

Building trust and relationships in Asia

Sebastien Hayoz, Managing Director at Asiaciti Trust Singapore, speaks to Hubbis about how independent, family-owned firms can offer stability and continuity in an industry that is still evolving, and how the issue with transparency no longer lies in challenging it, but knowing where the flow of information is going, and who monitors it.



Executive summary

Asiaciti Trust Group is a 100-percent family-owned and managed trust and corporate services provider. Founded over 40 years ago, the Group is one of the few family owned international fiduciary services firms that still exists to service private wealth management clients. Its Singapore office was established in 1980, and was one of the first independent trust companies to be licensed by the Monetary Authority of Singapore. The Group also has offices in Hong Kong, the Cook Islands, Dubai, Nevis, New Zealand, Panama and Samoa. Asiaciti Trust Singapore Managing Director Sebastien Hayoz talks to Hubbis about how being an independent company with no external ownership or links allows Asiaciti Trust Singapore to focus on servicing clients, offering long term stability and continuity without the short-term pressures that larger institutions can face.



SEBASTIEN HAYOZ, ASIACITI TRUST SINGAPORE MANAGING DIRECTOR, sees a trend towards increased consolidation on the part of financial management service providers, with regularly shifting landscapes in which many private wealth divisions of larger institutions are carved up and absorbed by different establishments “every three, five or 10 years, depending on the appetites of the directors and institutional investors in the companies to buy or sell those businesses.”

According to Hayoz, this can be both a good and a bad thing, “depending on where you sit.” That said, he believes that there are some clients who may be getting “annoyed and concerned” with the rounds of acquisitions by the financial institutions with which they do business, and finding their asset portfolios under new management.

“One of the biggest challenges facing wealthy families in Asia may be the flow of information, and that in an increasingly transparent world.”

This is why Hayoz believes that companies like Asiatic Trust Singapore still occupy a valuable niche in the industry for their ability to represent continuity and stability in an often unpredictable world. Established over 40 years ago, Asiatic Trust Group remains 100 percent family-owned and managed. The company provides international trust structuring and corporate services as well as specialist fiduciary and administrative services to individuals, intermediaries and corporations.



SEBASTIEN HAYOZ
Asiatic Trust Singapore

Completely independent, family-owned

“We are completely independent, and are not linked or related to any other financial institution,” Hayoz says. “The fact that Asiatic Trust Singapore ultimately remains family-owned demonstrates a genuine commitment to a long-term relationship with our clients. This prevents any pressure from shareholders in terms of generating revenues in the shortest term, or in the fastest ways possible.”

Does this really imply that private equity owned companies that have been bought, or who are in the process of consolidating, are acting in the own short term self-interests and not that of their clients?

“I am not saying it is a bad business model,” says Hayoz. “It is just a different business model. I am not here to opine on or to assess what others are doing. It very much depends on the client profile, their needs and wants. Larger firms are adapted to certain client profiles.”

“Our wealth management model is more adapted to the family-owned, entrepreneur’s business. This does not mean that we claim we have a better service or superior expertise; it is just different. It is dependent on what the client wants. Our being independent means that

Key Priorities

Over the next two years, Hayoz shares that Asiatic Trust Singapore will be adapting and consolidating the key elements of its services to clients, and repositioning itself in terms of what can be offered differently and additionally to its clients. “The first priority is to reposition ourselves in terms of what we are going to offer going forward. We are thinking about what we can add to the relationship, what more we can bring to the table”, he explains.

The core services of Asiatic Trust Group include the establishment and administration of trusts, funds and corporate vehicles for estate and succession planning as well as wealth diversification, preservation and protection.

The second priority for Asiatic Trust Singapore is to partner with established and reputable firms in Singapore and Southeast Asia generally and helping wealthy families in the region get familiar with the types of structuring Asiatic Trust Singapore can offer to help them protect their assets, and make sure that their wealth can be passed on to the next generations.

Thirdly, with the slew of new regulations, proposals and registers being imposed by various industry and regulatory bodies on the financial industry across all jurisdictions, the equally important priority according to Hayoz, is “making sure that we are still operating in an environment that is completely compliant with increased regulations, whether these are local or international”.

we can offer long term continuity, and stability.”

Control of information

Hayoz believes that one of the biggest challenges facing wealthy families in Asia may be the flow of information, and that in an increasingly transparent world, who has information, where the information goes and who receives this information is a key issue that applies to families in Asia as anywhere else in the world.

“After one or two generations of successful wealth building, high and ultra-high net worth clients in Asia are also now prioritising issues of succession planning.”

“There is no longer any point in challenging the need for transparency,” he says. “It’s here, whether in Asia or Europe or the U.S. The challenge is where is this information going, and who can monitor this flow of information.”

He adds that clients are getting used to recent new regulations surrounding transparency, despite early attempts to challenge this. Now, however, he says that there is a level of acceptance of wealth structures having to become more transparent, and that there will have to be “compromise on one or two things.”

“At Asiaciti Trust Singapore, we have a very high employee-to-client ratio. We have a dedicated, personalised service, where senior people not only carry out whatever needs to be done, but are also able to talk to the client in terms of sharing or consolidation of information, to give every comfort the client needs.”

Getting Personal

Sebastien Hayoz is the Managing Director for Asiaciti Trust Singapore. He was born and grew up in Fribourg, Switzerland, which he describes as “a small town in the middle of Switzerland, between the French and German regions.” After graduating from the University of Fribourg with a Master’s degree in Law with a focus on banking and tax, he moved to Geneva and trained as a lawyer for two years before an opportunity came up for him to join the trust and fiduciary industry.

He spent the next 13 years in Geneva before moving to Singapore in October 2016, initially joining Asiaciti Trust Singapore as a client services director. He believes that Asia represents an enormous opportunity for the wealth management industry, and it was this belief that prompted his move to the region. In his spare time, Hayoz enjoys keeping fit by sparring with opponents in the Muay Thai boxing ring. Married with two children aged two and 10, he is also enjoying discovering and exploring different countries, cultures and traditions in Southeast Asia.

Succession planning

According to Hayoz, after one or two generations of successful wealth building, high and ultra-high net worth clients in Asia are also now prioritising issues of succession planning. He observes that notwithstanding strong family ties in Asian families, there is often also a temptation to spend the wealth, “because this is Singapore, or Hong Kong; places where you can easily spend money very quickly.”

industry for a number of years. “We see more and more business originating directly from Singapore now,” he says.

He adds that, because of a new generation of entrepreneurs in the region, he is also seeing clients who are “coming from everywhere” looking for the stability, credibility and reputation of Singapore. This includes but is not limited to the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. Hayoz believes that the

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He says the challenge for these individuals lies in making sure that the businesses and wealth they have created will be protected and passed on to the right hands, and that it stays within the family to benefit successive generations.

Hayoz believes that the wealth management markets in Singapore and Hong Kong are mature, with established advisors and professionals in these cities who have worked in the

appetite of these clients to begin properly structuring their wealth will create opportunities but also challenges for wealth management service providers in terms of adapting the advices, structuring and the business generally to the new international standards in each country within the region. Asiaciti Trust Group has been present and is active in the region for 40 years and has therefore a distinct advantage to assist. ■