

EMBRACING NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND NEW THINGS KBQUEST EMBRACES INNOVATION THROUGH MODERATION

熱愛新科技新事物

KBQUEST中庸之道談創新

Interviewed by Mr. Alex Tam



“Keep exploring with new technologies is part of our Company Gene, we love trying new initiative and are agile to the changes in technology and market. We use adaptive model in our daily operation, providing platform to encourage our staff participating in Company's innovation and business development.” **Eric Moy, CEO of KBQuest said.**

KBQuest香港行政總裁梅力恒：「我們的公司基因(Company Gene)就是喜歡接觸新事物，對技術、市場改變不會感到痛苦，熱衷於學習。我們採用適應模型(adaptive model)，提供平台以鼓勵和促進員工參與理念創新和業務發展。」

In 2000, KBQuest Group was founded in Los Angeles, the United States, and further set-up subsidiaries in Hong Kong and Shanghai, specializing in enterprise software consultation and new business development. The company provides extensive solutions covering enterprise portal, cloud computing, education, financial services, broadcast and media for multinational to small and medium size businesses in United States, China and Hong Kong. KBQuest is the key partner of Microsoft and was awarded Microsoft Best Azure Partner (2012-2014) and Microsoft Country Partner of the Year in 2015.

Today, KBQuest Hong Kong team is the key source of new business driver of the Group and has achieved unparalleled results from Cloud solution business, acquiring a number of customers from large corporations. Eric shared the secret of success of KBQuest Hong Kong team in fast changing world of technologies, “I love new technologies and trying new things. We have the courage to try new things but we won't rush for short term benefits nor put all the eggs in one basket. We aim to establish a business model with steady growth.”

Market changes while businesses transforms

Eric Moy joined KBQuest in 2000 as a Solution Architect for about 8 years when the Group changed their business model in 2008. During that period, he had been travelling frequently between US and Shanghai to provide software development and consultation to their customers. He mentioned, due to the financial crisis in 2008, the US Headquarters decided to change their business model and focus on investing in Startups while the subsidiary in Hong Kong refined the mission to develop new businesses and new business direction. This changed the position of Eric from technology consultant to the leader of the company in future business development.

Establish the culture of trying new things

As the leader of business development, Eric Moy has a different view on allocating manpower and company resources for innovation. He emphasized the company should focus on learning and applying new or innovative technologies and products, but

KBQuest Group於2000年在美國洛杉磯成立，同年在香港及上海設立子公司，專攻企業軟件顧問及開發業務。該公司為美國、中國和香港的跨國企業到中小型企業提供企業入口網站、雲端計算、教育、金融服務、廣播和媒體等解決方案。KBQuest與微軟合作無間，更於2012-2014年Microsoft Best Azure Partner及2015年Microsoft Country Partner of the Year.

今天KBQuest香港團隊成為集團創新動力的來源，更在雲端解決方案上取得不俗的成就，獲得本地多家大型機構使用。科技日新月異，究竟KBQuest香港團隊如何轉型成功？KBQuest香港行政總裁梅力恒說：「我熱愛新科技新事物。勇於嘗新，卻不急進及孤注一擲，保持平穩增長的經營模式。」

市場改變企業轉型

梅力恒於2000年加入KBQuest，早期擔任Solution Architect經常往返美國與上海之間協商，從事軟件開發及顧問工作，這工作模式維持8年，直到2008年集團經營方式轉變。他表示，因08年金融風暴，美國總公司要改變經營模式，專注於投資初創公司，而香港分公司則轉為肩負發掘新業務、尋求新發展的使命，這使梅力恒面對的挑戰由昔日科技顧問轉為帶領公司業務發展的領導工作。

建立勇於嘗新文化

梅力恒作為推動業務發展的舵手，對於調撥人手及資源進行創新，有另一番體會。他強調公司是以應用方面創新為主，不是開發新科技產品，而是勇於學習及面對新科技。他表示：「我們對新科技充滿狂熱，有測試項目也會投身其中，當中有利有弊，可能會因此浪費時間與人力物力。但我們的公司基因(Company Gene)就是喜歡接觸新事物，對技術、市場改變不會感到痛苦，熱衷於學習。」我們採用適應模型(adaptive model)，提供平台以鼓勵和促進員工參與理念創新和業務發展。」

not developing them from scratch. “We are enthusiastic to any new technologies and we love to participate in the beta testing projects even though there are some drawbacks – you may waste a bit of time, human and other resources,” he said. “Keep trying new things is our Company Gene, therefore we love learning new things and are agile to the changes in technology and market. We use adaptive model in our daily operation, providing platform to encourage our staff participating in Company’s innovation and business development.”

