards for the quality of advice given, it also covers such things as 'fit and proper criteria' for Advisers, individual and corporate record keeping, handling client funds, product suitability, audit reports as well as ongoing annual competency of the individual advisers.

That sounds fine, what happens in other jurisdictions in Asia?

Our other main markets in Asia are in Singapore, China & Thailand. Singapore and its regulatory requirements are very similar to Hong Kong's so clients and consumers there are also very well protected. China & Thailand are very different, they each have regulatory systems of their own but those systems do not cover the type of products that most 'expat' Brokers are selling to their expat clients and so the many International Brokers that operate do so in an unregulated market.

There is nothing illegal in operating in these markets and that strong management to implement a code of 'self regulation' is required. This self regulation should be driven by the same morals, code of ethics and standards that apply in the likes of Hong Kong & Singapore. If you apply the same standards as those that you adhere to in a regulated environment to an unregulated market and also operate using good business practices then the clients will feel comfortable enough to do business and will ultimately receive very similar protection.

In China & Thailand we encourage all of our Consultants to study and obtain industry recognised exam qualifications*, we also operate a mentoring system ensuring that newly appointed Associates are not thrown in at the deep end and are put in a situation where the client they are sat in front of knows more than they do!

* More information about the industry recognised qualifications can be found at www.ifphk.org & www.hkrfp.org

If you would like speak to Mark please contact him at ems@businessclassgroup.com

FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

CAN YOU AFFORD NOT TO ACT NOW?



You are probably in a state of shock or even denial at the moment, after all we are about 2 years into the worst financial crisis in the last 70 years. We have seen property prices collapse, the equity markets have been decimated, new words have entered the vocabulary - toxic assets, credit crunch, CDOs (collateralized debt obligations) to use a few.

Yet life must go on-but it can't carry on the same as before, we must become more efficient and we must take more responsibility for our financial wellbeing. It is obvious that the banks and governments take none.

Financial planning is more important today than any time in history as monetary value is so difficult to measure. Think back to when you were younger, one Pound, Dollar, Franc or Deutschmark (if you are old enough to remember a time before the Euro), would buy an awful lot more than it will today. We are all familiar with and understand that that is what happens due to inflation, yet when it comes to how much we will need in the future often arbitrary figures are used based on yesterday's value. We don't seem comfortable with the mathematical processes needed to work out what we will likely need.

It does seem strange that given we all use money and therefore suffer from the devaluation of our asset that there is zero education on the subject.

The conspiracy theorists are convinced we are being dumbed down and that it is all part of a grand plan to keep us poor and in debt. I am not sure if there is a grand conspiracy as they prescribe but do see on a daily basis that people just don't understand money, where it comes from and how the printing presses effect your daily lives and erode your wealth. Many are shocked when they find out that money is not backed by gold, they have never heard of a Fiat Monetary System, do not know 'The Fed' is not a U.S government agency. Henry Ford is credited with saying "it is well that the people of the nation do not understand our banking and monetary system, for if they did, I believe there would be a revolution before tomorrow morning".

The recent black comedy with Banks being bailed out by us the taxpayer, the obscene bonus culture and lack of contrition by any party involved (ok they wheeled out a couple of crooks such as Bernie Maddoff for the public to vent their anger, though it is strange the S.E.C did not follow up on him earlier however), should of course be enough for any sensible investor to steer clear of any bank. Use them to pay your bills and keep your spending money, but do not entrust them with your future.

The fact is that most people are further away from reaching financial security than ever before. Many of you will be holding large cash positions waiting for things to improve, in other words waiting for prices

to go back up before buying. You wouldn't wait for the price of your car to double before buying or the price of beer to rise before you got your round in would you?

Although it has been proved timing the market does not work (ok, you can get lucky) many try and fail, further compounding the problem, it is time in the market that counts, with a disciplined low expense ratio, tax efficient plan you will beat cash and negate the effects of inflation.

The way I see it you either have to take the time to study investment, taxation and how investment accounts work and are charged, or build a relationship with a reputable independent firm. You should have a full understanding of what options are available with regards to fees and commissions as a one size fits all approach will not suit everybody.

Now would be a perfect time to get your house in order and gain a little education, if you have never discussed your fees and charges or you believe that your adviser works for free you will probably end up regretting it later.

For more information please contact Gary Kennedy at ems@businessclassgroup.com

FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT



The Need for Active Portfolio Advice in Bull & Bear Markets

Every year hundreds of young men put their lives on the line for the thrill of a short run through the streets of Pamplona, Spain, with a battalion of angry, agitated bulls on their heels. Insane? Maybe. Frightening? You bet.

