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OPEN MIND
DATO' SULAIMAN
MOHD TAHIR**

Group Chief Executive Officer
AmBank Group

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• PP 8551/10/2012 (031187) • ISBN 1394-0562

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Easier™

A young man and woman are smiling and standing in a modern, brightly lit indoor space, possibly a university or office lobby. The man is wearing glasses, a blue and grey long-sleeved shirt, orange pants, and a backpack. He is holding a laptop that displays a network diagram with various icons like a globe, a smartphone, and a document. The woman is wearing a black shawl over a red top and is also smiling.

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- Asia Best Employer Brand Awards 2015 (World HRD Congress)
- 1Malaysia Employer (category:GLC) 'Hari Pekerja 2015'
- Top 10 Preferred Employer GRADUAN ASPIRE 2015
- Asia Best Employer Brand Awards 2014 (World HRD Congress)
- Top 10 Preferred Employer GRADUAN ASPIRE 2014
- Most Popular Graduate Employer Telecommunications 2014 (M100)
- Best Companies to Work For in Asia 2014 (HR Asia)



Life
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2017 GRADUAN® GO DIGITAL

For more than two decades, GRADUAN® has been a constant companion of hundreds of thousands of fresh graduates. This publication has helped young talent to connect with the companies we featured by giving them an insider's view of an organisation, its leaders and industry trends.

This year's GRADUAN®, the 23rd edition, touches on the digital challenges ahead but the C-suites have a reassuring message – at the end of the day, they still want talent!

Find out what the chief executive officers, human resources directors and industry leaders say about the job market and opportunities available, entrepreneurship, ambition, career growth and mobility, climbing the corporate ladder, innovation and more.

As you enter a new and exciting phase of life, GRADUAN® is here to guide you in making the right choices and decisions. Enjoy the foray into the “real world”!

ExxonMobil in Malaysia



The world is growing. Every day, more people, vehicles, homes and factories are driving an ever-increasing demand for energy.

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At ExxonMobil, you can do more with your career than you ever imagined. Whether your background is in business, engineering, IT or science, ExxonMobil has a challenging career waiting for you.

If you're a recent graduate or are looking for a stimulating internship, there's no better place to look than ExxonMobil. We will give you the opportunity to experience all that your field of study has to offer as you work alongside the most talented minds in the industry to unlock your full potential. Explore the opportunities waiting for you at ExxonMobil by visiting our career website.



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MESSAGE FROM THE **MANAGING DIRECTOR**

PUAN ELIA TALIB

Founder & Managing
Director GRADUAN®

Congratulations to graduates of 2017! This year marks the 23rd edition of GRADUAN®, the premier resource tool connecting fresh graduates with potential employers.

2017 will bring changes to GRADUAN®. We recognise that the world, including talent recruitment, is changing quickly and that everyone is now moving online.

It is my great pleasure to invite you to join our transition, in tune with this year's tagline "Go Digital", towards the future. Read about the revamp of our website in the Profile guidebook on page 4. Visit www.graduan.com and discover for yourself the bountiful digital offerings there – from job listings to videos, employer profiles and articles. We urge talent to take advantage of our search engine, update your profiles by uploading a video resume, and contact and interact with the human resources officers and directors of the companies you are interested in.

Meanwhile, this edition of GRADUAN® is packed with interviews with CEOs and other industry leaders who share their journey to the top, giving us insights into how they run their businesses and what opportunities they offer ambitious and hard-working talent. These leaders are keen to hear from young talent. Read their advice and if you meet them at one of GRADUAN®'s career fairs, engage with them!

We at GRADUAN® take this opportunity to wish you the best in your job hunt and career!

We look forward to meeting you online and at our career fairs.

“TOGETHER WE PROGRESS”



Established in 1913, RHB Banking Group is a Malaysian based organisation with core competencies in the areas of Banking and Financial Services, establishing itself as one of the largest fully integrated financial services groups in Malaysia.

The Group's core businesses are streamlined into seven business pillars, namely Group Retail Banking, Group Business & Transaction Banking, Group Wholesale Banking, Group Shariah Business, Group International Business and Singapore. Our regional presence now spans ten countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei, Cambodia, Myanmar, Hong Kong (with a representative office in China), Vietnam and Lao PDR.

RHB aspires to be a Leading Multinational Financial Services Group by 2020 and is committed to deliver complete solutions to our clients through differentiated segment offerings and an ecosystem that supports a simple, fast and seamless customer experience, underpinned by our cohesive and inspired workforce and relationships built with our stakeholders.



Dato' Khairussaleh Ramli
Group Managing Director

RHB aspires to be a prominent employer of choice within the region and we work hard towards making this a reality. We have in place multiple policies and initiatives, covering all aspects and touch points of an employee's lifecycle to ensure that the approaches are holistic and relevant. We partner with our employees in ensuring they experience a fulfilling and conducive work life.

The RHB Banking Group's headcount stood at 16,117 employees as at December 2015. In Human Resource, we believe in staying true to "Great Teams, Dynamic Workplace". We have put in place various initiatives and action plans that revolve around our Employee Value Proposition (EVP) which focuses on finding the right work-life balance for our employees.

The EVP highlights the five pillars that have been identified as the main areas of engagement for employees, namely:

- RHB Cares
- RHB Leads
- RHB Inspires
- RHB Progresses
- RHB Rewards

Through the EVP, RHB takes pride in providing an all-encompassing experience and we distinguish ourselves by valuing our people, encouraging an environment of "leading it right", cultivating the value of trust that extends internally and externally, fostering growth in our people and inculcating the culture of excellence.



In ensuring a common behaviour towards a high performing organisation, RHB has put in place our core values, which dictate that all RHB-ians display the qualities of Professionalism, Respect, Integrity, Dynamism and Excellence, or in short, PRIDE.

In 2015, we remained focused on continuous learning and development for our employees. To fortify our efforts of developing future leaders for the Group, we executed a new leadership development programme in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Management Western Australia (AIMWA) called the Core Leadership Development Programme. Meanwhile, the Learning Experience Action Programme (LEAP) 2, in partnership with the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), is an intensive learning programme spread over six months. This programme is packed with pre-course work, workshops and action learning projects and was crafted for high potential talents.

We established the Healthiest Sector Recognition award in November 2015 following the launch of the 'Jom Sihat' campaign in April. These initiatives are aimed at promoting a healthier and more balanced lifestyle amongst our employees and resulted in the:

- RHB Staircase Day
- Fun Ride with GMD
- Occupational Safety and Health & Wellness Day



“Great Teams, Dynamic Workplace”

Last year, 91% of our employees attended some form of learning and development programme, concentrating on leadership, technical expertise or functional development, to which we allocated a budget of more than RM40 million. We also put into practice the revised Core and Leadership Competency Architecture, as well as crafting a comprehensive leadership assessment framework together with Development Dimensions International (DDI).

We held the inaugural RHB Employee Awards as part of our efforts to recognise budding talent and those who go the extra mile at the workplace. The awards look to recognise and reward those who have made significant contributions in the area of social responsibility, customer experience and business excellence.

We believe that communication is key to improve our customer service and to enhance productivity within the organisation. In line with this, we rolled out several initiatives including the Group Management Committee roadshows to all regions in Malaysia, the quarterly Senior Leadership Forum and town hall meetings to increase interaction and to boost engagement between the leaders and employees.

In recognising the need to care for the wellbeing of our employees, we also introduced an employee perks application called PerkSense. PerkSense offers employees access to multiple discounts and freebies from top-notch merchants as an extension of the employees total rewards system.



RHB Bank Berhad (6171-M)

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Group Chief Executive Officer
AmBank Group

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ON THE COVER

DATO' SULAIMAN MOHD TAHIR
Group Chief Executive Officer of
AmBank Group

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BELAL DIN**

SERVING ALL MALAYSIANS

Bank Negara Malaysia wants a special kind of recruit: People who can plan with their head and execute with their heart so that ordinary people are both protected and provided for.



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PETER BELLEW

JOIN THE GOLD RUSH

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**DATO' SULAIMAN
MOHD TAHIR**

KEEP AN OPEN MIND

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▲
**LEONARD ARIFF
ABDUL SHATAR**

**BREAK FREE, FIND
YOURSELF**

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Axiata Digital Services breaks the mould to create new opportunities and products. Its CEO embodies the firm's bold, humble and disruptive nature.

ISKANDAR SAMAD

**START-UPS CAN
BE A GOOD LEARNING
EXPERIENCE, TOO**

Graduates should not restrict their job search to multinationals but also explore start-ups, which provide a great learning experience, suggests the CEO of Astro Tribe and Raku. ▼



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Printer
Percetakan Osacar Sdn Bhd
No 16, Jalan IDA 1A
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52200 Kuala Lumpur

GRADUAN® is published by
BIZ Connexion Sdn Bhd
The Corporate Centre
B7-1, Block B, First Floor
Dataran Palma, Jalan Selaman 1
68000 Ampang, Selangor, Malaysia
Tel : +603 4270 3270
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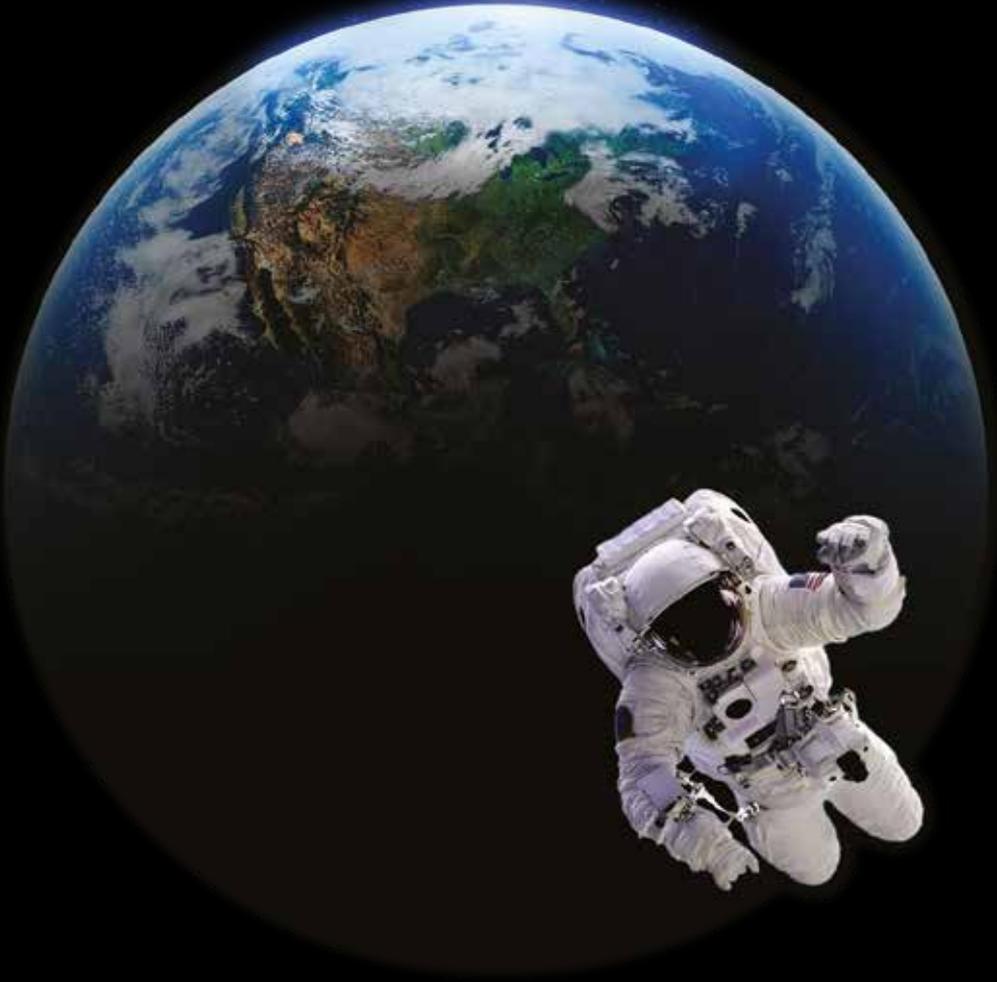
PP 8551/10/2012(031187)
ISBN 1394-0562

EDITORIAL POLICY

All companies highlighted in GRADUAN® hire fresh graduates. We select the companies. All articles are written by GRADUAN® writers and contributors, unless otherwise indicated by the word "Advertorial" to indicate that the company has paid for the pages. We aim to be the most trustworthy source of careers and employment for fresh graduates and pay attention to both accuracy and independence. We have a high presence of advertisements because this ensures FREE books for final-year undergraduates. (On a first-come, first-served basis.)

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create your own.**

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FLY HIGH

GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2016 was a two-day event, bringing talent and leading corporations together to share ideas, network, participate in workshops, events and activities.



GRADUAN® ASPIRE also provides information on the postgraduate courses offered by universities in Malaysia.

To kick-start the **GRADUAN® ASPIRE CAREER & POSTGRADUATE FAIR 2016**, a flash mob was held on 14 May 2016 at Pavilion KL with **GRADUAN®** ambassadors taking part in an energetic performance.

Bloggers and online videos turned the event “viral”, ensuring the event’s success two weeks later.

More than 150 leading companies and institutions together with their CEOs and top management teams took part in the career fair, held in the last weekend of May at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Some of the top names included Maybank, AirAsia, Axiata Group, Dell Global Business Center, Malaysia Airlines, UEM Group, AmBank, Gamuda, Great Eastern Life Assurance, Honda, Nestle, Unilever, and institutions such as International Islamic University Malaysia, University of Malaya, Curtin University, Sarawak, Universiti Sains Malaysia and more.

GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2016 in numbers

WHEN
28 & 29 May 2016

WHO
43,900
Graduates, postgraduates
and professionals attended
the fair

WHERE
**Kuala Lumpur
Convention Centre**

WHAT:
Participation from **150**
leading organisations and
institutions



ASPIRE+ CORPORATE LUNCHEON



The focus on the 2016 corporate luncheon was on “Staying relevant in the changing economic landscape”.

CEOs and other leaders had the chance to interact and mingle with some of the top talent in Malaysia in a casual dining setting. Candidates were handpicked and this exclusive invite-only event was the perfect opportunity for organisations to brand themselves and find the cream of the crop.

Tan Sri Tony Fernandes, Group CEO of AirAsia, delivered the keynote address (he was also on the cover of the **GRADUAN**[®] magazine themed “Fly High”). He shared his journey to the top, highlighting the importance of networking – or meeting the right people at the right time to guide you to the top.

Amirul Zarif Azri, an overseas graduate and alumni from Teach for Malaysia, stole the show when Fernandes offered him a job on the spot. The AirAsia boss also handed out free tickets with Azreena Azizana the lucky recipient of a trip to Mauritius.

The Q&A session with Fernandes was another hit with the crowd. He sportingly answered talent’s questions and after the Q&A, mingled with other participants.

The “Staying relevant in the changing economic landscape” forum was moderated by Sridharan Nair, Managing Partner of PwC.

The panellists were:

- **Mukhtar Hussain**, CEO of HSBC Bank Malaysia
- **Benyamin Ismail**, CEO of AirAsia X Berhad
- **Badlisyah Abdul Ghani**, President of Chartered Institute of Islamic Finance Professionals (CIIF)



ASPIRE 500 CONFERENCE

Held on the first day of the career fair, the conference touched on a great topical issue of the day – “the digital age”. The internet and digital connectivity have disrupted traditional businesses and the leading players shared their views on what the future of work looks like in the digital age.

The experts addressed 500 of Malaysia’s top-performing talent. The panellists included:

- **Nazrin Hassan**, CEO of Cradle
- **Ashran Ghazi**, CEO of MaGIC
- **Goh Ai Ching**, Founder of Piktochart
- **Leon Foong**, General Manager of Uber





GRADUAN® BRAND AWARDS SURVEY 2015

The GRADUAN® Brand Awards Survey 2015 report is one of the most talent-focused resources for organisations in Malaysia.

The survey covers more than 1,800 organisations named by talent as preferred employers. The GRADUAN® Brand Awards Survey 2015 was carried out by GRADUAN® while the data was analysed by Putra Business School.

Dr Brian K.M. Wong from Putra Business School presented the findings at the ASPIRE corporate luncheon.

GRADUAN® Brand Awards Top 10 Companies



ASPIRE LOUNGE

Aspire Lounge works like a TV talk show featuring personalities and celebrities in a casual setting where they share life experiences with attendees.

The sessions are designed to help graduates obtain detailed information on job opportunities in various industries and organisations.



GRADUAN® AGENTS RACE

GRADUAN® AGENTS RACE is a tag-team competition where participants compete to solve challenges. The “agents” had to complete their missions to survive like James Bond!

Six teams competed in the final with the winners taking home two Dell laptops.

TESTIMONIALS



OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

- Visitors pre-registered for the fair at the **GRADUAN® ASPIRE** website for express entry. On the day of the fair, two counters expedited on-the-spot registrations.
- More than 150 leading corporations and institutions scouted for prospective talent while local universities and institutions offered advice to those keen to pursue postgraduate studies.
- Many high-profile corporate leaders and personalities also attended the fair.
- Talent gained an insight into the state of employment in Malaysia and career prospects. **GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2016** served as a gateway to connect employers with talent, ensuring brand awareness and career development for both parties.
- Organisations gave the thumbs up to the turnout and quality of talent at the fair.



webe debuted for the first time at GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2016 – we found it to be a beneficial platform providing young graduates with exciting career opportunities. This is very aligned with webe’s philosophy ‘START HERE GO ANYWHERE’. Not only did it provide a good networking experience for us, but the quality and enthusiasm of the participants were exactly what webe is looking for. Thank you GRADUAN® for this opportunity – we look forward to the next edition.

Suhaimi Sulong
Chief People Experience Officer
webe digital sdn bhd

It has always been a great partnership between MAB and GRADUAN® ASPIRE. Our mutual understanding on the talent requirement and pipeline is an added advantage to MAB. Our 2016 debut was an amazing journey and we have received encouraging support from the GRADUAN® team for that. Definitely, we are going to continue our journey with them.

The best thing is when we can ‘fly high’ with someone who is always there for us and with us. And GRADUAN® is that amazing ‘someone’ for MAB.

Watch out for our next takeoff in the upcoming GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2017. We are aiming for another great landing...

Sainursalwa Sani
Head, Strategic HR Management
Human Resources Division
Malaysia Airlines Berhad

A true test of stamina and creativity for anyone aspiring to be a graduate recruiter. Jokes aside, GRADUAN® ASPIRE is a great event where employers like ourselves get to interact with young talent from Malaysia and the region to advise them on various opportunities on offer. Well-prepared students will also walk away with lots of ideas on the various career options open to them, regardless of their background.

Mona Abu Bakar
Head, Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition
UEM Group

MALAYSIA AIRLINES

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Open

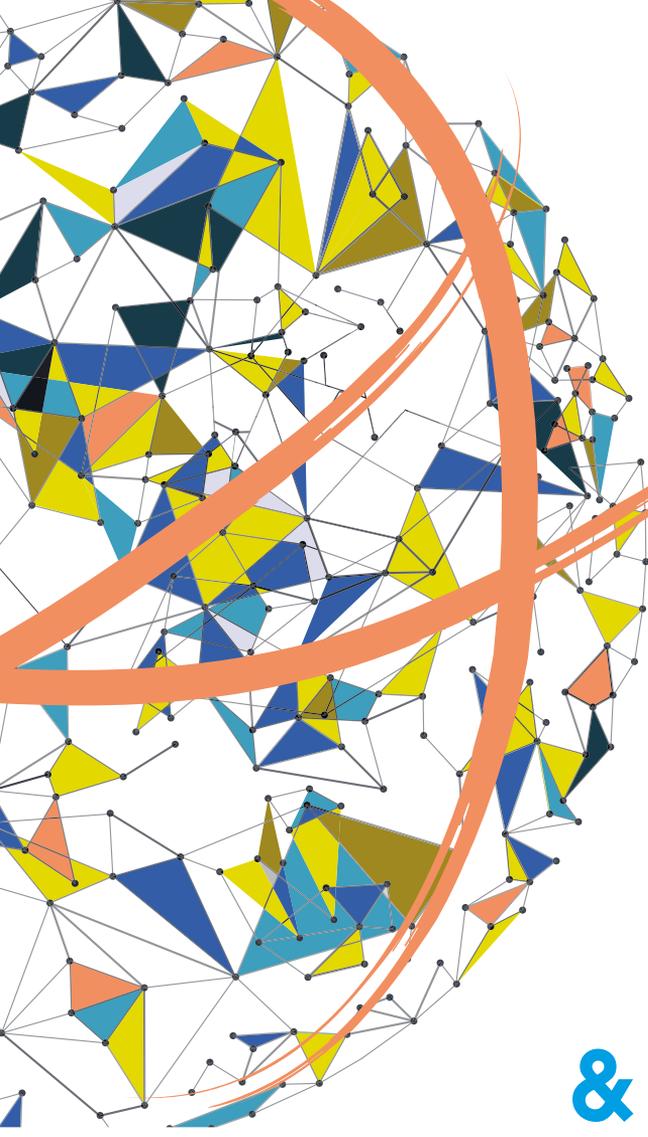
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CHAPTER 1 **MOVERS & SHAKERS**

Be inspired by intimate life and leadership insights from some of Corporate Malaysia's outstanding chief executives.

What is Roche?



World's largest biotech company focused on discovering medicines for patients with serious or life-threatening medical conditions



Pioneer in **DNA sequencing**



World's **most sustainable** healthcare company

(the Dow Jones Sustainability Index leader for the healthcare industry since 2009)



Global leader in cancer treatments **helping 25 000 000 people a year**



5th largest investor in innovation worldwide with over **10 000 000 000 USD yearly budget** for R&D

(PwC Global Innovation 1000 2009-2015)



~90 000 people working together across more than 150 countries



APAC Shared Service Center, Kuala Lumpur

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MOVERS & SHAKERS MANAGING THE FUTURE & BEYOND

How Corporate Malaysia is changing to adapt
to the new workforce

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Keep an OPEN MIND

As the AmBank Group transforms and moves towards the future, its Group CEO looks forward to working with Malaysia's youngest professionals.

By Theresa Manavalan

DATO' Sulaiman Mohd Tahir is someone with a pretty open mind. "No matter how much we think we know, there is always new knowledge to be found on every subject," says the Group Chief Executive Officer of the AmBank Group.

"To improve an existing process, it's important to master the original steps first. I once read a quote that said, 'It is what we think we know already that often prevents us from learning'. Organisations work in different ways, even in the same industry. The key thing is to go into any new environment with fresh eyes and an open mind."

Sulaiman is counting on those traits from the generation entering the banking sector now. The industry is facing more disruptors than ever before in history; the challenges are both technical and intellectual, and their impact is expected to revolutionise the world of finance.

"The banking world that I started in almost three decades ago is so different from the one young professionals are entering today," he says.

ERA OF DIGITAL BANKING

"Today, one has to be tech-savvy. The economic landscape evolves rapidly. Digital transactions are the norm. To stay ahead of the game, young bankers must be able to pair the best use of technology to customer needs."

As a group, AmBank has already completed the heavy lifting in terms of technology and system investments.

"We're accelerating towards an era of digital banking that will allow us to better serve our consumers, with the right financial solutions at the right time. There is much our new generation of talent can do to leverage on, to drive the bank forward. The important thing is to continuously develop the skills of our future leaders, to ensure that they are equipped to transform these disruptors into opportunities for growth."

Another growth hot spot in finance is Islamic banking. "The Islamic banking sector has great potential for growth. AmBank Islamic is a key pillar for the group, and we are looking to go digital for



“

The **single most important thing** I've learned in my career is that **people** always **work better** in **teams**.

”

Islamic banking as well. We intend to leverage on a digital banking platform to reach out to more customers, particularly millennials. There are many changes and projects coming up, which means exciting career prospects with AmBank Islamic.”

Sulaiman says there aren’t any specific traits or qualities that candidates need to differentiate between conventional and Islamic banking.

“Understanding banking regulations, product knowledge and industry awareness are what all bankers should have. Similarly, employers value candidates with a good attitude, diligence, honesty and professionalism.”

INTEGRITY IS KING

Now, more than ever before, those values are the subject of intense public debate. “I will say to anyone entering the financial services industry that integrity is king,” says Sulaiman.

“Customers will stay with banks they have confidence in. Such relationships are built on trust, professionalism and transparency.”

This is why compliance is a vital focus area for AmBank in its four-year strategic plan. The bank has taken significant strides to enhance the robustness of processes, reporting and governance,

and continue to improve with investment in systems, infrastructure and training.

All of which will need to be managed by the next generation of leaders. “The right skills set and dedication are must-haves but I would say these are important for all employees, not just leaders,” he says.

“Leaders must be able to make and take responsibility for the difficult decisions that will inevitably come their way. Beyond that, those in leadership positions, such as a CEO, have a crucial role to play in sustaining morale and creating a sense of belonging for employees.

“It goes without saying that teamwork is necessary. At AmBank, we want to build a culture that values collaboration and empowerment. I have started a new initiative called ‘Tuesday Lunches’, which allows me to reach out to team members directly and hear feedback in person.”

Only recently, AmBank hired 16 international and local graduates through its AmGraduate Programme. Sulaiman is looking forward to working with them.

“I get the feeling that today’s young talent is always ready for new challenges, and they even look forward to it,” he says. “As AmBank transforms, there are many opportunities for young people to contribute and collaborate.”

DIVERSITY OF OPINION

Like many other Malaysian organisations, there are multiple generations working at AmBank. This means diversity of opinion, which is why Sulaiman is asking for everyone to have an open mind.

“I would also advise graduates to set realistic expectations of themselves, of the employment process, and eventual place of work,” he says.



Dato' Sulaiman Mohd Tahir advises graduates to set realistic expectations of themselves and the employment process.



“Don’t be discouraged if things don’t work out the way you planned. As the saying goes, ‘If at first you don’t succeed, try and try again.’ It’s also a good idea to build up your work experience as much as you can. I took a sandwich programme while at university. I believe that taking time to explore and learn new skills is important in the long run.”

Being multi-dimensional might well be the right approach given that employers have become highly cautious in hiring.

“Well, times have changed and a university degree is no longer a guarantee of employment,” says Sulaiman.

“Some graduates find the job search challenging because they have unrealistic expectations of salaries and benefits. But this is the digital age and the younger generation is uniquely suited to this, having grown up with technology. At the end of the day, flexibility and a can-do attitude are as vital as your educational qualifications.”

SHOW DRIVE AND PASSION

Once in, says Sulaiman, a newbie’s next step is to ensure career progression. “Communication is very important and when you communicate well, you will be highly valued,” he says.

“It’s important to show your drive and passion to take on new challenges and always be willing to learn. These qualities together with your skills will take you a long way.”