“Our enthusiasm to new things has differentiated us from other local technology companies which might stay on their original approach due to their past success and they started to lack courage in innovation. However, we think different and act different,” Eric said. He used Cloud computing as the example. In 2010, the industry started talking about Cloud computing, but the market was not mature – none of the large enterprises used. Therefore, a number of companies didn’t step forward and invest in this market. However, KBQuest has made a significant step to start developing Cloud computing application because they always love to try new things. When Microsoft decided to enter Cloud computing market, KBQuest has been well prepared for this and gained huge advantages.

Balanced development model

From changing business model in 2008 to shifting to new technology projects in 2011, KBQuest prioritized risk management during the period of change. Eric Moy explained, if the whole company has completely engaged in the innovative project, they will face a huge operation risk when the market does not accept this innovative idea. Therefore, he doesn’t allow himself and the team only focus on one single project. Instead, the technology team of 50 people that Eric leads will be divided into smaller teams for 4 to 5 combinations of businesses, embracing paralleled development approach.

“When we put all eggs in one basket and the market doesn’t respond well, it will be very difficult for us to change our business focus at once.”

When investing in new technology, we may face failure and the chance of failure would be higher than success. This is very common to KBQuest. He roughly estimated only one of five technologies that they have invested would successfully be brought to market. However, this is not regarded as success, but yet to be a failure. Therefore, we still need to invest and continue to develop. For example, even Windows Phone is not popular, but our KBQuest is committed to engaging themselves in exploring its technology. And, although Virtual Reality is not within their scope of business, we still bought some VR products to try and develop the technology in order to explore more potential business opportunities.

We have strong knowledge about the new technologies in the market while some of them may be successful and will gain market attention. Thus, KBQuest can enjoy advantage in advance. Indeed, we have given up some projects but we just stayed clam. We believe this is part of our journey and it will not



Technology companies always embrace imagination for their businesses. This is the illustration at the reception area of KBQuest Hong Kong office.
科技公司追求想像力，這是KBQuest香港辦事處的入口位置的插畫。

他坦言：「這種熱愛新事物的文化令我們跟本地科技公司不同，他們可能為了過去的成功留守本業，不敢創新，但我們沒有這個心理包袱。」最簡單例子是2010年業界開始談論雲計算，但市場仍未成熟，未有大型企业採用。許多公司因此對雲計算卻步，不敢貿然投入其中。由於KBQuest不抗拒新事物，很快便投入雲計算技術發展應用，當Microsoft決定轉攻雲計算市場時，KBQuest早已準備就緒，優勢突顯。

平衡發展模式

由於2008年起改變業務，到2011年轉攻新科技項目，KBQuest經歷蛻變過程中首要考慮風險管理。梅力恒解釋，若然公司全面投入創新項目，當市場不接受時，會面臨極大營運風險。因此，他不容許自己及團隊們專注於單一項目，而他統領50人技術團隊中採用分散投資4至5種業務組合的並行發展模式。

「當大家孤注一擲時，若市場不接受，要立即轉身太難了。」

當然投資新技術，總要面對失敗，更是失敗多於成功。這對KBQuest來說是一種常態。他粗略估計，每研究五項新技術只有一項能夠面世，但這不代表成功，只是仍未失敗，繼續鑽研而已。例如 Windows Phone 即使不流行，KBQuest同事們也有涉獵當中技術。又例如VR（虛擬實境）跟現存業務沒有太大關係，但該公司也會購入VR產品，讓同事們试玩及研究，再找尋商機。

好處是熟悉市場最新技術，當中有些會爆紅，令KBQuest取得領先優勢，當然也有一些要放棄。對於失敗他處之淡然，因為這是公司成長的必經階段，也不會弄至公司倒閉。他說：「每間公司有自己生存模式，我們不是追求熱賣一個新產品而取得過百倍高速增長。我們本業是軟件顧問及服務，追求每年增長30%。」

impact our business in the end. "Every company has their own way to operate. We are not looking for one single product which can drive our business to grow by hundred folds. We focus on software consultation and services, aiming to grow our company 30% every year."

