

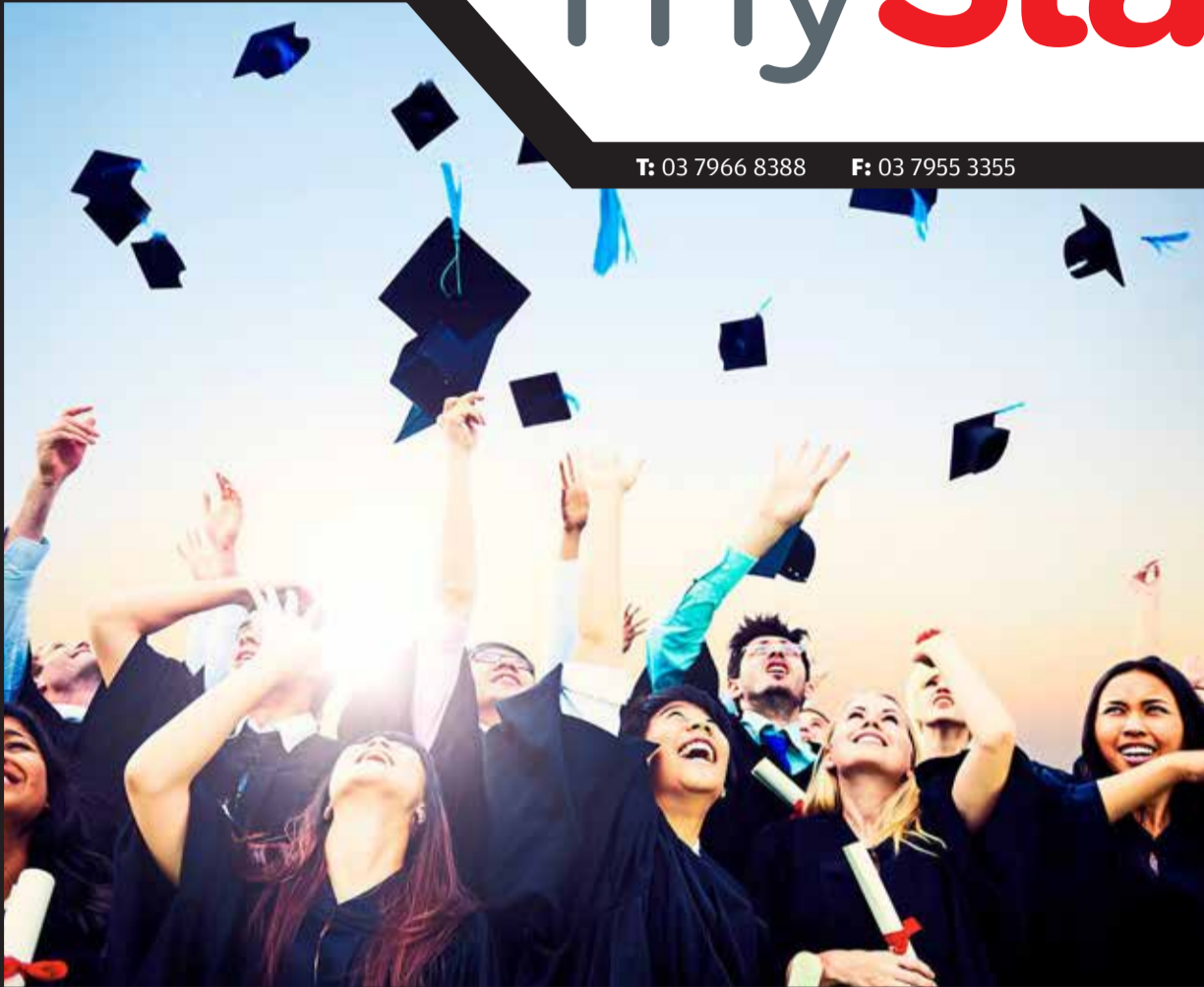
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TOWARDS REALITY 2020

ROAD TO ACHIEVING THE ASPIRATIONS OF A NATION
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READY WILLING AND ABLE

From classroom to boardroom

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'I'LL BE BACK' AND OTHER PROMISES

Paving the way for career comebacks

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MALAYSIANS ABROAD ONBOARD

Read about those who have come home

KAREN SAYS

OF LEADERS AND FLUX CAPACITORS

IF you haven't had a chance to play the Leaderonomics game *Thinkonomics*, do reach out to any Leaderonomer for a quick introduction to a happy little box, chockfull of questions that give you pause; questions which may reveal things about yourself you never knew.

This week's issue is brought to you by the question "Time travel – if I could go back in time, what would I change?"

Based on a recent study, we take a look at leaders of a century ago, and how they have evolved over time to leaders operating in today's environment – in order to better predict the traits that leaders must be equipped with in the future. Gazing into the future, we can begin to make an informed decision on our personal development strategy.

At the national level, TalentCorp has taken steps to analyse and assess where we, as a nation, have come from with regards our talent pool and how we can prepare to achieve our vision of the future. Based on their findings, we have great insights into what we need to do as leaders to develop our people and indeed ourselves.

To achieve Vision 2020, TalentCorp has developed a strategy to meet Malaysia's talent needs; to provide the support necessary for individuals and organisations to work together *berganding bahu* to reach our national aspirations.

Indeed, TalentCorp has collaborated with industry partners and government agencies to meet our talent challenges head-on. In this week's issue, we see just the tip of the iceberg of the plethora of programmes and initiatives that have been developed and fine-tuned with various public and private partners locally and abroad.

Still an economist at heart, seeing the implementation and impact of effective measures that increase the productivity and efficiency of individuals, organisations and our economy at large keep me energised.

With all this time travel, Tara Thiagarajan also reminds us to focus on the here and now in her article just to the right of this one!

We would be remiss if we didn't share an instalment of *Movie Wisdom* – this week by Dinesh Ramachandran. From the *Life of Pi*, we learn about having a strategy, about being nimble (quite literally!) when circumstances change, about having courage and perseverance, and also about having hope.

All these valuable lessons (and more) can be applied to us in our daily lives, and in our pursuit of Vision 2020 and being an advanced nation.

Have a fabulous week!

KAREN NEOH
Editor
leaderonomics.com

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BEING PRISONERS OF THE PRESENT

By **TARA THIAGARAJAN**
editor@leaderonomics.com

MANY tales have been told of time – mainly about what happened to humans when the past is tampered with, or when time is wasted.

Our pasts are sure to be filled with many "what if" moments – filled with wrongs we wish we could make right, while our futures may be filled with uncertainties.

However, many of us do not realise how much power we have to change the course of our lives by utilising the present.

According to renowned astrophysicist, Dr Neil deGrasse Tyson, if we were to live in the fourth dimension, we would be able to control our past, present, and future, just as how we can control our three-dimensional world, by being able to physically move around to whichever location we choose.

Since we clearly have a long way to go before our species transcends into the fourth dimension, we are, as Tyson puts it, "prisoners of the present".

So, we might as well make the best of what we have and focus on what we can do at this very moment to change things. But how does one go about doing this?

1 TAKE THINGS SLOW

For starters, we should be more mindful of what we're doing at this very moment and how it is getting us to where we want to be in the future.

We can accomplish this by taking things a little slower when we are working on something crucial to our development.

By starting ahead of time and doing things slowly, we can be more aware of our mistakes and therefore, have more time to right our wrongs and learn valuable lessons that are sure to benefit us in the future.

2 GIVE THANKS

We seem to forget to show our loved ones how important they are to us. Showing how grateful we are to them strengthens our bond with them and even makes us happier, according to research.

The more we show our appreciation, the more happiness we accumulate over time, therefore making us happier in the future.

3 LET YOUR HAIR DOWN

We often overlook the importance of fun and taking breaks.

Instead of constantly working, we also need time off, spend that time with the important people in our lives, and savour those moments.

Life is nothing without fun, so it is crucial we spend the time we have to balance work and career development with activities that help make life worth living.

We wouldn't want to look back on our time on this earth and regret that we took everything so seriously.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Every moment that passes idly by will never come back again. So it is important that we take full advantage of the time we have.

Let us all get out there and seize the present!

QUOTES

The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.

