Companies can embrace accountability, accessibility & availability as the foundation for effective investor relations, says ELAINE LIM

Mrs Lim: There is a growing body of opinion and evidence to suggest that a successful transparency campaign brings financial benefits – has almost reached the level of shareholder activism that is part and parcel of most matured financial markets.

The battle lines have shifted, though interest and engagement vary from company to company. A tour of AGMs of listed companies, including some small cap stocks, would show that apart from the generally well-informed housewives and retirees who are known to turn up for the five-star hotel food, there is a growing number of well-read, well-prepared and market savvy shareholders who attentively listen to the financial narratives and business strategies.

Companies under intense pressure to keep pace with a rapidly changing market are struggling to meet new demands from investors as well as changing fortunes of the stock markets.

For starters, companies must get the basics right. Their house must be in order. How effective is the board? Are checks and balances in place? Is there an efficient and reliable management information system that will alert the board to potential material risks and to the impact of changes on capital allocation, which in turn lowers productivity per capita and capital intensity?

This growing interest in timely and quality disclosure has been fed by a voracious appetite for comprehensive information from private investors who are no longer content to be passive recipients of information from public companies. Their interest – supported by well-read and articulate investors – has almost reached the level of shareholder activism.

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