Sulaiman, who has spent most of his working life in banking, started as a management trainee which, he says, allowed him to learn and experience a variety of businesses within a bank.

“Every role has prepared me to take on the role of CEO. Now that I’m at the helm of AmBank Group, I’m tapping on lessons from these experiences to help me lead the group forward on its transformation journey. The single most important thing I’ve learned in my career is that people always work better in teams.”

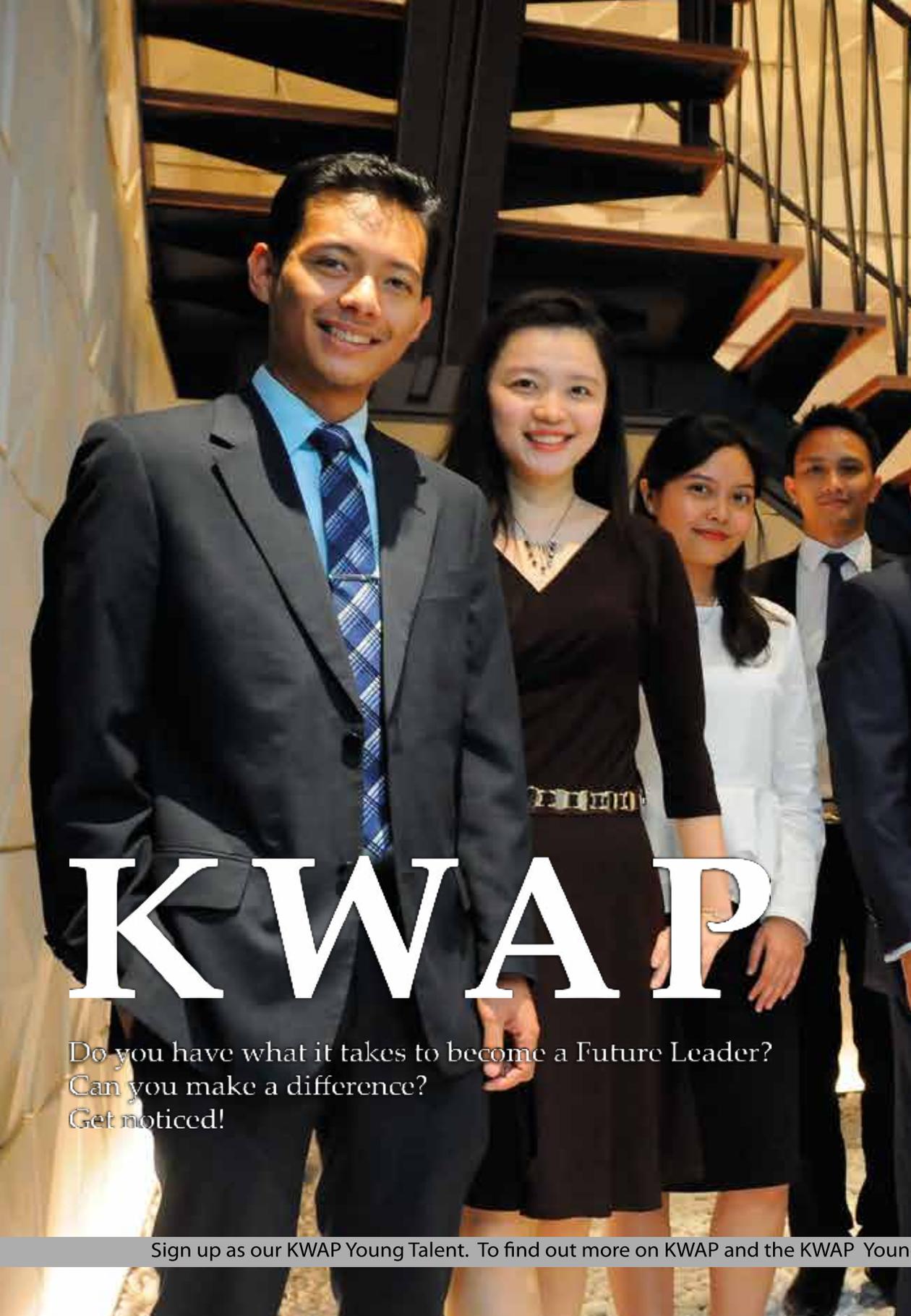
At this moment, Sulaiman is leading AmBank’s transformation strategy that will take the bank into the future. A typical working day is spent meeting with customers and staff, chairing meetings and task forces, making strategic decisions and pushing his people to meet the bank’s goals.

In the last 10 years, Gen Y has been called out as job-hoppers. Many expect Gen Z to be the same. Sulaiman, like many in his generation, spent 28 years in one organisation before assuming the role at AmBank.

“It’s easy to see that job-hopping is a choice that I take very seriously,” he says. “Moving because of real career progression or change of pace is completely valid. Hopping too often can leave an impression of flightiness.”

“It’s wise to look for new opportunities within an organisation. Our AmGraduate Programme deliberately places graduates in several projects and assignments to provide them with a more holistic on-the-job learning experience.”

Work aside, Sulaiman advocates a healthy lifestyle, adequate exercise and being active. “For me, it’s about work-life integration, finding an optimal way to manage work and personal life. Yes, it is important to make time to unwind. I like to read and I’m partial to the music of Bruno Mars, Sam Smith and Sia.” ©



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SERVING ALL Malaysians

Bank Negara Malaysia wants a special kind of recruit: People who can plan with their head and execute with their heart so that ordinary people are both protected and provided for.

By Theresa Manavalan

IT'S not banking, but central banking. There's only one organisation in the nation that does it. The monopoly is on serving the people and its mandate is to protect and provide for all Malaysians.

"If you're interested in helping the people of Malaysia, come work with us," says Mohd Adhari Belal Din, Assistant Governor at Bank Negara Malaysia. "Anyone who joins us needs that perspective."

Bank Negara's talent come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, from urban and rural areas, and with different life experiences.

A score sheet of straight As is desirable but they are looking for applicants with inclination towards nation building.

"You must understand the business we are in and ask yourself if you are going to be effective in serving the nation," says Adhari, who oversees

Bank Negara's Strategic Human Capital, Strategic Management, Human Capital Development and IT Services Departments.

"Even if you are scholars at the age 19 or 20 years old but if you have this kind of perspective, then you will do well with us. You will be working with the country's best. You will work on national policy and how it affects every single person in the country."

That's the perspective – serving every single person in the country. A central bank oversees a country's monetary policy, for example, which affects all its citizens, from the largest industrialists to the smallest farmers and private house buyers. Similarly, central banks oversee the national currency and exchange rates, which have a direct impact on goods and services, even on the price of food.

That's why Bank Negara does its hiring carefully and wants only the best, says Adhari. "The attrition rate is below four percent and that includes retirement.



Mohd Adhari Belal Din (left) and Kristina Rai both say Bank Negara welcomes diversity as it is the best way to tackle national issues.

That’s an indicator that everyone who is here wants to be here.”

BUSINESS GETTING MORE COMPLICATED

But that’s not to say that things are simply static. Ten years ago, Bank Negara was already talent-mapping for the future.

“Our people need to thrive in a business environment that gets more and more complicated with every passing year,” says Adhari.

Only 20 years ago, people would say that new hires needed to be analytical (able to break down a problem into smaller parts). Then, new hires were expected to think conceptually (see the big picture). Later, these two merged into “strategic thinking” and “strategic insights”.

For Gen Y and Z, it’s called “integrated thinking” and take note, soon this, too, won’t be so novel. “It will be the baseline expectation,” says Adhari.

“What this means is having a drive for excellence, organisational understanding, working collaboratively and horizontally, being able to think in an integrated manner, working well with others and being able to mobilise a workforce.”

It also means that recruiters are looking for future leaders, who are technically competent and have a natural ability to engage with their colleagues, as well as communicate with the outside world.

Recent global events have demonstrated clearly that central bankers are no longer quiet personalities. Instead, they have had to engage with the public in



“

We are a
**thinking
organisation;**
that’s the **nature**
of our work.

– Mohd Adhari Belal Din

direct and sometimes confrontational ways. Another major change: The way public debate is shaping our financial future.

“In the past, staff mostly focused on the tasks they were told to do,” says Kristina Rai, Director of the Strategic Management Department, “And they were experts at their own job. Today, you must know your domain and know about other people’s domains, too, and consider the impact of your actions on others.

“You must know science, economics, history and society and be really well read. Many think Bank Negara is a specialist organisation. Actually, it is an organisation that specialises in addressing the many issues facing the country.”

What’s more, global finance is facing more disruptors today than ever before. For the generation coming into banking and finance, being tech-savvy is a baseline expectation. Much of the disruption has its roots in technology.

Kristina says the technological evolution is just how civilisations move forward. “The big question is

how we handle all this, find our balance and know our priorities.

“It’s great that we can do well with technology, but we need to balance this immersion with the ability to be self-aware, articulate well and connect with others. It’s good to be tech-savvy, but does the outspokenness on Facebook mean you are principled and bold enough to lead a team or inspire a whole workforce? The great potential of technology must always be anchored to the right principles and the good that it brings to people’s lives”.

And, people say, the years ahead will be filled with unknowns.

DIVERSITY AT WORK

“We know that there will be many uncertainties in the future and we believe diversity will prepare us for that,” says Kristina. “We are prepping Gen Y and Z to lead a diverse no-formula type of generation that will be in the workplace soon.

“Diversity will be our safety net for uncertainty. Many kinds of people working together can

outsmart the challenges out there. They will find many-faceted solutions.”

Diversity at Bank Negara is already visible: Women make up 42 percent of Senior Management, 57 percent of Managers, 58 percent of Executives. About 62 percent of workforce are Gen Y and Z. Definitely not grey, boring or all male.

Adhari says, “We also want an international perspective in our brainstorming and planning, so that every policy we create is well rounded, on par with global practices, and human in every way. We are a thinking organisation; that’s the nature of our work.”

Take Islamic banking. Its exponential growth in recent years has meant fresh prospects for graduates of Islamic studies and shariah law. As it turned out, Islamic banking is inherently international with growth centres in places like Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Dubai.

“There’s a high demand for bankers with a solid grounding in shariah law and finance,” says Adhari. “Even in Islamic finance, we need diversity. It’s not exclusive to Muslims or those with Islamic qualifications. A diverse group means there will be effective brainstorming from all perspectives for the benefit of Islamic banking.”

Clearly, the next generation of executives must arrive at the workplace with an open mind and a diversity of ideas. “They’ve got to understand the decisions made by their predecessors, so that they can manage the present situation,” says Kristina.

“This takes a lot depth and strength to appreciate the value of other people’s work, the history, and the present day, plus the impact on the future.”

At the end of the day, she says, it will always be about serving people. “This is why it’s a joy to work with young people. They communicate with ordinary Malaysians with passion. They take new technology to rural places and figure out how to bring banking services to places where there isn’t even an ATM. They put their heart into it.” ©

————— “ —————

It’s a **joy**
to work with
young people.
They communicate
with **ordinary**
Malaysians
with **passion.**
— Kristina Rai

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“ ULDP is an experience not to be missed! Through its comprehensive structure, the programme had encouraged my peers and I to continuously challenge ourselves – always hungry to take up more. ”

Katie Lee Sheah Tsan
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Law
University of Cambridge



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EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE



Axiata Young
Talent Programme

Selection Process



Online
Assessment



Final
Interview

Axiata Young Talent Programme

At Axiata, we believe that nation building begins with nurturing young talented individuals who aspire to be the CEOs of tomorrow. The Axiata Young Talent Programme (AYTP) is our unique leadership initiative for young Malaysians who have demonstrated academic excellence and outstanding involvement in extra-curricular activities.

We have two programmes that are beneficial to undergraduate students:

- University Leadership Development Programme
- Young CEO Development Programme

Who can apply?

- **Malaysian undergraduate students** studying in recognised **local** and **overseas universities**
- **All** field of studies
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How to apply

Applications must be submitted online, please visit www.axiatafoundation.com. For more information on the programme, please refer to the FAQ section or contact us via email at aytp@axiata.com or via phone at **03-2265 6858**.

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The University Leadership Development Programme (ULDP) is a 2-week ‘summer camp’ style programme open to Malaysians currently pursuing their undergraduate studies in local or overseas universities. This year, the programme will be held from 14 July to 28 July 2017.

Our aim is to put leadership concepts into practice, focusing on dealing with real-world challenges in an ever changing business environment. Participants will be challenged through a wide range of activities designed to bring out the inner CEO within them.

At the end of the programme, a selected group of high performing students will have the opportunity to apply what they have learnt through our 8-week Structured Internship Programme.

**All expenses incurred during the programme from 14 to 28 July 2017 will be borne by Axiata but excludes transportation to and from place of study or residence to Axiata Tower in Kuala Lumpur.*



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“ Being surrounded by a diverse group of bright young minds, and led by knowledgeable professionals just drives me to be the very best version of myself – as an individual, and as a future CEO. ”

Lily Alyssa Mior Azri,
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) Accounting & Finance
Taylor's University



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Selection Process



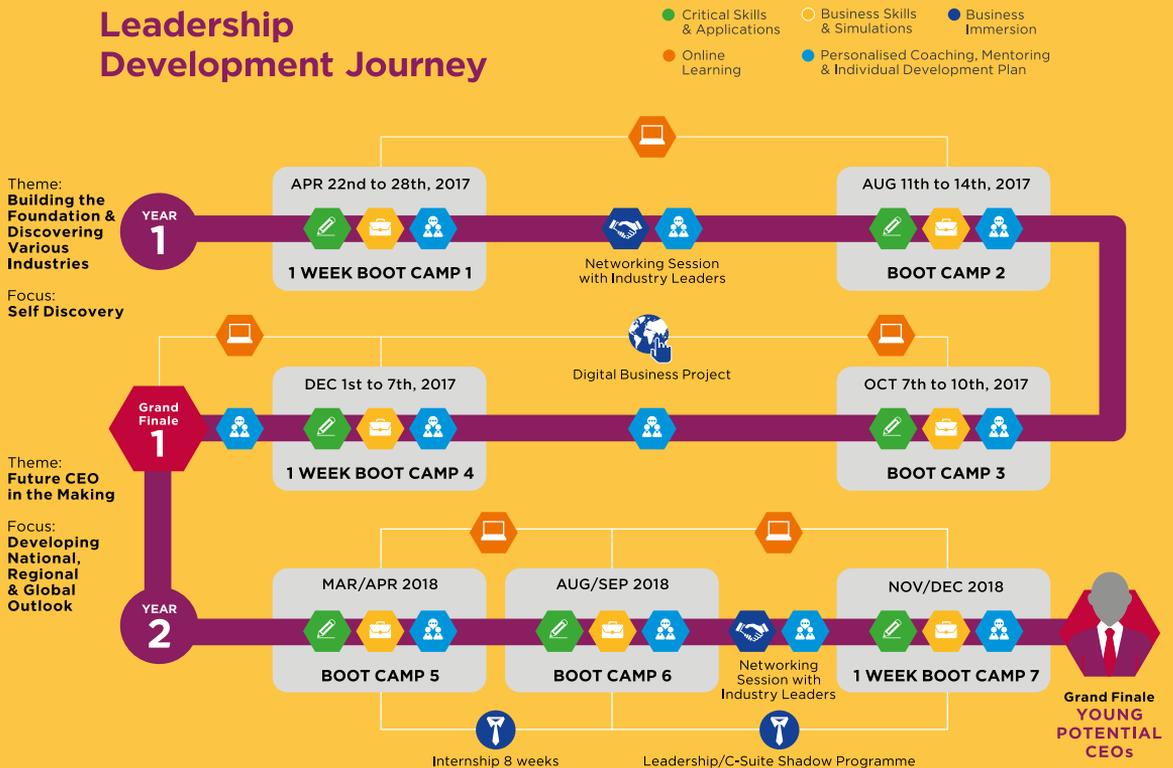
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Leadership Development Journey



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Join the **GOLD RUSH**

Tourism, says the boss of Malaysia Airlines, is undeveloped in this country and ripe for explosive growth. Graduates just need to polish up their English, learn Mandarin, and they will thrive in the industry.

By Tan Wan-Peng

MALAYSIA is enjoying a surge in tourist numbers. The growth is partly fuelled by Chinese tourists who no longer need a visa to visit Malaysia for a period not exceeding 15 days.

And guess who is excited about the stats? Peter Bellew at Malaysia Airlines!

Bellew, the Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, joined the national carrier on 1 September 2015 as Chief Operations Officer and took over as CEO on 1 July 2016.

One of the first things Bellew tells **GRADUAN**[®] is that the country's tourism industry is underexploited. This might come as a surprise to many of us since figures show that the country received 13 million visitors* in the first half of 2016 alone.

But Bellew, who has been in the aviation and tourism industries for more than 30 years, begs to differ.

“Tourism in this country hasn't even started yet. Like totally undeveloped,” he says when asked about the opportunities available for youngsters in the industry.

**source: Tourism Malaysia*

For graduates, he says, tourism is the best place to get their first start. “You assume responsibility quickly. You climb up the ranks because it has more to do with hard work, ability and common sense.”

Malaysia, he says, still needs hotels, resorts and theme parks. For graduates, if you’ve got an arts degree, a business, law, engineering or finance degree, every single one of you is needed in the tourism industry, he says.

You are needed to build, finance, engineer, maintain and manage resorts. This, he predicts, will be the boom that is coming to Malaysia. People want to visit this country and the jobs are ripe for the picking.

“The tourism business is a great learning ground,” he says.

And Bellew has his eyes fixed firmly on one major Far Eastern market – China.

BULLISH ON CHINA

For many first-time Chinese tourists, one of the most convenient and accessible spots is Malaysia. But what’s driving the Chinese travel demand?

Bellew says Malaysia has many advantages. The biggest thing going for us is the understanding of Chinese culture. There’s also the easy availability of Chinese food and in most parts of the country, 15 to 30 percent of the population speak Mandarin.

“Our strongest bookings from any route in the world are from China,” he says. “We’re sold out on every flight between here and every destination in

China in January (period leading up to the Lunar New Year).”

Advanced bookings from China for the next six months, starting in April, are also strong. Bellew cites the stats, saying: “Only four percent of the Chinese have a passport and their target is 12 percent in 10 years. That’s 150 million people!”

Imagine the potential. Nowhere on earth at any point of history is there such large numbers of potential tourists.

“I wish I were 20 years younger, I’d be over here. I see it like the gold rush. It’s the numbers. It’s maths.”

In terms of business, Malaysia could be the gateway for many Chinese businesses like the United Kingdom and Ireland, which American companies use as their landing points to Europe.

China, says Bellew, welcomes Malaysians as “brothers” and the Chinese are keen to invite their brethren to start new businesses there.



“

You
CLIMB UP
the ranks
 (in tourism) because it has
 more to do with
hard work,
ability and
common sense.

”



*Peter Bellew and his colleagues performing at MAG Got Talent in December 2016.
– Picture courtesy of Malaysia Airlines*

PAY ATTENTION TO LANGUAGES

“Pretty much everybody speaks good English here. It’s a recipe for absolute success,” he says, urging Malaysians to seize the opportunities waiting at the door.

“You’ve got a great banking system, good rule of law... if you stretch it out, in 10 to 15 years, Malaysia could be a giant version of Hong Kong or Singapore.”

The opportunities are boundless, thanks to our geographical luck.

To succeed in the tourism business, however, graduates must polish up their language skills. Graduates, advises Bellew, should pay attention to their English. He says the older generation has “the most beautiful perfect English” and then you meet recent graduates who go “Ok-lah bro” or use Manglish.

If you want to get far in the tourism industry, that’s a no-no.

What’s the best way to improve your language skills? Start by listening to audio books. He suggests Stephen Fry reading the collected works of Harry Potter. If you listen to a posh English person reading an audio book, literally just listening to them, you will improve through a process of osmosis.

In other words, English is the lingua franca of the business world.

Bellew also advises younger Malaysians to acquire high-end mathematical skills and data analytical skills. He is impressed with our creative skills, especially in graphic art, drawing and fabric, and he suggests that they transfer the creativity to web and app design.

STAFF STRENGTH

What about the job prospects at Malaysia Airlines? Bellew raves about the quality of the people here. He is impressed with the graduate trainees working in IT and on the new reservation system. They are engaging in dialogue with the company.

He also praises the staff in Sabah and Sarawak, calling them “an extraordinarily talented people” who are highly engaged.

“The MASwings (a subsidiary airline) people are as good if not better than any airline I’ve come across.”

There is so much depth in the staff, he says, compared with other aviation organisations.

“Most airlines and organisations around aviation are only 10 to 15 years old. So, the longest experience for an engineer might be eight or nine years.

“Here, I can go into the hangar and if we have a problem, there will be 50 people over 50 and they could have been here for 25 years.” These oldies have seen all the mistakes and can pinpoint the trouble quickly.

One of Bellew’s tasks at the national airline is to recalibrate the organisation and work towards

breaking even by end-2017. He says the airline is on track in meeting this goal with the strong support of the staff.

He is also focused on engaging the public and travel agents with the brand – he wants them to get excited about Malaysia Airlines again.

To get there, Bellew needs the young to help make Malaysia Airlines the preferred carrier.

So, if you are a fresh graduate and you don't know where to start, take Bellew's advice and join the tourism industry. You never know, you could strike it big. 

The grass is greener in Malaysia

Peter Bellew can't understand why Malaysians are so eager to criticise their own country.

“There's amazing potential in the country and young Malaysians are far too hard on their own country.

“There is too much emphasis on the few negative things that are around,” he tells **GRADUAN**[®] when asked what advice he'd like to impart to young graduates.

He thinks it's time to cut Malaysia some slack. He offers a checklist of the positives in Malaysia, starting with the ease of doing business.

Incorporation can be done in a day. There is access to flights and airports. Quality of broadband. Availability of skilled staff. Access to capital. Support for local businesses and entrepreneurs. These are just some of the things contributing to the business-friendly environment.

There are loads of work available in the burgeoning sectors, such as digital marketing, web design and app design.

And the killer USP? We're better than Singapore!

“People always say to me ‘We can't compete with Singapore’ and I always say: ‘Singapore can't compete with here’ in terms of cost of office space, availability of telecommunications and staff, and lack of congestion,” Bellew says.

Nothing beats Malaysia's geographical location either. People also disregard Kota Kinabalu and the north coast of Sabah. If you look at a map, it

is bang in the middle of Asia, between Urumqi and Tasmania. So, what's holding us back? “People need to have the confidence.”

We just need to network better, with the big companies working tightly with each other like they do in Japan and South Korea.

As for human resources, many of the graduates and younger Malaysians Bellew comes across lack confidence and they're a little shy.

“We have a number of recent graduates coming here, their qualities, capabilities and work ethic are good or better than anything else I've come across. They just lack the confidence.”

He sees those traits in Malaysia Airlines and is keen to help them overcome their modesty or reticence. “You're brilliant and you need to wake up to that. You need to hold your head up, be proud.”

As a “fairly open person”, Bellew advises people to work hard to overcome their phobias on public speaking, presentation skills and stop being too deferential. If you have a brilliant idea, speak up and share it.

But above all, Malaysia's greatest asset, Bellew says, is that it has been at peace for nearly 60 years compared with other nations embroiled in trouble and strife. The racial integration is also remarkable.

“I have never seen anything like that in my life. There are some issues here and there but in the scheme of things, they are inconsequential.”

So, let's give Malaysia a break.



Leonard Ariff Abdul Shatar (second from left) says it is alright to decline promotions if they do not fit into one's lifestyle.

Break free, find yourself

Don't let your degree define your career, advises the Group Managing Director of CCM.

By Sharmila Valli Narayanan

THE biggest mistake job-seekers do is to limit their career choices to their degree. For example, a science or biomarine graduate might think one can only work in industries related to what one studied.

Fresh graduates need to get out of this mindset, stresses Leonard Ariff Abdul Shatar, Group Managing Director of Chemical Company of Malaysia Berhad (CCM). He should know, as he speaks from experience.

Leonard graduated with a degree in law and economics from Australia and upon his return to Malaysia, promptly went to work in a legal firm. "Three months into the job, I realised that a career in the legal field was not what I wanted," says Leonard.

"I also realised I was more interested in economics and that to thrive, I needed a career with a job scope that changes on a regular basis."

His dreams of an ideal career were realised when he joined CCM. "I never held the same portfolio in CCM for more than 18 months. I kept adapting to new situations and learning new things."

DON'T BE PIGEONHOLED

To survive and thrive in the working world, one must embrace adaptability. It is one of the most important qualities that will propel one's career.

“Whatever university degree you have would not dictate your career for the next 30 years,” says Leonard.

“At CCM, we have an individual with a medical degree who works in the marketing department. We have people with pharmaceutical and mechanical engineering degrees in departments that had nothing to do with what they have learned in university.”

“What makes them successful is their willingness to adapt to the situation and their hunger to learn new things. Always be ready to learn new things: That is a mantra that you should always keep saying to yourself. As long as you are willing to do this, you can bravely venture into any new field.”

MONEY MATTERS

Be realistic about the salary that you will get. Fresh graduates these days have an inflated sense of their worth. This was revealed in a study recently which found that fresh graduates expect a starting salary of RM6,000!



“Let’s not kid ourselves, money is an important factor,” admits Leonard. “But you also need to be realistic about what is being offered in the market.”

Before going to an interview, do some research about the entry level salary in your field.

During job interviews, Leonard prefers to ask candidates what they would do with their first pay packet.

“One candidate told me that he would like to buy himself a Tag Heuer watch. The price of a Tag Heuer watch starts between RM6,000 and RM7,000. I told him he was unlikely to get that kind of salary!”

“I have seen young people making major career mistakes based on money,” reveals Leonard. “Be practical and realistic. Do not move jobs just because of money. Decide what job that you can learn the most from.”

FINDING YOUR PASSION

“Many young people who first enter the job market are not sure about what they want. That’s perfectly fine,” says Leonard. “You need to give yourself three years to find out where your passion lies.”

If you want to climb the corporate ladder, go ahead, but ask yourself how high do you want to go and what are you willing to sacrifice along the way.

“Not everyone can be or wants to be a CEO. While it is good to set career goals, you must also be realistic about it because your priorities as an individual change as the years go by.

“What was important to you when you were 25 might not seem that exciting at 35,” he adds. He has seen staff declining promotions with big pay jumps because they were happy with where they were and were not willing to compromise what they had at present for a position that would affect their lives and families.

“

I have seen young people
making **major career**
MISTAKES
based on money.



Tips for job-seekers

“And that is alright,” says Leonard. “In the end, to succeed, you need to find out what you are good at, be good at it, and you’ll make a career out of it.”

If given a chance and he could go back in time, is there anything he would have done differently with regard to his career?