- 01 | "Lost time is never found again." – Benjamin Franklin
- 02 | "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin." – Mother Teresa
- 03 | "In all our deeds, the proper value and respect for time determines success or failure." – Malcolm X
- 04 | "Time has been transformed, and we have changed; it has advanced and set us in motion; it had unveiled its face, inspiring us with bewilderment and exhilaration." – Khalil Gibran



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MEETING MALAYSIA'S TALENT NEEDS

NEXT month will be the third anniversary since the Talent Roadmap 2020 was launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Malaysia has focused on continuously developing talent and enhancing the availability of talent to meet the needs of the economy. The *IMD World Talent Report 2014* ranked Malaysia among the Top 5

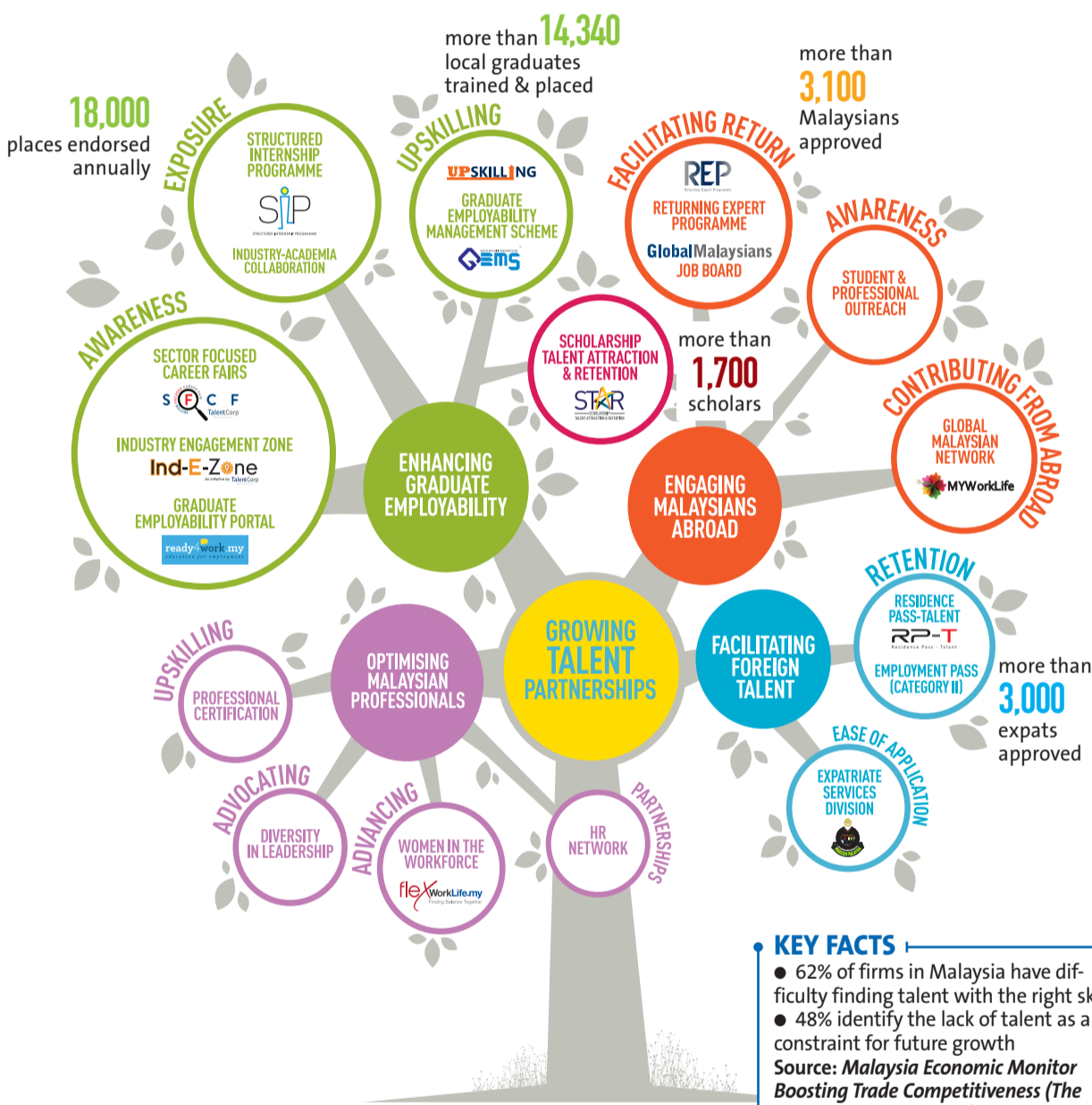
countries worldwide for its positive talent environment.

However, more needs to be done to enable Malaysia to emerge a high income economy by the end of this decade. The Talent Roadmap articulates the game plan to address this urgent and immediate need for top talent to drive our country's economic transformation.

It encompasses strategies and

initiatives that require cohesive efforts by both public and private sectors to ensure our talent pool meets the needs of key industries that form the backbone of Malaysia's economy.

Driving the change, by collaborating with leading employers and key government agencies in engaging the talent needed by the country, is Talent Corp Malaysia Bhd (TalentCorp).



WORKING WITH YOU TO MEET MALAYSIA'S TALENT NEEDS

Since its formation in January 2011 as an agency under the Prime Minister's Department, TalentCorp has partnered close to 3,000 Malaysian employers in key sectors to address the talent gaps faced by these industries.

Based on TalentCorp's engagement with these companies, they found that leading employers continue to have high demand for top talent, in addition to needing a highly-skilled workforce both at the entry and experienced levels.

Beyond the highly-skilled expertise required for the transformation of Malaysia's priority sectors up the value chain, top talent is also required to support organisational transformation, as an increasing number of Malaysian companies are emerging regional champions and multinationals are

establishing regional operations here.

This creates a demand for new skillsets to support companies embarking on higher value-added activities and international growth.

To close the skill gaps and take the Malaysian economy to the next level, TalentCorp has focused on an integrated approach to nurture, attract and retain top talent and a highly-skilled workforce.

These interventions focus primarily on **Malaysians in Malaysia**, who form the primary source of talent, supplemented by measures to target **Malaysian professionals abroad** and facilitate **top foreign talent** needed by the priority sectors.

Measures principally involve refinements of government policy and

catalyst collaborations with employers and relevant agencies to address critical skill gaps.

TalentCorp, together with its partners in the public and private sectors, engages with a broad cross-section of Malaysia's talent pool.

From undergraduates in local universities to returning Malaysian professionals, from global expatriates to encouraging Malaysian women on a career break to return to the workforce, TalentCorp is continuously striving to fully engage and optimise all available sources of Malaysian talent.

In an era of intense global competition, the strength of Malaysia's talent pool will be the crucial factor in determining whether the goals of Vision 2020 are successfully achieved.

TALENTCORP HAS PARTNERED CLOSE TO 3,000 MALAYSIAN EMPLOYERS IN KEY SECTORS

AMONG THE LEADING EMPLOYERS PARTNERING TALENTCORP IN MEETING MALAYSIA'S TALENT NEEDS

FINANCIAL SERVICES



ELECTRICAL & ELECTRONICS



OIL, GAS & ENERGY



BUSINESS SERVICES



COMMUNICATIONS, CONTENT & INFRASTRUCTURE



ENHANCING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

Working with employers and universities for greater career awareness, industry exposure and upskilling of Malaysia's future talent.

E DUCATION and human capital development have consistently formed the largest portion of the Government's annual allocation accounting for 21%, or RM54.6bil of Budget 2015.

In line with this, the largest portion of TalentCorp's resource and allocation is for developing local Malaysian talent, with a focus on enhancing graduate employability.

To ensure Malaysia has the graduates and skills needed to meet its goal of becoming a high-income, knowledge-based economy by 2020, TalentCorp is taking significant steps to produce "industry ready" graduates through a three-pronged approach involving greater **career awareness**, **industry exposure**, and **enhancing skills** for employability.

