

KONICA MINOLTA BUSINESS SOLUTIONS (HK) LTD.: PIONEERING CORPORATE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Case overview

“Hidden youths” are individuals who hide themselves and refrain from joining main-stream living. Securing employment for this disadvantaged group of people remains a social problem, even though Hong Kong has a vibrant economy with full employment. If “hidden youths” do not receive attention and help due to social isolation and apathy, they could become chronic unemployed and inflict sufferings to themselves and their close others. “Hidden youth” has become a social problem of many other developed cities, such as Tokyo and Singapore.

With the emerging idea of social enterprising and creating shared value, profit and non-profit organizations do not need to be conceived as distinct entities. In the past, profits made in the businesses might be gained at the expense of the broader community, and social problems are left to non-profit organizations and the government to solve. However, such belief is no longer valid. New kinds of hybrid enterprises create both economic value and social value.

Konica Minolta Business Solutions (HK) Ltd. is a pioneer example in Hong Kong. Through its BACKME (Business And Community Konica Minolta Enterprise) Program, it has employed “hidden youths” since 2014 and empowered them to work, reconnect with others, and contribute back to society. It is hailed as the first multinational corporation (MNC) in Hong Kong to put corporate social enterprising into practice. Better still, BACKME has expanded in 2016, and started drawing attention from the headquarters in Japan. This case illustrates how a MNC can implement, in our view, a shared value project, manage it well and then scale up to increase its impact. It provides valuable lessons to other corporations, that are interested to begin their own corporate social enterprising project. Also, given the protagonist a branch of a MNC, the case also illustrates how a subsidiary interacts with the headquarters to implement an innovative new business for an international business class.

Teaching Objectives

This case is designed for students in senior business undergraduate, MBA/EMBA, or executive development programs, chiefly with the following teaching objectives:

1. To understand the key concepts of corporate venturing and social entrepreneurship, the key