Leonard ponders on the question and says he would have joined an airline as a flight steward.

“I would have used the opportunity to travel and to develop myself. I would have done this for three years before plunging myself into a corporate career. That would have given me a different perspective on how I would navigate my corporate career.”

When asked what he will be doing in 10 years, he took some time to reflect before answering: “I have always been fascinated by the diplomatic service. In the US, it is quite normal to tap corporate leaders as diplomats. Of course, in Malaysia, it’s different. But if I am offered the opportunity, I will jump at it.” ©

- **A boring CV:** “The CV should reflect the individual. Don’t just pad it with your academic qualifications. Companies rarely want to hire bookworms. We are looking for individuals who are also engaged with the society they live in,” says Leonard Ariff Abdul Shatar.

Fresh grads should also emphasise their extracurricular activities, including any work done either full time or part time.

“I like to read the CV back to front. Some of the candidates that I have interviewed had worked as part-time hairdressers or make-up artists. Some even have worked in fast-food joints. These are all interesting talking points. I want to know how they fared and what was their experience like.”

- **Don’t ask about salary:** During question time, don’t touch on salary straightaway. It can put off the interviewer, especially when the salary you are expecting does not match what the company is offering to you.

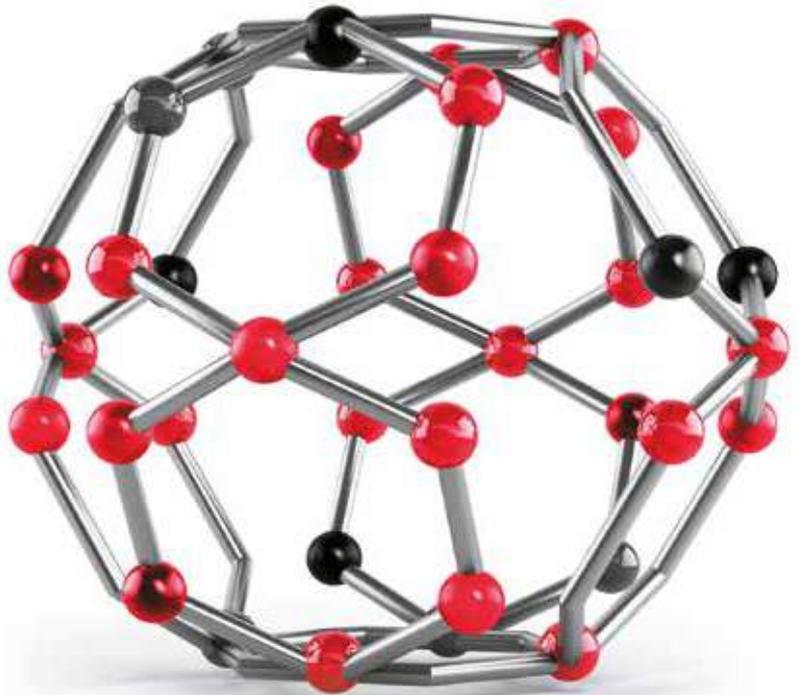
“Only 20 percent of what you study is relevant to the job; the rest is what you will learn on the job. The company has to invest a lot in retraining you. Ask questions about the company to show your curiosity about the place you might be working in the future,” advises Leonard.

- **Brush up on general knowledge:** “One area which is weak among our fresh graduates is general knowledge,” says Leonard. Know what’s happening in the country, in the region and around the world and how it will impact on the industry you want to work for.
- **Job-hopping:** One of the trends among the millennial is to job-hop frequently. How do employers see this? “Jobs for life don’t exist these days because of the competition to get skilled workers,” explains Leonard.

“When I see someone who has changed jobs often, I observe whether he or she is doing the same job at a higher level or doing something totally different. Normally this type of people would change jobs every three to five years. As they move, they acquire new skills. I see these people as wanting to learn new things and take on new challenges. These people are different from those who have changed six to seven jobs in four years. These people mainly do it for the money. These are job-hoppers I would not be interested in.”

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Gan Leong Hin sees his job as educating Malaysians on the need to insure themselves adequately.

PUSH yourself to the limit

The life insurance industry is facing many changes and it is crucial that energetic, passionate and younger people join that journey, says Prudential's CEO.

By Yasmin Ramlan

WHAT is the first thing that comes to the mind when the word “insurance” is mentioned? If you think of insurance agents chasing after you in a shopping mall, then you couldn't be further than the truth. But this is the misconception with which the insurance industry has had to contend.

Life insurance is a product designed to protect customers' future but many people simply think of agents instead, says Gan Leong Hin, Chief Executive Officer at Prudential Assurance Malaysia Berhad.

“It is an obvious misconception that people have about insurance agents. It is just harder because unlike other products, what we are selling is intangible benefits.

“I guess you are not going to wake up in the morning and say ‘Today, I'm going to get an insurance policy. But you're going to say ‘I'm going to get the latest iPhone’,” Gan tells **GRADUAN®**.

“

The **CHALLENGE** for the industry is having **people** who are **ENERGETIC** and want to **affect change.**

So, part of Prudential’s mission is to rework the message a bit – in other words, to give insurance a “positive spin”. It aims to move on from just selling a product to protecting its customers’ future and understanding their needs.

Gan believes that most Malaysians are under-protected and it is Prudential’s job to educate them on the need to secure their future in line with its mission statement “Financial freedom and peace of mind for all Malaysians”.

At present, only 56 percent Malaysians have some form of life insurance and even out of this, more than 50 percent are underinsured, according to Gan.

GETTING MALAYSIANS INSURED

The task ahead for Gan, who was appointed as CEO in November 2015, is to get Malaysians to understand the concept of life insurance and the importance of financial planning and protection.

“Fortunately, we have a Bank Negara governor (Datuk Seri Muhammad Ibrahim) who is passionate about moving the industry up and there is the LIFE (Life Insurance & Family Takaful) framework to support the long-term development of the life insurance and family takaful industry,” he says.

Consumers need to be educated constantly so that they can make an informed decision when they buy life insurance.

At Prudential, there is a firm belief that when Malaysians seek financial advice, they should approach a quality financial planner, which is why the company is focused on recruiting full-time agents who are highly educated and committed.

“We have attracted more Gen Y agents, which will definitely put us in good stead as we strive to reach out to more Malaysians, especially younger customers.

“Our efforts to educate Malaysians to be financially savvy extend beyond our insurance products and solutions. Financial education is a key pillar in our CSR programme... we aspire to build a financially literate and resilient society.”

One of the ways to achieve this goal is to run financial education programmes in schools and among low-income communities.

Therefore, a leader needs the right mindset, especially in dealing with the changes and challenges ahead in the life insurance industry, he says.

“But to do that, you need a change. You need to start with yourself first. You can’t keep on doing the same thing repeatedly and expect a different result. If you want a different result, you need to push yourself to the limit to make a difference in an organisation,” he says.

Although many of us find changes hard to adapt to and uncomfortable, Gan points out that those feelings are crucial because if you become too



Our Mission
Financial Freedom and Peace
of Mind for All Malaysians.



comfortable, it means you are stuck in a comfort zone and can't progress further.

"We all need to learn to be comfortable with the uncomfortable. So, I think the challenge for the industry is having people who are energetic and want to affect change. (They are the ones) who want to improve whatever we are doing currently. That's the biggest challenge."

Being energetic and having a desire to bring about positive changes are some of the traits Prudential looks out for in its talent and future leaders.

PASSION OR INTELLECT?

Gan recounts the time when he was invited to Nottingham University for an education event where about 100 youngsters were present.

"I was one of the panellists and one of the students asked what was more important – to have the right intellect or passion?"

"I answered, if you don't have intellect, your passion will overcome you. But if you have intellect without passion, you are just useless. So, it's to have a mindset of having the passion to want to do what you want to do."

Gan offers the same advice to his son. He always reminds the youngster that being smart is not enough if you don't make full use of it.

To succeed, Gan says, you should be passionate, hardworking and possess a strong work ethic. Otherwise, you will find yourself always on the back foot.

But what about non-assertive or introverted individuals, who may not be so vocal about communicating their passion?

Gan is sympathetic as he has more than 20 years' experience in the industry, spanning retail life insurance, pensions, investment trust and mutual funds. He has seen all sorts.

It doesn't matter if you are an introvert but what's more important is to gain a thorough understanding of what you are doing and harnessing the energy around you. That allows the whole team to move forward.

"It is the combination of having the right intellect and passion for what we do and work with the people around us (that's more important). It is quite universal and applicable in whatever industry you are in.

“It is more than just being an extrovert or introvert. If you are a poor communicator but you recognise it, it’s good – you will improve yourself,” Gan says.

DOWN-TO-EARTH CEO

“OK, my colleagues may not agree with me here,” he says jokingly when asked to describe himself as a CEO.

He has always been guided by the principles of a strong work ethic and a desire for continuous learning and need to be humble throughout his career.

Describing himself as a down-to-earth leader, self-aware and confident about his strengths and weaknesses, he scoffs at the idea that leaders should not display weaknesses.

“There’s nothing wrong in knowing your own weakness. In fact, as a leader, I think it is extremely important. You need to know what you’re good at and what you’re not good at. Then, you should get people who are good at things that you are not good at. Thus, you will achieve a better result. But it can be challenging because birds of a feather flock together.” ☺



It’s not about the money

1. Get a job that excites you because you will not be able to do it otherwise.
2. Look for a job that allows you to grow.
3. Choose the right industry you want to work in.
4. Find a job that rewards you. The reward is more than just financial although this is an important component. Rewards can come in other forms. For example, the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programme at Prudential is geared towards helping the less privileged and many of its employees find it very meaningful to volunteer and contribute to society.

Prudential offers financial education, such as the Cha-Ching (primary school) and Duit Right (secondary school) programmes to educate students on how to earn, save, spend and donate in a fun and interactive way.

These programmes are conducted by volunteers and NGO partner, Yayasan Generasi Gemilang,

through a series of interactive, experiential and educational activities, teaching students the concept of financial management.

Through PRUkasih, eligible urban low-income households receive temporary financial relief should the main breadwinner face an accident, illness or death. Volunteers explain and assist eligible recipients on PRUkasih.

In 2014, Prudential built 14 houses for the families of Kampung Serasa whose homes were destroyed in the December floods in Kuala Krai, Kelantan. The rebuilding effort involved more than 380 employees and agency volunteers from Prudential’s offices throughout Malaysia and 12 other countries.

Building a house from the ground up was an eye-opener for the volunteers. With no building experience, they managed to construct a house in four days despite the adverse weather.

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Getting to know Nik

He is a doting father of two young girls. A firm believer in the importance of work-life integration, he always finds ways to spend time with them despite his busy schedule. He also loves riding his Vespa motorcycle. Every year he would participate in the 'Distinguished Gentleman's Ride' event, where hundreds of riders would gather in KL and ride their motorbikes in smart business suits. Nik is also proud of his East Coast heritage, and can frequently be seen wearing a batik shirt on Fridays. Get connected with Nik via LinkedIn @ Nik Shahrizal Sulaiman, to get to know him more.



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Agent of CHANGE

Axiata's Regional CEO shares his views about digitalisation and tells GRADUAN® why he wants to hire kids ready to shake up the digital world.

By Tan Wan-Peng

DATUK Seri Shazalli Ramly is a man with a mission. Shazalli assumed the post of Regional Chief Executive Officer at Axiata last year after leading Celcom for 11 years.

He transformed Celcom into a competitive mobile player in Malaysia and was instrumental in bringing about massive changes to the organisation. So, in many ways, change is a constant theme in his professional life. And when he proclaims, “You have to embrace change”, you can feel the zeal and urgency.

But what sort of change is he talking about? Shazalli is referring, of course, to his area of expertise – technology. Terms like “old core”, “digitised kids”, “PS4” and “millennials” pepper the conversation but Shazalli is interested in the disruptive nature of digitalisation.

“Everyone’s talking about it (digitalisation), but what does it mean?” Shazalli asks. “Digital to the core” refers both to the concept and title of the best-selling book by Mark Raskino and Graham Waller.

They argue that business leaders must understand the impact of the digital revolution on their

industries, companies, and leadership styles and practices. Organisations and their workforce cannot stand still and risk failure.

The digital revolution upends the way businesses are run and Shazalli shares the experience at Celcom.

“Two years ago, we saw that the dynamics of the market had changed. The world had moved out of voice. [It] leapfrogged [and took a] quantum leap into the world of data.”

The shift meant that apart from the traditional way of calling one another or SMSing, millions of apps were downloaded.

The telco industry was at a crossroads. “Everyone in the so-called telecommunication business had to redefine the word ‘tele’. The communication stays,” he says.

Consumers were changing their behaviour – moving from talk and text (the “tele” bit) to using WhatsApp, Telegram Messenger and other apps to communicate.



Datuk Seri Shazalli Ramly relishes the challenge of leading Axiata in the midst of technological upheavals.

“

A
20-YEAR-OLD
kid in a new
DIGITISED
world
can do what a
55-YEAR-OLD
man did in the old core.

”



Smartphones were the catalyst and the trend was catching in rural areas, too.

“The shift is so fast and it’s not like a year or three years. You’re looking at a leap of six weeks... boom! the whole town becomes smartphone-centric.”

Disruptions to the telco industry were caused by changes in human behaviour and a plunge in the price of smartphones.

HIRING NEW BREED OF LEADERS

What does digitising the core involve when digital consumption patterns are changing? For Shazalli, it means finding candidates from the “digitised kids” segment while also dealing with two other segments – “non-digitised kids” and a middle path, “transition kids”.

It is this last group, “the most difficult and the biggest”, which interests Shazalli because they are the ones exposed to the old core but who need to change to embrace the new digital world.

From a hiring perspective, he is looking at, for instance, youngsters who know how to play PlayStation blindfolded.

But he emphasises, the “transition core” still matters to companies like Axiata. They are the group, who when playing PS, will need to check and look at what they are doing but those who are willing to change can still get ahead. The last segment, non-digitised core, comprises of those who never play in their entire lives.

The PlayStation analogy fits into the new core, transition core and old core segmentation. It is a mistake, Shazalli says, to use only age to define the groups. He relies on – surprise! – technology instead.

Kids born in 1994 and 1995 are part of the Sony and Nokia mobile phone generation, and crucially “they are not millennials”.

Shazalli says: “They are already in the workforce. Which means they saw both. They were from PS1, not even at PS4. Grand Theft Auto (GTA) doesn’t exist yet.

“You are judging transition in a very difficult way. Why am I highlighting this? We’re addressing **GRADUAN®**, you have to address kids, not according to their age, but rather their interests.

“A 20-year-old kid in a new digitised world can do what a 55-year-old man did in the old core.

“He jumps straight to Chief Technology Officer because he knows how to do things and you are talking to him like he’s a kid?”

THINK LIKE A GAMER

The identification of skills with age is still there but will be diluted based on the new need. New talent who possess technical skills will jump to the front.

A good example is the old days when we talk about customer experience, we are referring to optimal service. Today, it is called user interface, user experience (UI/UX), which calls for a different skill set: You need to know coding, and how to create swipe, turn and tilt.

Someone managing a screen for your customer digital online services must be open to new consumer behaviours, he says.

Try, for example, to develop a new ATM machine for the future. Shazalli suggests designers think like gamers playing GTA because “that’s what’s coming”.

“You cannot have an ATM machine where you slot in a card and then go ‘tick, tick, tick’ (jabbing at an imaginary number pad) then left, right. That’s old school.”

This explains why game consoles pop up at the Axiata booth during career fairs. Parents and teachers think playing games is a waste of time but for Shazalli, it allows “digitised kids” to shape organisations, such as Axiata.

He is also interested in addressing youngsters who appear to be introverts, sitting quietly at the back of the classroom, but who turn into extroverts on social media (commenting, liking, tweeting) and those who know the ins and outs of Grand Theft Auto (level 5), because they are into coding and user interface.

This is one of the reasons, Shazalli says, he accepted a role in the CEO@faculty programme. It allows him to deal with the change agent – lecturers, teachers and faculties – and to show them that future innovations, start-ups and other big ideas come from embracing change, doing business and hiring talent differently.

What motivates him is also faith and belief in local talent. The digitisation of Malaysia is a government policy and for Shazalli, the new generation of talent does not need pens or papers but a PS console to conquer the world.

So, the next time your parents yell at you for spending hours hooked to PS4, tell them: “Axiata wants to hire me!” 🎮

What’s ‘digital to the core’?

Leaders must understand the critical forces driving digital to the core of products and services, and learn how to remap their industries, remodel their enterprises and remake themselves, according to technology gurus and Gartner duo Mark Raskino and Graham Waller.

Based on interviews with more than 30 Chief Information Officers, CEOs and Chief Digital Officers, *Digital to the Core* argues that there are three critical forces at work coming from outside an organisation and penetrating right to the core of it.

The first, Resolution Revolution, is where the sensors in objects from cars to tennis rackets will

see what’s going on in the world around them in ever greater detail, revealing things we could never see or manage before.

The second, Compound Uncertainty, compels leaders to probe into the edges of the digital frontier to nudge regulatory, cultural and technological tipping points.

The third, Boundary Blurring, forces the merging of the digital and physical worlds, leading to alterations in the core products, propositions and possibilities for industries. The effect then cascades across ecosystems, enterprises, people and things. –

By Tan Wan-Peng



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A man with short dark hair and a goatee, wearing a grey V-neck sweater over a collared shirt and blue trousers, stands on a balcony. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. He holds a black laptop in his left hand and a black coffee cup in his right. The balcony has a glass railing with metal posts. In the background, a modern high-rise building with many windows is visible under a bright sky.

Go BREAK IT!

Axiata Digital Services breaks the mould to create new opportunities and products. Its CEO embodies the firm's bold, humble and disruptive nature.

By Sheridan Mahavera

AS Axiata Digital Services' No. 1 person, Mohd Khairil Abdullah could have been a “king in the castle”, grabbing a massive office at the top floor from where he could literally look down and oversee the staff.

Instead, he tore down the walls of the room and turned it into a lounge cum rec room cum meeting area complete with sofas, PlayStation console and mini-fridge stocked with Magnum ice-cream bars.

Khairil then moved to the open floor where most of his staff sit and took a nondescript corner on a long meeting table that is shared with his other teammates. There is nothing about the spot where he sits that sets him apart from the other staff.

His former office space turned rec room is now a place where software designers, engineers and data scientists meet to hash out the kinks in their products and improve them.

Khairil embodies the values that Axiata Digital Services lives by and which have helped the company to grow its business by 11 times since its formation in 2012.

Fresh graduates, who wish to join Axiata Digital Services, should acquaint themselves with these values, as similar tech companies come to

dominate the business landscape and become major employers.

In foregoing the executive office and stature for a place in the trenches with his troops, Khairil exemplifies two of Axiata Digital Services' core values – to disrupt, and to be humble and collaborate.

POWER OF DISRUPTION

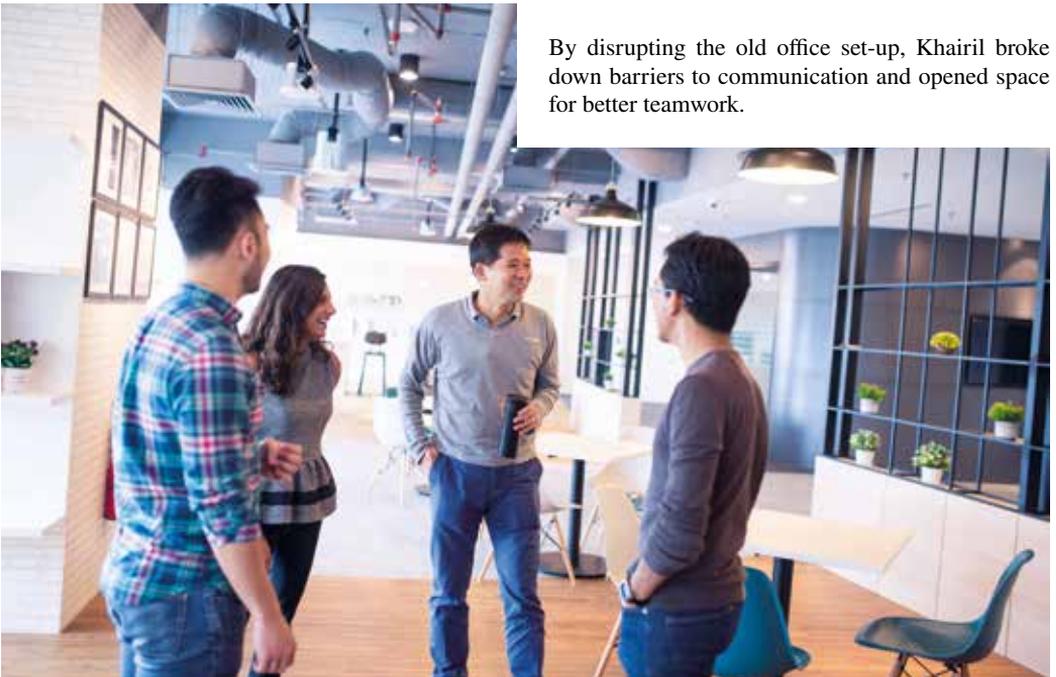
He “disrupted” the traditional practice of having strict company hierarchies where the boss is distant, sits apart from his staff and issues orders from the top.

Instead, he works like his staff and collaborates with them so as to pool talent, expertise and experience to get the best out of a work day. And when people are humble and collaborative, they realise that big ideas can come from anywhere, even from the greenest member of a team.

“I spent 15 years of my life working in a traditional office set-up where I had my own office, so to make that adjustment, I was worried that my productivity would go down. But it actually went up,” Khairil tells **GRADUAN®** in his office in Kuala Lumpur.

“Since everyone sits around me, I can just stand up and ask for updates and input from my officers and it's so much more productive, as it's real-time collaboration.”

By disrupting the old office set-up, Khairil broke down barriers to communication and opened space for better teamwork.





“
We
**WANT
PEOPLE**
who are
bold and a
bit crazy.”

Unlike other firms that look at disruption as something that has to be managed and dealt with, Axiata Digital Services embraces the value.

“People used to say if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. But we say, if it’s not broken, go break it,” says Khairil, because in breaking with conventional ways of doing things, the firm creates new opportunities and products.

DREAM BIG

For instance, the company is working on new technology that is “breaking” the way auto insurance firms calculate premiums for drivers in the region.

A SIM-card-type technology installed in the car collects information on an individual driver’s

behaviour, whether he is reckless or safe, explains Khairil. That information can then be used to calculate the premium for the driver instead of relying on the traditional statistical model where young and older drivers are charged a higher premium because statistically, they are likely to get into an accident.

This “disruption” could lead to new ways in which insurance premiums are priced, says Khairil.

The mantra of “disrupt” gels with the value to “dream big and be bold” because breaking with convention requires vision.

“We want people who are bold and a bit crazy. Richard Branson said it well, ‘If your dreams don’t

Mohd Khairil Abdullah (right) has no qualms about working alongside his staff in an open office.



scare you, then they are not big enough'. Our dream is to be an USD1 billion company by 2020 and we are probably going to achieve that. And to think that back when we were formed, we were worth only USD20 million."

Boldness and craziness get translated into the firm's next value, which is to "act now" or roughly speaking, to launch an initiative or product as soon as it is finished. This breaks with the practice of doing market research and customer surveys first to fine-tune a product.

This was done when they launched Axiata's "Twig" service that rewards smartphone users with points if they clicked on ads. The points can then be used to buy more mobile airtime.

"We now put the product up there, get people to sign up to it, and observe how people use and interact with it in real time. The first few days, we got only 75 people but the number grew and now you have hundreds of data points, which give you feedback on your product."

The beauty of it, Khairil says, is that it slashes the amount of money needed to launch a product. A typical USD5 million spent on research and market analysis is now not required.

FAILURE IS AN OPTION

Axiata Digital Services also wants people who are willing to "fail in order to learn", because if you are bold enough to "act now", then you have to accept the idea that you could fail.

Failure is part of the process of creating better products, Khairil explains.

"If you throw something out there and it fails, it does not matter. You come back and tell me what you have learned from it. We've shut businesses down that did not work but we learned a lot... and now, we're coming out with version 2.0 or 3.0."

Finally, Axiata Digital Services believes that its employees should "have fun and be good", as the saying goes, happy workers are productive workers.

Aside from the PlayStation and ice-cream, the company also has ping pong tables, foosball tables and hoverboards scattered throughout its offices.

"To attract millennials, you need to have these things because to get creativity from them, they need an outlet. It helps amplify creativity," says Khairil.

"These are the values that we live and breathe by and they are in our DNA." ☺

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Our sustained success and achievement can only come with respect for people, be it colleagues, peers, customers and partners; as well as the environment, the key source of our business.

Integrity

Integrity is about trustworthy, honest and sincere. In the context of FGV, it means being responsible and accountable for one's own actions and behaviours. Each employee is accountable for the Group's success and business reputation.

Dynamism

Strive to discover and create ideas and growth potential from uncharted opportunities, in the best interest of our stakeholders and communities, beyond traditional boundaries.

Enthusiasm

Strive to lead with passion and work with enthusiasm. We are enthusiastic about what we do, committed to the growth and future of our agri-business and propagating sustainable development.



Partnership Respect Integrity Dynamism Enthusiasm



**At FGV, we strive to instil
PRIDE in transforming
our people towards
a high performance culture
and building a dynamic
team for tomorrow.**



Start-ups can be a good learning experience, too



Graduates should not restrict their job search to multinationals but also explore start-ups, which provide a great learning experience, suggests the CEO of Astro Tribe and Raku.

By Yasmin Ramlan

WITH up to 200,000 unemployed graduates in the country and a less-than-robust economic outlook, fresh grads with little to no experience are struggling to find a decent job.

Many are clueless when it comes to the definition of finding “the right fit” – a term used commonly by employers.

Iskandar Samad, Chief Executive Officer of Astro Tribe and Raku, is more upfront. He seeks graduates with creativity, problem-solving and soft skills.

“I personally will hire for that (criteria). Someone needs to have the right attitude and behaviour towards the job more than talent. Talent can be defined in many ways as well. Talent is a good criterion but is not the be and end all measure.

“The world has evolved, especially in the more disrupted industries. Creativity, innovation, passion, as well as motivation are far more important in determining success,” Iskandar tells **GRADUAN**® when asked whether attitude or experience was more important.

“

If you **LOOK**
at what I am doing,
it is a **SIMILAR**
BUSINESS
MODEL to companies
like iFlix, Netflix, Spotify
which offer a
(good environment).

Iskandar says most start-ups and large multinational companies (MNC), including established tech companies, such as Amazon and Alibaba, are seeking talent with those attributes to be part of their team.

