

Philip Merry, Founder of Singapore's Global Leadership Academy



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According to Philip, we are all connected and the “world truly is one”. So let’s harness this power and see what we can achieve. Find out more here...

What’s your story?

Son of a coal miner who then became a Christian minister I began my working life in 1972 as a family and marital therapist from England. My background led me to the belief that a life of significance is made by having the courage to become who we are, to live an authentic life, and I have always tried to do that. Interested in cultural harmony and experiencing as many cultures as possible, I have conducted global leadership and intercultural workshops in 58 countries over the last 35 years. As founder and CEO of Singapore’s Global

Leadership Academy, regional representative for the Belbin team profiling system and the only Singaporean company certified to teach the HeartMath resilience approach, I help groups and leaders build high performing multi-cultural teams which drive happiness and excellence at work. As I continue to grow and learn I am doing a part time PhD researching Synchronicity and Leadership which helps leaders integrate heart and head by understanding how their spirituality impacts leadership. I arrived in Singapore in 1990 as head of OD for Reuters Asia, set up my business in 1991, married Normala and stayed.

What excites you most about your industry?

What excites me is that I believe that the leadership consulting industry has the ability to help organisations and people be the best they can be by activating their inherent potential to leave the planet a better place. My company tag line is “Building the Spirit of Partnership, Peace, Prosperity and Happiness across Cultures” and I have never taken an assignment where I cannot achieve that goal in some way, whether I was working with the UN in Iraq or with secretaries from different cultures in a multinational company.

What's your connection to Asia?

First by DNA – my great grandmother was Indian and married my great grandfather – a soldier in the British army – so that means that I am 12.5% Indian. Second by marriage – Normala my wife and the love of my life is Singaporean. And lastly by residence – I have lived in HK for 2 years, Malaysia, 2 years, Phuket for 2 years, Sri Lanka for 2 years and Singapore for 25 years. Asia is my physical and spiritual home.



Favourite city in Asia for business and why?

You have got to just love Singapore – it took me 2 days to set up my company. And where else in the world would you have a government that regularly comes up with projects to help your business save money.

What's the best piece of advice you ever received?

From my mother who told me, “there is nothing you can't achieve in life.”

Who inspires you?

David Cooperrider Professor of Social Entrepreneurship at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve inspires me. He founded Appreciative Inquiry (AI) which helps people focus on what's going right (not what's going wrong) and in 30 years AI has become the most used organisational improvement tool on the planet. David is also supervisor for my PhD and I have never talked to him without coming away feeling truly inspired.

What have you just learnt recently that blew you away?

“Human emotions and consciousness interact with and encode information in the earth's geomagnetic field, and hence information is communicated non-locally between people at a subconscious level, which in effect, links all living systems and influences collective consciousness.” (HeartMath research). When I first read the statement above it BLEW ME AWAY. Research at the HeartMath Institute has proven (some say conclusively) that we are all truly connected – the world truly is one. If we begin to behave knowing that we are all energetically connected imagine what we could achieve? Our thoughts are linked to others and to a universal energy called the “Unified Field.”

If you had your time again, what would you do differently?

Find and live my dreams sooner, buy property earlier, meditate earlier and learn to play the piano as a child.

How do you unwind?

I love Premiership soccer. It is (for some of us) a universal language and I love studying it's leadership and team dynamics. I was delighted recently to meet the Chelsea team when I was staying at the hotel where I was doing some team development in Bangkok. Travelling to new and favourite places keeps my curiosity alive and young. Sitting in public places and just observing people also gives me pleasure.

Favourite Asian destination for relaxation? Why?

That would be Sri Lanka or Bhutan. Sri Lanka because it has everything, mountains, beaches, architecture, safari parks, spirituality and warm friendly people. I have been to Bhutan 7 times in the last few years mostly on UN assignments. Very few places on earth hit you with tranquility as soon as you get off the plane and Bhutan is one of them.

Everyone in business should read this book:

“Science and the Akashic Field” by Ervin Laszlo. As the world's foremost physicist Laszlo has spent years researching the intersection between science and spirituality. “We know now (says Laszlo) that our brain can receive non-locally (ie while not in the same place) information on aspects of all things in the universe”. This information is stored in the Akashic Field and is a validation of insights and intuitions that have inspired humans throughout the centuries. This is truly an exciting time to be in the human development business when we now have proof that we are connected to each other beyond just the human senses.

Shameless plug for your business:

When teams experience clashes of culture, of personality or of gender – they call me in. Most problems in organisations can be sourced back to a non-functioning senior management team. Because of my therapy background I am well placed to help people at a deeper psychological level, by identifying the unspoken roots of problems, and coach or facilitate to bring tangible business results helping individuals and teams to thrive. I am increasingly helping people understand how heart, intuition and synchronicity (all connections to spirit) can help balance heart and head to achieve transformations they never thought possible. And of course 35 years in 58 countries is a good record to have. I like to continually grow and evolve and recently achieved the CSP GLocal (Certified Speaking Professional Global) award from the Global Speakers Federation, one of only 29 people in the world to achieve this award. Also I am the only person in the world doing PhD research into Synchronicity and Leadership. My mission to make it as natural for leaders to do a synchronicity audit as it is to do a financial audit. So watch this space.

How can people connect with you?

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This interview was part of the Callum Connect's column found on The Asian Entrepreneur:



Callum Laing invests and buys small businesses in a range of industries around Asia. He has previously started, built and sold half a dozen businesses and is the founder & owner of Fitness-Buffer a company delivering employee wellness solutions in 12 countries. He is a Director of, amongst others, Key Person of Influence. A 40 week training program for business owners and executives.