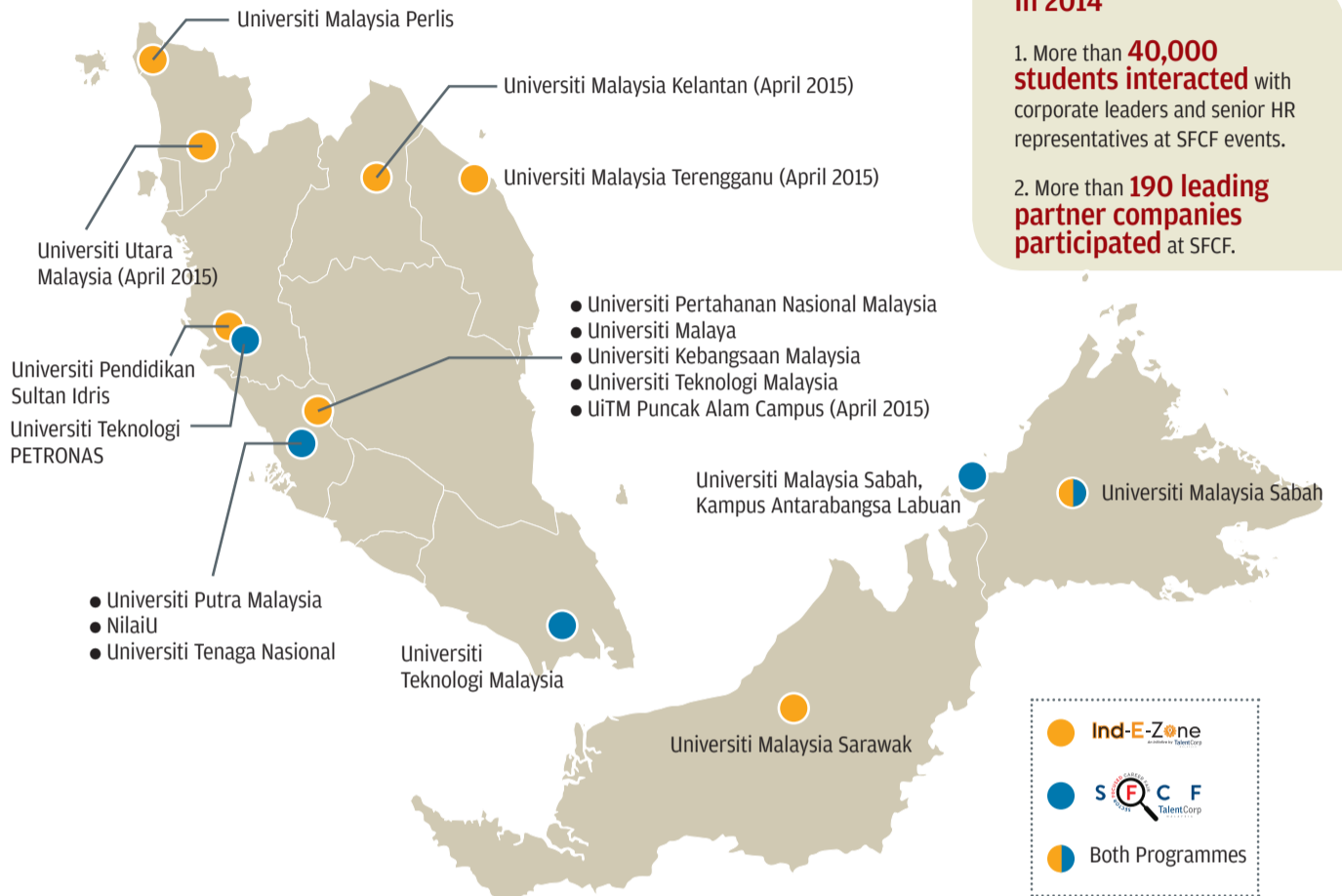
AWARENESS

SECTOR FOCUSED CAREER FAIR (SFCF)

In 2014, TalentCorp organised the industry-led SFCF in 10 universities throughout the country. The fairs focused on raising awareness of career and internship opportunities in key economic sectors including Engineering, Banking, Accounting, Finance, Consulting, Shared Services and FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods).

KEY FACT

"Eighty per cent of employers polled by the World Bank highlighted the need for university curricula to be more applicable to industry needs, particularly in providing students with more practical training and industry exposure."



In 2014

1. More than **40,000 students interacted** with corporate leaders and senior HR representatives at SFCF events.

2. More than **190 leading partner companies participated** at SFCF.

HOW I FOUND MY DREAM JOB AT SFCF



"Every effort I put in at work will be a direct contribution to Malaysia."

Mohd Hanif Mohd Taib
Project Delivery, PETRONAS ICT
Graduated in Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical)

"The companies listed at the SFCF were big players in their industries and I wanted to find out more about the opportunities out there.

"The thing that attracted me was the welcoming, encouraging and inspiring attitudes of the PETRONAS ICT representatives at the SFCF.

"With the high standards required to join PETRONAS ICT, I was confident that I would be challenged and also pushed to the limits of my own ability."



"They (PETRONAS ICT) taught me a very important value: teamwork."

Mashita Shaharuddin, Corporate Business' CIO Office, PETRONAS ICT
Graduated in Political Science and Sociology of Law, Criminology and Deviance

"Through SFCF, I learnt that YGP provides a very structured programme to successful candidates who undergo an 18-month training programme before finally being assigned to a department.

"I am currently undergoing training in the Corporate Business' CIO Office. Even though I have no background in ICT, my teammates are actively helping me understand the nature of our business."

ADDRESSING THE SKILLS GAP

Malaysia's economic transformation towards a knowledge-based economy has driven the demand for a wider range of new skills and competencies.

According to the *World Bank's Malaysia Economic Monitor (June 2014)*, 200 leading employers surveyed found that there is a skills mismatch between recent graduates and employers' requirements, arising from the education system not evolving in tandem with industry needs.

The mismatch is further exacerbated by a lack of communication and collaboration between universities and employers. Fifty-three per cent of companies surveyed do not work with universities career services centres and less than 10% contributed towards curriculum development at universities.

THE INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT ZONE (IND-E-ZONE)

A dedicated area within university campuses to encourage universities and students to directly interface with key industries.

Industry relevant content and engagement to help students get ready for the working world

Active industry input for employment and internship opportunities

Platform to create awareness on key industries in Malaysia and their job opportunities

Venue for industry-related activities and engagement sessions – career talks, CV review clinics, interview tips, etc.



"It is critical that our education system produces industry ready graduates. Ind-E-Zone will be established in 11 public universities by 2015 and will provide industry-relevant content and engagement to help students get ready for the working world," said **Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, Minister of Education II at the launch.**

Unveiled in November 2014, Ind-E-Zone will allow employers to have consistent and constant presence at universities, and actively participate in students' development before they graduate.



PARTNER PROFILE

PETRONAS ICT's Young Graduate Programme (YGP) is a featured programme offering at TalentCorp's SFCF events. YGP is a holistic, 18-month development programme with project or division-specific assignments that provides a strong foundation for young professionals.

"Finding the right talent is paramount to PETRONAS ICT." – **Redza Goh, CEO, PETRONAS ICT Sdn Bhd**

EXPOSURE

STRUCTURED INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME (SIP)

A collaboration between the Ministry of Education (MOE) and TalentCorp, SIP provides incentives and support to companies providing young graduates with a good industry exposure through structured internship experiences.

In 2014, more than 12,000 undergraduates did internships under SIP, with more than 1,000 doing internships in the Accounting sector.



“Structured internship programmes have the power to prepare students for successful and fulfilling careers.” – **Datuk Narendra Kumar Jasani, country managing partner, Grant Thornton Malaysia**



PARTNER PROFILE



The MDEC-International Association of Outsourcing Professionals (IAOP) internship project in 2014 provided certification training as part of internship and placement to employers upon completion.

Upon completion of training, students will receive certification as an IAOP Certified Outsourcing Specialist, an internationally recognised certification for outsourcing professionals.

- Two hundred participants received IAOP certification in 2014. Three hundred more will be trained in 2015.
- Participating companies are Fujitsu Component (M), Petronas ICT, Schlumberger Business Support Hub, AirAsia Global Shared Services.
- Participating universities: Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak.

