

**Roundup by Eithne Treanor:
13th MAP Convention (Management Association of Pakistan)
18th Dec 2012-Karachi Marriott Hotel**



The opening session of the 13th MAP Convention was upbeat and welcoming as the President of the Management Association of Pakistan and Chief Executive Officer of Pakistan Cables, **Kamal Chinoy** set the scene. He said that innovation is essential and must be top of the agenda in Pakistan for all companies. He also emphasised the need for a combination of “Leadership, People and Innovation” the theme of this year’s convention, to drive growth and success.

The Macroeconomic Address was delivered by the renowned economist and former Vice President of the World Bank who travelled from Washington DC to be at the convention. Earlier in his career he briefly served as Pakistan's Finance Minister, and Chief Economist of West Pakistan and who is now Chairman, Institute of Public Policy, **Shahid Javed Burki**. People were eager to listen to his views as he delivered a dose of realism about the state of Pakistan. “These are difficult times,” he said as he talked about the country’s worst downturn over the past 5 years. He said that Pakistan was always “in a crisis” of sorts and had been on a political rollercoaster throughout its history. He warned that if things stayed the same, the country would stagnate and remain isolated. The state of the environment needs attention and unless we see swift action, Pakistan will have serious issues with water scarcity in 25 years time. But hope abounds and things will change and he says he is forever hopeful for a brighter future for his dear country. His short to medium outlook with suggestions on a reduction in Government consumption, increased foreign investment, more private sector involvement, trade with India and better governance were the way forward.

Dr. Marie Lall, South Asian expert tackled the topic of Pakistan In terms of the strategic perspectives in the new context & the new challenges. She warned of the impending disruption the country should expect from Afghanistan in 2015 after the Americans pull out. This will cause political upheaval that will impact the economy for a while. She spoke of the need for Pakistan to improve trade links with India sooner rather than later. On the issue of foreign aid, she said she feared many tied aid projects, particularly in education were not delivering what was promised and she cautioned against an over-dependence of American aid. Energy security needs to be examined carefully as this is an issue that will threaten the country in the near future.

The Head of Retail & Consumer Banking from Habib Bank, [Sima Kamil](#) addressed the need to transform large banks by rediscovering the basics. She talked of the role of the banking sector and of the obligations and responsibility banks have to their customers. By taking their eye off the ball and ignoring the very basics of integrity and trust, the banks failed their customers in recent years. She warned that in the absence of checks and balances; the same situation should occur. She presented some interesting innovative initiatives from HBL and showed that moving with the times and listening to customers paid off in the long run.

We heard about new trends and got some rich insights into developing markets from [Mike Sherman](#), a market research expert who has travelled the world and observed different habits and customer responses. Though he is the head of living analytics & group digital life at Singtel, his experience with trend analysis caught our attention. He said we need to really know our customers better and while a consumer may be poor in one environment, they are often sophisticated and uninterested in another point of view. A product or a service means different things to different people in different parts of the world. Some people focus on brands, others are happy to focus on categories in less brand aware environments. While the mobile phone has transformed the lives of many people around the world, its uses are not universal. Only the human smile evokes the same response from people around the world – a theory that was also challenged by a member of the audience!

[Furqan Qureshi](#), Senior Executive Vice President Business Zone South, PTCL led the only Panel Discussion of the day: “Development of an indigenous innovation & entrepreneurial ecosystem in Pakistan – challenges & opportunities.” His panellists included Chairman of the Institute of Public Policy, [Shahid Javed Burki](#), Founder and CEO, Pakistan Innovation Foundation; CEO Technomics International & Fellow, World Technology Network, [Dr. Athar Osama](#), CEO, Gillette Pakistan, [Saad Amanullah Khan](#) and the head of innovative products & internal expansion at Bayt.com [Muhammad Younas](#). There was general agreement that Pakistan was not innovating enough in comparison to other developing markets. The feeling was that too few companies were scaling up and expanding within and outside Pakistan. A case of Shan Foods was highlighted as an example of one internationally successful local company. Many agreed that the government should support and create an environment for entrepreneurship, but the lead in innovation must come from the private sector. The talent is available; through there was a feeling that confidence to take the risks was not always evident or encouraged. One new initiative was announced that might hopefully address this situation; The National Innovation Grand Challenge, culminating in the winning of the X Prize, an initiative that might encourage local innovation from new or existing Pakistan companies.