START-UPS VS MNCs

He says most people prefer to join MNCs, working their way up the ranks in the same company.

But MNCs no longer offer job stability like they used to, with many now looking at contracts and taking a hard look at headcount.

There are many start-ups, such as Grab, K-Fit and Garena, he says, which offer great learning experience to fresh graduates compared with MNCs. “Because many industries, banking, telco, media and more... they are all being disrupted by these start-ups. Some of them are start-ups and some are large multinational digital companies.

“However, a company like Astro Tribe and Raku offers the same experience to fresh graduates. If you look at what I am doing, it is a similar business model to companies like iFlix, Netflix, Spotify which offer a [conducive environment for personal development].”

Astro Tribe and Raku are both wholly owned subsidiaries of Astro Malaysia. Tribe is a new video OTT (over-the-top) service launched in March 2016 for the Asean market. It currently operates



Iskandar Samad counsels graduates to find work at companies which offer great learning experience.

in Indonesia and the Philippines, and is likely to launch in one other market in 2017. Tribe's target is the young and fast-growing market for mobile video that could one day overtake cable and satellite platforms in Asia.

Raku is a digital brand of Astro, centred on online music and radio streaming via web and mobile app. In addition, it also creates new content, for example, live events and shows throughout Malaysia (Rakufest, NegaRaku), and live recording of artiste performances (Raku sessions). It launched in April 2015.

What's his advice? Fresh graduates, says Iskandar, should try to join companies that allow them to acquire skills that are increasingly needed in the next five to six years. Start-ups have a different culture and ethos altogether. Often, they have an innovative and energetic vibe, are agile and nimble, and are willing to experiment.

A lot of tech companies provide good learning experience to fresh graduates because the job often doesn't fit defined skills set, allowing them to take on different responsibilities, he says.

DON'T BE TOO PICKY

Above all, fresh graduates need to be open-minded. As Iskandar reminds **GRADUAN**[®], the job market today requires them to contribute more to a company and not limit the contribution to their field of study – there's a need to be flexible at the same time.

Iskandar serves as a good example. He was trained as an engineer but ended up in a creative field. His mum was a chemist and dad was an engineer. Both encouraged him to excel in his studies.

He says he thought he knew from the onset where he would end up. "It was clear at that time that I wanted to be an engineer. So, after my undergraduate degree, I pursued further studies for another four years. I was really passionate about engineering.

"I would wear a clean-room suit in the lab every day. I had briefly considered a job at an audit firm after my undergrad but eventually held off after my PhD for a job in management consulting."

He was Head of Special Projects at Axiata Berhad for about three years before joining Astro. Prior to that, he was an Engagement Manager at McKinsey & Company for five years after completing his PhD in engineering at the University of Cambridge. ©

Rules for success

Iskandar Samad shares three rules for success:

1) Taking ownership

"I think it is important to take ownership of the scope of your role, however small it is – driving outcome and being responsible. Managers appreciate when you are not doing a certain task just for the sake of completing it but committed towards the end result."

2) Sense of curiosity

"I am not very sure how it contributes to success per se, but I think it is vital to keep asking questions about what is happening around you today to keep yourself alert to how the world is changing – curiosity breeds innovation.

3) Work and life balance

"It is not easy to achieve this because today's working culture is no longer nine to five, which means you have to spend longer hours at a workplace. But finding the right balance is key to having the stamina to contribute long term.

"I make sure that I have some time to cycle 50 to 100km every weekend. It not only keeps me fit but also allows me a lot of time to reflect on what has happened during the week and plan for the next.

"Graduates really have to find that balance of contributing to a workplace because it is important to understand that this career is a long-term journey, not a short-term sprint."



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A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blue sleeveless top, is smiling and looking towards a man whose back is to the camera. They are in a meeting room with papers and a glass on the table.

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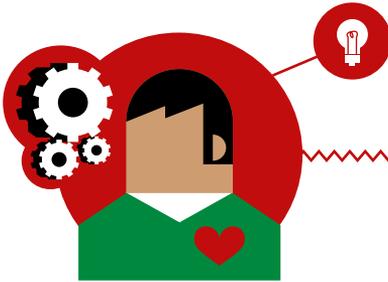


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Few companies live and breathe their motto the way we do. From the people who work on our cars to the ones who will drive them, we put their needs and wants at the heart of everything we do.



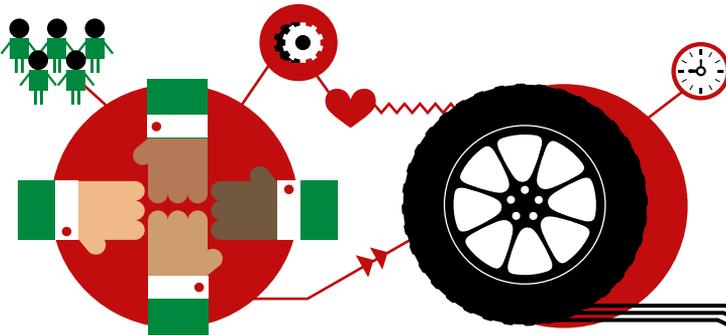
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Relentless Pursuit of Perfection

We are humbled by the support of Malaysians that has made us the No. 1* car brand. Although we have sold over 2.9 million vehicles, we are constantly looking for new ways to improve and create better products and services.



Uncompromising Values

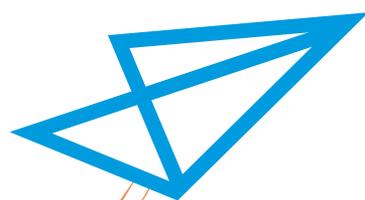
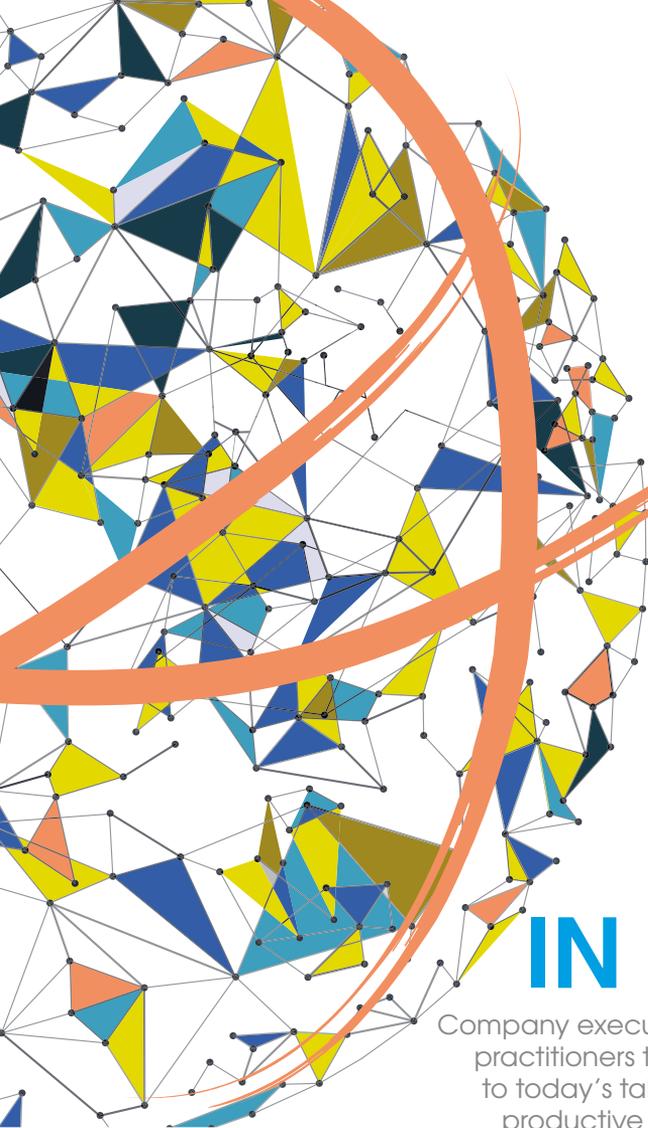
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The automobile industry is fast paced and more demanding than before. It is an exciting time full of new challenges. With talented and passionate individuals on board, we are looking forward to drive value for all Malaysians. Because you matter most.

*Number one car brand claim is based on data from the Malaysian Automotive Association.





CHAPTER 2 IN THE LEAD

Company executives and human resources (HR) practitioners tell us how they are reaching out to today's talent to create a more engaging, productive work environment that prioritises professional development and personal satisfaction.

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Building a better working world



Finding the right FIT

Malaysia has a shortage of accountants and prospects are brighter than ever. But, EY's talent leader in Malaysia says, graduates must offer something extra if they want to land a job in the organisation.

By Tan Wan-Peng

THERE is good news for accounting and finance graduates in 2017. The outlook for the profession remains “very positive” for graduates who are career-ready, says Lee Soo Fern, partner at Ernst & Young Advisory Services Sdn Bhd and Malaysia talent leader, EY.

But if you want to land a job in EY, pay close attention to what Soo Fern is saying. Firms like EY look for candidates who are the right fit.

What's the right fit? It means academic qualifications matter but a professional services firm like EY needs people with the extras as well. It looks out for candidates who possess the right attitude, good communication and interpersonal skills, and are willing to learn.

Soo Fern is firm on this point. “Ability is important but for someone to do well, potential and fit are more important in an environment like EY's,” she tells **GRADUAN**[®] at her office in Kuala Lumpur.

In terms of hiring, it's not about a string of As. “Malaysian students have them (top grades). But if you put them in front of a client, they may not be able to showcase that they are first class, once you take away the certificates.”

HONE YOUR SOFT SKILLS

EY's clients include multinationals with a global footprint, so its employees must be able

to communicate and articulate well, especially when liaising with C-suites. As such, EY requires graduates to hone their soft skills (leadership, communication and interpersonal) since they must present reports and attend meetings.

Beyond that, Soo Fern emphasises, graduates should also possess an important trait – people smart. “Our clients want real people. People who are a little street smart. They must have an ability to spot an issue, to present appropriate and relevant solutions to address clients' concerns... things that a string of As don't necessarily guarantee.”

Hence, EY does not limit its search for talent to accounting/finance graduates, because the types of services it offers and work it does are diverse and challenging. They require a certain ability to find answers and people who can think quickly.

“We're a lot more open. We hire people from all sorts of background – economics, engineering, law, IT/computer science, psychology and physics, who can work in our different service lines like tax and advisory, besides assurance.”

It's important for EY to find candidates with a broad background and training, she says, because of its diverse client base. “If we don't have people from other backgrounds with diverse training or a different point of view, it is not conducive to client servicing.”



Lee Soo Fern (centre) says EY's clients want real people who are people smart.

OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

The prospects in the accounting profession remain bright, as there is an insufficient number of accountants in the country and there is a need to grow the number.

There is some “help”, in the form of new technology and tools – some disruptive – that can assist accountants to do their jobs more efficiently or differently, thereby, freeing them to focus on other pressing issues.

“However, it is important for accountants to possess the new age competencies and skills set to continue to stay relevant. So, the ability to learn and openness to learning are key,” Soo Fern stresses.

The point is that technologies will create new roles and jobs. Accountants must, therefore, adapt and reinvent themselves to take advantage of these opportunities.

Those who do will thrive in the new environment as regardless of the technologies, accounting still needs human insights and judgments.

However, that’s not to say there are no challenges, such as accountants moving to higher-wage countries and the competition for talent everywhere. Younger talent, who after training for four years and

obtaining their professional qualifications, might want to decamp to a start-up, bringing their skills set over to another industry. These things are just part of the employment cycle. So what EY does is to focus on its people and offer them “an exceptional EY experience”.

WHY WORK IN EY

For many, EY’s culture is the number one reason for being part of the organisation. It is a people-centric, nurturing and supportive environment, where diversity and inclusiveness, teaming and respect for each other are the values that guide the way it operates.

Graduates also come to EY because of the holistic development – formal or informal – programmes that are in place.

“We are well-known for our learning and development programmes. We invest significantly, in terms of money and time, to ensure that our people get the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to succeed at each grade and rank. It could be 80 hours a year or 100 hours a year or more if they are pursuing professional exams.”

Executives, senior managers and partners are also required to facilitate training as part of their development, she says.

“

We **invest significantly**,
in terms of **money and time**,
to ensure that **our people**
get the knowledge,
skills and competencies
they need to succeed.

”

This is the kind of investment that ensures a clear career continuum. EY also invests in experiential learning – or on-the-job training.

“The fact that the fresh graduates are at a young age and are put into situations where they have to solve technical and complex issues, it forces them to get up to speed and learn quickly – unknowingly sometimes! That’s how adults learn best.”

This sort of exposure to experiences, learning and broad areas of work is a key reason to join a firm like EY. In addition, staff are exposed to different types of clients.

Referring to rewarding young people for their performance, Soo Fern says, “The average age of our employees is probably 27. Our managers can be as young as 26, leading a portfolio or a team, liaising with C-suites. That’s another thing. Our people gain access to the business community that they might not otherwise be able to if they were in another environment.”

The learning curve is steep, the hours can be long (“there’s no guarantee you can get home by 6:30pm for dinner”), but if a candidate is career-focused, able to meet expectations, not afraid to accept challenges, then he or she will enjoy rapid career advancements.

Soo Fern explains: “Because they are expected to perform and deliver to a high standard, young

talents acquire new skills and experiences quickly. When people acquire new skills, you need to move them to another level and you need to pay them more, to acknowledge that they’ve got more value to bring to the table.”

In other words, consistent and almost-to-be-expected annual career advancement for high performers is another key reason people want to join an organisation like EY.

EY offers its people opportunities to match their ambition and create relationships that last a lifetime. So if you are indeed in pursuit of “an exceptional EY experience”, then get your act together and start working on being the right fit. ☺

Brand yourself, stand out

One of the first things we noticed about Lee Soo Fern when we met was the chic yellow jacket – which also happens to be one of EY’s corporate colours!

She lets us on a little secret: “It’s personal branding”. As a partner with more than 25 years in the firm, Soo Fern knows a thing or two about making yourself stand out and she shares some tips with job applicants.

“Knowing what is unique about yourself and actively profiling it makes it memorable for a recruiter or interviewer,” she says.

For instance, if you are a national sportsman or have taken a gap year to serve the community or worked part time to fund your studies, highlight it. Make it authentic and be genuine.

The second thing is to pay attention to grooming and dressing. “If you aspire for the part, then look the part!”

Finally, put yourself in front of a potential employer, recruiter or decision-maker. Build relationships and make them remember you.

If you follow her tips, chances are you will get a foot in the door.



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- Provide financial advice and recommendation that influence business decisions at various levels of the organization.

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Business Analyst - Accountant

- Prepare monthly accounting close (include preparing and posting journal entries, analyzing financial statements and variance analysis), balance sheet reconciliations and ensure timely payments.
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#4

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY

As an **equal opportunity employer**, GE is committed to building a diverse workforce throughout its global network. It values diversity and inclusiveness as integral to productivity, creativity, innovation and a competitive advantage. GE currently employs over **333,000** people and at each country it operates, the workforce is a reflection of the communities they serve as well as the people they conduct business with.

#6

FLEXIBLE WORK CONDITIONS

In 2016, GE made it to **Flexjob's Top 100 Companies** with Remote Jobs list. Much aligned to one of GE's Employee Value Proposition, it is at the forefront of telecommuting and remote workforces. GE's flexible work conditions allow for employees to work from home as and when necessary. GE employees are able to find a balance that works for them between work and personal life. GE is also the perfect company for working mothers (**Best Companies for Working Mothers in 2016**). Careful strategizing helps women get ahead at this diversified digital industrial company!

#5

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

GE's commitment of **USD 1 billion** towards employee development each year is a testament to the company's priority in building leadership. In 1956, GE established a management training centre in Crotonville, New York, that has churned out countless leaders – and is today a hub for conceptualizing new ideas about leadership, strategy, innovation and performance. Senior leaders from around the world and other top MNCs frequent this facility every year as well. Not surprisingly, human resources and consulting company Aon Hewitt 2015 placed GE right at the top of its annual **Top Companies for Leaders list**.

GE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

In May 2016, GE partnered with Inti University to select 5 top students from across the faculties as GE Ambassadors called GE Leaders of Tomorrow. The 5 candidates endured a series of tough selection rounds to emerge as the chosen few. Over the 1 year period as GE Student Ambassadors, they will each embark on an individual and a combined group project which aim to increase knowledge of the public about GE and its beliefs. This will be rolled out to more universities in the coming year—so look out for it at your university campus!



CSR ENGAGEMENT

GE prides itself in doing social works, and GE do so via GE Volunteers (GeV). We have a community of GeV in almost every country which GE operates in. For Malaysia, one highlight in 2016 was completing 20 hours of volunteerism over 4 weeks in November as part of our Global Month of Service act. GeVs spent the time painting an animal shelter, cleaning up forest trails, building a public picnic bench, beach cleaning, visiting an old folks' home and an orphanage!

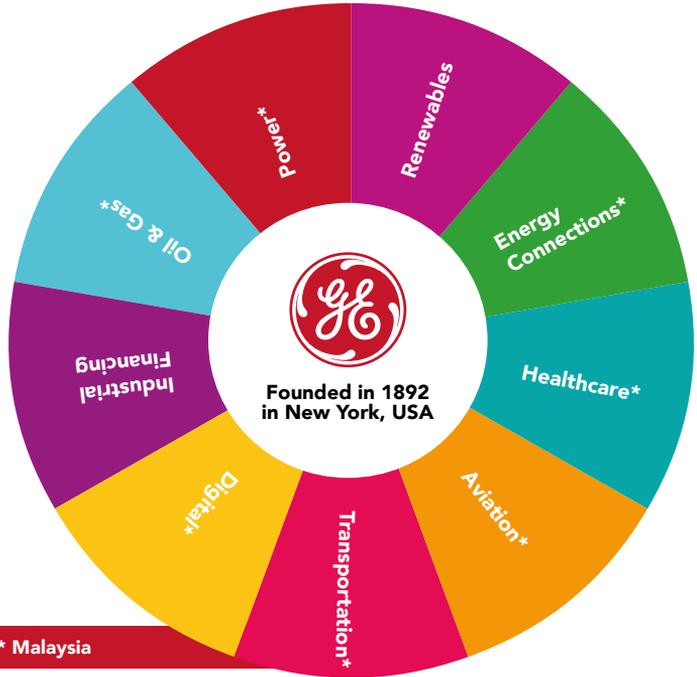


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GE AT A GLANCE

General Electric International Inc. (GE) is one of the world's largest and most diverse corporations with as presence in more than 180 countries including Malaysia. We highlight the details, benefits and opportunities that the company offers.



WHAT IS GE WORTH?



USD 120 BILLION

This is GE's worldwide revenue in 2015; countries with revenues of or exceeding USD1 billion include Algeria, Indonesia and Turkey.

GE AROUND THE GLOBE



- OPERATING in **more than 180** countries
with over **333,000** employees

GLOBAL AWARDS IN 2016



Best Companies for Leaders
Chief Executive, 2016

Top Employers for Equal Opportunity
Equal Opportunity Magazine, 2016

Most Innovative Companies
Fast Company, 2016

Top 100 Top Companies with Remote Jobs
Flexjobs, 2016

Best Places to Work (Manufacturing)
Human Rights Campaign, 2016

World's Most Admired Companies
Fortune, 2016

The World's Most Ethical Companies
Ethisphere, 2016

Top Companies for Leaders
Aon Hewitt, 2015

Best Corporate Citizens
CR Magazine, 2015

World's Most Respected Companies
Barron's, 2015

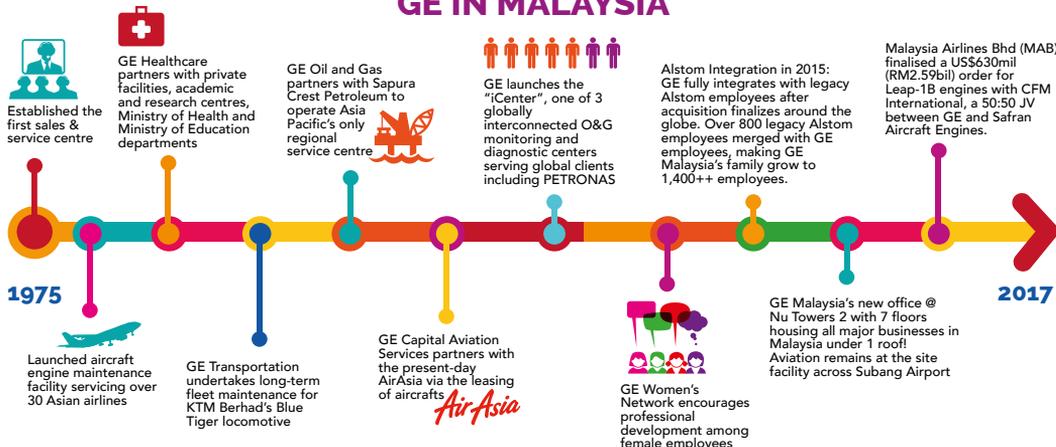
Best Companies for Working Mothers
Working Mother, 2015



CORPORATE GOAL

"We want to be a company that is always getting better. A company that understands where it fits in the markets and in society and appreciates its responsibility to both." – Jeffrey R. Immelt, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer

GE IN MALAYSIA



THE GE WORKS EQUATION

We look at what the world needs x (A belief in a better way + A relentless drive to invent and build things that matter) = A world that works better



GREEN COMMITMENT

GE launched its ecomagination in 2005, a business initiative that emphasises products and services that address energy and environmental challenges while generating profit. This unique approach has seen tremendous growth in the last decade, and GE continues to up their efforts.



Since 2005, GE employees and retirees have reported more than 12 million hours spent volunteering on more than 52,000 projects spanning 61 countries.

- \$201 million in contributions from GE businesses, GE employees and the GE Foundation in 2015
- 1.1 million GE volunteer hours reported globally with 262 local councils established in 61 countries
- For nine consecutive years, GE has been recognized by Junior Achievement with the U.S. President's Volunteer Service Award.

ECOMAGINATION REVENUE GENERATION

USD70 BILLION 2005-2015 → USD232 BILLION 4x GROWTH OVERALL GE



GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY

IN 2015 **12%** REDUCTION IN GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS → THE AIM **20%** REDUCE IN GHG EMISSIONS

ECOMAGINATION R&D



USD17 BILLION 2005-2015 → ADDITIONAL USD10 BILLION 2020

WATER CONSUMPTION



SINCE 2005 ↓ **17%** freshwater use → THE AIM **20%** further reduction

Find out more about our Leadership Programs in the GP and Finance books!

Future mapped out in DNA



C. Viknesh Nambiar shares some of the ways in which DKSH Malaysia keeps its employees engaged, empowered and happy in the long run.

By Hyma Haridas

VIKNESH joined DKSH Malaysia in 2012, a leading market expansion services provider, as General Manager, Talent, Organisation and Performance.

Fifteen years ago, as a young computer engineering graduate from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) Skudai, Viknesh had set his heart on becoming a successful engineer.

But fate decided otherwise. As part of his first stint in a local multinational company, he was required to undergo several job rotations – one of which landed

him in the human resources (HR) department to learn about its information systems.

He quickly developed a keen interest in HR and continued to explore a spectrum of roles within the field, from recruitment to talent management and operations. He admits that the initial transition was tough, especially since HR was seen as a “less glamorous” and lucrative field than engineering.

He then moved on to have a short stint at a media company before joining DKSH Malaysia. Today, he is the Senior Director of People & Organisation,

overseeing Malaysia, India, Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam) and Northeast Asia (Japan, Korea, Micronesia).

He has enjoyed his last 15 years in HR and it has been an interesting journey for someone with an engineering background, he says.

KEEPING THINGS EXCITING

To achieve its vision of being known as the world's leading provider of market expansion services with a focus on Asia, DKSH upholds eight leadership principles that make up the DNA of the organisation and its people globally.



These principles are grouped into two clusters – leading oneself and leading others. Enjoy winning, staying hungry, write your own ticket, and grow and contribute make up the first cluster, while ensure performance, be deeply interested in people, perform at eye level and master deal-making form the latter.

DKSH reinforces these leadership principles in its multiple touchpoints, internally and externally. A specially designed programme called “Living the DKSH leadership principles” globally brought together 90 senior management leaders who were trained as “leadership coaches”. These leadership coaches then cascaded the same programme to their team members with a joint commitment to living the leadership principles on a daily basis.

Opportunities to explore career growth and chart one’s future are areas that DKSH looks into seriously for its employees. This is in line with one of its leadership principles, “write your own

ticket”, where employees are encouraged to steer the direction of their career and future with the organisation.

One of the questions DKSH continuously asks itself, says Viknesh, is “how we can create an empowering, challenging work environment for our people?”

“What tends to happen (traditionally) is that most organisations keep people in the same role for many years because they get familiar then excel at it and find themselves trapped in a routine.

“This does not work for the younger generation. So, what we do is to provide them an environment where they can take on challenging new roles or assignments. Every two years, we empower our high-performers with options to grow and contribute locally or regionally within DKSH.”

By continuously raising the bar in this manner, Viknesh believes that DKSH is able to keep employees engaged – an important aspect in retaining its top talent.

DKSH also ensures that its employees enjoy a continuous journey of professional and personal growth where every individual is given the opportunity to further enhance their leadership, soft and functional skills through its in-house learning and development centre, the Fantree Academy. What is unique about the Fantree Academy is that training programmes are internally developed and delivered by a network of DKSH master and associate trainers.

FINDING YOUR VALUE PROPOSITION

In his current portfolio, Viknesh has first-hand insights into the type of talent available regionally. When it comes to Malaysian fresh graduates, he notes that the current breed is more independent and entrepreneurial – qualities that are valuable to any organisation if harnessed and groomed in a positive way.

On the flipside, one of the biggest drawbacks is their poor command of English coupled with their lack of confidence and critical thinking.



DKSH



C. Viknesh Nambiar is an engineer by training but these days, he is a talent connector for DKSH.

“There are some who have a good command of English, but many don’t. When it comes to communicating ideas, some lack confidence or the ability to put their thoughts across in a coherent manner. That’s a struggle we face.

“Interestingly,” he adds, “the Japanese also struggle with English proficiency, but they are very confident. They are able to express their ideas and get their message across succinctly and confidently. I think it boils down to our education system and exposure as well.”

He says one of the most important questions that a fresh graduate should ask themselves when entering the workforce is “What is my value proposition to the organisation?”

“It’s not about asking the organisation what they can do for you, but rather [finding out] what your value is. You need to read more and get exposed to different people and situations in and out of work.

“It’s also important to know your facts and speak concisely – avoid the fluff. It’s not about how much

you speak but how much it means in the little that you speak.