But can you imagine just how much more terrifying the annual "Running of the Bulls" would be if they used bears? A bear can outrun a racehorse. It can rip a person to shreds. Bulls trample. Bears maul.

For a glimpse at the aftermath of a "Running of the Bears," just take a look at the stock market today; the bears have been on a rampage, mauling some of the largest, most respected financial companies on earth.

There are risks when investing into world stock markets and that is why it is essential to select stocks with strong moats; meaning understanding P/E ratios, balance sheets, profit & loss statements and capital structures of the firm which you would like to invest into. The current economic waves of the worldwide business cycle are a natural part of investing.

A diversified investment portfolio will always have the occasional 'clunker' however (hopefully) your portfolio will also contain double, triple digit returning investments. Having an investment strategy is essential during these tough times in the equity market. During tough investment times we always would recommend having a suitable qualified specialist to discuss your portfolio allocation.

There are a host of factors that need to be taken into consideration when compiling your investment

portfolio to ensure your investment objective is achieved. An experienced and qualified analyst would take into consideration the following basic considerations.

Risk and return

It is generally accepted that risk and return go hand in hand. The higher the risk you are prepared to take, the higher the potential return. Each individual investor will have differing return requirements and differing feelings about risk. In addition, each asset class also has its own risk and return profile. However, there are ways of building portfolios that seek to provide the best chance of good returns in the medium to long term, but reducing the risk involved in achieving this.

Volatility

Volatility is a measure of the degree to which investments fall and rise or, strictly speaking, how much they vary from the average. There is a big difference between fund 'A' which has gone up by 2%, 6% and 10% respectively over the last 3 years and fund 'B' that has gone up by 6% every year. The overall return may be almost identical but fund 'B' is much less volatile. Clearly, the aim is to achieve the highest return for the lowest volatility.

Diversification

In achieving a well diversified portfolio, it is important to spread your investments among a variety of asset classes (equities, property, bonds/ fixed interest, alternatives and cash), global regions and investment managers across the world as various types of investments and investment management styles can perform differently given the same economic climate. It is important to diversify investments across different fund managers to avoid having your portfolio unduly affected by the under-performance of one Investment Company.

Correlation

Correlation is a measurement of how different types of investments move in relation to each other. For example, UK and US equities are reasonably closely correlated, meaning that, more often than not, when one goes up, so does the other and vice versa.

If you have all of your money in closely correlated investments, then you are not reducing the risk very much as your investments will mostly go up and down together. The best way of diversifying a portfolio is by using assets with low correlation.

Summary

Having a suitably qualified professional fund manager or financial adviser is imperative to navigate your investment portfolio through the current market turmoil. Any investor has the ability to generate strong returns during a Bull market, however these consultants tend to go MIA (Missing in Action) when having been ravaged by the Bear market.

History has proven that after virtually every sudden drop the stock market(s) have experienced, it has recovered within a few years. For the few brave contrarians with the foresight to "buy when there is blood in the streets" – there will be great long term rewards.

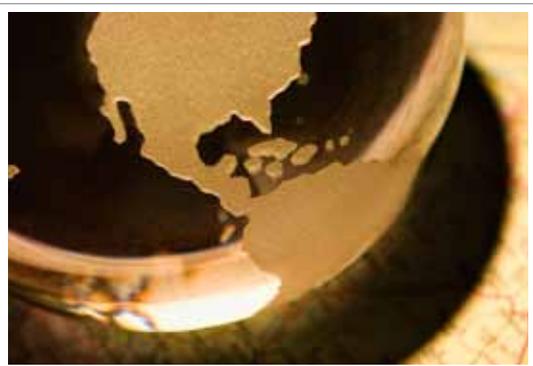
So, if history is any guide, you would be foolish to succumb to panic. In fact, you might even want to increase your holdings. Notice that for periods of up to two years, the market has tended to perform far better than usual following large declines. As difficult as it can be to contribute or invest into such volatile markets, now is an opportunity of a generation to take advantage of current market conditions for the long term investors.

Roger Sefton leads up the Investment Team with the Business Class Group.

For more information please contact Roger Sefton at ems@businessclassgroup.com

FINANCE AND INVESTMENT

INTRODUCING BUSINESS CLASS THAILAND'S RETAINER SERVICE



Setting up life in a different country is very exciting but also means great changes in an unfamiliar environment. Different lifestyles, tax regimes, foreign red tape and laws can be at best confusing.

We at BCT want to make sure that you have a friendly face and source of reliable ongoing advice to make sure that everything is taken care of. Whether you are a newcomer to Thailand or a seasoned expat who wants to ensure that current provisions and plans are taken care of and as up to date as they possibly could be, BCT will assist you in achieving that aim.

