

# Working from home is a reality, says Tricor group

BUSINESS

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LAST month, business expansion specialist Tricor Group announced that Veerinderjeet Singh had joined the group's subsidiary in Malaysia, Tricor Services (M) Sdn Bhd, as non-executive chairman of the company.

This came on the heels of Tricor Group's recent acquisition of the Malaysian operations of Axcelasia Inc, a Singapore-listed company, and an integrated professional services firm delivering governance, risk & compliance (GRC) solutions, corporate, business and tax services.

Tricor Malaysia was established in 2006 through the acquisition of the client accounting, payroll outsourcing, company secretarial and share registration businesses of Total Corporate Compliance Sdn Bhd and Tenaga Koperat Sdn Bhd.

It expanded in 2007 through the acquisition of the PFA Group, formerly a service arm of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu in Malaysia. In 2014, Tricor Malaysia acquired an issuing house business from Equiniti Services Sdn Bhd (now known as Tricor Investor & Issuing House Services Sdn Bhd).

Below are excerpts of an interview with the management of Tricor. They include Gary Tok, group chief commercial officer, Tricor Group, Veerinderjeet and Yeap Kok Leong, CEO and managing director of Tricor Malaysia and Labuan.

**With the emergence of virtual services, do you see an opportunity for Tricor to leverage on similar technology for your clients (e.g. voting for shareholders during AGMs)?**

Yeap: Virtual office services are likely to be on the upward trend as more companies manage a fully or partially remote workforce going forward. In this model, a service provider would handle mail collections, book meeting venues bookings and answer calls. Tricor Hive covers these aspects of the virtual office solution.

For virtual shareholders' meeting, especially for PLCs, we provide a remote participation and voting (RPV) system.

Tricor Investor and Issuing House was the first RPV provider to launch in Malaysia, with the first virtual shareholders' meeting held on April 21, 2020 during the MCO period.

Moving forward, we do anticipate virtual meeting to be part of the new normal. As the frontrunner for facilitating virtual meetings, we believe our RPV service is a favourable alternative to holding a physical shareholders' meeting.

**With the new way of doing business, do you see more opportunities for Tricor Hive?**

Yeap: The new norms call for agility in business operations. The option of "work from home" is now a reality and the traditional requirement "one staff, one desk" will no longer be necessary for some businesses.

This will result in drastic change in business trends as companies pivot to smaller office space especially for SMEs and emerging business segments.

Firms will continue to seek increased flexibility and transition from fixed office space with long-term contracts to flexible office space arrangements that allow them to flexibly scale as needed.

The smaller space requirement may be traded for better, prime locations, offering an ease on commuting and serving as an attraction tool for talent recruitment.

Such trends bode well for Tricor Hive, our Virtual Office & Serviced Offices in Kuala Lumpur that offer executive office rental space for rent plus corporate, business, HR & tax services all under one roof.

**How is the current pandemic impacting your business?**

Veerinderjeet: Because a significant part of our business is assisting clients to meet their obligations under the corporate and tax legislation, we have not seen significant impact from the pandemic apart from extensions being granted by relevant authorities for the filing of income tax returns or the hosting of general annual meetings.

However, there has been a delay in some of our advisory engagements as clients face more urgent matters due to the lockdown and the resumption of business operations.

**What are the urgent needs of your clients during this pandemic and how are you assisting them?**

Veerinderjeet: One specific area which has emerged during this pandemic is the rising need for guidance on the various funding schemes that have been set up by the government as well as the taxation changes related to the recently announced government stimulus packages.

In addition, for clients who have needed assistance with the wage subsidy programme, Tricor Axcelasia provides guidance on their submissions to the relevant agencies.

**From your perspective looking to assist businesses, what do you think the government should be doing to ensure businesses are on a steadier footing given that we have already entered phase-5 of the MCO?**

Veerinderjeet: The reopening of the economy has commenced well with the relevant SOPs in place. The key issue is always the need for financing.

For companies that do not have reserves, working capital has been critical during the lockdown and remains particularly important during the reopening as they look to resume operations.

We would suggest that the government monitor the utilisation of the existing funding schemes to ensure that assistance is directed to the right sectors and is reaching a wide, diversified segment of the business sectors.

The next step is to spread out payment schedules for businesses that have borrowed money from banks or owe money to the government. The final stage is to provide more extensive assistance to help businesses "technologise" and adopt new automation, computerised systems, and relevant software. This final step will require education and funding.

**What was the purpose of acquiring Axcelasia Inc?**

Tok: To complement our corporate and business solutions in Malaysia and across Asean, Tricor has long envisioned a regional governance, risk & compliance, internal audit, environment, sustainability & governance and tax advisory business.

**What is Tricor doing to quickly integrate Axcelasia's business into Tricor's business and value add its existing client base?**

Tok: As a people-based business, the successful integration of our teams was at the core of this transaction.

Since Permira Funds became the controlling shareholder of Tricor Group in 2017, we have completed eight acquisitions. A smooth and well-structured integration is critical to synergizing the respective strengths that each organization brings to the table.

Tricor's experience in previous acquisitions enabled us to quickly implement a strong collaborative and unified team structure with Tricor Axcelasia.

**What are the expansion plans both for Tricor Malaysia and Axcelasia?**

Tok: Now that we have successfully launched Tricor Axcelasia, we are embarking on a regional expansion plan to offer our services to companies beyond the borders of Malaysia, particularly in key Asean markets.

We are progressively expanding our footprint to serve businesses in Singapore, Hong Kong and Vietnam and will work our way to mainland China as well.