Free teaming every year

There are always popular and relatively unpopular technologies in the market. To be fair, Eric does not only encourage his team to invest in a number of new technologies, but also allow his colleagues to choose the projects that they prefer. He believes this annual free rotation and teaming approach can help the team better understand their objective and responsibility for the year and they can choose other businesses next year. "I only provided them with a development platform and they can choose the projects they are interested in, such as big data, business intelligence, database, etc."

Lunch gathering with millennial colleagues

Eric Moy believes the traditional top-down paternalistic approach is dated and no longer works. Instead, we need to encourage colleagues to participate from bottom-up and show our respects to millennial colleagues.

"Nowadays, we have to work anytime anywhere and we need our colleagues to follow-up with the potential customers for every enquiry. Therefore, the sense of belonging and engagement of our colleagues and their happiness are critical to our business." He said.

He loves to have lunch with each millennial colleague and will help him know them better. During the lunches, everyone can share their opinions and build trust among each other. Sometimes, he feels like he is a school's Principal, rather than a manager because he loves to share his thoughts with colleagues and provide them with guidance through discussion.

Eric Moy emphasized, the definition of work-life balance is not the same as before. We are now working anytime anywhere and it is essential to relax after work. As such, the company has set-up two dart boards for the staff. At first, only a few colleagues played it, but now we have more than 80% colleagues enjoying it. They even arranged a competition with more than fifty colleagues participating.

"After working for a week, they may organize activities together over the weekend. The harmonious environment in the company has enhanced the sense of belonging among colleagues. Some of them even formed a recreational committees and organized regular activities for all the staff. The company doesn't need to arrange those activities but only support them," he said. "These little dedication and engagement further enhanced the cohesiveness among the staff. They don't want to leave the company because they became friends."

This management style encourages highly transparent discussion with employees in order to help them develop their own career. Thus, KBQuest has achieved high staff retention rate with nearly 0% turnover rate. Except migrating to other countries, no KBQuest

每年自由組合團隊

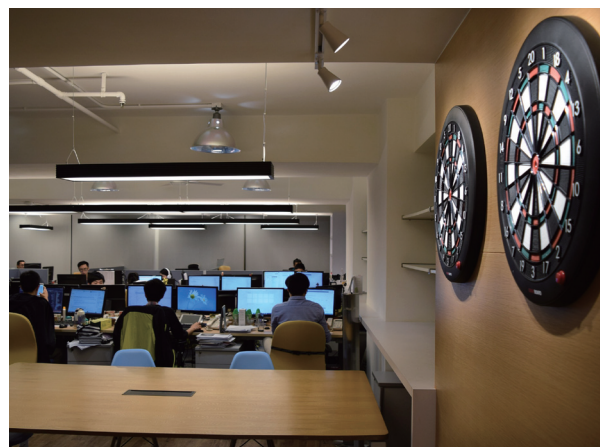
科技項目有熱門與冷門之分，為公平起見，梅力恒不但讓團隊投資多種新技術，也讓同事們自由選擇從事哪個項目開發工作。他認為採用同事自由輪換及組合的模式，每年執位一次，令員工明白今年目標及責任，明年也可以重新選擇做其他業務。「我只提供一個發展平台讓他們自己發展，按他們興趣發展自己的職業，例如大數據、商業智能、數據庫等。」上述經營方法，讓每位同事仿如老闆般看待自己，不會單憑自己的喜好而斷定項目，因為同事們從已有的選擇中選取對他們最有利的答案。

與年輕同事共晉午餐

梅力恒認為高高在上的家長式管理已經過時，需要鼓勵員工自下而上的參與，讓年輕同事需要受到尊重。他表示：「現在任何時間都要工作，每個電話查問都需要同事跟進，所以同事的歸屬感、投入感與開心是十分重要。」他喜歡每周跟一位年輕同事共晉午餐，對他們多了解多關心，也藉此互相分享意見，建立互信。有時候，他感覺就像學校的校長，而不是經理，通過討論，與員工分享並提供指導和意見。

梅力恒強調，今天追求工作與生活平衡的定義跟過去不一樣。因隨時隨地工作，這代表完成工作後，需要立即輕鬆一下。為此，公司掛了兩個飛標板，讓同事需要放鬆時玩樂。起初僅得三、四人玩，現在差不多八成同事都懂玩，甚至50多人進行比賽，場面熱鬧。他續說：「即使一周工作過後，星期六、日還會相約去玩，同事間十分開心及親密，增加了對公司的歸屬感。他們更會自組娛樂部定期舉行聯誼活動，不再由公司安排，公司只提供相應的支持。這些小小心思與付出，卻令同事們不願意離開，因為這代表離開一班朋友。」

