

Dixon comes clean

Ralph Dixon is not only passionate about the environment but has turned it into a business, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**

IF you throw a used battery into the waste paper basket, don't admit this transgression to Ralph Dixon, 47. "That battery will be sent to a landfill. In time, the battery will leak heavy acids and metal. From the landfill, these substances will flow into the sea."

Duly chastised, you try to redeem yourself by proudly saying that you use only energy-saving light bulbs. "But what happens when they break?" retorts Dixon. "All the mercury will seep out. It's better to use LED bulbs."

Perhaps it's wiser not to reveal any further transgressions against Mother Nature. Although Dixon smiles, it is obvious he's not shy being passionate about the environment. He explains that it is now imperative for everyone to consider "sustainability" when thinking

about the environment. There are four main prongs to such sustainability which include health and safety, economics, the environment and community.

After a career that ranged from the banking industry to a manufacturing one, Dixon joined YTL Group about five years ago and manages the environmental investment division and sustainability called YTL-SV Carbon.

YTL-SVC is now the largest Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) consultancy organisation in Malaysia.

CDM was created as part of the Kyoto Protocol. It allows companies to turn environmental improvements into a cash flow through the creation and sales of a new commodity called Certified Emission Reductions (CERs).

There are three parties involved in the approval process for such creation and sales: the first is the government of the country where the emission reduction project is installed. The second is the government of the country which buys the carbon credit assets. The third is the United Nations.

Buyers of CERs are governments and private sectors in industrialised countries. Over the years, billions of dollars have been traded internationally. Dixon refers to studies showing that the Malaysian carbon trading business is expected to be worth some RM7 billion. This is driven by companies' increased participation in environmentally sustainable projects.

The government, aware of the financial potential here, is also giving companies involved in CDM tax exemptions and allowances.

"In our consultancy service, we are like a funnel. People send us technologies that they think are sustainable," says Dixon. "We then vet these technologies and assess their feasibility. People send us their technologies because we have the potential to use them in all our properties."

In other words, it provides tailor-made, end-to-end solutions for companies wishing to embark on carbon emission reduction projects. It handles all aspects of the process including identification of the potential projects, development of documentation, approvals and sale of carbon credits regionally and globally.



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Ralph Dixon

Dixon insists that, in addition to being involved in the trade of this new commodity of carbon credits, the company is also involved in more "visible" environmental projects. "When you walk on the road, do you sometimes wonder how the road glitters?" asks Dixon. "Well, that's blended cement. We were one of the first countries to import the raw materials from China and Japan to blend it with cement. This means that we were able to acquire waste products, which would have gone into landfills, and reuse them. This made commercial and environmental sense.

"This underpins what we're try-

ing to do all the time. Yes, there's Earth Hour which we promote to create awareness. In that time, we can save up to two tonnes of carbon dioxide. However, we would like to do more. Certainly, the awards we get are good. But what makes me happy is that what we're doing is also good business practice. And others are following us. For instance, other companies have started to use blended cement as well. We don't want to stand alone, but want people to follow us."

Dixon then rattles off a few things that he'd like to see done: "Phones, which have US\$5 (RM15) worth of platinum, gold and silver in each one of them, should be discarded properly. The plastic should be chipped and recycled. We should invest funds into

research about the solar industry. We have over five hours of sun every day. Yet, it's Singapore that's become the hub for research and development into this industry. Then there's bottom ash, a waste product from many industries. We still don't know what to use it for. There's potential there."

Finally, Dixon encapsulates his message by saying: "Like everything, we must do due diligence on the supply chain of anything that is produced. It must begin from day one. Is the product made using sustainable materials? And we must go right to the day when it's discarded. Throughout, we should maintain responsibility to both the community and the environment."

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Earth Hour 2012

What: Earth Hour 2012 celebrations hosted by YTL Corporation Bhd

Where: Rooftop of Lot 10, Kuala Lumpur

When: Today from 8.30pm to 10pm