

Great Eastern scales new heights for 100th anniversary

Insurer celebrates with RM7 million 'live100percent' ad campaign

by **Kathleen Tan**
FD@bizedge.com

LOKE Kah Meng, customer management executive vice-president for Great Eastern Life Assurance Malaysia Bhd, will go to great lengths — and heights — for the company, including plunging 150ft in a bungee jump.

All for the sake of Great Eastern's "live100percent" campaign.

Having played an instrumental role in the planning stages of the campaign about 1½-years ago, Loke was certainly not going to miss out on the action during the filming of the commercials in Bali and New Zealand from September to October last year. For the "Plane" advertisement featuring a Tiger Moth aircraft flying over a young man driving a Chevrolet sports car, Loke got into the helicopter alongside the cameraman who filmed the plane doing somersaults.

There were hair-raising moments as the chopper pilot had to manoeuvre around the plane to try and get better angles. But Loke was more concerned about getting good shots than for his own life.

"The helicopter door was wide open with the cameraman sitting on the ledge with his legs hanging out! With only two seatbelts securing him in place, he held his camera in position like how soldiers hold their machine guns in war movies. Only thing is that he's not 20ft above ground level trying to gun someone down but 300ft in the air!" exclaimed Loke, who discovered in mid-air that his legs were freezing from the cold.

The "Plane" commercial was considered the toughest to shoot because of its highly technical nature; although it's only about 40 seconds, the commercial took a whole day to shoot.

Technical challenges aside, Great Eastern had difficulty trying to locate a Tiger Moth plane and the production team scoured the whole of Southeast Asia before locating one old plane in Bangkok, said Loke.

Looking further, the team finally decided on New Zealand which had an active Tiger Moth club. There, they were able to get not just two planes for the shoot but a crew of experienced pilots and cameramen who had worked on commercials as well as movies.

During the shoot at a private airstrip about an hour's drive from Auckland, the president of the New Zealand Tiger Moth Club himself flew the plane while the media talent sat in the back seat.

Great Eastern's "Jump" and "Beach" commercials were filmed in Bali, Indonesia. While filming the "Jump" commercial, Loke himself bungee-jumped from a 150ft-high steel platform, with his face inches away from the surface of the water in the swimming pool below. The 12-storey high steel platform owned by bungee company AJ Hackett overlooks Kuta Beach in Bali and constantly swayed with the sea breezes.

"You know, it takes three to four seconds for the jump but you



Loke

wouldn't know how long the recoil upwards would go on! I would have jumped for the ad but they didn't let me!" said Loke, chuckling.

The commercials are the first part of the "live100percent" campaign which celebrates Great Eastern's 100 years in Malaysia. The campaign includes thematic print advertising, on-the-ground promotions, outdoor advertising, television commercials and 52 "amazing experiences" overseas trips to be given away to lucky policyholders. The entire campaign costs RM7 million.

Of that, Loke said: "As you can see, we're very good at strategic planning and budgeting because we make RM7 million look like RM70 million!"

The "live100percent" campaign started with discussions between Loke, the company's corporate communication and marketing staff. Eventually, different versions were discussed by the company's advertising agency and Great Eastern management before the basic concept of the campaign took shape several months later.

"Since this is our 100th year and no other insurance company in Malaysia has celebrated its centennial year yet, we wanted to do a year-long celebration. And for us to be 100 years here in the country with generations of policyholders, what better way to celebrate it than with our policyholders," said Loke.