STRUCTURED INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME (SIP)

BENEFITS FOR COMPANIES

- ▶ **Enhance visibility** of internship programme to undergraduates
- ▶ **Access to** a wider base of qualified **talent pool**
- ▶ **Forge closer relationship** with universities
- ▶ **Double tax deduction incentive** for monthly allowance and other relevant costs



PARTICIPATING COMPANIES ARE ELIGIBLE FOR DOUBLE DEDUCTION TAX INCENTIVE FOR TRAINING INTERNS WHO MEET THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA:

- ▶ **Malaysian citizen**
- ▶ Pursuing a **bachelor degree programme, diploma and equivalent vocational certification** on a fulltime basis in local institutions of higher learning
- ▶ Completes the **approved internship programme** before completion of the **final semester of the student's diploma/degree** (and equivalent) programme



MY ASEAN INTERNSHIP

To become a global economy, we need Malaysians with an international perspective. MY ASEAN Internship gets young Malaysians to intern overseas with our regional champions.

“With Malaysian talent on the move, this initiative will be a major benefit to Malaysian employers as they seek to build ASEAN-wide companies.” – **Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed, Minister of International Trade and Industry**



Mustapa speaking to students at the launch of MY ASEAN Internship in January 2014.

GAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

TalentCorp supports competitions by employers to provide young talent exposure to industry in a fun and challenging way.

INNOVATE MALAYSIA

The Innovate Malaysia Design Competition is a multi-discipline engineering design competition open to all final year undergraduate engineering or computer science students in Malaysia.

While aimed at promoting the culture to innovate among graduates, the competition also seeks to promote greater interest in engineering design. In 2014, more than 350 students across Malaysia participated in the event.



CIMB TALENT TRAIL

Organised jointly by TalentCorp and CIMB Group, where more than 240 students across Malaysia are involved in the Talent Trail games in English, with emphasis on employability skills such as clear communication, teamwork, self-confidence and preparedness in facing challenges.

UPSKILLING

TalentCorp's Graduate Employability Management Scheme (GEMS) and Upskilling programmes enhance graduates' employability by giving them industry-relevant skills and experience.

Since 2011 > 14,340 graduates have been upskilled

Year 2014 3,500

Since 2011, almost more than 14,340 local graduates have been upskilled through TalentCorp's GEMS and upskilling programmes.

In 2014, more than 3,500 graduates were trained and placed with leading employers in key sectors such as electronics, oil and gas, fast moving consumer goods, Shared Services, ICT and telecommunications.

FASTRACKING YOUR WAY TO A CAREER IN ELECTRONICS

Typically, fresh graduates begin their career in electronics as a manufacturing engineer on the factory floor. TalentCorp's FasTrack programme equips young fresh graduates with the competencies to become a research and development (R&D) engineer.

The FasTrack programme was industry-led, coordinated by the Penang Skills Development Centre involving a 12-month R&D apprenticeship programme, which combined classroom training and on-the-job training working on actual ongoing R&D projects.



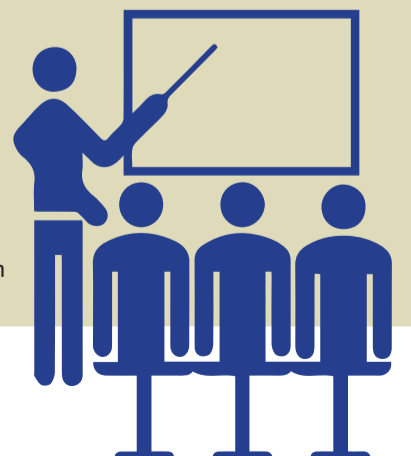
“Motorola Solutions Malaysia is one of the participating employers in FasTrack, an Upskilling programme that accelerates graduates into the highly skilled area of R&D.” – **Dr Hari Narayanan, managing director, Motorola Solutions Malaysia**

BUDGET 2015

RM30mil has been allocated to TalentCorp for the Industry Academia Collaboration programme.



- 1 Training disciplines: Radio Frequency, Embedded Systems, Software Engineering, Integrated Circuit Design, Test and Validation, Wafer Fabrication.
- 2 World-class host companies: Silterra, Altera, Agilent, Motorola, Clarion, Avago, Intel and Fairchild.
- 3 Since 2011, 420 graduates successfully trained.
- 4 Host companies involved in curriculum development and competency gap mapping of training programmes.
- 5 Majority of apprentices have secured employment as permanent and contract engineers in host companies.



OPTIMISING MALAYSIA'S PROFESSIONALS

A key focus for TalentCorp in 2014 was on developing and implementing workplace initiatives that responded to changing talent needs and workplace requirements.

These initiatives are aimed at guiding and encouraging employers to implement parent-friendly work-life practices that promote flexible work arrangements (FWA), encourage workforce diversity and support upskilling of their talents.

ADVANCING WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

"I would like to encourage Malaysian employers to adopt some of these best practices so that we can retain more women in the workforce," - **Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim, Minister of Women, Family and Community Development**



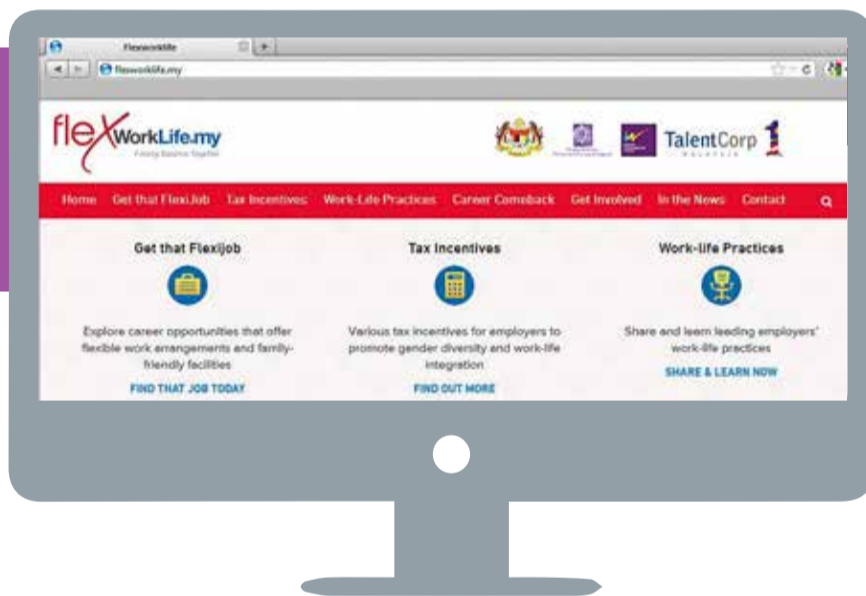
Launch of *flexWorkLife.my* which aims to build a network of employers and talents to optimise work-life integration

TALENTCORP PARTNERS LEADING EMPLOYERS TO CREATE A NETWORK TO OPTIMISE WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

flexWorkLife.my has an online job portal powered by *myStarJob.com* for employers to advertise job opportunities with FWA.

The portal also contains reference materials and best practices from employers with FWA and parent-friendly facilities, in addition to information on grants and tax incentives for return to work programmes and FWA implementation.

In 2014, more than 680 job vacancies with FWA were advertised. Hiring companies included AIG Shared Services (M) Sdn Bhd, IBM Malaysia Sdn Bhd, Siemens Malaysia, Gamuda Bhd and Taylor's Education Group.



FLEXIBILITY IN THE OFFICE
flexWorkLife.my, a collaborative effort between TalentCorp and the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development, is a portal that promotes family-friendly working environments and looks to increase female participation in the workforce.

Visit flexWorkLife.my for more info!

Sarena Cheah, managing director – group strategy and corporate development, Sunway Bhd

"As part of our initiatives to attract and retain women in the workforce, we have launched the Women Talent Project. This project includes several components such as flexible working arrangements, childcare centre and mother's room to provide support for women returning to the workforce after taking a lengthy break to care for their families."



LIFE AT WORK – THE BASF STORY

In line with the company's strategic principle to form the best workforce team, BASF Asia-Pacific Service Centre Sdn Bhd focuses on providing its employees with career development opportunities while ensuring work-life balance is achievable among them.

BASF's pilot job sharing programme is a work arrangement that adopts the concept of a full-time job being tasked to two employees on a part-time basis. This concept encourages individuals who are keen to return to employment but unable to work full-time to get back into the working world. The flexibility allows them to manage their personal commitments while having the opportunity to continue being employed.