The BCT Retainer Service does just that and is based around a long-term, ongoing relationship between our dedicated Account Managers, Specialists and clients. We are here to help and want to be involved every step of the way, guiding clients to make the best financial choices over the lifetime of a relationship which delivers expert advice, service and support.



How do clients benefit from Business Class Thailand (BCT) and the Retainer Service?

There's no such thing as a typical client anymore and in today's fast paced life everyone deserves individual care and attention. BCT are confident that following a complete review of a client's personal circumstances that any identified shortfalls can be quickly and efficiently remedied and that their retained clients will continue to profit over time.

We all know that only a few things in life are certain - these are commonly referred to as birth, death and taxes. Putting those events to one side for

now what we can also conclude is that 'the only constant is change'. If that is the case then everybody needs somebody to keep a constant eye out for their financial and investment needs - the retainer service does just that.

Even our Premium Class package includes 'Options', a service which is designed to keep you informed at all times.

What do I get as a retained client?

You get ongoing access to BCT and external industry Consultants, who, amongst other things will:

Make sure that all of your individual and family insurance requirements are properly catered for.

These include travel insurance, health insurance, income protection and critical illness protection. As well as these life insurance is utilised to provide both family and mortgage protection. BCT will make sure that they shield you from the effects of unexpected changes to your wellbeing by tailoring protection policies to your individual circumstances.



Securing the most efficient mortgage based on a product and market review.

This focuses on both domestic and international bank offerings taking into consideration relevant market trends and currency exchanges.

Make sure that you plan for a long and happy retirement.

A BCT Consultant will undertake regular reviews of your existing pension arrangements to keep you up to date and informed of any important changes in pension and tax legislation. They will also advise on the necessity to increase contributions to existing arrangements in order to meet your goals.

For those who have worked for several employers during their career an investigation and detailed analysis of a Qualified Recognised Overseas Pension scheme (QROPS) is extremely important to maximise retirement benefits.

Make sure that you maximise returns on investments whether they are regular savings or lump sum investments.

BCT will examine and present their findings in relation to tax efficiency, investment flexibility, and sector & asset allocation and of course charges. It is important that you are kept informed and have access to new products as providers constantly improve and streamline them. The BCT philosophy of restructuring underperforming and outdated investments gives you peace of mind that you are always at the forefront of product innovation.



Make sure that your hard earned cash and assets are well protected in the event of death.

Will writing, trust formation and offshore companies are just some of the structures used to mitigate inheritance taxes and make sure the people that you want to benefit from your estate do so at the appropriate time.

Learn about market trends and innovative investment ideas at BCT's regular seminars presented by industry experts.

Share ideas and experiences.

Meet other BCT clients and financial partners in a less formal environment at various sponsored Sporting or Charity Events.

Receive discounts on products and services available throughout the BCT network of partners.

The retainer service is designed to keep your finances on track and has the ability to respond and adapt to changes in circumstances through ongoing liaison with your personal BCT Consultant. The retainer service covers a whole range of individual requirements and services.

Please contact Richard Jackson for more information at ems@businessclassgroup.com

INSURANCE

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS TO BE PROTECTED

During these difficult economic times business owners are understandably concerned about their companies but it is equally important to be aware of the need for insurance to cover any company against the loss of important individuals who are paramount to the operation and profitability of the company. This article will examine the different areas in which prudent insurance planning must be considered for good business practice.



Business and Shareholder Protection

A partnership is an effective method of pooling resources and skills. However, it also brings along responsibilities and the possibility of financial burden, especially when one of the partners dies, retires or becomes incapacitated. For a partner, his share in the business is often his greatest financial asset so there needs to be measures in place to protect it, not only for his family, but also for the benefit of the other partners to ensure the continuation of the business.

Business protection plans in the form of life insurance can provide a simple way to protect the interests of partners and shareholders.

The business protection needs for partnerships are twofold:

- Ensuring that when a partner leaves through any cause, the remaining partners are able to continue the business without undue financial strain.
- Ensuring that when a partner leaves the business he or his family are adequately provided for.

These problems arise when a partner dies, retires or becomes incapacitated.

When a partner dies it is typical for the deceased's shares to be passed to their Estate to benefit their family. The family then has two options:

- A member of the family may decide to take over the deceased's position or appoint someone else
- Sell the shares

Both of these alternatives can present problems for the parties concerned. In the first scenario a member of the family may not want to be involved in the business or have the necessary experience. They may also have problems with finding someone else who would be willing/capable to run the business.

For those remaining in the business option one may not be ideal as they may be reluctant to invite a family member of their former partner to become a member of the Board.

