

# People come first at Gothong Southern

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**Living up to the legacy of his great grandfather Don Carlos A. Gothong Sr., the founder of Carlos A. Gothong and Co., Inc., Charles Robert Gothong believes business is all about the people.**

At first glance, the 26-year old fourth generation Gothong, who prefers to be called Charles or Bobby, has all the makings of a basketball star with his towering 6-foot-four frame, but when he starts talking about business, he strongly exudes family values and entrepreneurial spirit making him worthy to be called a Gothong.

Bobby, who graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration major in International Business Management studies in Northwood University in Michigan, USA, said people are core for businesses and what makes Gothong Southern (GS) unique is its people whom he consider as the company's best assets.

Looking back, when William Lines, Gothong and Aboitiz merged to form WG&A in 1996, a lot of Gothong's employees were retrenched and to help those people, Bob Gothong had to venture into other businesses just to give jobs to those who were affected by the retrenchment.



"I'd like to break down the wall between management and staff, our role as managers is to coach our people, to give them the leeway to be able to bring out their creative ideas," GS manager Bobby Gothong said. **JOY TORREJOS**

However, since shipping is the family's core business and it runs in the blood, Bob Gothong established GS in 2005 with Don Carlos Sr. as its first vessel.

It has always been the

legacy of the Gothongs to take care of the people and maintain good relationship with the employees, and now as Bobby steps up and takes the reins of the family business, he intends to continue the heritage that

his ancestors, from his great grandfather down to his father Bob Gothong, have inculcated in him.

Gothong Southern believes in developing leaders who develop people, who develop business. It takes pride in its values of spiritual discipline, 4Es + P people, balanced lifestyle, bayanihan teamwork, active social responsibility, accountability and palabra de honor.

Highlighting the hiring as well as retaining the right people, GS has always sought to invest in its people, maintain attractive retention programs, leadership trainings, team building activities and exposure to broaden their skills and enhance their understanding of how the business works and the significance of each of their roles in the company.

Among GS's employee retention programs are the KIA cars program and the rice subsidy program.

Bobby said retaining the right people is absolutely critical to the success of the business adding that a satisfied workforce reflects a positive attitude about their jobs and relationships with colleagues, which eventually will domino into exceptional service to customers.

"It's easy to copy

things, in fact our competitors might be able to copy our ships but they can never copy the people that we have. We are still breathing because we got the right assets," Bobby said.

Bobby stressed that it is a must for all businessmen to know their people, managers should be strong advocates of HR work, which means touching base with the people.

"I'd like to break down the wall between management and staff, our role as managers is to coach our people, to give them the leeway to be able to bring out their creative ideas," Bobby said.

He echoed the beliefs of his father, whom he said takes inspiration from the movie Coach Carter, which explains the Coach Carter sign placed at the entrance of his Dad's office.

He said a company may have many resources and assets, but don't forget the most important one - your human resources. Treat them well, keep them happy and they will be here to stay.

Gothong Southern is in the business of shipping, logistics and port development, providing solutions for efficient movement of goods and timely information. It has branches in Cebu and

Manila, powered by 250 people manning sea based and land based operations nationwide.

MV Doña Rita Sr. is the first passenger ship of Gothong Southern, a relatively small ship, plying the Cebu-Cagayan route, that has gained the praise of patrons mainly because of its on time departure, no breakdown, cleanliness, and state-of-the-art entertainment center.

From the inception of Gothong Southern Business Development Team in 1997, it has since paved way to new business activities.

Gothong Southern has evolved into an international freight forwarding and domestic logistics support and transport solutions to the third party logistics (3PL) needs of the country today. Today, the company boasts of a wide array of prime movers, trailers, delivery vans and cargo containers among others and is in constant lookout for more growth.

"I don't want GS to be known as the most profitable company but rather the best place to work at. Profit is only secondary. I see the shipping company as a platform to mold people as I believe everybody has the capability to be leaders," Bobby said.