"Basically our flexibility at work initiatives are centred on three core areas. First is job sharing, second is staggered hours and the last one is work from home. The three combined initiatives give us tremendous flexibility in our workspace." - **Lau Kin Pong, managing director, BASF Asia-Pacific Service Centre Sdn Bhd**

RETURNING WOMEN

The Government is encouraging more employers to attract and retain women in the workforce. Through the Women Career Comeback Programme, grants are provided to encourage employers to introduce and implement measures to bring back more professional women from career breaks.

BUDGET 2015

The Prime Minister announced that TalentCorp will set up the "Women Career Comeback Programme" to encourage women to return to the job market.

FROM CHEMICAL ENGINEER TO TALENT SPOTTER

Nisa Hidayah Ahmad, talent acquisition coordinator, Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Bhd

I had stopped working for almost two years. My initial plan was to take a break and enjoy motherhood before I started thinking about going back to work.

It was my sister-in-law who came across the Career Comeback fair in 2014. She posted it on my Facebook page and that was how it started. Most of the participating employers were among the top firms in Malaysia. I was impressed by the stories that the event speakers shared. I never thought that certain companies offered such flexibility and had so many facilities under one roof.

After much discussion, I decided that I would make my comeback to the workforce as a talent specialist with Standard Chartered Malaysia. I had graduated in Chemistry and was now venturing into Human Resources (HR). I came in to the industry with zero knowledge of the job.

Nonetheless, I was confident of my ability to adapt and learn. I am amazed by the knowledge I gained over the past one year.

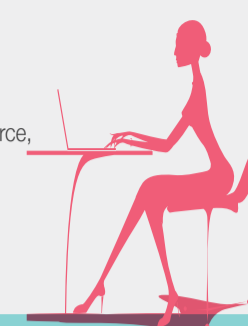


Nisa Hidayah Ahmad and family

It is not easy to juggle career and family but if a woman can be the manager of the house, she can also be the manager in the office.

About the Career Comeback Grant

As part of the Government's initiatives to increase the participation of women in the workforce, the Career Comeback Grant aims to encourage employers to recruit and retain women on career breaks, enabling them to expand their talent pool and provide career opportunities for women looking to return to work.



RESOURCING GRANT

Implement or enhance a programme or campaign to recruit women returnees.

The grant offers co-funding of 75% of the cost incurred by employers to run the programme, up to a maximum of RM100,000.

RETENTION GRANT

Successful recruitment and retention of women returnees for more than six months.

The grant amount is equivalent to returnees' one month salary, to encourage employers to recruit and facilitate their transition back to work. The retention grant is up to a maximum of RM100,000 per employer.

"Our partnership with TalentCorp on *flexWorkLife* is an important one. It helps to meet our own growing talent requirements in Malaysia while at the same time giving us the opportunity to work with the Government to provide a career pathway for Malaysian women to come back into the workforce." - **Rahmat R. Hashim, country head human resources Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Bhd**



CAREER COMEBACK FAIR

In March 2015, the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry and TalentCorp organised a Career Comeback Fair which enabled employers to reach out directly to women looking to return to the workforce.

Initially run as a pilot programme in 2014, more than 30 employers took part in the event this year, which attracted more than 500 women keen to make their career comeback. Some of the participating employers included Astro, Accenture Malaysia, EcoWorld, Maybank Group, Shell Malaysia, Sunway Group and Taylor's Education Group.

COMPANIES WHICH IMPLEMENTED CAREER COMEBACK PROGRAMMES



PARTNERSHIPS

TALENTCORP HR NETWORK

The HR Network was launched by TalentCorp in August 2014 to strengthen collaboration and enhance industry participation in our talent programmes through sharing of best practices and encouraging industry-led initiatives to attract and nurture Malaysian talent.

The initial areas of focus are to raise HR capability, promote diversity and inclusiveness and to enhance collaborations on leadership development and graduate employability programmes.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVENESS

GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

HR CAPABILITY

UPSILLING HR CERTIFICATION RAISING THE BAR OF THE HR PROFESSION

Employers are encouraged to invest in developing their human resources (HR) practitioners to ensure that our human capital management is benchmarked to international best practices and are well-managed by professionally certified

practitioners. This is in line with the New Economic Model strategic reform initiative to strengthen HR standards and certification initiative.

KEY FACT

Currently, less than 1,500 HR practitioners in Malaysia have professional HR certification.

HR CERTIFICATIONS PROGRAMMES

TalentCorp will reimburse 50% of course fees to employers upon successful completion of certification programmes by professional HR bodies:

- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), UK.

BUDGET 2015

Encouraging employers to upskill their workforce by providing a double deduction tax incentive on expenses incurred in providing employees with professional qualifications (such as ACCA, CFA, and PMP) and industry recognised vocational qualifications

- Australian Human Resource Institute (AHRI), Australia.
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), US.
- Malaysian Institute of Human Resource Management (MIHRM).

ADVOCATING DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

DIVERSITY AS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH

According to the TalentCorp-PwC Diversity in the Workplace Survey of public-listed companies (2013), Malaysia has made good progress in achieving the overall diversity of the workforce, in terms of gender, ethnicity and age.

However, the data suggests the need for greater efforts to improve diversity at top management, with a representation of only

KEY FACT

"Closing gender gaps in economic opportunities could substantially leapfrog Malaysia to high-income status." Source: *Malaysia Economic Monitor Unlocking Women's Potential (The World Bank, Nov 2012)*

24% women, 18% aged 40 and below and only 34% bumiputra. Meanwhile, at the board level, only 10.2% of board members of listed companies are women against our target of 30% by 2016.

DIVERSITY DIALOGUE

In April 2014, at a Business Leaders Dialogue organised by the Economic Planning Unit, the Securities Commission and TalentCorp, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Razak called on the private sector to show leadership in talent practices.



- All listed companies are required to disclose their diversity policy for board, management and workforce in terms of gender, ethnicity and age in annual reports from Jan 1, 2015.
- Corporate leaders to emulate best international practices in diversity and inclusion by disclosing the breakdown of their workforce in terms of gender, ethnicity and age by management levels.

"As set out in the New Economic Model, we must not achieve our objective of high income at the expense of inclusiveness and sustainability", says Najib.

KEY FACTS

- Government targets for women in the workforce:
 - 55% female labour force participation rate by 2015.
 - 30% women in decision-making positions by 2016.

WHERE THERE IS A WIL, THERE IS A WAY

Even though they make up half of our country's population and 70% of local university enrolment, women in Malaysia are not fully optimised in the workforce with a participation rate of only 52.4%.

Working in partnership with the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, TalentCorp launched the Women in Leadership Malaysia (WIL MY) programme for senior women managers in April 2014.

This development programme supports the careers of Malaysian women professionals across industry sectors and business functions who are one to three career stages away from a senior leadership or board role.

WIL MY has a strong focus on evolving women's unique leadership style through a blend of workshops and mentoring. The programme includes sharing of external perspectives, peer learning and strong mentoring by some of Malaysia's successful corporate leaders and women CEOs.

AMONG THE MENTORS FOR WIL MY



Raja Teh Maimunah Raja Abdul Aziz, CEO, Hong Leong Islamic Bank Bhd



Selvarany Rasiah, chief regulatory officer Bursa Malaysia Bhd



Janet Yap, country managing director – Malaysia, Accenture

ENGAGING MALAYSIANS ABROAD

AS Malaysia transitions into a high-income country, there is a greater demand for Malaysian professionals with international experience and diverse skill sets. This demand for global Malaysians is further amplified as more home-grown Malaysian companies become regional champions and multinationals headquarter their operations in Malaysia.

Beyond raising awareness of available world-class professional opportunities in Malaysia and enabling overseas Malaysians to contribute from abroad, TalentCorp's principal focus in engaging Malaysians abroad is to facilitate the return of top Malaysian talent living and working abroad to meet Malaysia's critical skill gaps.

"Every growing economy has a need for labour and human capital from abroad. The REP and RP-T programmes succeed at attracting people with the skills that Malaysia needs."

Source: *Malaysia Economic Monitor Towards a Middle-Class Society (The World Bank, Dec 2014)*

FACILITATING RETURN

TalentCorp's focus on facilitating return of top Malaysian talent to meet critical skill gaps involves working more closely with employers to connect with global Malaysian talent and vice versa. This focus has been reflected by:

- **Right incentives, Right Talent:** a revision of the Returning Expert Programme (REP) in April 2014 tightening incentive and approval criteria to better target Malaysians with critical skillsets for Malaysia.

