



THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF  
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# Managing expectations

Dick Kwok, HKIS senior vice-president, says property management is going to play an increasingly vital role in the city's property sector, writes **Kit M Yip**

## HIGH-FLYERS

**D**ick Kwok, senior vice-president of the Hong Kong Institute of Surveyors, joined the surveying industry more than a quarter of a century ago when the industry was just beginning to take off in Hong Kong. Today, as the senior director of Savills Property Management and deputy managing director of Guardian Property Management of the Savills group, he is happy that the industry is being recognised by official bodies and the general public alike.

"Back then, it was difficult for people to imagine degree holders joining the field of property and facility management. Today, with the building management ordinance being strengthened and the setting up of the Property Management Services Authority, property or asset management has gained wide respect," says Kwok.

Having had a keen interest in drawing since childhood, Kwok was always attracted to fields related to building and architecture. He earned a BSc in building from what is now the City University of Hong Kong, specialising in construction and technology, to prepare for a career in building surveying and quantity surveying. Upon graduation, he joined what was then Jones Lang Wootton as an assistant management surveyor though, interestingly, he instead engaged in property and facility management, which was then considered part of general practice surveying. "I changed my specialisation in surveying since the day I joined the workforce. As an outgoing person, I can apply my social skills in property management where I work with plenty of people."

While acquiring a diploma in surveying (general practice) from the UK's College of Estate Management, Kwok moved to Savills in the early 1990s and thus began his career in the group, a career now spanning more than two decades.

The combination of building surveying and quantity surveying education, on-the-job training in general practice surveying and property and facility management, coupled with his people and management skills, has given him a head start in the industry.

At Savills, Kwok has worked on a number of signature projects for the public and private sectors, non-government organisations, as well as managing portfolios in relation to property assets of trustees.

One of his most remarkable achievements involved a comprehensive and foolproof plan for the three government buildings in Wan Chai North during a protest by South Korean farmers against the World Trade Organisation's ministerial conference in December 2005. "The unprecedented high level of risk could be compared to Y2K, SARS and anti-terrorist measures all rolled into one. The Wan Chai Immigration Tower, the Law Courts and the Business Registration Office – sites for crucial govern-

ment functions with thousands of employees and daily visitors – had daily operations which needed to continue as usual despite the extreme actions of the protesters. Working closely with the Security Bureau and the Government Planning Agency, we devised contingency plans months before. Three massive fire drills, each involving close to 10,000 people, were conducted, which were reported by the media even during the preparation stage," Kwok recalls.

As a result of meticulous planning and implementation, the three buildings remained entirely untouched despite the protests. Needless to say, its asset management won applause from government authorities.

Aside from his professional commitments, Kwok contributes to public services with his expertise through the Chinese Temple Society. "While hardware in temples can be enhanced and modernised with systematic methods, it is equally important to take into consideration the spiritual aspect and heritage when we preserve the culture of temples," Kwok says.

Kwok's voluntary and sporting activities have also led him to participate in long-range cycling events for charity in Hokkaido and Okinawa, as well as cycling around Taiwan to raise funds for Drop of Life, a charity dedicated to improving the supply and quality of drinking water in China's mountainous areas.

As the senior vice-president and past chairman of the HKIS' property and facility management division, he is pleased that the institute's six-divisional structure has genuinely reflected the entire life cycle of real estate development. "Before properties are built, land surveying, planning and development are needed. For land search and valuation, general practice surveyors are needed. The building stage keeps quantity surveyors, project managers and building surveyors busy. When building is completed, building and property and facility management surveyors will be involved in the handover. Property and facility management, as well as maintenance and building surveying are essential when the building is in use."

Kwok speaks highly of young surveyors, finding them intelligent, knowledgeable, passionate, open-minded and community-conscious. He nevertheless finds it important that young surveyors build strong inner qualities to distinguish truth from falsehood among masses of information, and, in so doing, nurture sound professional judgment. "Ultimately, our value lies in our service, professional judgment and integrity," Kwok concludes, with some meaningful advice for the next generation.

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