

Home (/en/) > Education (/en/education/faqs/general-faqs) > BLOG (/en/education/blog) > 2017 (/en/education/blog/itemlist/category/50-2017) > Up Close with Albert Ee, CEO of Pilgrim Partners Asia

Up Close with Albert Ee, CEO of Pilgrim Partners Asia



Albert Ee
CEO of Pilgrim Partners Asia

This week, we had the privilege to chat with Mr. Albert Ee CEO of Pilgrim Partners Asia to find out more about his investment strategy, challenges as a CEO and his take on fintech.

Q: Can you tell us something about yourself, your education, and your career?

I founded Pilgrim Partners Asia in 2009. Before Pilgrim Partners, I was with Millennium Partners, heading up its Singapore and Asian operations. Millennium Partners is a US based multi-strategy hedge fund with AUM of more than USD13 billion then. My first job in a hedge fund was with Tribeca Global Management (Asia), an in-house multi-strategy hedge fund of Citigroup. Besides being in charge of the business in general, I helped to identify, hire and develop fund managers. Working for a multi strategy fund company exposed me to a wide array of different hedge fund strategies.

Prior to joining Tribeca, I was the Deputy Director of the Foreign Exchange Department at the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC) and worked there for about 8 years. I played a major part in the investment activities of the FX department. I was in charge of the department that comprised of the FX, Money markets and Commodity divisions. Prior to joining GIC in 1998, I worked in the various areas of the Treasury Department with several international and local banks. This included a period of where I traded options in Chicago and London.

I have an Honours degree in Civil and Structural engineering from the National University of Singapore. I also hold an MBA in Banking and Finance from the Nanyang Technological University. I am a CFA and CAIA charter holder.

Q: Given your credentials working for reputable firms, why did you decide to set up Pilgrim Partners Asia?

After Millennium Partners, I had already been working for more than 20 years in the finance industry. I thought that it was time to start something on my own. I set up Pilgrim Partners with 3 other partners. We are a Registered Fund Management Company (RFMC) with the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS); and have just received an in-principal approval for a license upgrade to

a LFMC license. Pilgrim Partners is now a fund management platform. We have launched 6 funds in different strategies and asset classes so far; and expect to have 10 Funds or more by the fourth quarter of the year. We also manage wealth for private individuals and family offices through our Independent Asset Manager (IAM) department with the sole aim of being aligned with clients' interest. In addition, we operate as a multi-family office where the founder's and partners' family wealth is managed alongside with other families and advise families on the generational wealth and business transition process.

Q: How did Pilgrim Partners evolve over the years to where it is now?

Initially, we started the firm as a single global macro fund. However, after a few years, we started to come to the realization that the market conditions that had been good for Global Macro strategy in the preceding 2 decades had come to an end. I think that the change started after the 2008 crisis. While central banks were credited with saving the banks and the economy, their extreme involvement in the markets did not let up years after the crisis abated. The unprecedented monetary policy created an artificial environment that was not conducive for Global Macro trading.

However, other hedge fund strategies and new hedge fund strategies continued to perform well in that environment. With the Dodd Frank Act, more bank traders were looking to set up hedge funds. This led us to pivot our fund business model to that of a Fund Platform. The idea took some time to germinate, but now the steady pace of growth is gathering steam. Besides a Fund Platform, we also run an Independent Asset Manager (IAM) platform and help families set up family offices.

Q: What does a normal work week look like for you?

I do not have a normal work week, or work days for that matter. My time is spent building the business. Like any other entrepreneur, the hours are uncertain. The work entails and revolves around building relationships with partners and service providers, meeting prospective fund and wealth managers, attending conferences and seminars, strategizing and developing our business model etc. However, I do make sure that I set aside enough time for family, friends, health and other interests.

We work with all our fund managers in a partnership model. Our job is to partner them, and support them in the growth and success of their business. Apart from attracting good talents to work with us in setting up their funds, I also spend time mentoring the younger managers. The final and most important piece to the puzzle is to play the role of the risk manager.

Q: Do you have specific tasks as a CEO? How do you motivate and retain your staff?

I feel that CEOs should not be burdened with the minute details tasks, and I am lucky to have partners who help me in the areas of implementation and execution. He or she should dedicate himself towards the broader company strategy. He should be constantly thinking about the strategic vision of the company, whether it is functioning well, feeling out the business environment. Should the business strategy be tweaked or changed? Are there any new business opportunities? In Pilgrim we have a very flat structure. We treat everybody as partners. Within their areas of responsibilities, we will agree on the scope of work and the responsibilities. I expect my colleagues to be self-motivated, and to be able to figure out how best to get the job done.

We are fast reaching a phase of growth where we need to attract new young talent. to work, and to eventually help run the company. So it's more than retaining just staff, its attracting new talent to work with us. We are a fast growing company in a good niche. I believe that we are an attractive alternative to working in banks. Being lean and nimble, we are able to move quickly; this is imperative in this fast changing world of finance.

Q: What is the most important thing you have learned in the different functions you had in your career?

Over time, I learnt that there are a few principles that you should adhere to, whether it is managing people, bosses, employees, or business partners. Always respect the people around you, whether they are your bosses or the aunty cleaning the office. Act professionally and ethically at all times, no matter the temptation. Be mindful of the needs, motivations and aspirations of the people around you.