Since 2011, more than 3,100 REP applications have been approved. In 2014 alone, TalentCorp approved REP for more than 600 global Malaysians with expertise in key sectors, particularly finance, oil and gas, electronics, business services and healthcare.

"TalentCorp's REP fast-track application works well to support our efforts to bring back top talent."
— **Nora Manaf, senior executive vice-president, head, group human capital Maybank**

"Oil and gas is a global business. Hence, we need world-class talent – highly productive, globally competitive Malaysians with global mindsets and complemented by top international talent."
— **Lokman Baharuddin, director of human resources, ExxonMobil Subsidiaries of Malaysia**

KEY FACT

There are 310,000 Malaysian professionals living in OECD countries

Source: *Malaysia Economic Monitor Towards a Middle-Class Society (The World Bank, December 2014)*



STAY CLOSE TO FAMILY

THE REP CAN FACILITATE YOUR RETURN HOME

REP | TalentCorp
MALAYSIA
rep.talentcorp.com.my

- **Fast-track application process** for REP to prioritise company supported applications.
- **Global Malaysia job board** collaboration with *myStarJob.com*, launched in September 2014 to showcase opportunities targeted at Malaysian talent with international experience.
- **JPA Management Apprenticeship Programme** to place Malaysia's scholars to serve bonds with companies driving Malaysia's economic transformation.

RETURNING EXPERT PROGRAMME

In the *Malaysia Economic Monitor December 2014* report, the World Bank found that REP participants fill skill gaps in the economy.

Key professions for returning Malaysians under the REP include managers, engineers, health professionals and specialists in the financial and education sectors. These occupations correspond to the professions that are in short supply in Malaysia.

The REP eligibility criteria were revised in April 2014 to better meet the demands of the labour market and the economy, while ensuring transparency and accountability in the dispensation of a tax incentive by the Government to top Malaysian talent.

Prior to that, the approval criteria principally focused on length of experience abroad. The revisions involved more holistic approval criteria taking into account not only academic



COMPANY SUPPORTED APPLICATIONS PRIORITISED

OPTIONAL FLAT TAX RATE 15%



TAX EXEMPTION ON PERSONAL EFFECTS

TAX EXEMPTION ON CAR



PR STATUS FOR FOREIGN SPOUSE AND CHILDREN

GLOBAL MALAYSIANS DIGITAL JOB BOARD

Launched in September 2014, the online job board connects Malaysian professionals working overseas with leading employers keen to tap into their international experience and expertise.

Global Malaysians offers more than 250 mid to senior professional positions from over 45 companies covering key sectors of the economy, including:



qualifications and experience abroad but also income level, total work experience and criticality of skillsets.

At the same time, beyond connecting with employers, TalentCorp has begun collaborating with executive search firms to assist global Malaysians to connect back with opportunities in Malaysia.

HOMeward BOUND



Name: Antony Fook Weng Lee
Company: AIG Malaysia Insurance Bhd
Position: CEO
Years Overseas: 12

ON WANTING TO COME BACK TO MALAYSIA...

The main reason was work as well as family and friends. There was a great career opportunity, and at the same time, my mother was missing the family.

ON MAKING THE JOURNEY BACK...

I heard about TalentCorp and applied. The whole process of getting my appli-

cation approved was swift and before I knew it, my application had been approved.

ON WORKING OVERSEAS...

The most valuable thing was gaining a better understanding of cultural differences, which allowed me to communicate better. I believe it is important to be collaborative if we want to get the best out of any situation and to get things done.

ADVICE TO MALAYSIANS THINKING OF RETURNING HOME...

I would absolutely encourage Malaysians to return. Malaysia has plen-

ty of right job opportunities for those wanting to return home. My one piece of advice for returning Malaysians: be adaptable in both teaching and learning. Having a proactive and positive mindset is especially useful when coming from a larger, more developed economy or work environment.

TalentCorp works with multinationals like AIG to leverage on the REP to facilitate the return of their Malaysian talent within their group, like Fook, who are working globally.



Name: Cheryl Yeoh
Company: Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Centre (MaGIC)
Position: CEO
Years Overseas: 12

ON WANTING TO COME BACK TO MALAYSIA...

I often thought of contributing back to Malaysia, and wanted to take action rather than just talk about it.

When I was approached by the Finance Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office for the position, it was the perfect opportunity to use

my experience in Silicon Valley to help develop a start-up ecosystem.

ON MAKING THE JOURNEY BACK...

It was not easy deciding to uproot my life in the United States. TalentCorp's REP was instrumental in facilitating my return and the TalentCorp team processed my application quite efficiently.

ON WORKING ABROAD...

I started my company in New York, where the start-up scene blossomed within two to three short years and learnt first-hand how a successful ecosystem is built.

ON THE MALAYSIAN START-UP SCENE...

There is a real culmination of talent, passion from the community and desire to create successful global ventures, coupled with government support and the influx of private funds.

MaGIC has facilitated a number of Malaysian professionals abroad using the fast-track REP application process.

CONTRIBUTING FROM ABROAD

CONNECTING MALAYSIAN SCIENTISTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

Malaysian scientist, and a returning expert, Professor Chau De Ming, specialises in research on cancer and Alzheimer's disease. His focus is on drug discovery.

A PhD holder in pharmacology from Cornell University's Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences in New York, he worked as a research fellow at the renowned Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

He had been living and working in the United States for almost 12 years before returning to Malaysia in 2012 under the REP programme. He



is now a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Before returning home, Chau started the Malaysian Scientists Abroad,

a Facebook group that connects like-minded Malaysian scientists abroad. It provides a platform for Malaysian researchers abroad and those at home to discuss and collaborate on various scientific research topics.

Chau continues to work alongside TalentCorp in meeting and engaging with Malaysian researchers and scientists abroad. At the Science@Malaysia Conference at the University of Oxford last year, he shared his views about the current research landscape and opportunities back home.

Passionate about giving back to the country, he currently is working on a community project with his Malaysian Scientists Abroad members to nurture interest in science among young Malaysians.



BREAKFAST WITH CEO

The Breakfast with CEO series, conceptualised by TalentCorp, has become a popular and much sought after platform for overseas Malaysian students to network and interact closely with leading industry players from top companies in Malaysia.

By including top employers in the Breakfast with CEO series, TalentCorp is raising awareness among young Malaysian talents abroad of the exciting career opportunities in key sectors of the Economic Transformation Programme by providing key insights from leading corporate personalities.

AWARENESS

OVERSEAS CAREER FAIR

In March 2014, TalentCorp supported the United Kingdom & Eire Council of Malaysian Students (UKEC) and Graduan organised Malaysian Career Fair 2014 in London. Last year's UKEC-GRADUAN fair – now in its 10th year – was staged to connect Malaysians studying in the UK with attractive career opportunities back in Malaysia.

A similar event, the GRADUAN-MASCA Australia Recruitment Drive 2014 was held in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia in September 2014.

KEY FACT

UKEC-GRADUAN Malaysian Career Fair 2014 attracted more than 4,000 Malaysian students. More than 40 leading Malaysian employers representing Malaysia's various priority economic sectors participated at the career fair.

In addition to the overseas career fairs targeted mainly at Malaysian students studying abroad, in 2014 TalentCorp also supported selected professional outreach focused on key sectors such as oil and gas and healthcare.

"To support our growth, private hospitals reach out to Malaysian medical specialists abroad as part of supplementing our future talent pipeline." – **Datuk Amir Firdaus Abdullah, CEO, Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur**



"We hope our top Malaysian talents join us in making Vision 2020 a reality."
– **Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department**

SCHOLARSHIP TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION (STAR)

This high-impact joint initiative between the Public Service Department (JPA) and TalentCorp enables government scholars, who are among the country's top young talent, to serve in the priority areas of Malaysia's ETP and build their careers in National Key Economic Area (NKEA) sectors.

In 2014, more than 1,000 Government-funded scholars from overseas universities returned to Malaysia and are serving their bond of service with leading employers in the private sector.