“When you are young, you have to be willing to work hard. It’s important to stay hungry and curious about the people, environment and world around you. You need to go that extra mile building your value proposition, be brave enough to challenge the status quo and shedding any limiting beliefs.

“Being successful is about knowing who you are, what you are capable of and allowing yourself to be vulnerable to learn and unlearn throughout your

own journey – enjoy winning while staying humble and never rest on your laurels.”

This is a true testament to the way Viknesh influenced his team while heading the local Malaysia People & Organisation portfolio, before his move to the regional role. They are the three-time consecutive winner of the DKSH Best Strategy Implementation Award (2013-2015) and Best Practice Award (2016). Young dynamic local talent within the team continue to be recognised for thriving in their multiple assignments and roles with some subsequently taking on impactful global portfolios. 

Empowering the hearing-impaired

In addition to its core business activities, DKSH regularly participates in corporate responsibility (CR) and community outreach programmes. In early 2016, DKSH Malaysia spearheaded a revolutionary initiative for its in-house brand, Famous Amos Chocolate Chip Cookie Corporation (Famous Amos), which faced the challenge of high attrition rates and difficulties in retaining its retail outlet crew members.

Working together with the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf (MFD), DKSH launched Project ORCHID (Opportunities in Rejuvenating Careers for the Hearing Impaired), a pilot programme to recruit ten hearing-impaired individuals at selected Famous Amos retail outlets, after undergoing a specifically developed hearing-impaired friendly crew member retail training.

This proved to be a fruitful idea as these crew members demonstrated an eagerness to work and learn. Each crew member was paired with a supervisor who also attended sign language training with MFD that facilitated more effective interactions between both parties.

“It was not just about hiring them but also ensuring that they were comfortable and able to interact with people who could understand them. Our management, people & organisation and supervisory teams were collectively enrolled in

an MFD-facilitated sign language training and introduction to working with hearing-impaired employees. Now, they have all graduated the training and are certified sign language communicators,” says Viknesh.

“The training allowed us to effectively engage our hearing-impaired colleagues. Feedback from our crew members was that they felt valued and respected with the efforts made to communicate with them through sign language, and that made a positive difference in their daily activities.”

Project ORCHID was recognised at the DKSH group level for its innovative approach in overcoming its challenges with attrition by incorporating a community outreach element.

Viknesh says they are looking into the second phase of the programme in 2017.

“We are now looking at trying to adopt this at our distribution centres. A lot of jobs, such as forklift drivers, pickers, box packing and so on, rely on foreign labour. This comes with its own costs and issues. So, we thought, why not try and structure these jobs to see how we can replicate our success story? It would solve our labour issues and provide empowerment to the hearing-impaired community to gain suitable employment opportunities.”

Young talents of UMW graduated from the UMW Executive Development Programme in 2016

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Listen up, Gen Y

Don't switch jobs for the sake of getting a higher salary; do it if it brings you closer to your career goals, advises Bank Islam's Chief Financial Officer.

By Sheridan Mahavera



As a 40-something Chief Financial Officer of a major bank, Mohd Muazzam Mohamed has useful advice for millennials entering the job market, as these lessons have helped him crest to the top of his career.

First, it pays to have a serviceable skill not related to your degree, says Muazzam, who is the CFO of Bank Islam, a premier Islamic banking institution.

Serviceable skills are essentially something that can be turned into a service, such as the ability to cook, to do carpentry, household wiring or babysit. This skill is one that you can rely on when the economy sours and jobs become scarce.

Second – and fresh grads have heard this before – when you do land a job interview, it will be soft skills or experiences you possess that will make you stand out and catch an employer's attention.

Today, a string of As and top grades are a job prerequisite, Muazzam says, so fresh graduates must show that they can bring more to a company than a degree.

Third, when you already are in a job, think very, very carefully about changing jobs every few years. This is since the salary increments you think you will get each time you switch companies may not matter much in the long run, he says.

Much of the advice is not just gleaned from his 20-year experience in the finance industry but also seeing first-hand the socioeconomic changes that had taken place since he joined the workforce in 1997.

The present reality is a constant theme in Muazzam's interview with **GRADUAN**® at Menara Bank Islam in the heart of Kuala Lumpur recently.

“The skills a young adult needed during my grandfather's era and my father's era were different. During my grand-dad's time, you needed to know how to farm, how to fish to make a living.”

“During my dad's time, as long as you finished school, you could get a job. When I graduated, it was enough just to have a university degree.”

“So naturally, the skills and attitude that millennials need now would be different from my era of about 20 years ago, simply because the world has changed so much.”

Muazzam started out at the bottom rung of global accounting giant KPMG before rising to become a partner of KPMG Malaysia. In between, he amassed a wealth of experience on the financial

sector when he was transferred between KPMG's many divisions, such as auditing, risk services and corporate finance, every three years.

BE PROACTIVE

But the 43-year-old father of three does not just attribute his success to the opportunities at KPMG. He believes that what helped him get to the top had been planted even while he was an accounting student at the International Islamic University. These experiences form the first part of his advice.

“During semester breaks, even in my first year, I was a part-time tutor and I taught primary schoolkids maths.” This helped him build his interpersonal and entrepreneurial skills.

“

GRADUATES

need to be **clear**
about what they want
to **achieve** in their
career.



Mohd Muazzam Mohamed (right) says a serviceable skill comes in handy during economic slowdowns.

Tutoring became an extra serviceable skill that Muazzam developed and was one of the things that set him apart from his college mates.

During his third year, he went out and looked for an internship with a small accounting firm so that he could practise what he learned in class.

“I even told the firm I didn’t need an allowance because all I wanted was the chance to get hands-on training. But they gave me an allowance anyway,” he says laughing.

When the time came to apply for an internship at a Big 4 accounting firm in his final year, Muazzam had an advantage compared with other applicants, even those from more prestigious universities.

“Other kids might have come from more prestigious universities with higher CGPAs (cumulative grade points average) than me but I had practical experience, so the firm chose me as one of the interns. When I applied for a job after graduating, I had all these extra experiences, which made me stand out from the rest.”

Experience matters, especially today, in a job market where millennials are competing with thousands of graduates for the same jobs, says Muazzam. The key is to stand out and offer more than just technical competency.

Jobs will be harder to come by because the civil service can’t keep expanding while in the private sector, technology is allowing companies to operate with fewer employees, he points out.

REWARDS FROM LOYALTY

Muazzam’s experience in KPMG showed how hard work, passion and loyalty to a good company can pay off instead of job-hopping.

“Graduates need to be clear about what they want to achieve in their career and they have to identify what are the steps to get to it. Every step must take you closer towards your goal.”

After about three years, some of his peers switched companies and landed in big oil and gas firms, says Muazzam. The move netted a bigger salary increment compared with the raise they would get had they stayed at the same company.

“But when you go and work for a bigger company, you may start at a position that is two to three steps to a more senior position compared with if you had stayed at the same company, where you would probably be only one step away.”

In his case, after 10 years, Muazzam found that he was comparatively at a higher position than his peers who had job-hopped for higher salaries.

“I was at a higher position, I had more exposure in the industry, thanks to my on-the-job training and I was also well remunerated and rewarded. So, don’t just switch jobs for the sake of getting a higher salary, do it if it brings you closer to your career goals.” ☺





“

I try to be a
**good role
 model** to my kids
 and to prepare them
MENTALLY and
SPIRITUALLY
 for the world they
 will grow up in.

No short cuts to success

Maybe it's because of his auditing background but Mohd Muazzam Mohamed is clear-eyed when he talks about the world his children are growing up in now and what parents like him have to do to prepare them for it.

His 16-year-old son will be similar to the 20-somethings making their way today in a world that is different from the one he grew up in the 1990s.

His advice to his son and two daughters is insightful and can be useful for millennials as it comes from a 43-year-old who has lived through the past and the present and gained much from both.

Muazzam fuses timeless values that he has seen applied in a top multinational corporation with the knowledge of what it takes to survive and thrive in the world of today and tomorrow.

“I try to be a good role model to my kids and to prepare them mentally and spiritually for the world they will grow up in. But I know that their world will be different from than the one I grew up in.

“So I tell them that you can't follow exactly what I did. There are certain different things that you have to do,” he tells **GRADUAN**®.

Besides picking up a serviceable skill (see main story), Muazzam believes that young people need to believe in the value of the hard slog – the process by

which you work diligently and patiently on a project or assignment to make sure it is done right.

The problem with millennials is that they grew up with the internet as a fact of life. This has nurtured a feeling of instant gratification and convenience, including finding information online. This leads to the mistaken belief in taking short cuts and doing things quickly and effortlessly.

“The problem with this is that you do not become resilient, you do not become mentally strong. When something becomes hard you give up too quickly. The thing about success is that it requires hard work.”

This point leads to his advice about measuring success in a global economy where it is harder to land stable, high-paying jobs compared with the past, and more people are forced to take “gig jobs”.

“You can't measure success by the amount of money you make or your corporate position any more,” says Muazzam, as those things are becoming scarcer.

“For instance, you are forced to sell nasi lemak on the sidewalk. But you work hard at it and do it well and you have a stable, strong client base. That can be a new measure of success.”

So because success will be harder to come by, it is critical that you can and know how to work hard to get it.



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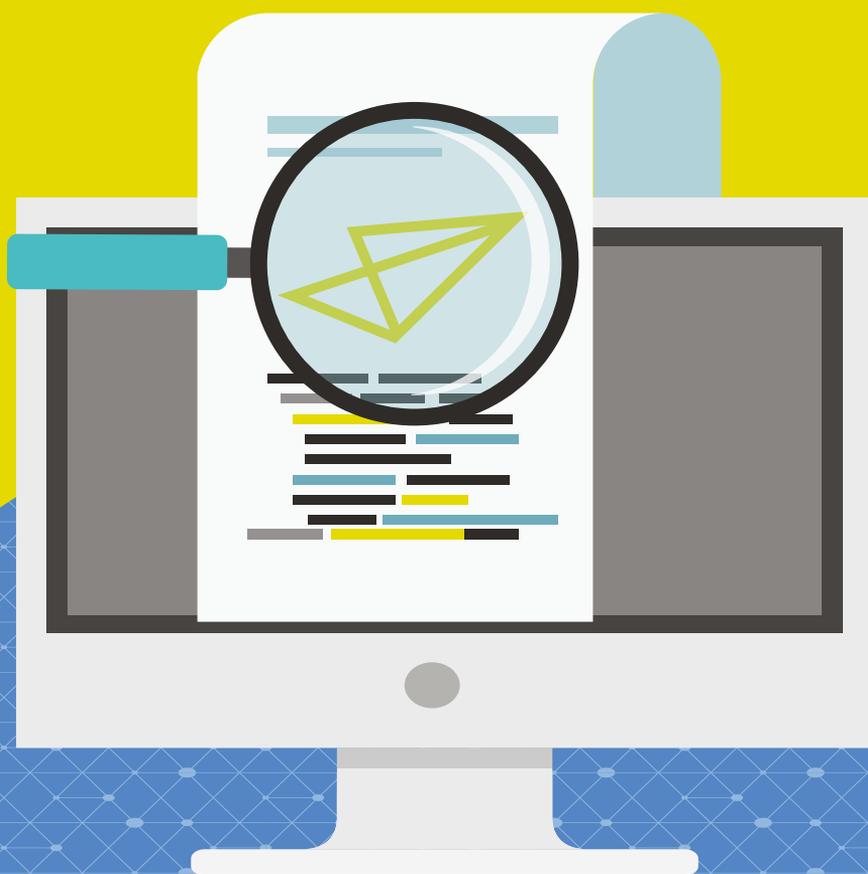
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IT folk, get out of your SILOS

Computer science and engineering graduates should brush up on their soft skills if they want to land a job in a world-class company like Gamuda.

By Sheridan Mahavera



Wong Tsien Loong is not a fan of using the latest technology for the sake of it.

IN his many years as the top tech person in Gamuda Berhad, Wong Tsien Loong knows that it takes more than raw skills in engineering or computer science to help the firm get the best out of its technology.

It requires the ability to think strategically, understand the business and communicate well with a variety of people, says Tsien Loong, Gamuda Berhad's Chief Information Officer (CIO).

Many of these skills or the desire to acquire them is missing from a majority of graduates, he says.

It's not that firms like Gamuda expect graduates to leave university as policy planning geniuses or business visionaries but they would like engineers and programmers to be well rounded instead of just being technically proficient.

"Whether it is an IT graduate or an engineering graduate, you need the technical skills which you learn in university.

"Then you need to understand the business, which you pick up along the way," Tsien Loong tells **GRADUAN**[®] at Menara Gamuda.

“

WE WANT
all-rounders,
who can think
critically and look at
a complex thing and make it
understandable.

Often the lack of these skills or the drive to improve them cripples a fresh employee's chances and ability to move up in the company, especially in this era of ever-changing technology.

It's a mistake for IT people to think that just knowing what technology there is out there and being good at it, a person can bring value to a company.

For Tsien Loong, a piece of technology is only as good as the realisation of its relevancy to operations and how much it helps the firm be better at what it does.

The key term here is “information relevancy”, which is determining what kinds of information are critical for a company to know and consume, and to use technology so that information can be used effectively and to make decisions in a timely manner, he says.

“Technology is just a means to an end. So my role is to see what the business needs are in terms of information for business and corporate strategy and making sure we provide the right types of solutions to enable the business to have that information in the most cost effective way.”

In Tsien Loong's view, effective tech people do not try to get their companies to adopt the latest technology just for the sake of it.

They first identify what kinds of information are important to the company and only then go out

“Also to be able to interact and work effectively in a team requires people skills and that is what we find lacking in local and foreign graduates.

“A lot of the time when I go and meet graduates, whether it is IT or engineering, many are trapped in their own silos of skills and don't see the need to go beyond those silos.

“So that's not the type of people we want. We want all-rounders, who can think critically, express themselves well and look at a complex thing and make it understandable. Those skills are crucial to advancing your career,” says Tsien Loong, who is also Executive Director of Gamuda Engineering.

to find the technology that can best organise and disseminate the information.

And to be able to do that, good IT people need to be able to work with others from non-IT backgrounds and be able to think strategically, he says.

The combination of these traits has helped Tsien Loong and his team, together with other senior managers of Gamuda, to improve on the firm's technologies to boost its sterling track record in building infrastructure.

For instance, instead of using the same tunnel boring machines (TBM) deployed in Kuala Lumpur's SMART tunnel project several years ago, Gamuda upgraded and modified the machines for its Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) project.

The improved TBMs allowed Gamuda to tunnel through some of the most difficult terrain underneath dense neighbourhoods, such as the Bukit Bintang area in central Kuala Lumpur.

“We collected a lot of data and used it to analyse the impact on the surface of the surroundings. We put in sensors in surface buildings and structures to make sure that when we tunnel through, if there is movement, we know about it.

“We use that information to help us through the difficult spots in our tunnelling and we are exploring beyond to make our operations safer as we tunnel through limestone, which is karstic in nature.

“We use our data to analyse and optimise our operations and make it safer for our people and the public.”

“

We use our data to **analyse** and **optimise** our operations and make it **SAFER** for our people and the public.

As a result, there have been fewer incidents, such as sinkholes in the tunnelling work through Kuala Lumpur, compared with the SMART tunnel project.

Gamuda's new tunnel system won an award for technical innovation at the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Awards 2014.

Another example of using technology effectively is the complaints management system (CMS) Gamuda implements at all its big project sites, especially the MRT, to deal with public feedback.

This is since the mammoth construction project is smack in the middle of heavily populated areas, such as Bandar Utama, Bangsar, Cheras and Kajang.

“The system is mobile and cloud-based, and we track all complaints and the progress in resolving the complaints, as we know who is responsible for dealing with them.

“And this system has its own KPI (key performance indicators) in place to make sure that our contractors,



sub-contractors and employees are on their toes to ensure that non-compliance is dealt with and public safety is protected.”

The CMS and its twin, “Safetrac”, ensure that the safety and traffic aspects are constantly looked into at Gamuda’s construction site. In a nutshell, it is a traffic violation and safety inspection system used by the project delivery partner to monitor the MRT sites.

“Our inspectors also go around to report non-compliance and we track those through Safetrac.”

So the question of what would make an engineering or IT grad attractive to a company like Gamuda goes back to a value that has been repeated before by other experts interviewed by **GRADUAN®** – diversity.

Diversity not just in terms of the gender, ethnicity or religion of university grads, but also in terms of their skills and traits so they can use their technical qualifications to bring value to the company.

As Tsien Loong emphasised in the beginning: “We don’t want people who are trapped in their silos, we want all-rounders.” ©



*Gamuda is involved in the construction of the MRT, one of the most ambitious transport projects in the Klang Valley.
- Pictures courtesy of Gamuda*



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Stay **POSITIVE,** get on the right track

SPAD's Fauzi Che Rus is a strong believer in having the right mindset to lift sagging spirits in challenging times.

By Sharmila Valli Narayanan

IT'S a tough world out there for fresh graduates entering the job market. And in 2017, it is going to be even tougher with the global situation being so uncertain, what with Brexit and a Donald Trump presidency.

There are reports of fresh graduates waiting up till a year or more until they land a job. Fauzi Che Rus, Head of Organisation Support at the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD), knows what it feels like, as he himself has gone through high and low phases in his career.

His advice to fresh grad is: "If you don't get a job for a while, you lose confidence in yourself and you start feeling you are not good enough. You have to be strong mentally, if not, you can spiral down and end up in depression."

RIGHT FRAME OF MIND

He explains further: "If you are not in the right frame of mind mentally and emotionally, you cannot succeed although you might have all the skills. When you are faced with failure, if you're not careful, it will lead to more failures. And you will begin to wonder why is it people who are less talented than you are going places while you are left behind."

He urges fresh graduates to invest in themselves and one of the easiest ways to do that is to equip themselves with knowledge and skills, and to "fuel up your spirits" with motivational books and to keep a positive frame of mind.

"I often don't have enough time to read or am too tired to read by the time I get home. That's why I

like to buy audio books and CDs by motivational gurus like Tony Robbins, author of books like *Awaken the Giant Within*.

“I listen to Robbins when I am on the treadmill in the gym. It really boosts my spirit and makes me charged up to face the day,” he adds.

It’s not enough just to listen or read these motivational books. You have to put into practice some of the advice. “These books give you ideas that you can practise, to see the changes in your life.”

One such idea he follows is the law of gratitude, which asks one to give thanks for all the good things you have in life.

“You can do this any time. I like to do it in the morning on my drive to work. I look back on all the things I have to be thankful for: My job, my health, my family. Even if you have not found a job, look back on the things that are good in your life. It could be a loving family, or even the clean air that you breathe because in some cities, it is so polluted, people get sick from the air that they breathe!”

Thanks to the internet, one does not even have to spend money buying these audio books. Some are available online for free while there are also many videos on YouTube on having a positive attitude and how to get ahead in life by famous motivational speakers, such as Earl Nightingale, Zig Zaglar, Jim Rohn and many others.

“The internet is a boon that young people have now that I did not have during my time. Make use of it to look for articles and speeches by motivational gurus!” exhorts Fauzi.

GETTING OUT OF A SLUMP

The reason Fauzi is a big fan of motivational speakers is because they have played an important role in his own life.

Like many young people first entering the job market, he was not sure what he wanted to do and opted to be a lecturer for two years. He was lucky to have been spotted by someone who knew where his abilities lay and brought him into the human resources department of a multinational company (MNC).

Within a year of being on the job, Fauzi realised this was the line he was meant to be in and like his mentor, he wanted one day to be the HR Director of Asia-Pacific for an MNC.

“

Even if you have not found a job, look back on the **THINGS THAT ARE GOOD** in your life.

By the time he was 28 years old, he was a Head of HR for an MNC. Ten years later, he became the HR Director Asia-Pacific for an American MNC. “I had set goals of what I wanted and I worked hard to achieve them.”

It was his proudest moment, but little did he know it was the beginning of a slump in his career. After a few years on the job, he became restless.

“I kept thinking what was I going to do next? Coincidentally, that was also the time when many of my peers were going into business and starting their own companies. I was so taken in by their business cards with their designations as CEO or MD, not realising that I was earning more than them. So I left my job and went into business, which did not work out.

“I then went to work for other companies and somewhere along the way, I lost my vision. I was feeling low-spirited and not sure of myself. That’s when I discovered the power of positive thinking through motivational speakers. That’s how I revived my flagging spirit and got back onto the right track,” reveals Fauzi.

KEEP STRIVING FOR HIGHER GOALS

His six years with SPAD is the longest he has been with an organisation and he is happy where he is today. “My job requires me to do many things: Finance, IT, HR, Procurement and Administration.



Fauzi Che Rus urges fresh graduates to download motivational books and videos, and learn from some of the top management gurus out there.

“There’s better exposure to different fields and I am being constantly challenged, which keeps me on my toes!”

The most important lesson he has learnt during his “wilderness years”, as he calls it, is that one must be quick to set new and bigger goals in one’s life.

“Once you’ve reached a goal, you must set yourself another goal. The goal post must always move further. Plan for what you want to achieve next. Some people are perfectly happy to have achieved their goals. That’s perfectly OK. But when you start getting restless, listen to yourself and ask yourself what new and bigger goals – whether in personal life or career – that you want to achieve. Be clear about what you want. Once you are sure, work towards the goal,” he advises.

SPAD is a great place for ambitious young people who want to serve the nation and have a fulfilling career. In SPAD, more than 60 percent of its employees are millennials.

Public transport, says Fauzi, is a key element in moving Malaysia into a developed nation. “And SPAD is at the forefront of leading the transformation of land public transport in the country.” 

Using social media to land jobs

SPAD hires people (including fresh graduates) via its own website, online and from internal references. In the West, employers are also looking into social media to find out more about a potential candidate.

“I don’t know whether in Malaysia employers really check Facebook, but I do look up LinkedIn to find out more about the candidate,” says Fauzi.

He advises fresh job-seekers to update their social media accounts and offers some tips on what employers look out for:

- **Qualification and the university the candidate went to:** These are important, but are not the main deciding factor on whether you will get the job.
- **Extracurricular activities:** Since fresh graduates do not have job experience, an

employer is interested to know what kind of activities that he or she was involved when in university or in school.

“While good grades count, employers are not interested in hiring someone who is just a bookworm. That’s where the extracurricular activities come in. These show what kind of activities the candidate was involved in and what kind of leadership position he held.

“Was he or she the director of the project? Did the candidate represent the university in state or national levels?”

“I have a soft spot for sports. So if a candidate was involved in sports, that piques my interest because athletic people tend to be competitive, yet often work well in a team. They will bring this streak to the workplace. Employers like competitive employees who can work in a team,” says Fauzi.



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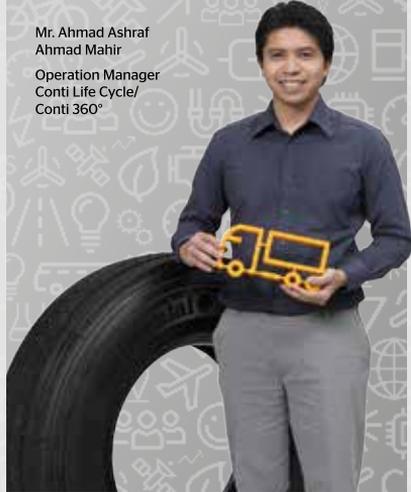
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Suhaimi Sulong goes all out to encourage 'play' at work through gamification if it allows him to connect with younger talent.

It's OK to 'play' at webe

An open culture, work any time and anywhere are just some of the perks 'webees' enjoy.

By Susan Tam

WITH more than 20 years of human resource experience, Suhaimi Sulong still wants to “play” at the workplace.

By that, he wants to encourage creativity and build an environment where employees can enjoy their work in his role as Chief People Experience Officer at webe digital (webe).

The company is shaping a unique workplace culture to set itself apart from other telecommunication players by immersing in all things digital. On webe’s website, it calls itself a digital mobility services provider with a meaningful difference. It is also the TM Group’s centre of excellence for digital and mobility.

“We truly want to be a digital corporation. Right from the time when a customer logs into our website or applications, through to when our employees access the back-end HR operations where they apply for leave online,” he says.

The company is in the digital era, hence its culture has to align with it. Traits like agility, speed and deep passion are what webe’s talent need to have to move the company forward.



Suhaimi himself has served in several multinational corporations across industries and countries, and is involved in a variety of disciplines, ranging from organisational development to employee engagement and talent development.

He says the company has been speedy in rolling out its services to the market and this is reflected in its hiring criteria.

“We tend to recruit more experienced hires as we need to start, run and go live. Therefore, we need talent who know their stuff, from digital services to engineering.”

But that doesn't mean it is not open to fresh graduates as internships are offered for non-critical functions of webe's operations.

The 54-year-old HR practitioner understands that tech-savvy recruits need to be challenged and remain excited about working in webe.

GAMING WAY TO RETAIN TALENT

Hence, concepts like gamification and setting community-based programmes are a priority in its strategy to retain talent. Suhaimi also believes that these two concepts are the way to woo talented professionals to webe.

He shares an example of using Pokémon Go to engage with new recruits at one of its orientation sessions called wowzone@webe. The new hires were curious and surprised that the HR head was playing the same game as they did.

Having broken the ice, he could engage and connect with these digitally savvy professionals. He believes that those who end up working with webe must be immersed in the digital culture themselves to add value to their services.

“We wanted to be different. So, we decided to be a company that helps to bring about positive change through the power of data and technology.

“When you (a new recruit) join webe, you join with all your (social media) assets. You are aware and use social media and utility apps like Facebook and Waze, so you are familiar with how people are using digital platforms to stay connected.”

WEBEES SHARE IDEAS, FEEDBACK

And it is this type of networking that Suhaimi sees as a strength in webe. The employees, also known as “webees”, are encouraged to share ideas, collaborate and provide feedback on WhatsApp groups.

Co-creation is also an important factor in talent retention at webe. He explains that in the gaming field, the tech-savvy are into creation of characters, from building their facial features to acquiring certain traits.

This interest towards creating a product or character is translated into how webe works. “The youngsters like to be involved in whatever we do as they want to be part of innovation.”

Among the creative work that webees do include producing videos for internal programmes rather than be subjected to a top-down approach.

“You can feed them our values, have them memorise them but what happens if they don’t believe in them? For us to be a truly different company, we needed to ensure that the entire organisation was transformed inside out.”

One of webe’s guiding principles, “We is greater than me”, stresses the importance of collaboration in a community, helping to shape greater and more



positive outcomes. This and many other principles are shared in the “webeLIVE” programme to build the culture the company wants.

Usually labelled as a team-building activity, the webeLIVE programme is geared to be easily accessed through a smartphone application, where self-produced videos of C-level managers are shared. This encourages discussions among employees who are motivated to create their own videos and take part in activities that touch on core webe values.

