

Business trip to Kuala Lumpur

With a causeway bridge linking Johore Bahru in Malaysia and Singapore, there are some 200,000 residents of Malaysia commuting to Singapore daily for work and education. When the Prime Minister of Malaysia announced the lockdown, which included the closing of the border, a lot of my friends were torn between leaving their young family behind in Malaysia and stay in Singapore or taking unpaid leave in order to be with their family. I am one lucky employee who is able to work remotely from home in Malaysia.

Working from home has its challenges which we are all familiar with and the surge of internet usage within the community has caused it to lag while we are on video calls. Many times we have been unable to hold a proper conversation and often the chain of thoughts are broken with 'Hello? Can you hear me?' "oh no, is lagging, let me try dialling in again" or having the terminator's distorted voice over the other end of the computer. Tropical thunderstorms also add to the rich variety of unanticipated interruptions.

As soon as the Malaysian government allowed inter-state travel in mid-July, the Geo Connect Asia team came up with a list of associations, government agencies and potential exhibitors based in and around Kuala Lumpur with a view to visit. Although the trip was less than 48hours, it was the most fruitful trip I have had in a very long time. A short one hour meeting with a government agency opened doors to numerous contacts and answered many questions about the industry and its make-up; this would normally take 50 emails and the impact would be questionable. By offering to visit and buying a cup of Starbucks coffee for an association president, a collaboration was proposed with the group for events in Malaysia. When I had a lunch appointment with a major construction company, I managed to build rapport with him and establish some key connections within the trade. We are also pitching for a small pavilion of drone suppliers for the show in March.

Just as we had discussed in the Best Practice Club, although people may be doubtful about face to face meetings and how relevant is the exhibition industry going to be in the post-covid world, wanting to socialise is part of human nature, and many just want to form new partnerships and expand their network. I believe it will be a new horizon after this pandemic. Onwards and upwards!

Best Regards,
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