"The STAR initiative demonstrates our engagement with government-linked companies and the corporate sector in Malaysia in nurturing, developing and retaining our own talent to continue to serve the nation." – **Tan Sri Mohamad Zabidi Zainal, director-general of Public Service Malaysia**



"It is amazing how the STAR initiative enabled me to pursue my interest in engineering, while simultaneously contributing to the development of the country." – **Timothy Tam, AirAsia X**



Name: Chia Li Ann
Education: Graduated in Earth Science from Rice University in Houston, Texas
Host Company: First Solar in Kulim, Kedah
Job: Currently under STAR serving bond, working as a sedimentologist at Shell Malaysia

LI ANN'S STAR STORY

"My host company did very well in developing its management apprentices. On my first day, my supervisor took the time to explain the role of my department and each of its sub-teams, and asked me what I want-

ed to learn throughout my time there.

"There were already two main projects ready for me to join as soon as I got there, each exposing me to new or more advanced use of software.

"The most important attitude to have is the willingness to learn. If your first job isn't something that you like, that's fine. Learn what you can from it and make the best out of it. Your goals may shift due to the experiences you've had, so be open to new experiences. Just be willing to learn."

3 Things You Need To Know About Li Ann

- Father is an offshore technician while mother runs a kindergarten.
- She is the first overseas university graduate in her family.
- Her take on being a JPA scholar: "To all scholars abroad, what we've received or learnt is a privilege. What we need to take out from this is the responsibility to give back."

Name: Akmal Hayat Jusoh
Education: Graduated in Mechanical Engineering from Imperial College, UK
Host Company: Jabil Circuit
Job: Currently under STAR serving bond, working as a customer quality engineer at Freescale Semiconductor

AKMAL'S STAR STORY

"It was the first time Jabil had a degree-holder apprentice. So I told them what I wanted to get from my three months of training there. My main aim was to increase my technical competency to equip myself with relevant working skillsets later on.

"I told my supervisor that I wanted to be treated like an

engineer, not like a trainee. I then got more challenging tasks; studying the defects of products and coming out with containment actions. My learning curve increased exponentially once I was entrusted to do an engineer's tasks.

"Upon starting my first job at Freescale Semiconductor, I realised how beneficial my experience at Jabil had been as most of the technical competencies I gained there was put into practice at my new job.

"I think it is important for apprentices and new hires to have a mind-set of challenging themselves, to be out of their comfort zones and to really get the most out of any training programme. If every trainee or

new hire could think of how they can leave a legacy in their companies, they would learn so much and really develop their professional careers."

3 Things You Need To Know About Akmal

- Both his parents are teachers.
- The eldest of five children, he is the first university graduate in the family and also the first to go overseas.
- His take on career development: "Don't work for the sake of working only. Think of how you can leave a legacy at your working place."



FACILITATING FOREIGN TALENT

AS MALAYSIA'S ECONOMY MOVES UP THE VALUE CHAIN AND BECOMES MORE GLOBALISED, HAVING A DIVERSIFIED TALENT POOL IS CRUCIAL TO ADDRESS THE FAST EVOLVING NEEDS OF INDUSTRY.

ACCORDING to the *World Bank Malaysian Economic Monitor November 2009*: "It is important to discard the idea that foreign and Malaysian skilled workers are perfect substitutes. On the contrary, they are strong complements."

World Bank highlights that restrictive employment visa requirements for expatriates is proving a constraint preventing companies to access skills needed to move up the value chain.

By having foreign talent join forces with Malaysian talent, there will be positive outcomes in terms of knowledge and skills enhancement to the local talent pool as well as significant operational enhancements to key economic sectors.

The Government has therefore taken steps to **retain** top foreign talent with critical skills, such as through the Residence Pass-Talent (RP-T) and to better **facilitate** leading investors and employers to access

foreign skillsets needed through the Expatriate Services Division.

RETENTION

Residence Pass-Talent

The World Bank has assessed that the RP-T, an initiative by TalentCorp and the Immigration Department to attract and retain top foreign talent, has been successful in addressing skill gaps when local talent is not available.

"We believe foreign talent stimulate the process of developing local talent. With the introduction of the Economic Transformation Programme, the Government has been an active facilitator of the private sector to remove barriers to competition and allowing more expatriates to work in Malaysia." – **Jacqueline Chue, regional HR vice-president, Technip Geoproduction (M) Sdn Bhd.**

FACILITATE

Expatriate Services Division

To facilitate ease of doing business, especially for investors to tap on expatriate talent into Malaysia, the Government has initiated the Expatriate Services Division (ESD).

Launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak in June 2014, the ESD is a collaborative effort between the Home Ministry, the Immigration Department and TalentCorp. Acting as a one-stop centre, the ESD provides a single channel for expatriates and companies to submit all expatriate-related immigration matters via an integrated data platform.

Successful applicants comprise technical experts as well as professionals contribut-

ing significantly in critical sectors under the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP). Expatriate talent approved by the ESD have come from key markets such as the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, Australia, China and India, as well as Asean countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

Since its launch, the ESD has received online applications from more than 3,600 companies and processed more than 13,000 expatriate applications including dependents.

"Going forward, the Immigration Department will commit to a client charter of five working days to process employment pass applications by companies registered with the ESD," said the Prime Minister on the Government's commitment to improve service delivery on expatriate facilitation.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak launched the Expatriate Services Division on June 19, 2014.

SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE RP-T IN APRIL 2011, OVER 3,000 APPROVALS HAVE BEEN ISSUED. IN 2014 ALONE, MORE THAN 1,000 RP-T HAVE BEEN ISSUED FOR PRIORITY ECONOMIC SECTORS.

> 3,000 RP-T approved since 2011

> 1,000 in 2014



ANNA BRAUN
President of B. Braun Asia-Pacific

"I think the programme really gives a long-term perspective to foreigners working and living in Malaysia. You feel at home and not just in transit. Apart from this stability, the greatest benefit certainly is that my husband has an independent work permit too."

"Malaysia is a great way to explore working in Asia. It has interesting industries and with its diversity, gives great exposure to the different life and working styles. It is also at the heart of the very dynamic Asean region."

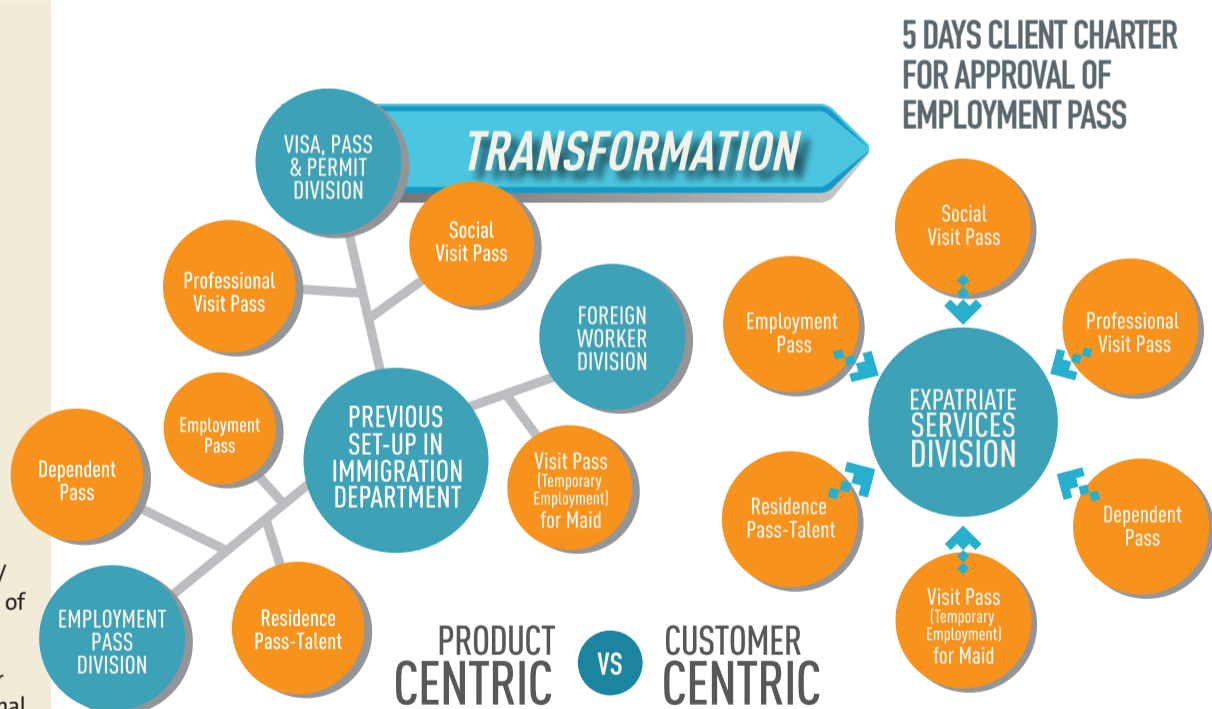


ALOIS HOFBAUER
Regional head of Nestlé Malaysia/Singapore and managing director of Nestlé (M) Bhd

"It (RP-T) makes it easier for high-calibre professional expatriate talent to settle into life here by taking away complications that you might experience such as applying for visas or renewing work permits – it's a burden off your shoulders!"