WORK ANY TIME, ANYWHERE

The company practises an “Anytime, Anywhere” concept for its staff, which means that they are



“
There are
NO RULES
on WEARING JEANS or
OTHERWISE.
Wear what is
COMFORTABLE,
practical and works best
for you.”



*webees are hyper connected and encouraged to share innovative ideas via many platforms.
– Pictures courtesy of webe*

allowed to work any time or anywhere so long as they remain in communication with their managers and teams.

Its six staggered working hours also allow parents to do a school run and encourage others who are health conscious to make it to the gym after work. Perks like fresh fruit, pool tables and fitness classes are also provided.

With such a relaxed and open environment at webe, Suhaimi believes that trust is an important factor to ensure that the company's culture thrives.

Suhaimi doesn't believe in forcing employees to clock in or track attendance meticulously at events or meetings.

The casual dress code reflects its aspiration to be different, allowing freedom for the staff.

"There are no rules on wearing jeans or otherwise. Wear what is comfortable, practical and works best for you," he adds.

webe's flexible working arrangements are encouraged, so long as professionals keep to their responsibilities. For example, Suhaimi says, employees should give notice on how long it takes to attend a physical meeting.

The "Anytime Anywhere" concept is attractive so long as the infrastructure allows the employees to

stay connected, making webe's never-ending data package an important factor in staying productive. "We are a digital mobility service provider, offering data liberation with never-ending data, calls and SMS with no contracts, quotas or caps. We do this because we want people to explore what mobility and connectivity truly mean and the power of the internet."

OPEN CULTURE

Suhaimi points out that webe is a young corporation working hard to emulate the open culture that thrives in start-ups in the Silicon Valley.

He hopes that one day there will be no demarcation between work and play because employees would enjoy their work so much that it doesn't feel like work any more. But, of course, there are challenges, admits Suhaimi.

An open culture needs a change in mindset as it challenges usual ways of running a business and disrupts traditional management techniques and conventional HR practices.

For example, he says HR processes, such as reviews, will need to be reassessed and whether a quarterly review or a half-yearly one is more effective for webe's workforce.

The journey may be challenging but Suhaimi is excited about the prospects of what webe can become. With all the right elements in place, webe will be able to make its mark. ©

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- Adaptive and enjoy challenges.

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Making office life **AWESOME**

An American company in Malaysia is big on nurturing and engaging its younger staff. PayPal also walks the talk on diversity in its hiring policy.

Ida Hasanuddin goes through a diversity checklist to ensure racial balance in her team.

By Susan Tam

PAYPAL, a worldwide online payments system, has a quirky sense of what makes good leaders.

For starters, the management embraces a leadership style where seniors are encouraged to coach other employees. But it might require some people to do a 180-degree turn, like Ida Hasanuddin.

Ida, PayPal's Group Leader for Protection Services Compliance Ops, says she has had to adapt her leadership style to one that nurtures others in tune with the company culture.

Being of service to his or her team in PayPal means that leaders pay extra attention to what employees want while managers are always strategising on ways to keep staff engaged and passionate.

"I have been in business for more than 10 years. I have had to change to coach and care because young people tend to get bored quickly.

"We have yearly employee satisfaction surveys that track whether they (employees) are inspired, engaged or satisfied," she says, adding that her teams have been tracking the highest engagement score year after year.

TEAMWORK

Ida began her career as a lawyer and after about five years, she realised that as a people-oriented person, she wanted to explore her skills working with teams.

She worked in several multinational corporations and PayPal gave her the opportunity to do this, when she joined as a compliance ops team leader.

From there, Ida's wide range of experience helped her fine-tune her leadership skills to adapt to the company's culture of engaging the staff positively.

So, how does PayPal do it? Ida admits that keeping employees engaged and passionate takes time and investment but well worth the effort.

The company runs incentive games, making tracking key performance indicators a fun task so staff are motivated to meet PayPal's targets.

Employees are also encouraged to take part in charitable events and sports, such as futsal or badminton matches.

There are recreational rooms on each floor of the office in Petaling Jaya, housing pool tables, air hockey and PlayStation games.

GIVE A GIFT

Staff can also take part in the MOOLA programme, known as the "Make Our Office Lives Awesome". The programme encourages employees to give a gift to his or her colleague who has been pleasant or performed an act of kindness for them.

Flexible working hours are put in place to serve the global markets and designed to encourage employees to enjoy a balance between work and life. Staff on the 6am shift end at 3pm, allowing them time for errands and to avoid the rush-hour traffic.

But it is not all about play to keep employees engaged. Incentive programmes are designed to encourage staff to collect points and rewards after achieving good feedback from customers.

Ida notes that through her study of generational differences, she finds that being part of the social media community engaged millennials better as they are savvy on these platforms.

"We try to be as trendy as possible, from picking up on the Pokémon game to the Pen and Apple craze. We have to be quick to appeal to millennials as much as possible."

She says one important factor in keeping new hires or millennials engaged is to be able to speak their language, understanding their needs and behaviour.

"If you're a good leader, you can evolve and serve your demographics, according to what appeals to them.

"There's no point sticking to the same leadership style if it's not going to get the buy-in of your teammates, who have to feel passionate about the job."

The company's regular leadership programmes and training offer guidance and knowledge to help the teams achieve a successful leadership style. Topics covered include self-awareness and communication skills.

“

We try to be as
**TRENDY AS
 POSSIBLE,**
 from picking up on the
Pokémon game
 to the Pen and Apple craze.

”



PayPal is also a strong advocator of diversity and inclusion, as Ida points out. The company ensures a balance of races when employing staff across all functions, so long as the new hires meet the competencies and skills required by the organisation.

She says during her last diversity check, she found that for her team, she had 36 percent Malay employees, which she pointed out to the team in charge of talent acquisition. The next batch of hires would have to be from other races to balance out the composition.

“Even when someone is speaking in Malay and that makes the Chinese (staff) uncomfortable, we call it out and encourage them to use English. It’s [diversity and inclusion] applied to every part of your life here.”

PayPal values respect and wants to instil that in its workforce, to respect each other’s religious and political values.

The company celebrates diversity, so if employees have tattoos or are part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, they can still get hired, Ida says.

“We find people who can fit our culture, our values of collaboration, inclusion and respect each other regardless of race and innovation.”

What PayPal wants from its new hires or fresh graduates is that they value team spirit.

“We also want adaptability because we are servicing the global market, things are very dynamic. We are an organisation that empowers our leaders to make decisions, so people have to be ready for that change.”

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

New hires or employees must be able to put their ideas forward and be independent in decision-making.



“As an American company, you must be independent in decision-making and learn independently. We have guidelines, policy or regulatory requirements when it comes to workflow, but at the end of the day, it is still down to your decision-making.”

To empower PayPal staff in such situations, the company offers training and newsletters to give them the confidence vital for their job function.

Ida encourages new hires to be patient, too, and have the tenacity to stay in a job to accumulate leadership skills and learn the business.

For fresh graduates with little or no work experience, she says the company ensures that it manages their expectations. “This means that we tell them [about] the good, the bad and the ugly,” she says about how they brief new graduates.

The new recruits are coached and given a performance plan, which has helped managed their smooth transition into the workforce.

“We tell them these are the challenges, so they are mentally prepared and we give them tips and advice.

“This is so that they feel emotionally and mentally supported and nothing is a surprise to them.”

For Ida, traits of being open, honest and direct are important at PayPal.

She believes that the company has set the environment for coaching, mentoring and feedback so PayPal teams are mentally and physically equipped for a positive and healthy work culture. 

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Awesome Culture



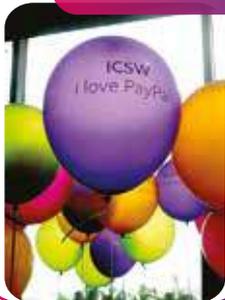
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THE CENTER OF
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DISCOVER your passion first



Vignesh Baboo has various cross-functional experiences with top Fortune 500 multinationals. Here, he offers some tips on how fresh graduates can stand out among the competition as they embark on their chosen career path.

By Alistair Tan

VIGNESH Baboo, Human Resources Leader at GE, is well positioned to advise graduates on the moves that could lead them to a coveted job interview and career progress. In this special interview, he shares insights into how graduates can prepare themselves for the transition from campus to the corporate world.

He is immersed in the selection process in identifying the best candidates from a competitive field, having covered the bases for more than a decade with multinational companies.

THE TRANSITION

Transitioning from full-time student to working adult can be very challenging. “You would have to face real consequences head-on,” he says.

“For instance, in university, any late submission would only affect you, but as a working adult it becomes clear that your ability to meet deadlines will affect your colleagues.”

It’s a whole chain reaction that can also put your career prospect in jeopardy.



“

CHASE
your **DREAM**
and the
SALARY
will look for you.

“Bear in mind, things you are assigned to do at work might be something never covered in textbooks or by lecturers in class.”

He suggests fresh graduates not to lose heart if they can't get it right the first time. “Keep on trying; don't be shy to seek assistance from your peers and you'll get there.”

FOCUS ON YOUR PERSONAL BRAND

“Stretch yourself to come out of your comfort zone. Be proactive and look out for activities that develop your potential.”

It's also part of building your unique selling point (USP), as leadership positions require proactive thinking, dynamic attitude and social savvy.

Deep diving into communication skills, it is surprising how underrated it is among graduates. This could also be your “make or break”, especially in an environment where graduates are expected to work with teams across borders.

Good communication skills would lead to good rapport with your peers and this could be your guide to identifying your passion and laying the right foundation for your career path.

NETWORKING BOOST

Securing a job is not just about what you know, but also who you know.

“The job market is very competitive these days,” he says. “It's not only about what you have to offer but also creating the visibility to your potential employer and making your presence felt.”

He advises graduates to take the initiative to attend career talks, engagement sessions with industry leaders and work on employer projects that bring them to the attention of potential employers.

Volunteer activities – working with NGOs, for instance – are also a great platform to meet new people who can be connectors to your future hiring

“

Stretch yourself to **come out** of your **comfort zone**. Be proactive and look out for **activities** that **develop** your potential.



manager. “More importantly, such involvements can also boost your confidence level and leadership skills.”

Ultimately, university days are the best time to lay the foundation for the future. A student should learn to strike a balance between pursuing academic success and developing life skills for the working world.

PACKAGING YOURSELF FOR JOB HUNT

It is more than having the right academic qualifications to clinch a position, Vignesh stresses. “The first impression is always important,” he explains. “That starts from the photo in the resume to attending a face-to-face interview.”

Job application photos should never be casual. He also suggests keeping the resume simple and result-focused. Ideally, it should be presented in point form and not more than two or three pages long. “It saves time for recruiters to vet through an avalanche of job-seekers’ applications.”

Candidates should highlight their key achievements and involvement in extracurricular activities.

A solid resume would reveal a candidate’s skills set and talent, as well as potential growth. “It is crucial for the candidate to include experiences and achievements they’re passionate about, for it may be just the thing they need to land the job.”

Before an interview, the savvy applicant should brush up on the company background. The knowledge indicates the applicant’s interest to the employer. It is also helpful to learn more about an interviewer before the meeting.

“In these days of social media, it is all out there,” Vignesh says.

“We encourage questions and candidates should take the initiative to prepare. It’s a two-way process.” The hopeful employees should establish their confidence level by making – and keeping – eye contact. “The idea is to keep it casual and candid, with everything to the point.”

ACE THE INTERVIEW FIRST

Job interviews, especially for fresh entrants, require two or more meetings. Interviewees should refrain from salary enquiries at the first encounter, Vignesh advises.

“This (prevalent) mindset among fresh job seekers should change.”

He points out that, at entry level, remuneration is pretty much fixed. The salary scale also depends on whether it is a multinational or a local company.

Other factors, such as the applicant’s professional exposure and the job scope, come into play.

“The right time to ask is at the final interview when they know the job is in the bag.”

“Similarly, university days are your best time to discover and focus on your passion.”

Some youth enter into a field of study – often under parental pressure – with an eye on a career path to wealth and prestige.

Many are drawn to marquee-name companies because of their branding or physical set-up. “Don’t just chase the salary or the dream company brand,” Vignesh advises.

Job satisfaction is vital to character development and career growth. “Chase your dream and the salary will look for you.”

MONEY FOLLOWS EXPERIENCE

In the early stages of their career, graduates should seek to gain valuable experience, which can be leveraged in the latter stages of their profession.

“Doing different things to enhance your creativity and entrepreneurial skills will enrich your career profile and accelerate career growth. It is vital to equip yourself with the appropriate experiences and knowledge before bargaining.”

Take charge of your career! 



“ I believe that young graduates should seize the different opportunities that come their way - just explore your options, and see what's out there ”

INSPIRATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Having established a long and thriving career in a leading tobacco company, Karl Yap, Marketing Director of British American Tobacco (BAT) Malaysia offers important advice on becoming an effective leader in the competitive, corporate world.

Karl has held a number of senior leadership roles in marketing since his days as a BAT Management Trainee in the late 1990s - from a two-year stint as a Senior International Brand Manager in the United Kingdom to his role as Head of Marketing in BAT Philippines, he had recently returned to Malaysia and assumed his current role as BAT Malaysia's Marketing Director in October 2016.

GRADUAN taps into his global experience as a prominent and successful leader, and the importance of inspiring and engaging with the members of one's team.

What is the one leadership value that you live by?

I think it would be difficult to just name one leadership value that I live by - our leadership values may evolve as we continue to progress further into our career. I believe it is important for leaders to achieve a balance between their responsibilities in driving business objectives, as well as being a role model for their team. Being a leader is much more than just hitting targets, it is also about being able to inspire the people you work with to achieve our shared goals, and also helping them achieve their own personal ambitions.

As a leader, we need to be mindful that we play a part in the dynamics of the team. By cultivating an inclusive working environment, we encourage open communication where constructive feedback and suggestions can be shared respectfully.

How has your experience as a Management Trainee shaped you as a leader?

The Management Trainee (now Global Graduate) Programme was certainly an enriching experience for me. Because of the high performance culture in BAT Malaysia, I was tasked with a number of assignments that stretched my capabilities as a leader. BAT provides a great amount of empowerment to its trainees, to be more proactive about their development within the organisation. Aside from that, I had also received cross-functional exposure that went beyond my own field of specialisation: I had the chance to learn about the different facets of the Company and how it operates, giving me the ability to gain a better understanding of the business as a whole.

One of the most memorable experiences I had with the organisation was the time I spent in the United Kingdom. I was exposed to a different culture and management style altogether, which helped me to

view business issues and challenges from a different perspective. During that time, I had the opportunity to oversee brands in Europe, Asia Pacific, Latin America and the Middle East. Through this experience, I acquired a better appreciation of the diversity BAT has to offer.

My recent role as Head of Marketing in BAT Philippines was also very eye-opening: previously, I was mostly involved in the commercial aspects of marketing such as planning and deploying branding strategies. However, my stint in the Philippines gave me the opportunity to exercise full commercial ownership - I had the chance to develop and coach people from different backgrounds and ethnicities, in a market that was completely different from the one that I am used to in Malaysia. There was never a dull day in the office!



How do you decide who will be the best candidate for the Global Graduate Programme?

We look for candidates who are ambitious and passionate about the work that they do, and the corporate brand that we represent. For example, in the Marketing department, we want talents who have the ability and capacity to leverage on our company's existing resources, distribution networks and sophisticated technology to market our products in an innovative and responsible manner.

In a nutshell, the ideal candidates are those that demonstrate a balance in both business and people leadership. They should possess the commercial capabilities to elevate our brands to greater heights, and also display strong collaborative skills to work in large, diverse teams within this dynamic organisation.

Do you have any advice for graduates who are preparing to embark onto the corporate journey?

There are no shortcuts when it comes to leadership and success. I believe that young graduates should seize the different opportunities that come their way - just explore your options, and see what's out there. I understand that some candidates may not necessarily

choose BAT Malaysia as their first choice due to the perceived controversy surrounding the tobacco industry, but I urge future hires to come in with an open mind. We are a responsible company, who strongly abides by governmental and marketing regulations in every step we take in running our business. As one of the biggest MNCs in Malaysia, we offer a wealth of learning experiences in our organisation, and we invest heavily in developing our people to achieve their full potential.

Do not restrict yourself only to the opportunities within your field of expertise: there is something to learn in every task you take on, no matter how small. Use this time to build a strong foundation in your career, that can lead you to continued success in the future. The important thing here is to take everything in stride: reflect and assess what went right and what didn't, and how you could have handled the situation differently. Be resilient, and do not let the setbacks discourage you.



**BRITISH AMERICAN
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Picture of **SUCCESS**

In just five years, Piktochart has grown from being a web design agency to one of the biggest tech start-up successes internationally, offering its seven million users the unique services of creating visuals on their own. Ai Ching, Co-founder and CEO, tells GRADUAN® how this Penang-based company charted its path to success.

By Mel Sim

A PICTURE is worth a thousand words. Think about this for a minute and how it relates to the way a complex idea or multitude of information can be conveyed easily and effectively in a single image or a series of images.

Essentially, this is what Piktochart is all about, the first do-it-yourself infographic and visual platform that allows users to create their own images for communication, which are visually attractive as well as easily understood.

With more than seven million users (and growing every day) and reviews pouring in from all corners of the world for its easy-to-use services, you would think that this tech company is based in the usual “start-up realm” – that is, Silicon Valley.

Here’s where it gets interesting: Piktochart – which started in 2011 as a web design agency – is based in Penang. Which means you don’t have to leave home or head overseas if you were interested in working at a successful tech company.

The birth of Piktochart began when Ai Ching, Co-founder and CEO, decided to leave her corporate job to venture into the digital space.

“I started seeing infographics on news portals and was excited by the idea of letting people create visuals on their own without the help of a designer,” she shares.

Along with her business partner Andrea, the duo started out as a web design agency but changed course when the thought of long-term servicing became undesirable. “It was difficult to get payments, income was unstable because we had to look for clients and it wasn’t always easy servicing clients,” says Ai Ching.

Like most first-time entrepreneurs venturing into something new, it was all ground zero for Ai Ching and Andrea in the beginning.

“We didn’t know how to start or scale a business. We had no knowledge or experience trying to run a business! Neither did we have the team of supporters that we have today. A lot of the things we know today are learned via trial and error.

“We have surely changed a lot. I used to say create MVP (minimum viable product) quickly and roll it out to the market. Today, we think a lot and figure out a strategy before we decide to test out new ideas,” she says.

Before long, Piktochart was getting noticed by the tech world for its unique DIY infographic platform.

Now in its sixth year, it has served users from all over the world – marketers using it to drive their marketing efforts, teachers creating visuals to complement their teaching, news portals and websites to engage their audiences, businesses to attract customers... the list goes on when it comes to Piktochart users.

“

There is a lot of
AUTONOMY
 at **Piktochart**
 although we do expect
 results.



Ai Ching (left) wants to create more innovative products. – Picture courtesy of Piktochart

“Our users began from a market of freelancers and solopreneurs,” says Ai Ching.

“It has now matured into the education and SME space. We are conscious about our diversity in terms of user base and we want to continue creating innovative products that will help them solve not just one problem (creating infographics) but do more than that. For example, create posters, presentations and daily communication materials. Most of our users are currently still from North America.”

While many start-ups initially capture their customers with unique ideas, many are unable to sustain themselves as viable businesses.

of doing excellent work but also have the heart to care for one another. With that, there is a positive culture of trust and many great things can happen when people who are genuinely excited about visual design are put in the same space.

“I define success as a long-lasting, profitable business that has changed the lives of people that it has come into contact with in a meaningful way,” says Ai Ching.

It is no wonder then that the culture at Piktochart is HOPEFUL: “Humble, Open Up, Passionate, Excellent, Fun Loving, User Focused and Love,” says Ai Ching.



An article in *Fortune* magazine quoted that nine out of 10 start-ups fail, with lack of sufficient capital, assembly of the wrong team, competition and slow demand for their product as the main reasons.

To ensure that Piktochart stays ahead of the game, Ai Ching says, it is essential for the company to have a proper foundation to scale. That and hiring the right people for Piktochart.

“There is a lot of autonomy at Piktochart although we do expect results. We try to hire people capable

A user-centric approach in terms of conducting business has also helped Ai Ching and Piktochart achieve success. While many entrepreneurs preach on the idea of thinking out of the box to be different from competitors, Ai Ching has her own views: “I don’t know if it’s necessary to think out of the box. Sometimes thinking in the box works. It is our priority to serve our users with excellence than differentiating ourselves for the sake of differentiation.” ©

Check out Piktochart at www.piktochart.com



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

AI CHING
CO-FOUNDER AND CEO OF PIKTOCHART

Rise and Shine!



9AM

Breakfast with whoever else is in the office



11AM

Check emails and read a couple of newsletters. Reflect on which meeting I have later and if any preparation is needed.

Work and Unwind



MIDDLE OF THE DAY

Team meeting, one-on-ones or me sitting at the desk working on the list of top priorities (it could be a yearly planning exercise or looking at some analytics or screening through a new marketing initiative). I try to take a break by reading devotionals or praying.



6PM

I try to leave the office and commute together with my husband back home where we have dinner and occasionally take a walk together to unwind.

For a free 10 day trial of Piktochart Pro (worth RM25), go to magic.piktochart.com/redeem and enter "10formyfriend".



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LEADING the way in ICT

PETRONAS ICT looks beyond academic achievements and technical skills set when hiring new talent, placing qualities, such as leadership, critical thinking and communication skills, at the top of the list.

By Hyma Haridas

A SPIRING to be the digital technology enabler that supports PETRONAS' bid to become a leading oil and gas multinational, PETRONAS ICT employs more than 1,600 people of various nationalities and backgrounds in its Malaysian operations.

“As a fully owned subsidiary of PETRONAS, we embrace PETRONAS’ culture transformation journey to develop a culture of accountability, where people take accountability to think and act in a manner necessary to achieve results,” says Rosehaida Ab Rahman, General Manager of the Human Resources (HR) Division of PETRONAS ICT Sdn Bhd.

Delivering mission-critical, innovative and secure ICT solutions to PETRONAS in 65 countries and servicing more than 51,000 employees worldwide,

PETRONAS ICT aims to develop a high-performing workforce that will deliver on annual targets and its larger aim to become an ICT organisation with world-class standards, processes, and delivery of digital solutions and ICT services.

Hiring the right talent is crucial to further these objectives. PETRONAS ICT looks for candidates who demonstrate leadership potential, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and effective communication skills. They must also possess the right technical and functional skills required for an entry-level position.

“We also look for graduates who carry themselves in a professional manner and have sound work ethics that are aligned to PETRONAS’ shared values. Involvement in leadership roles during the course of one’s education is certainly a plus,” says Rosehaida.

CULTURAL BELIEFS

These qualities will ease the new talent's assimilation into the new culture of accountability, which is underpinned by six cultural beliefs.

These are "Results Matter" – stretching one's limits to deliver superior results; "Own It!" – owning results without blaming others; "Focused Execution" – planning, committing to and delivering with discipline; "Nurture Trust" – always keeping one's promise and building mutual trust; "Tell Me" – seeking, giving and acting positively on feedback; and "Shared Success" – collaborating for the greater good of the organisation.

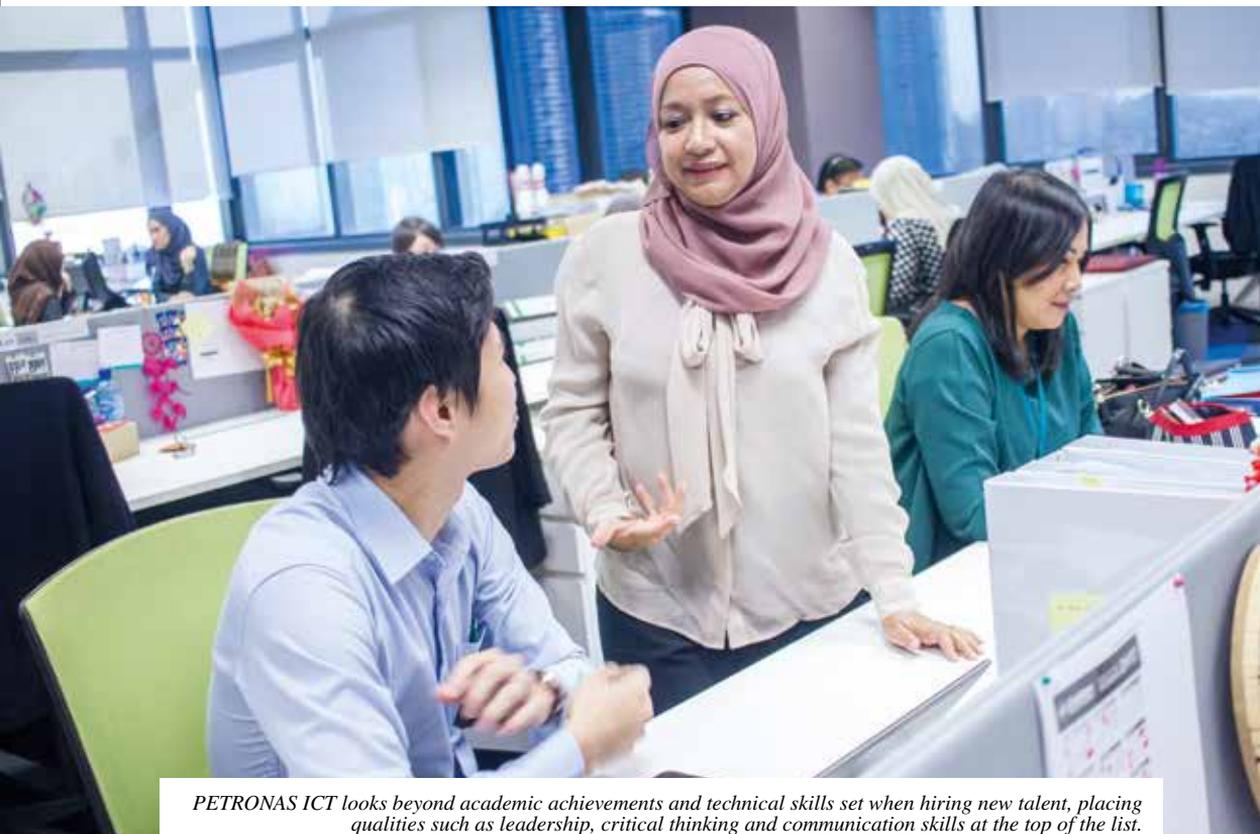
To ensure that they hire only the best, PETRONAS ICT conducts a rigorous interview process, which incorporates both a skills interview and behavioural interview.

"We want to hire not just IT people, but 'people people'," says Rosehaida, who has been with the company for five years.