Option two is often preferred if the family could sell the remaining shares back to the business which also has available funds. If these are not available the company may have to resort to liquidating assets, borrowing money or trying to find a replacement partner to buy out the shares. It is not certain that any of these options will be available.

Term Assurance is commonly used to provide the funds and are normally written to expire at retirement age.

Retirement

When a partner retires he will need an income. If this is to be provided for by cashing in his shares in the business then the problems which could occur on death may also be a concern. Having been involved in the running of the business the retiring partner is more likely to have the interests of the business in mind than the family of a deceased partner, but the situation will still be difficult if the retiring partner requires a cash sum which is not available.

It is common for a partnership agreement to stipulate that each partner will have a personal pension. This encourages the other partners to plan for their own retirement rather than relying on the other partners to make payment a later date.

When the partners intend to cash in their shares in retirement Life Plans combined with share agreements will ensure that all goes smoothly and the business will continue. Any type of plan which has a savings element, such as regular savings plans or Whole Life Plan could be used.

Disability

The long term disability or critical illness of a partner could lead to financial problems for both the business and the partner concerned. The partner would not be contributing to the running of the company but still drawing an income. To overcome this problem, a clause can be written into the partnership agreement stipulating that each partner effects a plan to provide income protection.

Income Protection Plans will provide a replacement income right up to the ceasing age which will normally coincide with the expected date of retirement.

Hopefully now the need for assurance is more understood in the workplace and not just for the home. Calculating and having the required amount of cover in place is essential to cover for any unforeseen circumstances and is a must have discussion with your Financial Planner.

Article continued in next edition. Please direct enquiries to Gordon Franks at ems@businessclassgroup.com

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SERVICE MATTERS

ARE YOU GETTING THE SERVICE YOU DESERVE?

Customer service is paramount in the Business Class Group. Here we talk to Nigel Brooker, Customer Service Manager of Platinum Financial Services about the service and what differentiates Platinum from others in the marketplace.

What is the scope of the service you provide in Hong Kong?

From head office we provide service not just in Hong Kong but also to the group companies and clients in Shanghai, Bangkok and Singapore. We aim to provide the same high level of personal service to clients irrespective of location which backs up regular local personal contact from the consultant for every client. This ensures that there is always a secondary point of contact for clients whenever the consultant is unavailable.

With such a diverse client base how do you provide the sort of individual service that meets the demands of expatriates?

Our business like many others relies heavily on recommendation from existing clients. Looking after those clients both during and after the investment product is chosen is vital for the satisfaction of clients' needs and expectations. We communicate with all our clients by email to ensure response times are kept to a minimum and aim to reply to all enquiries within 24 hours. At PFS we offer our value added 'Options' service to all our clients free for the first 3 months. After this it is subscription based and hence we provide a service which gives the client full control through transparency, access to information as well as ongoing advice and guidance.

So how does 'Options' do that?

All clients have access 24/7 to the value of their portfolio through a secure login to www.fsplatinum.com. This is important for many of our clients who travel constantly and want to be kept informed wherever they are. With the fast changing movements of global markets requests for fund switching can be made while clients are on the move. The Customer Service team also deal with valuations on demand as well as all the website access details and anomalies. Quarterly valuations are provided by CS as well as monthly global market and currency reports to ensure clients are kept up to date with events. CS will also support the new comprehensive Discretionary Managed Portfolio Service provided through the BCG Investment Committee in Bangkok for our EIB clients.

In addition, for those clients with mortgages our CS provides a Quarterly Mortgage Report and advice service to give our clients individual updates concerning their ICM (international currency mortgages) for the life of their mortgage. CS let clients know when a switch to another currency is appropriate; to move to one with a lower interest rate, reducing out goings and benefiting from favourable exchange rate movements to reduce their loan amount. Through monitoring of their mortgages on an individual basis and timely

reporting, advising clients of the options available we have been able to save clients many thousands of dollars.

What other services do you provide?

The customer service team has a wealth of experience in mortgage solutions from finding the right provider to completing the mortgage application, dealing and negotiating with the lenders during the process, obtaining decisions in principle, certifying supporting documents and assisting in the completion of the mortgage process. Post drawdown as well as with the 'Mortgage Options' service, CS are always available to help with any problems our clients have with lenders.

How do you aim to improve CS in the future?

We can always improve the way we operate. During the last 12 months we have added staff to the CS team to improve the administration function. During the coming months we will be seeking client feedback to gauge how we are performing and to determine the shape of the service for the future.

For more information please contact Nigel Brooker at ems@businessclassgroup.com

SUDOKU

Easy

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	7				6		4	5
	5				4	2		

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6					2			1
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Hard

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