



Manida Lau: Championing Talent at the Heart of Building a Gaming Legacy

Running a two hundred-million-dollar divisional casino gaming operations, while overseeing all aspects of business expansion, product development, new market exploration, and international production is no easy feat. But it's no secret that **Dr. Manida Xongmixay-Lau, Okada Manila's Vice President for Business Solutions and Premium Marketing Operations**, can handle such responsibility with grit and grace.

Her secret? "The heart of the business is the people. Having the right people with the right skills at the right positions at the right time are all keys to success," Dr. Lau, who recently completed her Doctorate in Business Administration in California, said modestly.

Prior to becoming a business leader, Dr. Lau once dreamt of becoming a physician, but after getting an internship at Grand Hyatt Macau, her interests change.

In 1994, Dr. Lau had just completed her Bachelor's Degree in Travel Industry Management when Hawaii's travel and hospitality industry was booming. She also bagged a Master's Degree in Human Resources, and went on to work in Human Resources for over a decade with HTH Corporation, a privately held real estate company, managing Alohilani Resort and the Courtyard by Marriott King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel in Hawaii as well as The Anza Hotel in California.

"Working in HR enabled me to learn people skills and diverse leadership styles. It gave me a new perspective in my career in terms of developing people to work in a way to hit your business targets," Dr. Lau said, adding that acquiring the skill in spotting and developing talent is crucial in meeting periodic business requirements in the ever-dynamic gaming industry.

A lot of team members have been with her since day one, "I always tell my team that the title I have serves as a voice for the company. When in the office, I'm just like them. I cultivate a culture of learning and knowledge sharing."

In 2006, Dr. Lau took a huge leap of faith back to Asia to open resorts and casinos, while rising through the ranks in The Venetian Resort Macau, City of Dreams Macau, and Okada Manila. She also supported City of Dreams Manila and Studio City Macau on a project basis.

Ever since Dr. Lau moved to the Philippines in 2016 to open Okada Manila touted as "Manila's Grand Icon," she has represented the company all over the country as well as in major international industry events in Southeast Asia to bring awareness to the brand, specifically in Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, and locations where there are Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW).

"Visibility of the brand is important. I participate in any industry engagements, aiming to talk about the Okada Manila brand as much as I can," said the veteran casino marketer who has added Korea and Japan to her business development portfolio.

Flexibility is as important, and handling team members and customers is no different. "Casino is an entirely different ball game from any other hospitality service. We're catering to different kinds of personalities, patience and understanding of human nature must be prioritized, especially when experiencing erratic behaviors and resolving conflicts."



Dr. Lau has launched successful campaigns for both team members and customers. Since 2019, “Bitcoins Rewards” has incentivized good work performance in which executives award team members with bitcoins. Accumulated bitcoins are then exchanged for hotel accommodations, spa, including food and beverage vouchers.

At the height of the pandemic in 2020, “One Japanese Sentence A Week” was launched through Okada Manila’s Team Member Communications Facebook group. Videos in Nihongo were uploaded on a weekly basis by a Japanese team member as part of the company’s language courses.

Moreover, Dr. Lau spearheaded the “Birthday Surprise” in 2022, a program in which mid-range patrons get to celebrate their birthdays in High Limit area, together with the Okada Manila team.

A meet-and-greet program with new patrons was created this year. Returning new members, who received complimentary hotel accommodation, shall be greeted by the Okada Manila team upon arrival.

The gaming industry in the Philippines is relatively young as compared to Las Vegas, Macau, and Singapore yet a fast-growing playground that has been attracting both foreign and local casino-resort players, creating thousands of jobs.

Dr. Lau’s personal mission and vision are to share her knowledge, develop a workforce, and groom people to run the integrated resort. “I won’t be here for that long, but the people and business will carry on to the future,” said the industry expert who has big hopes for the Philippine gaming.

She also urges Filipino local talent to continue developing skill sets, most especially grasping a third language, “Learning is never ending, there’s always a new path to tread. Whatever achievement you have is a product of your hard work.”

Dr. Lau shares that being able to impart her knowledge to a wider audience as a resource speaker is the most memorable accomplishment. She feels “delighted” that her body of work is being appreciated. She has represented Okada Manila in SiGMA Asia Summit 2023 and will speak in the 6th Hospitality Philippines Conference and SPiCE Philippines 2023 this September.

Dr. Lau has almost three decades of combined experience in gaming and hospitality as well as in other disciplines, such as HR, IT, education. She is a member of the Thai Travel Agent Association, Golden Key International Honour Society, University of Hawaii Travel Industry Management Alumni, and California Southern University Alumni.

Born in Thailand to Chinese parents, she is fluent in Thai, Cantonese, Mandarin, and English. Growing up to eastern traditions and having adapted western experiences, cultural diversity and dealing with differences in the workplace are her strength.

Dr. Lau, who holds Thai and American citizenships, spends her free time commuting back and forth to the United States to visit her only son as well as in Macau to see her parents and siblings. She enjoys reading short stories and homemaking activities like cooking and baking.