One of the ways in which the company ensures that its employees remain engaged and involved is through its corporate social investment programme, "Brilliant Young Minds", which allows employees to lead or facilitate and contribute in meaningful ways towards nation-building. Employees will be able use digital innovation, and their ICT knowledge and skills to mentor the next generation in developing higher order thinking skills required to succeed within the Digital Economy.

Corporate development initiatives also enable employees to gain cross-organisational exposure and exercise their professional skills, such as leadership, communications, project management, networking, coaching and mentoring, among others.

Recognising that all employees have room for growth, the company has put in place various talent development initiatives, including Core Academies for executives and managers to equip and upgrade functional competencies.



PETRONAS ICT looks beyond academic achievements and technical skills set when hiring new talent, placing qualities such as leadership, critical thinking and communication skills at the top of the list.

“We place a great focus on developing leaders at all levels, and recently appointed a Chief Leadership Officer to drive leadership development and culture transformation within the organisation. We have the Future Leaders Programme for top talent and recently established our Leadership Academy to develop leaders across the board.”

Just last month, PETRONAS ICT launched its Communications Academy to enhance business communication skills as part of an employee’s development as a potential leader within the organisation. Other programmes that employees can leverage on to further develop themselves are the Brilliant Mind’s digital innovation programme, Young Professionals Club, Leading Women’s Network, PERSONA Toastmasters and PETRONITA, to name a few.

HAPPY WORKERS

In 2014, the HR division spearheaded the initiative to measure and enhance employee satisfaction within the company. Overall, the survey results have shown that employee satisfaction increased by five percent in 2015 and seven percent last year.

According to Rosehaida, the survey results show that the company ranks highly among its employees when it comes to work-life balance, with the incorporation of flexible work arrangements, excellence awards, and health and wellness events.

“For us, work-life balance comprises achievement and enjoyment while at work. In our quest to provide a great place to work, we have introduced various initiatives to all employees.

“This includes policies that support flexible work arrangements to cater to the needs of the business and our workforce. Flexi hours allow employees to plan their time accordingly, including working from anywhere while remaining connected and contactable,” she says.

The annual survey also identifies the three lowest-scoring areas, which are converted into action plans and key performance indicators (KPIs) for the respective division leaders, assuring employees that their grievances are taken seriously and improved upon.

“

**We want
to hire not just
IT people,
but ‘people
people’.**

When it comes to the quality of local graduates, Rosehaida believes there has been a steady improvement over the past 15 to 20 years.

“Thus far, we have found our young graduates to be forward-looking, eager and constantly looking for ways to advance their career. They are enticed by opportunities to develop, and enjoy a good balance of work and fun. They also value immediate feedback, flexibility in delivering work and seek to contribute back to society.”

As someone who has been in the HR industry for more than 20 years, her advice to fresh graduates and job-seekers is not to overlook the importance of gaining exposure beyond the classroom.

“It’s really important to gain exposure beyond the classroom. And the best time to do this is while still in school or university, whether here or abroad. Students should make full use of opportunities presented by socialising with other students and professionals from different backgrounds, to gain a wider perspective and worldview.

“Job-seekers also need to develop strong interpersonal skills to communicate their ideas and thoughts during interviews,” advises Rosehaida.

To apply for internship or available positions at PETRONAS ICT, please visit www.petronasict.com. ©



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GROWTH AND NATION BUILDING







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JOIN a caring industry

The insurance industry is almost recession-proof, which means graduates can enjoy career growth and mobility, says the Head of Human Resource at Tokio Marine Life.

By Alistair Tan

FRESH graduates can look forward to a stable job market in Malaysia in 2017. This reassuring news comes from Stephen Wong, Head of Human Resource at Tokio Marine Life Insurance Malaysia Bhd, a Japanese multinational insurer.

The optimism is due to the country's resilient economy, which will continue to expand over the next few years, says Wong, citing global authorities. The insurance business is a growth sector that will reflect the healthy state of affairs.

"There are significant career opportunities (across the board)," Wong reiterates.

The reason is simple: The low degree of penetration because of a lack of awareness about the urgency to obtain insurance coverage.

In developed countries, these services form an important product that benefits most of the population while in developing countries, up to 90 percent do not enjoy such protection.

As a middle-income nation, Malaysia is better positioned: Up to 50 percent of the population has some form of insurance.

This still leaves plenty of room for development among the uninsured and even the underinsured.

They may not be covered in vital areas, such as diseases and accident injury, which require medical treatment and can rack up large hospitalisation bills.

"Such people could face substantial setbacks to family welfare," Wong points out. Insurance may still not be the first career that comes to the mind of fresh graduates as it has long been stereotyped as a sales job.

"Agents are an important connection between the business and the people," Wong says. "They do a fantastic job bringing products and protection to rural areas."

CHANGING MINDSET

But there's more to the industry than just persuading clients to take up policies against disabilities or illness.

The mindset is changing among young graduates, thanks to local universities pushing studies that promote insurance as a dynamic and essential component of financial services.

“They emphasise programmes, such as professional actuarial training. They also engage with the Malaysian Institute of Assurance to provide insurance training.”

As a result, there is more openness to career options in insurance, especially with the business converging with banking and investment banking in a single 21st century platform.

“Graduates can see the light at the end of the tunnel,” emphasises Wong, which has allowed Tokio Marine to recruit many young people.

Malaysia’s proactive approach to insurance training has even attracted foreign attention.

“Other countries have taken note on how long we have developed the business,” he reveals.

This has resulted in a brain drain with skilled manpower, especially technical and business leaders, absorbed by developed economies, such as Singapore, Hong Kong and even China into leadership positions.

“There is a lot of leakage with people going to other countries. We never produce enough people. There is hardly any retrenchment [in insurance].”

Clearly, there is career growth and mobility in a business that Wong describes as a “dynamic and essential component of financial services”.

Careers include not only generic roles in operations, business development and finance.

“There’s a big group of professionals from all disciplines entering the industry. We even have [with Tokio Marine] medical doctors who do professional underwriting and claims management,” he says.

“They understand medical science and whether a treatment is necessary.”

TRUST IN TOKIO MARINE

Established in 1879 as the first insurance group in Japan, Tokio Marine is now present in 37 countries and more than 486 cities, offering general and life insurance products.

“The Japanese tradition is that as a company, we are perpetual. It is a long-term business that people trust for generations.”

The legacy has helped to create a niche for Tokio Marine as a company that is “trustworthy, reliable and at the same time professional,” says Wong.

“It excels in running the business and delivering returns to customers and shareholders.”

In short, Tokio Marine’s corporate philosophy ensures long-term job stability and career growth.

In Malaysia, Tokio Marine has a history of more than 65 years. Operating as TM Asia Life previously, a merger in 2007 enabled Tokio Marine to establish its prominence as a leading insurer.

The general insurance division employs 1,200 people. Wong oversees more than 500 employees in the life insurance division.

Except for a handful of Japanese, it is a fully Malaysian-staffed operation.

“We have spent a lot of money looking for experienced people,” he says, adding that now is the time to hire more young graduates.

It is working with the Life Insurance Association of Malaysia to recruit interns to gain job experience during their months-long university breaks.



Stephen Wong (centre) likes to play the role of mentor to younger colleagues.

“They get exposure to the business, learn the work environment and the fun of working at Tokio Marine.”

The company is on the lookout for candidates from all disciplines, including liberal arts, engineering, investment and actuarial sciences.

INVESTMENT IN STAFF

Tokio Marine grooms its people through a multitude of career enhancement programmes. These include internally developed options, such as classroom studies, which provide about 10 percent of the [job] value.

Self-learning is encouraged and sponsored. Besides internet learning and reading, there are exams, such as professional accounting and actuarial tests, International LOMA, study with Malaysian Insurance Institute and membership of societies of Britain, Australia and the United States.

The most crucial part is on-the-job training. This forms about 70 percent of the job value.

“Our managers coach the staff,” Wong says. “They investigate and make decisions at the local level and ask for help when needed. That makes working and training at Tokio Marine fun.”

Ultimately, he cautions that a candidate’s temperament matters to a potential employer.

“We are looking for character. Technical qualifications can be acquired.”

Wong describes insurance as a “caring industry” where perseverance matters a lot.

“We hire people who are dedicated and disciplined.” There is no short cut to financial and career success. “If people demand immediate gratification, it will be difficult.”

Even in the age of the internet, the proverb “a rolling stone gathers no moss,” still holds true.

“We look for people with stability in their psychology.” That rules out an applicant who demands a salary level at an interview.

Wong came to Tokio Marine about four years ago, after three decades in insurance-related and financial services.

His experience has made him a firm believer in mentoring as an enhanced tool to craft resilient managers and executives out of young people.

“In my role, I mentor and share lessons,” he says. “Every company must have some mentors (to encourage) them not to give up so easily.”

Insurance is an ideal industry, especially at Tokio Marine Life Insurance, to define and cultivate mental strength and positive traits for career success.

The company retains two out of three new recruits, thanks to its intensive training, compared with the overall average of one out of three.

“You need to come in and see possibilities. There are many types of specialised disciplines, and you will not be disappointed.” ☺



“
They [interns]
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LESSONS from the masters

A willingness to learn, no matter at what stage in your career, is the secret to success, says the Executive Director of Eco World Development Group Berhad.

By Sharmila Valli Narayanan

LIEW Tian Xiong is in his late 20s, but his boyish good looks can easily pass him off as a college student. But behind the college-boy charm is a steely mind, which is certain of what he wants for himself and the company where he has a majority share.

As the Executive Director of Eco World Development Group Berhad, a property company that is not five years old but has already carved a name for itself as one of the most prestigious and well-respected developers in the country and overseas, he sits on the board of directors while working closely with the junior staff on the ground to help sell properties.

“I have the good luck of sitting on the board and seeing how the board arrives at a decision. At the same time, when I started working here, I worked myself up from the post of a junior executive. I had



a front-row seat of learning from both ends of the spectrum,” says Liew.

Liew’s father is Tan Sri Liew Kee Sin, Founder of SP Setia, the property company that put Malaysia on the global map, thanks to its winning bid to develop the prestigious Battersea Power Station Project in London.

Cynics would say it is only natural that Liew would follow his father’s footsteps. For every child who has followed the parent’s footsteps into the business world, there are many others who have chosen a different path.

EARLY EXPOSURE TO PROPERTY WORLD

In Liew’s case, going into property development was inevitable since it was a world he knew intimately: He practically grew up in the sales gallery offices of SP Setia.

When Liew was born, his father was spending so much time in the sales gallery helping to sell properties that he hardly saw his first-born. So he asked his wife to bring the baby along to the sales gallery so that he could spend time with his son.

Liew’s earliest memories are of wandering around sales galleries and interacting with the staff there. When he was a teenager, while most of his peers were spending time playing computer games, Liew spent his hours (from the time he was 14) sitting in at his father’s management meeting.

“It was my father’s suggestion that I come in and sit in for the meetings. At that young age, I did not grasp the content of what was discussed, but as I grew older, I became fascinated at the interaction between my father and the management team.

“I had a front-row seat in watching how to manage people – from dealing with issues during the Q&A sessions to solving problems and managing conflicts. I am thankful for my father’s foresight in making me sit in for those meetings. I learned a lot more from those sessions than any university could ever teach me,” says Liew.

BE WILLING TO LEARN

It came as no surprise to anyone when Liew went into the property business fresh out of university.

How did he prepare himself for such a challenge? “My dad gave me two valuable advice: Be willing to learn and know how to respect the seniors in the company. You might have the degree and academic knowledge, but they have the experience,” he says.

“It’s been more than four years since I graduated,” he continues, “but I feel I know so much less now than when I graduated because there is still so much to learn and I am continually learning.

“I am so lucky that I am among individuals who have so many years of experience in this field and I can learn from them. It’s like sitting in a master class and absorbing all the knowledge.”

“
We **deliver**
the best and our
commitment
is to deliver the
best in
everything.





Liew Tian Xiong (second from right) started learning about the ins and outs of property development at 14.

A willingness to learn is essential if one wants to succeed in any field, states Liew. Learning new things is a challenge and it can be difficult, but one must persevere because the rewards are endless.

“To be successful in life and career, it’s not just about how smart you are; it’s also about resilience and willingness to learn,” says Liew.

He shares his own experiences when he first started at Eco World. He was in the corporate financing department where it had to do fund-raising exercises.

“I was just a fresh graduate and I had a short window period to grasp all the facts and I had to keep up with the rest of the team. That was tough. At the same time, everyone is expected to chip in to help the sale of the products.

“Once when we were launching a project, during the first week, I only saw my family for 30 minutes for the whole week! I’d work till 3am, go home and be

back at office at 8am. That was a lot to take in at one time. But you just have to hang in there and do it.”

SUCCESS OF ECO WORLD

Despite the challenges facing the current property market, Eco World has done well, as its properties have been snapped up quickly.

What is the reason for its success? Eco World doesn’t just see itself as a builder of houses and buildings: It sees itself as creating a community and recreating a lifestyle that harks back to a bygone era where everyone in the community knew each other.

Where children and adults could walk safely on the streets even at night (all Eco World projects are gated and guarded), where nature grows in abundance and the air is clean.

This concept harks back to Liew’s upbringing. Despite his success, Liew’s father never forgot his old neighbours in the *kampung* where he grew up.

“

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 in **life** and
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 it's not just about
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 and your
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 to **learn**.

”

He used to visit it frequently with his children. Liew remembers spending holidays in the *kampung*, playing in the river or cycling along the gravel roads. It's this nostalgic spirit that Eco World successfully captures in its development.

Besides recreating remembrance of a time past, location also plays an important role in the success of Eco World's products.

“We buy land and build townships where large population lives,” says Liew. “Buying property is a generational thing: People want to live where they grew up or are used to. We buy land in existing developments that are old and poorly planned.

“For example, if you lived all your life in Klang and you want to upgrade your residence, where do you go? You come to an area like Setia Alam where we are now developing our new project, Eco Ardence, which is cleaner, newer and greener.”

Besides location, Eco World's reputation also rests on its quality. “We deliver the best and our commitment is to deliver the best in everything – from the finishing of the buildings to the surroundings that we create,” he says proudly. 

Skills every fresh grad must have

- **COMMUNICATION SKILLS** Proficiency in English is a must in the corporate sector. It's always a plus to be proficient in other languages as well. “If you're in sales, good communication skills are a must in order to close a sale,” says Liew Tian Xiong.
- **THE RIGHT ATTITUDE** Don't be picky about what you are asked to do. “I have heard from others that some fresh grads don't want to work late or on weekends.

“One of the questions I ask during interviews is whether he or she is willing to work seven

days a week for three months or more because that's what you have to do during property launches!”

- **LEAVE YOUR EGO AT THE DOOR** “Most young people fresh out of universities think they know a lot. Once you enter the working world, you realise you don't know much,” says Liew.

Be open to learning – from your superiors and especially from those below you. Learn to take rejection; it's part and parcel of working life.

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WORK can be FUN

BHP Billiton's office in Kuala Lumpur is a happy and vibrant place to work in with its paperless office and clear-desk concepts. The Head of Global Asset Services (GAS) says this is an organisation where it's OK to make mistakes and people are encouraged to speak up.

By Tan Wan-Peng

MATTHEW Brady has a deadpan sense of humour. The Australian, who is the Head of Global Asset Services (GAS) at BHP Billiton Shared Services Centre in Kuala Lumpur, takes a few seconds to reply when asked what is it like to work at the mining giant's KL office.

"We have a lot of fun." Um, as in theme park fun and making merry? "Yeah, some of the teams went to Sunway Lagoon for example," he replies without missing a beat.

Then, there was last year's annual party. The finance team walked away with the "best mannequin challenge" title. The tech team, meanwhile, displayed hidden talent with artistes and musicians performing that evening.

MISTAKES ARE OKAY

Why does BHP Billiton put so much emphasis on fun? After all, most employees don't think of the office or work as fun. And the fun is not limited to a geographical location; instead, it emphasises fun for the entire operational team across the globe. Brady says there is a rationale for this.

GAS in Kuala Lumpur functions as shared services solution for the mining giant, with operations in Australia, North and South Americas and whose headcount tops 55,000. The office here provides services in Human Resources, Finance, Supply, Technology and Maintenance Centre of Excellence. The work can be intense and hectic, especially when there's a project spike, such as the migration of new work and the year-end cycle.



“

It is
IMPORTANT
 for us to **VALUE** the
ideas they [graduates]
generate and
 the **smarts**
 that they bring here.

Where the fun element comes in is to bring out the best among people who work through some busy periods by making them inclusive and supportive towards their colleagues.

Brady offers an example of this. Recently, GAS ran a tagline competition, asking the team to sum up what life in the KL office was like. The winning entry was “Creating Value Together”, which encapsulates the inclusiveness and the importance of bringing your whole self to work.

“It is important for us to value the ideas they generate and the smarts that they bring here,” he says. At BHP Billiton, the staff members are encouraged to speak out and share their ideas freely. The firm also celebrates mistakes. (Yes, mistakes!)

“We celebrate mistakes,” Brady says, because “we need people to make mistakes and learn from them.” Team members are coached through making mistakes – with the caveat, people learn and improve on their performance.

He prefers engaging with people so that they get better at their job every day and work towards professional growth.

LOCAL TALENT

Brady describes his career as something like a boomerang. The Australian first joined BHP (as it was known then) when he graduated about 25 years ago, as a Human Resources Officer. Along the way, he left and worked at DHL, Boeing, Shell and Thiess before returning – or “boomeranging” back – to BHP Billiton.

Brady has been posted in Europe, the United Kingdom and Qatar, which puts him in a good position to comment on the KL office hires.

“We’ve had positive experience with the people we’ve hired here,” he says. Malaysians – and Southeast Asians generally – place a strong cultural emphasis on education.

“Most people here don’t stop at undergraduate degrees. They pursue postgraduate qualifications. They are far more qualified than me!” he says laughing.

Joking aside, people come to BHP Billiton with higher degrees and they want to do and contribute more to the company. Again, grades matter but, Brady says, GPAs are just one consideration as the company prefers graduates who show capabilities beyond grades such as leadership.

More importantly, graduates who join BHP Billiton must be aligned with its values. These include sustainability (putting health and safety first, being environmentally responsible and supporting its communities); integrity; respect (embracing openness, trust, teamwork, diversity and relationships that are mutually beneficial); and accountability, among others.

BHP Billiton prides itself on workplace diversity. “We have diversity in spades,” he says, adding that the ethnically diverse and young workforce in Malaysia has created value for the organisation.

The average age in the KL office is 25, which has led to some innovative results. “We’ve had people here solving some long-standing problems in months, not years.”





HOLA! SEEKING SPANISH SPEAKERS

But there are challenges, of course. BHP Billiton is a global employer and as stated earlier, with operation in South America and supplies across the globe. There is an urgent need for people with deeper language skills.

For example, there is an acute shortage of Spanish speakers in the KL office. (Remember, KL is providing global support, not just regional.) So, if you have Spanish language capabilities and possess skills in supply, accounting and human resources, running on SAP, they would love to hear from you.

The other challenge is a broadly cultural one, touching on timezone operability issues. People need to work extended shifts, which may impact on their family or leisure time.

But Brady is keen to emphasise, there is variety in the work and opportunities to work overseas as part of the learning process. “As a global employer, our employees are exposed to opportunities in BHP Billiton worldwide. They acquire cross-function training and extensive learning when they are sent overseas.”

Part of the learning process is to figure out ways to improve things as graduates are exposed to more and more complex work. The overseas stint – it could last weeks or months – serves another purpose. When they return to KL, the first thing is that their knowledge of where value comes from and why increases. They also feel far more connected to

BHP Billiton and understand that they are part of the largest mining company in the world.

In other words, they build a connection with the organisation. “They come back and they get energised by the experience,” Brady says of the secondments. They also return with funny stories, such as accidentally setting off the fire alarm when cooking in an apartment.

Another point Brady emphasises is that at BHP Billiton, there is no expectation of people coming to work with all the ready skills set. It is a privilege and the responsibility of leaders to train graduates and help them define and enhance their job scope, he says.

Which means that this organisation is the right sort: There is no harm in making mistakes here; it creates a fun workplace and it wants to see you thrive there. ☺



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CHAPTER 3

GOING TO GREATER HEIGHTS

Big business dreams

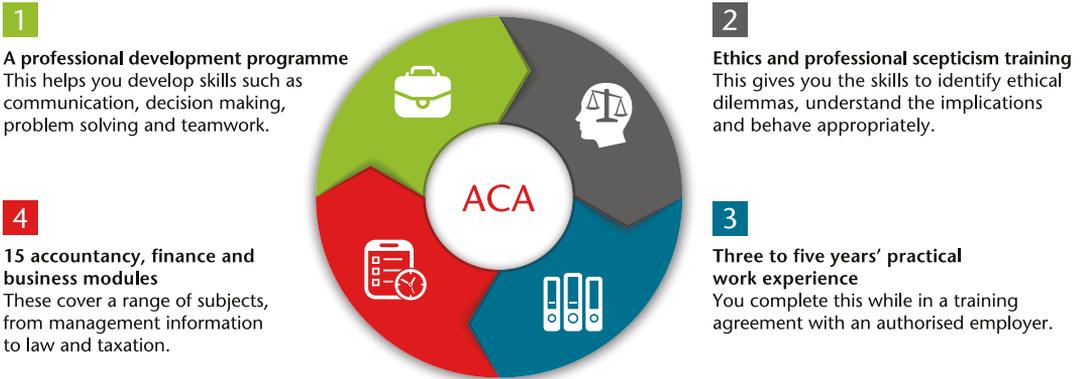
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Lure of **START-UPS** proves strong

Do you dream of becoming a start-up entrepreneur by 25? If yes, Cradle Group CEO Nazrin Hassan offers some tips and insights into the makings of a successful entrepreneur.

By Yasmin Ramlan

ONE of the biggest mistakes young start-up entrepreneurs often make is to fall in love with their own products. The second is to seek the opinion of friends and families, says Nazrin Hassan, Group Chief Executive Officer of Cradle Fund Sdn Bhd.

He has seen the pitfalls young entrepreneurs fall into when they dream of launching a start-up. Many also think that money is the biggest stumbling block when, in fact, it is the nitty gritty, like leadership, decision-making, number crunching and cyber security, which are more likely to kill a start-up before it is even launched.

“Don’t ask someone close to you – friends and family – about your products because they will all say nice things to you and morally support you,” says Nazrin.

“Go and ask strangers about your business model.” Their objective assessment will help your start-up to function better in the target market.

“Your function as an entrepreneur is to keep on looking for the thing that will work for your

business. If you fall in love with your product, then you’ll just continue doing something that is not beneficial,” Nazrin tells **GRADUAN®** when asked about the common mistakes start-ups make.

Cradle Fund Sdn Bhd is an agency under the Ministry of Finance, which manages an investment programme of RM150 million. It offers different types of grants up to RM500,000 to enterprises in the science and tech fields.

DOES YOUR START-UP QUALIFY FOR FUNDING?

The Cradle Fund selection process is arduous and applicants need to fulfil three criteria when they pitch their business ideas, says Nazrin.

“There are three aspects we look at. First, we will look at the business model of a start-up, then the value proposition. What’s the pinpoint that they’re trying to address and how are they going to make money out of it?

“Second is the complementary strength of the team members and whether they have the strength to execute a particular idea.



“And thirdly is whether they are able to raise further funding or investments or their prospects of commercialisation. So, these are usually the three aspects that we look at in the early sub-stages,” says Nazrin.

Nazrin Hassan wants to hear from entrepreneurs with hard-core tech and R&D ideas.

TALENT-SPOTTING

One of the successes at Cradle is Lee Ching Wei, who founded iMoney in 2012. Nazrin says Lee’s business was only seven weeks old when the latter turned up with his business proposal.

“He communicates well, he has solid ideas about his business... he even marketed his idea before his prototype was completed. He is also humble, open to feedback and always acknowledges that he needs a team – it is not a one-man show.

“So, these are some of the attributes that you look at when you are trying to [gauge] whether an entrepreneur is going to succeed or not. We’ve done it so many times.”

iMoney is a financial product comparison website catering to the Malaysian market. Consumers can search for deals offered by various banks on credit cards, mortgages, fixed deposit rates, insurance policies, among other financial products.

Nazrin says iMoney is a great idea and Lee is always willing to speak to other entrepreneurs whenever Cradle invites him to share his experience.

“This is the sort of guy you always want to fund because he gives back. Mind you, not everyone gives back, there are many who refuse to do that after they got funding from us.

“Gratitude is not prevalent in everyone. But the good ones usually come back and contribute to Cradle.”

These generous souls then take on the responsibility of passing on their knowledge to other would-be entrepreneurs.

Cradle also takes a forgiving view of failure. There are many entrepreneurs who are on their second and third attempts at funding.

Nazrin says it doesn’t matter if you have been rejected earlier – what Cradle is looking for is a well-prepared proposition.

To date, the agency has helped more than 700 start-ups since its inception in 2003 and out of this, the failure rate stands around 30 percent. The agency also has the highest commercialisation rate among government grants in the nation.

YOUNG MALAYSIANS KEEN TO START OWN BUSINESS

Nazrin is buoyed by the news that more and more young Malaysians are giving entrepreneurship a go. “It has almost come to the point where looking for a job is the second option.”

Working for yourself is almost a status symbol today, he says. Unlike his time, the big investment banks and accounting firms are losing their cachet among some young talent.

But he does caution young entrepreneurs who yearn to join the start-up club. For starters, he says, many simply lack the ability to become entrepreneurs. If you don't believe him, look at the numbers.

Out of 900 applicants, about 10 to 15 percent qualify. Even when the total number of applicants rises, the yield remains in that range.

Take prototype funding, for example. “We had over 600 applications in 2015 but only about 40 deals. In 2016, we had almost 1,000 applicants but about 47 deals. So, in terms of yield, it hasn't really grown. Interest wise, yes.”

So where do these budding entrepreneurs often go wrong?

1. Insufficient market validation: “They assume the market is there. They didn't do enough research.”
2. Fall out with their partners: “two or three people get together to start up a business and within six to 12 months later, they start falling out, arguing with each other and the team breaks up, which leads to failure.”
3. Overestimating market traction: “Let's say they think they are able to gain over RM1 million sales within 12 months but end up achieving RM600,000 sales. They assume the market will take up their products faster than it actually does.”



Nazrin's top tips

VALIDATE YOUR IDEAS

“You can always refer to someone who has established his business and seek his opinion on your product idea. Dare to approach and seek expertise.”

ATTEND MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

“At Cradle, we have a Coach & Grow Programme. You will go through a system of mentorship where your mentor will tell you whether your idea is going to work or not. They will advise you on what to improve and coach future entrepreneurs to pre-commercialise the product in the correct way. It is also available to those with zero experience.”