這種管理方法，鼓勵高透明度的討論來讓員工參與決定，提供靈活性，使員工能夠發展自己的事業，令KBQuest員工穩定性極高，流失率接近零。除了移民，過



Two dart boards are provided by the company for the colleagues to enjoy and relax. 公司掛了兩個飛標板，讓同事需要放鬆時玩樂。

staff left the company for job-hopping in the past few years. This situation is rare in the technology industry in which the salary is getting higher. In other words, our staff love and enjoy our company culture.

Encouraging “internal Startups”

In the market, there are a lot of gadgets or mobile phones that the colleagues may not buy for personal uses. However, KBQuest will buy them for research purpose, encouraging them to start new businesses from internal. When a staff has any innovative ideas, KBQuest will encourage more colleagues to participate through fostering “internal Startups” approach.

“KBQuest will encourage establishment of new business by the approach of setting-up subsidiary in order to give the stock options to our colleagues. In this case, the staff will have two jobs – one is to work for KBQuest while the other one is to work for themselves,” he further explained. “Our colleagues will be allowed to make their own decisions in allocating resources and time to the new projects. Although some of them may not be able to balance both ‘jobs’, no one has ever left our company to start new businesses.”

Softlearning.com is one of the successful examples. It is an education project inspired by KBQuest staff who are aware of the market potential of Cloud computing in the education industry. They leveraged on the existing advantages of the Company in Cloud computing on starting this new business. Launched in April 2016, Softlearning.com has acquired 60 schools as customers in less than 3 months. It is a forward looking project on Solution on Cloud using iBeacon, a micro-location technology which can analyze the customer pattern of the school tuck shop. In conclusion, it is a creative and practical solution for schools.

Technology-led development approach

Managing KBQuest by unusual approach, Eric Moy has established a unique management style led by technology and manifested his courage in trying new things no matter it would turn out to be success or failure. Such approach can even help the company grasp new business opportunities. Eric does not only enable KBQuest to embrace all types of new technologies and operate in a healthy manner, but also help strengthen the Company’s reputation in the industry, and thus attracting some large vendors to co-operate with. This is not a planned strategy but a result derived from the well-established company culture. “Software development is a protracted war and we need our fully committed talents to achieve the goals. The most beautiful part of running the Company is to enjoy process amid the fast changing world,” he concluded.

往幾年沒有人因跳槽而離開公司，在人才薪金不斷搶高的科技業，這情況極為罕見，可見同事們都喜歡這家公司的文化。

鼓勵內部創業

許多新手機新玩意，個人不會買，KBQuest則以研究為目標，容許由公司出錢添置新玩意，甚至因此促進內部創業。當有員工自發創新時，KBQuest會鼓勵內部創業方式，讓同事參與其中。他解釋：「KBQuest會以建立旗下子公司的方式鼓勵成立新業務，讓同事們擁有股權。這樣同事們等於打兩份工，一份是KBQuest，一份是為自己工作。至於新項目投入與時間，則由同事們自己安排與負責。或許會有些同事未能百分百集中心力兼顧兩面，不過沒有人因此而離去創業。」

Softlearning.com就是最佳成功例子，這個教育項目是KBQuest員工看到雲計算在教育界商機而提出，並利用公司現有在雲計算技術上的優勢而創立的新業務。Softlearning.com今年四月才公佈，不足三個月內已有60間學校使用。這項以雲計算建立解決方案（Solution on cloud）的前瞻性項目，當中有採用iBeacon微定位技術，可以分析校園小賣部的人流，極具創意與實用性。

技術部門主導發展

梅力恒統領的KBQuest公司，建立技術主導、勇於嘗新及不計較失敗的管理風格，更由此衍生新商機。這種管理風格不但令KBQuest能把握創新技術及穩健營運雙軌並行，同時令該公司在行內建立良好聲譽，獲許多大廠商跟他們合作。這不是一種精心計劃的策略，而是從文化慢慢自然衍生出來的成果。他總結：「軟件開發是一場持久戰，一切靠技術人才全心全意去完成，我們能在不斷變化中享受這一過程，實屬美事。」