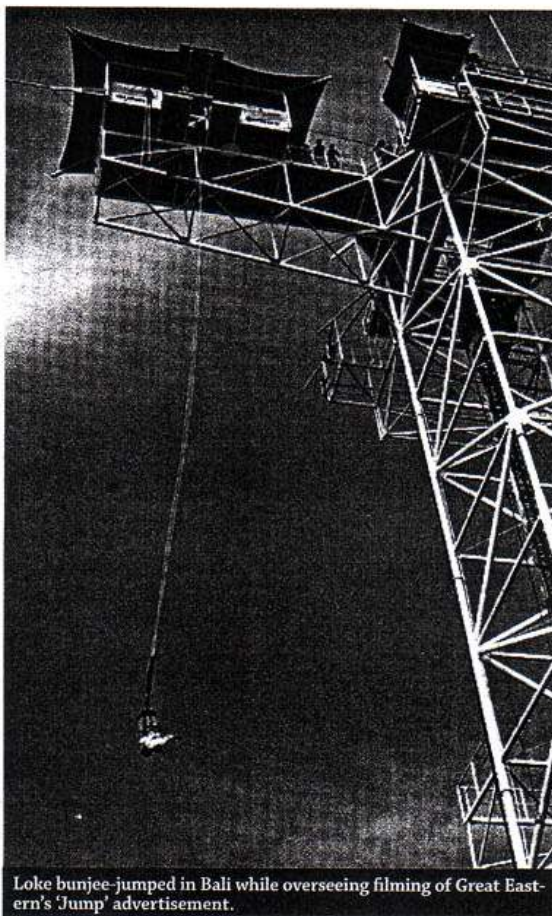
However, he said, for the campaign to be sustainable over a year, it must have wide appeal, hence the interactive campaign where policyholders get to participate. "We want to create enough hype so that people will be talking about it once the campaign is on, otherwise it won't last," he said.

"We're not different for the sake of being different — we're showing people that financial institutions are not just big, old, established institutions but we're actually here to be part of your life. And consistent with Great Eastern's theme, we'll actually reward you and allow you to live your life to the fullest," he said.

To tell everyone that "we're not 100 years old but 100 years young" required a more youthful, energetic type of campaign, said Loke, adding that it does not solely address a young target audience.

"That's why our TV commercials give a more adventurous outdoor go-and-live-your-life image and yet address three different target segments each," he said.

Another component of the integrated campaign are the thematic print and outdoor advertisements.



Loke bungee-jumped in Bali while overseeing filming of Great Eastern's 'Jump' advertisement.

According to Loke, taglines such as "Life favours the fearless" addresses the younger crowd while the "Growing old is mandatory. Growing up, is optional" catchphrase is targeted at people in their 40s to 50s.

Loke said unlike most insurance advertisements that tend to be product-centric with "in-your-face" marketing strategies, Great Eastern's campaign focuses more on benefits and lifestyle.

"The next stage is to show that we're actually rewarding our policyholders. We will be announcing the first of the '52 amazing experiences' winners on a weekly basis come February," he said.

The "52 amazing experiences" are 52 trips rewarded to 52 policyholders who submit the best-written slogans and vote for their favourite trip as listed on the interactive "live100percent" website. Winners will be given a video camera each to film their experiences, which would then be displayed on the website.

Among the "amazing experiences" are whale watching in Argentina, trekking up Machu Pichu in Peru, a bull run in Spain, gorilla sighting in Africa, aerial combat training in Arizona and celebrating New Year's Eve in Times Square, New York.

"The whole idea is that we would take you places that you never thought you could have gone to. For example, we'll be flying someone to Antarctica to actually walk with 3ft high emperor penguins! People may have gone to Phillip Island in Australia to see penguins, but not this," said Loke.

With more than 50 financial

products, 2.6 million policies in effect and 1.6 million policyholders, Loke said the company is targeting RM1 billion in revenue from all business lines. "Our policyholders have multiple policies, which speaks of their loyalty to the company," he said.

"We want to have a brand that has emotional attachment for our customers so we're here to offer you the benefits of insurance, not the products per se. We're more than insurance products — we're your lifestyle life insurance brand," he said.

Loke said branding is not just about high recognition but emotional affinity. "So what we're trying to do is to improve that emotional affinity — not to be recognised as an old established institution that's been here all these years but one that people can associate with emotional attachment. This is what will sustain the brand for the next couple of years," he said.

"Our brand has been around for 100 years and we plan to keep it around for the next 100 years," he said.

Great Eastern Life Assurance Malaysia currently has policies covering investment-linked, retirement planning, medical insurance, accident insurance and children's education plans. It plans to introduce more industry firsts like its Medicare 100, a medical insurance product which covers the insured till the age of 100, in the second quarter of this year.

"I think to stay number one, you cannot just emphasise on one product line. To be a market player you have to cover all segments," said Loke.