

Building a brighter agency force for a better future

With the ambition of creating the most respected advisers in the industry, Sun Life has launched its Asia Brighter Academy that will play a crucial role in recruiting, onboarding and developing its advisers and agency leaders. We spoke to **Sun Life Asia's Ms Carene Chia** to find out more about the academy.

By Amir Sadiq



In 2015, Sun Life launched its most respected adviser (MRA) initiative across its Asian markets to elevate its advisers in the eyes of its clients, driven by four core values of being caring, professional, inspiring and winning.

While the initiative has achieved good progress in all its markets, the insurer identified gaps that needed to be filled to achieve stronger and more sustainable distribution growth, leading to the evolution of the programme, now known as MRA2.0.

Sun Life Asia chief distribution officer Carene Chia told Asia Insurance Review that the objectives of MRA2.0 are to: Deepen client relationship, be the partner of choice to advisers, empower the agency force with digital and data analytics and deliver sustainable growth.

Sun Life's Asia Brighter Academy

To help MRA2.0 succeed, Sun Life has also launched its Asia Brighter Academy that will enable it to build a scalable and quality agency force and improve client experience across Asia.

"The Asia Brighter Academy supports all our advisers throughout their career with Sun Life, from rookie advisers to professional MDRT and leading to respected agency leaders," said Ms Chia, adding that the academy is expected to improve the recruitment and onboarding as well as training and development of MRA2.0.

Within the academy, Sun Life segments advisers into three broad categories, each with its own customised development roadmap:

- Brighter Gen – focuses on onboarding and upskilling rookie advisers and providing them with the support to start a bright career with Sun Life. There are five traits the Brighter Academy recruits for and develops in Brighter Gen rookies: Client obsessed, young at heart, energetic, digital-savvy and having an entrepreneur mindset.
- Brighter Pro – focuses on nurturing more professional and MDRT advisers. Sun Life has invested in making this a reality by partnering MDRT Academy and MDRT Global Services.
- Brighter Leader – focuses on ensuring quality agency expansion by developing and empowering agency leaders to recruit and coach their advisers. Sun Life's first Asia event was its Asia recruitment open day which attracted more than 8,000 attendees and was followed by the 'Influence2Grow' development series for brighter leaders across Asia.

How the academy prepares advisers and leaders to take on challenges

In line with the objectives of MRA2.0, Sun Life has transformed its tech-enabled sales and service processes to support advisers in all aspects of client engagement.

"Advisers will continue to be important but will need to



evolve significantly as technology changes the way they engage with our clients. We have religiously focused on the MRA's four core values to deepen our advisers' and agency leaders' capabilities and to compete for change," said Ms Chia.

"The caring core value puts our clients at the centre and focuses on the concept of 'client for life' – to provide lifetime security to clients; the professional core value consistently develops more active and sustainable advisers powered by digital; the inspiring core value offers the OneSunLife experience through an engaged community and Sun Life's brand purpose; and the winning core value enables our advisers to become stronger, faster and brighter," she said.

In addition, Sun Life has created five capabilities and design principles to ensure all its Asian markets are aligned and are able to achieve the targets of MRA2.0 consistently and effectively:

- Recruitment and onboarding – focused on adviser target profiles, recruitment tools and targeted segmentation for better onboarding experience.
- Training and development – nurturing advisers through the Asia Brighter Academy, digitalised training enablement with clear career path for its agency force.
- Structure and compensation – simplify the agency hierarchy, improving span of control and enhancing leaders' capabilities.
- Sales and performance management – allows Sun Life to increase adviser performance systematically through digital means.
- Client footprint and quality advice – empower advisers to deliver holistic solutions to clients through best-in-class digital tools.

Ms Chia added that through Sun Life's partnership with the MDRT Academy, it can equip its advisers with comprehensive and practical solutions which deepen their drive to achieve MDRT and reinforce their conviction to build a long-term career with the company.

And as the global landscape continues to evolve in the coming years, disciplined execution of strategy is critical to meet the changing needs and expectations of clients.

Through the Brighter Academy, Sun Life aims to ensure all its advisers deliver a balanced mix of professional advice to clients across Asia.

"We are constantly improving our new adviser retention and onboarding and we are building and leveraging digital tools to help them to be more productive and tailor the right product solutions for each client," said Ms Chia.

"The global pandemic has focused our attention on the importance of health and protection. With a significant protection gap across the region, there is massive opportunity for professional advisers to deliver quality advice and protection solutions to clients while enjoying the rewards."

Plans for the future

Looking ahead, Sun Life has set an ambition to become one of the top regional players in Asia by providing exceptional client experiences.

Sun Life aims to develop all advisers through the Asia Brighter Academy where the targeted recruitment, onboarding and development approach will enable them to follow a solid path and build a sustainable career with the company.

Furthermore, it will continue to enhance the capabilities of its agency leaders as role models for the next generation of advisers through the 'Influence2 Grow' Brighter Leader development series. Having nurtured many outstanding agency leaders over the years, the insurer will build an Asia legacy initiative to sustain the deep-rooted values of these leaders across the region.

Additionally, it will continue to develop the most respected advisers in the industry through its partnership with the MDRT Academy and MDRT Global Services.

"Distribution excellence is a foundation of our Asian growth, and we will continue to build our MRA 2.0 strategy, powered by the Asia Brighter Academy," said Ms Chia.

"All our advisers are Sun Life brand ambassadors delivering on Sun Life's global purpose of providing lifetime security to our clients and helping them live healthier lives. We want our advisers to be the most respected advisers in the eyes of their clients and industry peers."▲