

## **Asian with highest position in Siemens Headquarters in Germany**

### **Singapore's Jill Lee: An exceedingly good strategist**

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World energy, health care and industrial giant Siemens' Chief Diversity Officer Ms Jill Lee is an "iron lady" in the eyes of her ex-colleagues.

According to some western media, she is an exceedingly good strategist and extremely unyielding.

#### **Siemens' first Chief Diversity Officer**

However, during the interview at the Siemens Centre in Singapore, the Asian with the highest position in Siemens' headquarters in Munich, Germany, shows that she is amiable, humble and completely without airs, to the extent that she does not mind showing the simple side of her.

During the casual conversation, she speaks articulately with fluent Chinese which she honed while in Beijing. When talking about her current position, she switches back to English effortlessly.

Looking back in history, Ms Lee has the elements of a typically successful Singaporean and has many firsts in Siemens.

Her current position, Chief Diversity Officer, is the first ever position created in Siemens' 162-year history. Previously, she was the first female to assume the posting of Chief Financial Officer (2004) for Siemens' business operations in China.

In 2000, she became the first female Chief Financial Officer for Siemens' business operations in Singapore.

Before that, she was responsible for establishing the electrical and machinery assembly plant in Bali Island. She led Siemens to buy over a Japanese capital plant and in three years established a company worth 100 million German mark.

Strictly speaking, Ms Lee's current position is not only the first in Siemens, but possibly also the first in the world of business enterprises. This is because the companies which set up this position are focused in diversity in a certain country or area and not globally.

Ms Lee's next task is to carry out the initiatives globally and will station in Munich's headquarters where she will be reporting directly to Siemens' Chief Executive Officer.

Most people would not be able to recognise the importance of her job just by looking at her job title.

It would be easier to understand how important her role is simply by looking at how Ms Lee is paying close attention to the diversity of the top 300 positions in Siemens and grooming top talents of great potential.

However, this is still not a complete representation of her role.

Ms Lee says: "In the beginning, people thought that diversity is about having more females, some others said it is about having more X or Y generations, while there were others who looked at it from different nationalities. My challenge is to get people to understand what diversity is and why we are able to talk about it. Diversity encompasses all these aspects and is closely related to our businesses."

Siemens conducts its businesses in 190 countries with 430 thousand employees, of which two-thirds are outside Germany. 80% of its revenue comes from outside of Germany. Among the senior management, 30% are non German and 7% are women.

### **Creating a flexible and open environment**

Ms Lee feels that Siemens is just like Singapore in terms of diversity, where it is necessary to create a flexible and open system which taps on talented individuals in a diversified environment.

It is also an environment where there is equality between men and women, race, language and religion, of which nurtures and retains talented individuals.

This would allow individuals to develop their potential, maximise the use of each individual's greatest potential, as well as manage diversity in the environment, the aging population and ever-changing market needs.

Even if someone leaves Siemens, it is hoped that they would continue to have a positive attitude toward Siemens and Singapore. This would be favourable to Siemens and Singapore.

Ms Lee says with pride: "I am a Singaporean, a product of Singapore! When we work overseas and socialise with fellow Singaporeans and foreigners who have worked in Singapore before, it helps to increase the understanding other nations have of Singapore."

She believes that Siemens has good qualities and the thing to do now is to bring out the qualities of being diverse, which would become the company's competitive advantage.

This would increase innovativeness, ideas and meet the needs of the ever-changing, diverse world.

Hence, as Ms Lee points out, not only does Siemens has to put into effect diversity in its global businesses, it also has to do so for the different levels of the management.

This extends from senior to junior levels of the management. It is imperative to start nurturing those who have wide experience in junior management.

Also, the policies on diversity are not set based on a fixed quota and do not stipulate the number of females or non Germans, but are purely based on talent.

This looks like a big challenge, but Ms Lee has strong support. She says: “I have the support of Peter Loescher, Chief Executive Officer, Siemens. In addition, Peter has the unanimous support of the senior management including the directors from its global businesses.”

In reality, she has an important source of support. She says: “I have a child and a great husband. It was my husband who encouraged me to go to China (to assume the role of Chief Executive Officer), and to accept this job at Munich. When I went to China, he quit his job and helped look after the family in China as my son was only 13 years old then. Although I travel very frequently in my work, I never have to worry. His culinary skills are fantastic, and he knows how to make delicious cakes, cheese cakes and western style carrot cakes. I strongly believe that behind every successful person, be it a man or a woman, lies a great, loving and supportive mate.”

This sentimental “iron lady” actually enjoys doing things ordinary people do and places great importance on the family.

She explains: “In China, when people discover that we are just like ordinary people, I am very happy. I take that as a compliment. Just like many others, we have different roles in the family and at work. Two years ago, I gave up an opportunity to assume the position of a Global Chief Financial Officer in Germany because my son was still in his first year in junior college as I was afraid that it might affect his studies.”

**- Translated by Ignatius Pang, Public Affairs Executive, NBS**