

Thailand's wealth management industry: Rising wealth and sophistication

The 7th annual Thailand Wealth Management Forum attracted over 250 delegates who heard the insights and advice of 48 speakers, all holding senior roles in their respective fields in the Thai, regional or global wealth management industry.

A TOTAL OF FIVE PANEL DISCUSSIONS, four workshops and six presentations formed the event program. Each featured cutting-edge ideas, concepts and products from leading experts in their respective fields from private banks, financial advisors and technology solutions developers and enablers. Together they formed a comprehensive guide to the growth and evolution of the Thai wealth market.

The first panel of the event brought together top-level local and regional experts to discuss the prospects of the local wealth industry in the years ahead. The audience was treated to a robust discussion on how the Thai wealth management industry is developing to provide a greater array of onshore and offshore solutions to cater to the country's high net worth (HNW) and ultra-HNW individuals.

Experts noted that Thailand's expansion is helped, in general, by having some of the most receptive and forward-looking regulators in the region. The Thai investment culture is ever more global, digitisation will play an even more prominent role, and banks are increasingly focussing on the younger generations of HNWIs.

Delegates then enjoyed a panel discussion amongst experts who gave their insights into emerging digital trends in wealth management including distribution, plug-and-play versus bespoke design





and the consequences of failing to join the technological superhighway.

But experts also cautioned the audience to remember that the essential human connection must be maintained, that digital should empower this, not eliminate it. Panellists agreed that technology is not yet able to replace client advisors; rather it should be designed to enhance them as a hybrid.

The third panel comprised insurance experts, who provided a unique insight into issues including the development of unit-linked business in Thailand, open architecture in insurance, as well as industry priorities as wealth increases and life insurance needs evolve. Financial literacy and sophistication are rising fast in Thailand, and there is far more awareness around the value of insurance. That growth will come from proper financial planning linked to protecting income, incorporating health

insurance, planning for retirement, educating children and legacy planning.

Gatekeepers, as highly experienced international investment managers at the private banks and wealth managers are often known, assembled for the fourth panel of the day to analyse how the Thai asset management business has evolved and to predict future trends.

The Thai wealth management market is developing a more global perspective, encouraged by regulatory changes and increasing expertise of local professionals. Open architecture is preferred because of the desire to pick and choose the ‘best of breed’ products.

The last panel discussion of the day brought together a group of experts to discuss products that may suit current market conditions and forecast financial and geopolitical trends.





The first presentation of the day was given by Lee Wong, Head of Family Services at Lombard Odier, who explained her approach to transition planning for ultra-wealthy Asian families and their family businesses; she said this is as much an art as a science.

The second presentation of the event was provided by Manoj Prajapati, Head of Sales for South Asia at Allfunds Singapore. Prajapati described the Allfunds platform and its relevance for wealth managers in Thailand and the region, and also presented a detailed Workshop to look under the hood of the Allfunds platform.

The third presentation and associated workshop was given by Oak Samart, managing director and country head for Thailand at Henley & Partners. Samart advised that there are some excellent offshore residence and citizenship options for Thailand's wealthy, as well as highlighting Thailand's attractions for overseas HNWIs, especially those in the Asia region.

The next workshop was led by leading IT solutions provider Comarch; the audience was treated to an explanation of how to align customer and em-

ployee experience to boost user experience and the efficacy of AI to help achieve these objectives.

Next up was a workshop presented by Robert Hordon, a New York-based Senior Fund Manager with J O Hambro Capital Management. The workshop focussed on the need to produce income today and capital growth for tomorrow, while also protecting capital. Hordon explained how the search for investments at prices below intrinsic value and investing in durable, sustainable businesses both support the downside and upside potential of a portfolio.

The next presentation was given by Leonteq Securities, with a focus on the benefits of structured investment products, especially in more changeable, less predictable market conditions. Structured products (SPs) can help investors cope with changing market conditions, if they are correctly assembled and if they are tailored to suit the market outlooks of those investors.

An informative presentation given by Franck Fayard, Commerzbank's Asia-based Director and Head of Product Engineering, addressed the benefits for wealth managers in Asia in building smarter portfolios using an active portfolio building site.





Krzysztof Maurer, Managing Director of Comarch (Thailand), then gave a rousing presentation in favour of artificial intelligence, known as AI. According to Maurer, AI is exceptionally relevant and applicable to the global wealth management industry.

There is a latent fear of AI-enhanced robots turning against mankind or being used against humankind. Others believe that it is a revolutionary technology that can be compared to the invention of the printing press or a new industrial revolution, as AI never sleeps, never tires, it is continually re-learning and reacting to market changes and numerous other events and data.

The penultimate presentation of the event was provided Irene Lee, Head of Business Development, Intermediary and Partnership at Hawksford Singapore. She shared her insights into wealth management trends, characterised by rapid growth and enduring regulatory proliferation. The creation of tax compliant tools for estate planning can only be

achieved with professional advice and services from reputable jurisdictions and by paying close attention to the new world of regulation and compliance.

For the final presentation of the forum, Kelvin Lim, Head of Business Development for Asia at IRESS expertly explained the world of cryptocurrencies and blockchain, and why they are maturing so rapidly.

Lim reinterpreted the concept of Blockchains and Bitcoins by creating fictional characters and stories to make them more 'reachable' to the audience. Blockchain is, in essence, digital data to verify actions. The digital footprint is utterly permanent, rather like superheroes.

The Thailand Wealth Management Forum left the delegates and the speakers with a huge amount of information and many ideas to absorb. The conclusion was clear for all - Thailand's wealth management industry and the opportunities it brings are both developing apace and positively. ■

