



GREAT FORESIGHT

Omni United CEO G.S. Sareen has found success by respecting the great unknowns in life (and playing a round or two of golf).

To entrepreneur G.S. Sareen, the unpredictability of golf mirrors the tumult that can disrupt the best-laid business plans. And even as the hours he spends on some of the world's most stunning courses take the stress off running a US\$200-million (S\$253-million) global enterprise, they also provide lessons that stay long after he sinks that final putt on the 18th green.

"Golf as a game is code for anything in life. You can hit the ball perfectly 100 times, but on the 101st it could go anywhere. The ball has a mind of its own; the best you can do is try to hit it well. This teaches you acceptance," said the founder and CEO and president of Omni United, a Singapore-based company that sells millions of tyres to customers in over 80 countries.

Sareen has found an exceptional level of success; he was named in *Fortune* magazine's 2012 list of Asia's 25 Hottest People in Business, while Omni has been honoured as one of Singapore's fastest-growing companies. But, like a round of golf, he takes nothing for granted.

"It's the same with business. You can learn all the theories in business school, but you won't know how they will turn out until you actually put them into practice. You can never be sure that a transaction will end up the way you'd planned," he says. This philosophy has served him well on and off the fairway. The eight-handicapper was part of the team that won the Pro-Am competition at the HSBC Women's Champions tournament in Sentosa earlier this year.

Meanwhile, Sareen has set Omni United an ambitious revenue target of US\$1 billion by 2015, an over-five-fold increase from today. If that wasn't daunting enough, he plans to do it while being eco-friendly and giving back to society.

But such altruistic intentions do not mean sacrificing profits. Indeed, the strength of

this strategy is that every move to boost sustainability or help others is tied to one that raises the bottom line.

In Africa, he is looking to connect with large retailers to sell his tyres on a cash-and-carry basis. This will allow enterprising young men to set up small shops fitting tyres bought from these retail outlets. It is an arrangement that will help to boost entrepreneurship in impoverished countries, while making profits for both his company and the retailers.


"We are not discounting, but selling at market rate. The young men are adding value by fitting tyres. So they are happy, the retailer is happy, and we are happy."

Sareen also makes more direct philanthropic contributions, such as via his partnership with the Breast Cancer Research Foundation in 2011 to launch the Radar "Pink Ribbon" tyre in 2011. Radar is Omni United's flagship tyre brand.

But back to golf, and the great unknown. Perhaps because of his acute awareness that nothing is within one's complete control, Sareen compensates by keeping the things, routines and people around him as predictable as possible. This could mean the same pink shirt he puts on every Monday morning, for instance, or the same seat he always chooses on an SIA flight.

Likewise, his choice of banker is one predicated on reliability, predictability and of course, delivering results.

"There are so many moving parts in life, so I try to take away as many variables as possible. It's been a great experience with HSBC across all the business I do with them, from private to commercial banking.

He added: "The more I deal with HSBC, the less I have to tell them what I need. They have a good track record in business, and they help me to remove some of those variables in life." 



HSBC PRIVATE BANK

As part of the HSBC Group, HSBC Private Bank offers all the benefits of an international network to its clients.

Amit Gupta (above), CEO of South-east Asia, HSBC Private Bank, says: "We build on our banking heritage and focus on being the principal bank for our clients' private-banking and business needs.

"Being one of the world's largest banking and financial-services organisations, HSBC's role and purpose is to enable businesses to prosper, and then work with business owners to protect and grow their wealth."

As with Omni United's philanthropic cause, the past few years have witnessed phenomenal growth in charitable giving by Asian businesses. Adds Amit: "Our wealth planners engage with our clients to identify and shape their preferred approach to effective and sustainable philanthropy. Asian families are increasingly interested in incorporating giving strategies into their wealth-accumulation plans, and our professional philanthropy advisory services have helped family offices and trusts to assess these causes."

FITS TO A TEE

HSBC is also a strong supporter of world-class golf events. The WGC-HSBC Champions tourney in China, along with sister tournament the HSBC Women's Champions in Singapore, as well as the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship and The Open Championship in Scotland, have all become global golf brands, thanks to HSBC's insights into the region.



Eight-handicapper G.S. Sareen at the 2012 HSBC Women's Champions Pro-Am.