

## BioBiz 2018 – Interview with Committee members

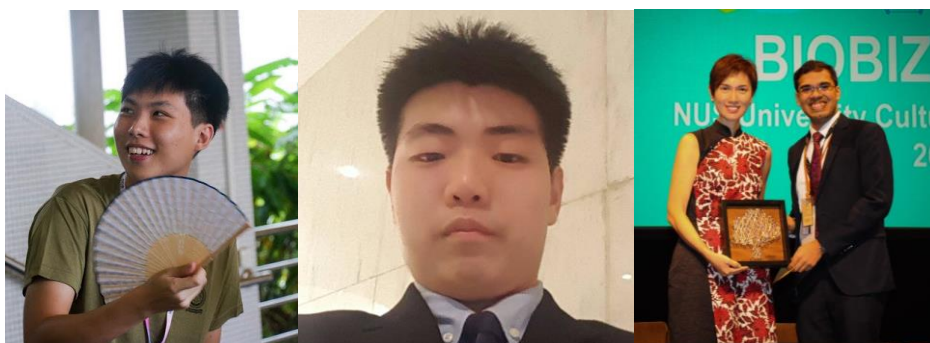
On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2018, BioBiz 2018 concluded on a resoundingly successful note. The organizing committee had done a really good job in securing a record number of sponsorships and in managing the immense logistical needs required to carry out the event.

The event was graced by Singapore's Minister of Manpower, **Ms Josephine Teo** and CEO of Vetter Pharma GmbH, **Mr Michael Vetter**.



We talk to three of the committee members to find out more about their journey in organizing the largest student-led career festival in Asia.

We have Ong Chin Wee Benny, Lance Quek and Somsubhro Mukherjee with us.



From left to right: Ong Chin Wee Benny (BO), Lance Quek (LQ) and Somsubhro Mukherjee (SM)

**Tell us a bit about your background and how you came across the call to join BioBiz.**

**BO:** I am **Benny from Chemical Eng, Year 1**. I saw the email on the recruitment for Biobiz EXCO and I thought to myself then that it should be quite an eye-opener experience for me.

**LQ:** I'm Lance, currently a student at NTU's School of Biological Sciences, taking my undergraduate degree. On top of that, I am running my own businesses and doing my own investments in the stock market and private equities. I came across BioBiz through my school's email blast.

**SM:** I'm Som, a Third year PhD student at the Mechanobiology Institute, T-lab. I came across BioBiz through recruitment mails sent by last year's organizing committee.



**What drew you to join the BioBiz Organizing Committee?**

**BO:** The companies that came for the conference, the wide array of the committee members (from NTU and NUS), and to get to know more seniors.

**LQ:** I saw it as an opportunity (which comes with every challenge) to help companies to bring on board skilled talent for their growth plans, and also to expose students to the opportunities in this space to tap on the high growth rate in the APAC region.

**SM:** BioBiz is already a very well-known student-led event in Singapore. Being a part of an event where students have the freedom to plan and execute a conference was really appealing to me. This also gave me a real-life experience on how to deal with corporations and stake holders.



### **What was your role in the committee?**

**BO:** I was the **Logistics Director**. It exceeded my expectations. I had the chance to be in a sit-down meeting with the deans from different departments and e2i. Meetings were held and important decisions were made weekly. Apart from that, security, WIFI, gifts, conference halls, water, food, registration, booths, goodie bags and many more were part of the scope of the logistics department. More importantly, I've learnt how to lead a team and also to be a good team player.

**LQ:** I was the **Secretary** of the team and eventually due to certain other circumstances, I took up the role as the **Vice Chairperson for Marketing and Publicity**. It was quite an experience.

**SM:** I was the **Chairperson** of the event. It turned out to be way more challenging than I expected. Due to very tight deadlines, I had to take up other additional roles such as; coordinating with the company representatives directly, managing participants and maintaining the website of the event. It was difficult at times but BioBiz really gave me a lot of exposure.



### **4. Tell us one or two things you have learnt about organizing a full-scale conference.**

**BO:** There was much planning involved, and changes can be very sudden and abrupt. More importantly, I've learnt that the most challenging aspect is

managing human relations. Much care is required to always maintain good relations, be it between excos or within the sub-comm team. Trust, understanding and sense of responsibility is the key essence.



**LQ:** Organizing a conference is very similar to running a business. We had a very tight balance sheet and cash flow statement. It felt similar to taking over a company that wasn't doing well and turning it around. The toughest challenge for the team was to minimize our cost as much as possible to ensure that enough funds go to the next committee.

We had to be very prudent with our funds before we could get sponsors on board. We had to revise the pricing schedule and deliver the value to sponsors for them to accept our pricing schedule. The key thing that brought us out of this situation was, thankfully, that we had a very good finance team.



**SM:**

Your team is very important. When you organise an event you have to make sure that you have committed team members to assist you.



Be dynamic and open to last minute changes. There can be a lot of last minute modifications and changes when you are organising an event of large scale like BioBiz. However, one should remain calm, adapt and improvise accordingly.

One of the challenges we faced were the tight deadline we had to work with. If given the chance to organise the event again, I would make sure I have sufficient time and not rush everything to the last minute.



**5. How would you rate the success of the event from a scale of 1 to 5?**

**BO:** 4/5. The VIPs could be better taken care of.

**LQ:** 4.5. Considering we were thinking if we could even pull through, to eventually attracting a large participant and sponsor crowd. It feels good when you helped your vision cross the "Valley of Death" (check out the startup financing cycle) and grow to something much more than yourself, where you get to serve many people at their needs. That feels very fulfilling for me.



**SM:** I would give the rating as a 4. We could improve by:

a) Getting more MNC's and start-up companies on board.

b) Making sure that management of crowd on the day of the event is well-coordinated.

c) Ensuring the invited speakers and the talks resonate more with the students.



**6. What is your biggest takeaway from this entire process?**

**BO:** Experience.

**LQ:** The key to any success is the committee/management team is accountability and radical open-mindedness. When we say we will do something, we will get it done. This is what I feel eventually helped us turn around and make BioBiz 2018 a roaring success.

**SM:** The biggest takeaway from the event was the importance of collaboration. This was the first time we collaborated on different levels - with the Faculty, the University and the Government. Always make sure that you are accountable and you fulfil your commitment.



## 7. What advice would you give to the next BioBiz Committee?

### **BO:**

The Marketing team is very important. Publicity is also very important. External Relations should work very closely with Marketing. Committee members should make the effort to attend weekly meeting.

**LQ:** It is important that you set your context straight at the very start. Always be radically open-minded to solutions to the problems you are currently facing and work together as a team to solve them by looking at them from different angles.

I look for management teams who are very solution-oriented and goal-oriented. Sometimes, you need to do things that others are not willing to do to have what others don't have. Juggling commitments is about scheduling your priorities, always have a schedule. If you have a meeting, place it into your schedule. If you have classes, place it into your schedule. Also, another key thing that will bring you a long way when working with people in your committee is accountability, there is no need to hide.



### **SM:**

Choose your team mates wisely. They are the ones who can make or break the event. Make sure you collaborate with people and do not be afraid to ask for help or assistance if the need arises.

If you think that you have to take an unpopular decision but you feel that it is important, then take it. You cannot please everyone at the same time. You need to prioritize. Juggling school and BioBiz can be challenging but then you will learn to schedule your time. If you plan well and work accordingly, you would be surprised how productive your day can get. However to be honest, things do get very difficult in the last few days and we had to prioritize BioBiz over other things.