We heard about the future of banking from the former President & Chief Executive Officer, of the Royal Bank of Scotland in Pakistan, [Shehzad Naqvi](#) who mourned the fact that such innovative products like derivatives and securitization became “weapons of mass destruction” when they fell into the wrong hands. He warned of the possibility of more financial problems and he urged banks to pay closer attention to their values and build more sustainable businesses. He talked about the role of technology in banking and how it has the power to transform the industry for the good. He was also encouraged to see the architects and masters of IT and technology being more closely aligned with the Board of Directors of companies. One interesting innovation was “data mining” to promote mass customisation that links directly to the supply chain. When the banks get it right, he said he felt there was a time for exciting initiatives to come in the Pakistan banking sector.

[Asif Jooma](#), President of the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Managing Director, Abbott Laboratories (Pakistan) addressed the challenges and the opportunities of doing business in Pakistan. He delivered an indebt and optimistic presentation, telling us that Pakistan was one of the world’s “best kept secrets” and when investors do explore beneath the headlines,

they would see the returns are worthwhile. He talked of a strong pool of available local talent and the growing numbers of qualified and highly skilled women entering the workforce. He said the ease of doing business had improved and that despite all the issues Pakistan was dealing with in the past and in the present, the country demonstrated remarkable resilience. Some businesses have reported profits of up to 36% and the business community has demonstrated that the will is there. The government now needs to show willing and while they are beginning to listen; support and action is what is needed from the Pakistan Government to move the country forward. He called on leaders of industry to take the first step and lead the way to a more productive and profitable Pakistan.

With all the cautious optimism abounding throughout the convention, trend-spotter, futurologist and renowned author **Magnus Lindkvist** from Sweden challenged the audience to join “the liberation movement of innovation.” He addressed the potential of unlocking a new world of possibility by getting used to the fact that things are changing at a pace beyond our control. We’re living longer and he emphasised that the expectations of a new generation are often unbelievable to the older generation. The world talks about “globalisation” a term used by the World Bank in the 1960’s, but the implementation of this great global uniting force has been much slower than expected. Local is good and most of us still live our lives locally. That does not mean we still can’t learn from others. Do we want to compete or do we want to create? This is the question we all need to carefully analyse, according to Lindkvist. He also said to keep in mind that there’s no need to re-invent the wheel. Technology has become the new enhancer, the enabler, designed to help us grow our business and our economy. Technology needs to become boring to change the world and when we look and compare a hard drive from 10 years ago to what we have today, we’re beginning to understand. We are probably the last generation to believe that connectivity is special; the younger generation take this for granted. We need to take time to re-imagine what it is we are doing and we need to take risks and be the leader with new and untested initiatives. We need to be willing to experiment, to fail occasionally and we need patience to see it through. In the current scheme of things Lindkvist says we are all success bound, but he feels that success often breeds complacency, whereas failure breeds creativity. The world is changing and we need to change with it. It’s not business as usual and to succeed, it never will be again. Members of the audience asked about resistance to change – a favourite topic of our speaker. People have been resistant to change all their lives, until someone took the initiative and got a few more on board and a few more. Throughout history change has never been greeted with open arms at first, but people come to embrace change and realise it’s an advantage. We need to be brave, be sometimes unpopular, even a little mad and be prepared to take risks. Its time to get used to the unexpected, because that’s what the future will look like according to Lindkvist and those who embrace this uncertainty will be the leaders of tomorrow. After all, it’s about people, innovation and ultimately leadership.

The Vice President of the Management Association of Pakistan, Saadia Naveed gave the closing vote of thanks to the audience and to all who had worked so hard to make the conference a success and promised to deliver more interesting speakers and dialogue at the 14th MAP convention in 2013.