Lastly, have an enquiring mind; be curious to learn new things. Never be too proud to learn from others: they may have fresh perspectives and the younger, 'less experienced' ones will be more in tune with the rapidly changing world. These principles, besides being the right thing to do, will lead to a happier, more fulfilling work and personal life.

Q: We have recently come across a statement 'High pay for asset managers make the world poorer'. What do you think about this?

I think that the reverse is actually happening. Traditional asset managers and hedge funds are being squeezed by lower fees. Money is pouring into ETFs as the average fund manager has not shown to be worth his fees. The introduction of low cost Robo-advisors is touted as the nail in the coffin for traditional asset managers. However, I feel that Hedge Funds with niche or good strategies will prevail against these trends.

If a hedge fund does not perform for a few years, investor redemptions will force it to close. Hedge fund managers literally 'eat what they kill'. So there is no question of them being paid too highly to take on the risk, they face the possibility of extinction if they do not perform.

This is alluded to in this article (<http://faces-online.nl/en/high-pay-for-asset-managers-makes-the-world-poorer/>).

The assumption of zero sum total may be generally right, although it's debatable. Darwinian Theory suggests that the bad ones will be weeded out as the average fund does not outperform the market. We, at Pilgrim, are looking for the few diamonds in the rough.

Q: Many asset managers do not invest their own money. Given that you run Pilgrim, do you invest your own money? Share with us your investment strategy.

We eat our own cooking. My family's wealth and the partners' families' wealth are mostly invested in the strategies we run at Pilgrim. My goal is to build an 'investment ecosystem'. This includes a range of both public as well as private market funds. The idea is to construct a varied and diversified portfolio of investable products for the IAM and family office businesses.

We closely scrutinize all the fund managers before we partner them. The plan is to create a stable portfolio of investments through the funds on the platform. It's a mix of more liquid funds in futures, options, equity and FX, together with a small portion in less liquid private equity and structured loan funds.

Q: Institutional investing has been playing an increasing greater role in the hedge fund industry which was originally dominated by private investors. Has your clientele changed over the years to reflect this trend? What do institutions tend to look for in a fund as compared to individuals and family offices?

Pilgrim is still a work in progress. The pivot in business model just took place about 2 years ago; therefore most of the existing investors are high net worth individuals and family offices. We will start to make a push to attract larger institutional investors in about ½ to 1 year time. These institutions tend to want a track record of 2-3 years. They will typically invest in funds with larger AUM of at least 50 million. For example, I have invested in our Ascent Global Futures Fund which is performing well and it was nominated for the EurekaHedge Best New Asian Hedge Fund Award 2017. Once the fund has sufficient track record, we will open up and offer it to institutional investors.

Q: Given that Fintech is a big thing now, how do you feel about the Fintech industry in Singapore?

Fintech seems to be the current buzzword. Even the regulators and the government have taken notice and have encouraged and even made special provisions (regulatory sandbox) for it. One hears of P2P lending, block-chain technology, and robo-advisors. To me, what will endure will be technology that truly revolutionizes and disrupts current practices. I believe block-chain technology is the future. Businesses that serve the under-banked retail in a cheap efficient way may also give the banks who charge huge fees a run for their money.

Some businesses that hide behind light or no regulatory touch, or those that have no really new workable ideas but merely play on flashy new keywords like 'robo-advisors' and 'block-chain' will fall by the way-side. I am not rubbishing robo-advisors, I think they may grow to dominate. It's more a question of who will survive the inevitable competition and consolidation.

Leave a comment

Make sure you enter the (*) required information where indicated. HTML code is not allowed.

Message *

enter your message here...

Name *

enter your name...

Email *

enter your e-mail address...

Enter the two words you see below

V1 SHUTDOWN ON 2018-03-31
Direct site owners to g.co/recaptcha/upgrade



Type the text

Privacy & Terms
(<http://www.google.com/intl/en/policies/>)

Submit comment

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FEEDS

Name

E-mail

SUBMIT

OPEN A DEMO ACCOUNT
(</en/accounts/open-demo-account>)

OPEN A TRADING ACCOUNT
(</en/accounts/open-a-trading-account>)

TOP 10 FOREX BLOG
(<http://www.forexcrunch.com/forex-blogs-best/>)

Follow Us



(http://www.linkedin.com/company/ong-first-tradition-pte-ltd?trk=company_name)



(<https://plus.google.com/118382942034101839892>)



NOTE: Trading involves high degree of risk and may not be suitable for everyone.

Please consult your financial advisors if you have any doubts.

Best viewed on Firefox, Chrome and Internet Explorer version 9 and above.

Copyright © 2016 KGI Futures (Singapore) Pte. Ltd.

Disclaimer (</en/disclaimer>) | Privacy Statement (</en/privacy-statement>) |
Security Policy (</en/security-policy>) | Risk Disclosure (</en/risk-disclosure>) |
Sitemap (</en/sitemap-2>)



(<https://www.linkedin.com/company/2062505/>)



(<https://www.facebook.com/KGISSFuturesForex/>)