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT PITCHING YOUR IDEA; IT'S A THINKING PROCESS

“Most people get it wrong that pitching is about you telling a story. It's totally wrong. Pitching teaches you to convey a message to us (Cradle), where you have already narrowed down the real value proposition of your business. If you can't explain it in about five minutes that means you haven't refined your thinking of what is the exact value proposition that differentiates you from the rest.”

YOUR BUSINESS PLAN IS YOUR THINKING TOOL

“You don't present your business plan to please funders. It's your thinking tool and it helps you to develop your business. It's for your own benefit, not the funders. So, if you treat it like a thinking tool, then you will evolve but if you treat it like a document to please the funders, then they will blow you off.”

STAGNANT IDEAS

Having led Cradle for nearly a decade and evaluating thousands of proposals, he has this to say: There is a distinct lack of original ideas.

Most of the ideas that he comes across are almost alike. Nazrin says Cradle would love to see a hard-core technology or research and development-based ideas, which no one is working on.

Instead, local start-ups are almost always consumer- and business-driven that will likely to disrupt the current market and its built-in inefficiencies.

“The perfect examples are all these ride-sharing businesses. Uber and Grabcar have completely disrupted the taxi model because it is something that was waiting to be revamped for a long time. It doesn’t work and it didn’t work, and many consumers suffered because of its poor service.

“Today, who’d imagine that everyone could have their own drivers? In the old days, only the rich could afford a driver. But now, everybody can have a driver daily and ride in luxury cars – you just need to pay more.”

Nazrin, however, takes comfort in local entrepreneurs who are taking a creative approach in solving the inefficiencies they have encountered.

As a developing country, there are plenty of inefficiencies everywhere and all the country needs is to tap into the entrepreneurs finding solutions to the problems and who are ready to market their ideas. ☺

“

Gratitude is not prevalent
in everyone. But the
GOOD ONES
usually come back
and contribute to
CRADLE.

How to apply for funding

1. Applications for grants can be submitted through www.cradle.com.my.
2. After the initial online application, selected applicants will be called to pitch their business ideas at Cradle.
3. Pitching session is done every month and if an applicant’s idea is shortlisted, he/she will be called in for pitching.

**Applications for Cradle Investment Programme (CIP) are no longer available. Please be informed that Cradle will be announcing a new investment programme in the second quarter of 2017. We are remodelling the programme to better suit Malaysia’s thriving start-up ecosystem. For more information, please visit www.cradle.com.my/product*

Programmes at Cradle

- Angel Tax Incentive: Tax exemption programme of up to RM500,000 for angel investors for the amount invested into start-ups.
- Coach & Grow Programme: A market-driven programme designed to bring together key players in the entrepreneurial ecosystem to support and fortify tech entrepreneurs to bring their businesses to greater heights via coaching, networking and showcase events.



MaGIC
Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Centre

MaGIC recipe for start-ups

Ashran Ghazi talks about the importance of creativity and innovation, and MaGIC's role in fostering a sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystem.

By Hyma Haridas

WHAT does Malaysia lack? And there's no need for smart-aleck answers, thanks.

For Ashran Ghazi, the Chief Executive Officer of MaGIC, the answer is "more Steve Jobs". Specifically, Malaysia's start-up and entrepreneurship scene needs someone like the late co-founder of Apple "to look at a situation and figure out what the gaps are."

Why is this important? MaGIC (Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Centre) is a government-funded agency under the Ministry of Finance Malaysia, whose mission is to catalyse and develop the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country. It has a two-part mandate: To build a sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystem and capitalise on creativity and innovation for long-term impact.

To achieve these goals, MaGIC believes in fostering a spirit of creativity and innovation from the inside out.

"As a creativity and innovation centre, our core focus is creating key innovation content and building entrepreneur talent."

Ashran says, "What we are trying to do within MaGIC is to nurture people who are able to look at a situation and figure out what the gaps are. And because they have a passion in that area, they can gather the right technology, people, resources, package them and tackle the problem.

"I think in the country, we are lacking such people. We always put a lot of emphasis on the creation and invention bit, but we have never actually tuned people to look at problem-solving in this manner. That's how I see MaGIC's role within the larger entrepreneurial landscape."

As MaGIC champions creativity and innovation among entrepreneurs, Ashran and his team are trying to drive home to the public that innovation does not necessarily mean reinventing the wheel.

He also believes that innovation should not be tied to technology from the get-go, because the business then becomes more focused on the "what" than the "how" of tackling the particular problem or situation.

"You must start with the problem first and figure out the best way to solve it. And then decide what is the best kind of technology to use.

"Otherwise you become too hung up on the technology and this becomes a challenge (for the business) once investors come into the picture and question or criticise the technology used, which often happens," says Ashran, who was himself an entrepreneur involved in various ventures for more than 16 years before joining MaGIC.

“

Even at
WORK,
 we strive to
break
boundaries.
We get a kick
 out of it!



“
In trying to be **innovative**, it’s about **stretching the boundaries** constantly.”

This slight tweak in mindset, Ashran believes, could make a significant impact on the quality of entrepreneurs and how they go about building their business.

EMPOWERING YOUNG MAGIC-ANS

In an organisation focused on creating and building entrepreneurs through creativity and innovation, the employees at MaGIC themselves need to embody these basic qualities.

“We tend to look for people who are open, agile and able to connect the dots. They should be comfortable with ‘chaos’. You need to be comfortable with storms around you to be able to deal with them,” he says.

As employers, MaGIC also tries to embody the “spirit of a start-up” within the organisation, while operating within the frameworks of a government agency.

“As much as we are a government agency, but from a spirit point of view, we want everyone to feel as if they are working in a start-up.

“As an organisation, one of the biggest values we offer to our staff is the level of exposure and networking opportunities. Even at work, we strive to break boundaries. We get a kick out of it! And to some extent, it is an embodiment of what we represent. If we don’t break boundaries ourselves, how do we encourage others to do so?”

Not surprisingly about 35 percent of “MaGIC-ians” are aged between 25 and 30, translating into the culture and spirit that the organisation seeks to foster internally and externally.

They are mostly people who want to directly or indirectly impact on the entrepreneurship ecosystem, or those who aspire to become entrepreneurs themselves later on.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

One of the benefits of working in a young organisation like MaGIC is its flexibility. Understanding that their nature of work requires their people to be always on-the-go, Ashran believes in allowing his staff the freedom to take “time out” or “downtime” when the need arises to recuperate.

This privilege comes with a certain measure of trust and mutual understanding between the staff, team head and team members.

“We try to strike a balance in our HR policies, so that everything is not cast in stone. Because then there is no room for agility and flexibility, which is important for our organisation’s culture. But, of course, for this culture to work, there must be trust between the two parties.”

It is also not uncommon to find empty spaces in the office, as many of the staff prefer to work from the various other common spaces around the building, including the cafe and discussion rooms.

“It’s one of the unique things about MaGIC. We try to strike the right balance in everything we do. If we are too rigid ourselves, we will not be able to react and interact in the manner that we should.

“In trying to be innovative, it’s about stretching the boundaries constantly. It can be uncomfortable, but it’s the only way for us to progress,” Ashran concludes. ©



Be daring if you want to be an entrepreneur

In building a sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystem, MaGIC strives to ensure that the entrepreneurship community and its players move fluidly as the ecosystem matures.

MaGIC curates various private sector players under a single platform to channel entrepreneurs to the right programmes and services available in the market.

“We become almost a ‘lead generator’ to private sector players. The more lead generation that is done, the more business opportunities they get and the whole sector moves along. This is how we ensure that the ecosystem continues to thrive,” says Ashran Ghazi, CEO of MaGIC.

Ashran advises aspiring entrepreneurs to dabble in entrepreneurship as early as possible.

“We want to encourage more individuals to explore entrepreneurship while studying. Explore ideas and problems that you want to solve. The route to becoming a successful entrepreneur is never easy, so if you have accelerated your learning while still in school or college, when you are relatively in a ‘safe haven’, then you are setting yourself up for a better starting ground when you graduate.

“The experience would have also tuned your mind in a certain way, that even if you failed [at the venture] and decide to do something else later, the clarity of thought you have would supersede someone else [without that experience],” he adds.

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“**G**OOGLEYNESSESS” is not a word you’d encounter during job interviews, but it is a key value if you want to work in Waze – that super-popular app on the phones of almost every driver in Malaysia.

Yes, Waze wants to hire more people, including interns, as part of its expansion plans in Asia, says its Sales Manager, Edward Ling, who is based in Kuala Lumpur.

But before fresh graduates pad up their resumes and send it off to Waze, they have to realise that getting into Waze is just as hard as landing a job at Google, the global tech firm which is the second most valued company, according to Fortune 500.

This is because Google owns Waze, which it bought in 2013, but the latter runs autonomously from the parent company.

Hence the need to possess “Googleyness”, which is one of four requirements at Google.

It’s a quality – along with its strict multi-level hiring process – that has made Google, the companies it owns and its parent firm, Alphabet, one of the most

No two **WAZE** about it

As one of the top apps in the world, landing a job at Waze would be awesome. But awesome jobs are also the most difficult to get.

By Sheridan Mahavera

respected organisations in the world, Ling tells **GRADUAN**[®] at Google Malaysia's office in Kuala Lumpur.

"It has been said that it's easier to apply and be accepted into Harvard University than Google," says Ling of the parent company's recruitment practices.

Ling exemplifies Googleyness and the concept encapsulates the values that Google and Waze demand from their employees. It is above and beyond how smart they are, how good they may be at programming or sales, and even their leadership capabilities.

"It is being comfortable with ambiguity, working through an unknown territory," says Ling, adding that a popular catchphrase among Waze and Google employees is to "do what has never been done before".

DO NO EVIL

Ling's own experience in Waze is a testament to this fact. He was hired to keep Waze a free app by selling ads in Malaysia, which is also one of the highest Waze users per capita in the world.

"I am the guinea pig, as they did not know if Waze could sell ads in Asia," says Ling, who is Waze's first employee in the Asian region.

"So, I asked Waze how am I supposed to do this? They said, 'We don't know, you figure it out. That's what we hired you to do'."

Another critical value is integrity, which goes beyond being honest in your job, says Ling. It's about not using the job and the power that comes with it to do evil.

For instance, as the guy in charge of ad sales for Waze, Ling could have simply gone out and instigated ad wars between his clients, sit back and make a tonne of money.

"But that's not allowed. You can't do that at Waze or Google. Google, in fact, prioritises organising information over profits."

In the corporate world, where profit is sacred, Google's unofficial policy is to do no evil and that means it won't recruit people who are likely to achieve results through nefarious means.

"We only hire nice, helpful people." Googleyness is what defines Waze and Google but it's not the only important trait. The firm looks out for general cognitive ability or general cleverness, leadership and role-related knowledge.

General cognitive ability and role-related knowledge may seem like intelligence but for Google, one is prioritised over the other.

"Google likes to hire curious, quick-learning generalists who can master whatever challenges thrown at them. General smarts are at the top of the list and specific skills are at the bottom," says Ling.

BEST PERSON FOR THE JOB

When it comes to leadership, Google does not measure it in terms of titles, such as chief executive officer or technician.



Edward Ling is Waze's first employee in the Asian region and calls himself its guinea pig.

“

Do what has
NEVER
been done
BEFORE.

It's about the ability to step in and help solve the problem even if it means relinquishing power so that someone else can solve it. It's what Google calls "emergent leadership" and it involves choosing the best people for a certain task, no matter what their status is in the firm.

"You look at our office and there are no specific rooms for the managing director or higher ups. Everyone sits on the same floor. There is no obsession with hierarchy here."

This also fits with how the firm encourages its employees to move around and pick up different skills in other departments, instead of staying rooted and specialised in one skill or field, he says.

"Even engineers and programmers are encouraged to move around to learn new skills. It's about keeping up to date and history has shown that companies that don't do this, don't innovate... [they] disappear."

Lastly is role-related knowledge, meaning doing what you are hired to do, which is the easiest to evaluate.

To show that Google is serious about assessing whether a candidate possesses all of the four above attributes, he or she is put through at least four separate interviews focusing on each trait.

“

Google likes to hire
**curious,
quick-learning
generalists**
who can
MASTER
whatever
challenges
thrown at them.

Candidates are only hired if they are approved by a committee of people based on the results of the interviews.

"There are no Gods or supermen in Waze and Google who can just say we want this guy or that girl'. It all goes through this meticulous process.

"It's a hard process to go through but Google has learned that it cannot bypass it because this is what makes it such a valuable company." ©





Malaysians crazy about Waze

Back in the “old days” when there were no internet, smartphones or the Waze app, drivers had their own ways of alerting each other about a police roadblock.

“We used to high beam other drivers on the opposite lane as a way of signalling to them that there was a roadblock ahead,” recounts Edward Ling, Waze’s Sales Manager in Malaysia.

The high beam is the kind of behaviour among Malaysians that has made us one of the top five Waze users per capita in the world.

Ling is not allowed to divulge Malaysia’s rank among the top five, but he reveals that the other top five countries are the United States, Mexico, France and Brazil.

Incidentally, Ling is the first person Waze, which is now 100 percent owned by Google, hired in Asia.

“It’s almost like Waze was forced to hire someone in Malaysia because the data showed that there was a high concentration of users here,” he says with a laugh.

Malaysia shares several similarities with the other four countries, which makes it ideal for Waze. The latest figures show that there are two million monthly active Waze users in the Klang Valley alone. There are 11 million drivers in the country.

It is one of the highest percentages in the world and there are Waze users in almost all major urban centres from Kota Baru to Penang, the Klang Valley and all the way to Kota Kinabalu, Kuching and Miri.

The Waze love affair can be attributed to a combination of the national car culture, road networks and how Malaysians just like to use technology in their daily lives and that they like to share.

“People often talk about leveraging big data but Malaysians actually use big data in their daily lives. We are also quite tech-savvy.”

The first thing most graduates who land a job also think of buying is a car.

“The thing about Malaysian roads is that there are a lot of alternate routes to get to one place. So Waze works well when it comes to beating traffic.”

Finally and more importantly, Malaysians are sociable and love to share what they find, such as roadblocks, construction and traffic jams. This fits with the app’s nature as a social “GPS” (global positioning system), he says, since it relies on user-fed data.

“Even during off-peak hours, you still get Waze users sharing traffic information.”

Dreaming **BIG** pays off

Home-grown brand Mimpikita started as a fashion blogshop in 2008. Today, it has a shop in Bangsar and stockists in London and Singapore. Co-founders and sisters Nurul, Mira and Syera Zulkifli share their journey from budding designers to boutique owners.

By Mel Sim

WALK into Mimpikita's boutique in Jalan Telawi 2, Bangsar, and you are greeted by a minimalist yet ultra-chic interior.

The brand's latest collections hang along rails by the walls, in seasonal hues that are a mix of bright colours as well as your basics.

Nurul, Mira and Syera Zulkifli are here to greet the **GRADUAN**[®] team, each dressed in her favourite Mimpikita pieces and showcasing a ladylike and sophisticated style. That is the first impression you get from the siblings, which has translated into the brand DNA for this home-grown fashion label.

"Mimpikita is a brand that speaks from the heart," says Nurul, 33, the oldest of the trio. "We are all very passionate about it. It is a passion that feeds our soul."

This passion began for the sisters in 2008 when they decided to start an online blogshop to sell clothing and home decor items.

Nurul says, "We had no fashion background at all." (Nurul received her Master's in Electrical Engineering and graduated from Queensland



University of Science and Technology; Mira with an international business degree; and Syera, international economics.)

"But we all really liked fashion and pretty things. So, we started an online website on BlogSpot and also participated in weekend bazaars to create an awareness for our brand, Mimpikita."

At these bazaars, the sisters worked hard to get customer feedback on their brand and saw it as getting the money rolling to eventually start their own clothing brand. "The feedback was great for us



(From left) Syera, Nurul and Mira Zulkifli started out at weekend bazaars but are now retailing in Bangsar.

to decide on our focus so we can build a brand based on this.”

From there, they decided to try their hand at designing, which Nurul says was quite a feat, seeing how they didn’t know where to start.

STARTING FROM SCRATCH

“It was a challenge trying to do this, as we didn’t have any experience at all. We had to find out where to get our clothes manufactured, where to get the right fabric or which tailors to work with. Of course, factories wouldn’t be viable, as you needed

a minimum quantity, which to us, is a huge amount for a small brand. Our parents helped out with the process, getting us in touch with home-based tailors who worked on our designs.”

Having a brick-and-mortar was a dream for the sisters. “We always saw Bangsar as the place to be,” says Syera.

“We would come here and be inspired by the boutiques, hoping that one day we would be at the same place. We had this vision of growing big, and into an international fashion brand.”

“

One of the **perks**
of being your **own boss**
and owning your **brand**
is being able to see something you
love so much grow.



However, their parents were conservative about the business and advised the sisters to start small. “Instead of starting shop in Bangsar, Mimpikita’s first boutique in 2009 was the front quarter of my father’s architectural firm in Sunway Damansara,” says Nurul.

Still adamant that Mimpikita deserved to be in a prime area like Bangsar, the sisters had to prove to their parents that they were serious about the business.

“We had to convince our parents that this business is profitable. So, when we finally managed to convince my dad to move to Bangsar, his only requirement was that he would move his office as well into the location we wanted!” says Nurul.

THE BANGSAR MOVE

Two years after starting the business, Mimpikita finally landed in a double-storey house in Bangsar. The boutique was on the ground floor while the architectural firm was upstairs.

Then, Mimpikita was mainly a bridal/formal wear boutique but the sisters worked hard to create their own designs. “I learnt how to sketch, how to design,” says Nurul.

“I learnt from my mum, who is actually a seamstress. It was funny though because she would discourage us from doing this, telling us that it would be hard job, especially when dealing with customers.”

Nurul says handling customers is where they learned the most about the business. “I would say this is one

of the challenges we have, understanding customers and giving them what they want. It took us years to learn this as well as pattern-cutting and sewing. But all this prepared us for bigger things at Mimpikita.

“A year after relocating to the double-storey house in Bangsar, we needed our own place – which is why we are now in Jalan Telawi, amid the boutiques we admired before. In fact, we are still here while some of those boutiques are gone,” says Nurul.

The move spurred the siblings to think seriously about Mimpikita as a brand. “We didn’t want to be just a bridal brand like many out there. We wanted Mimpikita to be a proper fashion brand with ready-to-wear seasonal collection,” says Syera.

And so began the journey of Mimpikita where the sisters worked together in conceptualising the seasonal and festive collections: From research to creating a mood board, sketching and narrowing down the collection, and then getting the samples down before finalising the collection for production. After that comes showcasing the collection, photo shoots and finally, hitting the store for sale.

To date, 18 employees work with the sisters, many of whom have been with them for several years.

Nurul says, “One of the perks of being your own boss and owning your brand is being able to see something you love so much grow. It is different when it is your own business. You appreciate it so much more and you are so passionate about it.

“It is not just about making money but instead it becomes a responsibility in seeing your brand through and sustaining it so that your employees

are able to have a good lifestyle because of the hard work put in.”

The other perk, she says, is: “We all get to wear pretty clothes every day!”

LONDON INSPIRATION

Mimpikita also showcased in London Fashion Week in 2015, which was a great learning experience. “We learnt so much from our showcase in London,” says Nurul.

“It felt good to see the people at the showcase and how they appreciated our designs. It made the process even more real and gave us inspiration to do better.”

The sisters also recently revealed a sub-brand, MKita, a lower-priced line of basic and relaxed pieces designed to complement their dressier Mimpikita offerings.

Mkita also comes with a philanthropic vision: A portion of the sales goes to a charity of choice.

Reflecting on their journey, Nurul is grateful for the experience the sisters have gathered and the lessons they’ve picked up on.

“Our brand speaks from the heart. In a way, it is an extension of us. Year after year, we work hard to sustain it, to have it grow into our vision. Doing this is not a walk in the park. We keep telling ourselves that this is a learning process, day after day. I hope everyone can see the intentions we’ve put into Mimpikita and understand where we are coming from. This is something we are all very passionate about and I hope it shows through our work.” 





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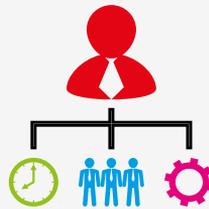


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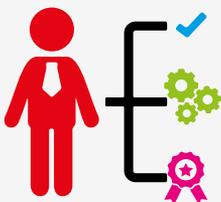


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A top-down view of Starbucks VIA Ready Brew products on a light-colored wooden surface. In the top left, a brown paper napkin holds a black Starbucks VIA Ready Brew stick labeled 'ITALIAN ROAST'. To its right is a white cup filled with black coffee. In the middle left, a yellow Starbucks VIA Ready Brew stick labeled 'CARAMEL LATTE' is partially visible. Below it is a green Starbucks VIA Ready Brew stick labeled 'VANILLA LATTE'. In the bottom left, a clear glass cup contains a light-colored coffee drink. In the bottom right, a clear glass cup contains iced coffee with ice cubes and a green straw. Two blue Starbucks VIA Ready Brew sticks labeled 'ICED COFFEE' are positioned at the bottom center.

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There's never been an instant like this. With the great aroma, body and flavor customers have come to expect from Starbucks for more than 40 years, Starbucks VIA® Ready Brew offers delicious Starbucks-quality coffee instantly. Made with 100 percent Arabica beans, Starbucks VIA® Ready Brew offers a full-bodied, flavorful cup of black and iced coffee as well as lattes.

Starbucks VIA® Latte

Starbucks VIA® Lattes deliver the high-quality taste Starbucks is known for, all in a convenient single-cup stick:

- **Starbucks VIA® Caffé Mocha:**
Inspired by the irresistible flavors of the handcrafted version, Starbucks VIA® Caffé Mocha is the perfect union of cocoa, Starbucks® coffee and natural dairy.
- **Starbucks VIA® Vanilla Latte:**
The much-loved Starbucks Vanilla Latte inspired the creation of this everyday companion, featuring rich Starbucks® coffee, natural dairy and vanilla flavor.
- **Starbucks VIA® Caramel Latte:**
The Caramel Latte combines rich Starbucks® coffee with velvety milk and luscious caramel flavor.

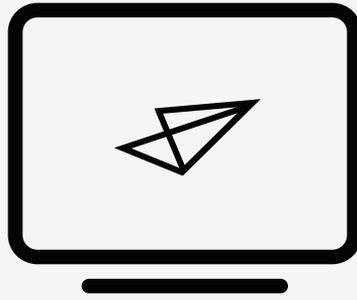
Starbucks VIA® Ready Brew

At last there's an instant coffee you can enjoy at home that's as good as freshly brewed Starbucks® coffee. Made with the finest Arabica beans, there's something for everyone, whether it's the smooth and balanced taste of Starbucks VIA® Colombia, or the bold and robust pop of Starbucks VIA® Italian Roast.

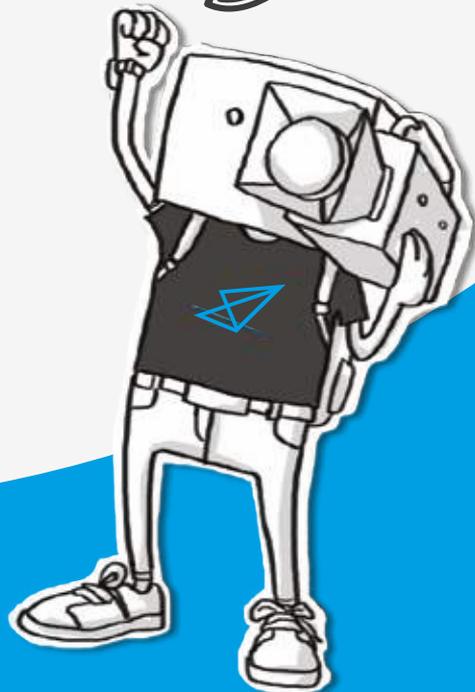
Starbucks VIA® Iced Coffee

When the weather warms up, all it takes is a few seconds to tear open a packet and brew up 16 fl. oz. of Starbucks VIA® Iced Coffee. Lightly sweetened with cane sugar and specially designed for mixing with cold water, this coffee just needs ice to hit the spot.

Starbucks VIA® Ready Brew is now available at all Starbucks stores in Malaysia.



GRADUANtv





A CAREER AT DELL

Bandhana Rai, Asia Pacific & Japan Talent Acquisition Director shares with GRADUAN her journey at Dell and what it is like working there.

WHEN DID YOU JOIN DELL AND WHAT ROLES HAVE YOU HELD IN YOUR TIME HERE?

I joined Dell in 2008 as a Human Resources Generalist (HRG) supporting the then consumer, small and medium business sales organisation for South Asia and Taiwan. After more than two years supporting the sales organisation, I moved on to support multiple other business functions including Malaysia Services and Global Operations businesses.

In 2011, when an opportunity arose to take on the Talent Acquisition (TA) Malaysia leader role, and after having had a career discussion with my manager, I decided to pursue this opportunity as it allowed me to develop myself further as a people manager as well as deliver tangible results while still making a direct impact on the business. Although it was a lateral move, it allowed me to learn and grow into a more all-rounded HR person at Dell. Since taking on the role, I have grown to include several other countries into my portfolio, culminating in my current role as Talent Acquisition Director for APJ.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE DELL CULTURE?

Our culture embraces change, is trust-based and where diverse opinions are respected and embraced. Dell empowers each team member to act in the best interest of our customers, our community and our company and the overall belief of “winning together as a team” stands out at Dell.

HOW DOES DELL DIFFERENTIATE ITSELF WHEN IT COMES TO BEING AN EMPLOYER OF CHOICE?

Being at the forefront of bringing talent into the organisation, I am constantly unsurprised by the number of people who choose to come back and work at Dell. The ability to craft your own career path, our direct communication style, the flexibility to be able to deliver on both the professional and personal fronts, and the high level of collaboration within the teams are some of the things I constantly hear at Dell and that in turn makes us an employer of choice for many.

DESCRIBE YOUR DELL EXPERIENCE USING 5 WORDS.

Empowering, enriching, constantly evolving and ever-challenging with never a dull moment!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO STUDENTS OR ANYONE FOR THAT MATTER WHO'S INTERESTED IN WORKING IN DELL?

We work in an industry where rapid change is a way of life. The ability to be resilient and open to new experiences, while constantly developing and challenging yourself would be required skills to be successful at Dell.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG GRADUATES ABOUT MAKING IT IN LIFE?

Armed with an Accounting degree, I started my career as an auditor in a large audit firm, moving to banking before discovering my passion in people – and what I learned through this journey was never say “no” to new opportunities; at every stage of life, give it your best shot; continue to always grow and learn and STRETCH yourself and finally, discover your passion and you will succeed in whatever you set out to do!

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