

## In CSR expo, firms get chance to do what's right

By Riza T. Olchondra

NINE YEARS AGO, WHEN corporate social responsibility (CSR) had not yet become a buzz word, only a few large companies in the country had foundations and supported volunteerism among their employees.

Today, most corporations, whether Filipino or foreign-owned, have a CSR program ranging from granting educational scholarships to sending employees to a day's work of building homes and training informal settlers about entrepreneurship.

With the completion of the country's first-ever computerized elections and the coming turnover of power to a new set of national and local leaders, more businesses are thus seen to go into CSR to support national development.

This is because the elections have sparked a sense of hope for the country, a sense that Filipinos have a "fresh start" after the recent financial crisis and natural calamities, says Edgardo C. Amistad, chair of the League of Corporate Foundations (LCF) and president of the United Coconut Planters Bank-Coconut Industry Investment Fund Foundation.

Mindful of the country's optimistic outlook, the LCF has adopted the theme "Synergizing for Change" for its ninth annual CSR Expo.

"The recently concluded elections represent a remarkable opportunity for the Filipino people to set aside political colors and work together towards re-building our nation," says Amistad, who leads the LCF CSR Expo 2010, at the press launch held at Glorietta Mall in

Makati City.

To be held on July 14 and 15, 2010 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City, the LCF's ninth CSR Expo provides a platform for the business community, government, and other sectors to redefine relationships, discuss common agenda and together, begin to draft a framework for action where each stakeholder can make a significant and lasting impact.

"The LCF and its members have long been involved in supporting our nation's sustainable development, complementing government efforts in the areas of education, environment, arts and culture, health and enterprise development. This year we hope to engage other sectors even more in an effort to make our contributions more strategic and relevant," Amistad says. Amistad recalls that back in

2001, the LCF started its annual CSR Expo with only a handful of corporate foundations and corporations.

The league now has a membership of more than 70 corporate foundations and corporations advocating for greater CSR.

Amistad admits that the recent financial crisis somewhat dampened the CSR spirit as business leaders struggled to keep their own businesses afloat and their employees secure. It became a challenge for the LCF to even put together a CSR Expo in 2009, he says.

"But the years of educating business leaders about CSR have built good momentum, and with the world coming out of the recent financial crisis, as well as having a new government, I think we will see more CSR work among big and small

businesses alike," Amistad says.

During the LCF CSR Expo, delegates will hear about various models for collaboration and cooperation among the public and private sectors and have the opportunity to network and converse with business leaders, government representatives and development experts from here and abroad. The two-day conference delegates will feature plenary sessions on The Journey to Sustainability, The Business Response to Poverty, Building on Common Values, and Public-Private Partnerships.

Breakout and special interest sessions will discuss issues and initiatives on Climate Change, Education, Arts and Culture, Health and Enterprise Development, as well as Global Standards on CSR, CSR and Social Media, and Measuring

Social Impact.

The LCF CSR Expo also features an exhibition of booths over 70 organizations involved in CSR and a parallel 'CSR 101' learning series that will be offered for free to students and teachers.

To further promote CSR and the LCF CSR Expo, the LCF has put up a 3-day photo and product exhibit at the ground level of Glorietta 3. The exhibit features photos of CSR in action and selected products that were a result of business and community partnerships.

"We actually want to encourage more SMEs (small and medium enterprises) to do CSR work. They comprise a larger portion of our economy and if more of their employees volunteer for CSR work they can really make a difference," Amistad says.

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