"Furthermore, the advantages of having the Residence Pass-Talent are extended to your family members."

"For example, your spouse can apply for a work permit too. I especially like the fact that RP-T recipients are given a 10-year visa; it's fantastic because it gives you the security of being able to make plans for the long run."



PRAKASH CHANDRAN
President and CEO Siemens Malaysia

"The setting up of the ESD is a great step forward. Support for this cause is clearly expressed by the Prime Minister."

"The Immigration Department aspires to provide our customers with services that are facilitative, fast and delivered with integrity," – **Datuk Mustafa Ibrahim, director-general, Immigration Department of Malaysia**

BE A
LEADER

By **KAREN NEOH**
karen.neoh@leaderonomics.com

ONE of the main things we are committed to at Leaderonomics is to build leaders – and I must admit that I did not fully understand what that meant when I first learnt of the organisation.

As individuals, we all have our aspirations and the more I speak to my fellow Gen-X, the multitude of Gen-Y I am surrounded by and the up and coming Gen-Z, the more apparent it is that people are beginning to have a wider variety of career goals.

Even more so, I am encouraged by the fact that our future leaders have a deeper definition of success – beyond status and material well-being.

An enlightening study by strategy& titled *The Lives and Times of the CEO* takes us on a journey back in time to understand what made a good leader 100 years ago and how leaders have evolved since then. Armed with this information (and always the first step of self assessment of our current skills and competencies), we can start to chart our own futures.

Whether we would like to lead an organisation one day, or are contented to lead alongside the CEO, understanding what makes a great leader is crucial for our personal development and growth.

strategy& examined CEOs at four points in time: 1914, 1964, 2014, and their educated predictions for 2040, when today's new entrants into the workforce would take the helm.

LEADERS OVER THE PAST CENTURY

"The 1960s 'organisation man' was a pragmatic, tough-nosed, and driven leader, more focused on managing a career than the entrepreneurs of 1914, who had concentrated on developing their own new institutions. In order to manage an increasingly complex and growing enterprise, he needed solid management skills.

"The CEO's most important external goal was to maximise investor returns. In the 1960s, CEOs focused their attention on raising earnings per share, and to do so many became master deal makers.

"Back then, some CEOs also understood the massive imprint that they, and their companies, were making on the national culture – often supported the Boy Scouts and other civic organisations, such as museums or hospitals; he felt duty-bound to uphold civil society."

Source: strategy&

It is fascinating to have personally experienced this almost Darwinian change in CEOs I have worked with over the years (I do not confess to working since the 1960s however!).

CEOs of today run much flatter organisations in a fluid environment that is constantly changing. They lead a generation of workers with needs that have likewise evolved since the 1960s.

Fast forward to 2040, some anticipate a competitive landscape with "integrators" and "specialists" coming to the fore,

where the former are large-scale organisations focused on providing distinct, solutions-based value propositions to their customers.

"Specialists" on the other hand, are the complementary players that provide the products and services the integrators sell.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Alongside these predictions, I believe there is another development worth noting.

Observing the rising trend of social enterprises in countries like the UK and Canada; the priorities of our youth to make a difference in the world; and the keen interest of business schools worldwide in the study of social enterprises; my prediction is that the growth in impact investing and social entrepreneurship will continue into the future.

Our leaders of tomorrow would need to consider this element in the running of organisations.

DNA OF A FUTURE LEADER

Collectively, these trends will lead to the emergence of a CEO who is agile, highly entrepreneurial, able to access and use data effectively, able to see beyond traditional networks of stakeholders and is a great communicator.

1 On developing strategy, I still recall the long-drawn-out strategy planning meetings that sought to develop five- or three-year strategic plans.

In light of the speed with which things were changing in the market we were in, these plans were, in my mind overly ambitious.

If this trend continues, the duration of these "strategic plans" would necessarily decrease as our nimble CEOs have to be quicker to identify the need to change course, and have an organisation poised to do so.

2 The need to work in teams will still be crucial. Our future CEO invests time in developing a deep understand-

ing of his/her stakeholder universe along with the complex matrix of interdependence.

He/she must also have the ability to translate this into action – building and empowering cross-functional teams which may comprise internal and external partners.

3 In mapping that stakeholder universe, our intrepid and socially conscious CEO needs to be able to communicate and connect in a manner that takes into consideration the needs and concerns of multiple stakeholders, all the while ensuring that communication is in both directions.

Through various media, customers and investors alike have direct access to senior leaders, watching their every move and being more vocal when mistakes are made.

4 Over the years, I have experienced firsthand how senior leaders in the United States and our Asia-Pacific region, have changed in the way they communicate with their people and also in their openness to listen.

In fact, leaders of today realise that listening and responding to their frontline teams is less of a choice, but a necessity and should be very much a part of their repertoire.

5 Our future CEO further recognises the importance of developing and delivering on a strong employee value proposition, with corporate culture and values that his/her people are aligned with, and are proud of.

Mirroring the need of peers as well as employees for meaningful work, CEOs need to ensure that employees are constantly engaged.

Our CEO would also need to be skilled at managing workforces in a state of flux due to, for example, changing employee preferences and the ongoing introduction of new enabling technologies.

MOVING TARGET

SO YOU WANT TO BE A LEADER OF LEADERS

6 Likely to have been comfortable with an iPad from the moment he/she mastered motor skills, our innovative CEO would be able to connect the dots and identify potential disruptions that technology can bring not just to customers, but to the competitiveness of the organisation as well.

7 Our leaders of the future will increasingly understand the value of information – how it flows within organisations and externally, and how to use data effectively to adjust his/her strategy in a fluid environment.

"A combination of factors—the rising number of women in executive ranks, the high level of education and training among global employees, and the ability for people to work anywhere—may reduce the urgency of the war for talent."

We anticipate an important new addition to the C-suite: the chief resource officer (CRO), whose role will be very different from anything existing now. The CRO will be responsible not only for human resources, but for all nonfinancial resources."

Source: strategy&

8 CEOs of social enterprises with conservation being one of their social goals, may already have a foothold on the redefined "war for resources" (even if their environmental considerations are grounded on different organisational objectives).

As climate change affects the wanton use of perceived "limitless" natural resources, organisations have to increasingly be more aware of their choices and business decisions and CEOs need to prioritise sustainability in their agenda.

In our next article gazing into the future, let us take a look at the steps for developing the CEO of the future.

■ Karen firmly believes that nature, and her creatures big and small, is a great teacher of leadership and that staying away from nature for prolonged periods of time is to her own detriment. For leadership content, do visit leaderonomics.com





LIFE LESSONS FROM LIFE OF PI

THE CURRENTS OF LIFE WILL PUSH
AND PULL YOU IN MANY DIRECTIONS

MOVIE
WISDOM



By **DINESHSETHU RAMACHANDRAN**
editor@leaderonomics.com

SOME movies connect with us only in the mind while others connect with us only in the heart. Then, there are those rare movies that connect with us in both of those ways.

Life of Pi is one such movie, for it delves seamlessly into the world of rationality and religion, accompanied by enchanting music. The choice of music complements each scene so perfectly that one is easily drawn into the movie.

Of course, this is a matter of personal preference. To me, *Life of Pi* highlights a number of valuable lessons through its main character, Piscine Molitor Patel, which are applicable to people from all walks of life.

Although I would like to believe that most of us have watched this movie, I am obliged to mention to those who have yet to watch it that this article will reveal important events.

FROM JOKE TO LEGEND

"With one word, my name went from an elegant swimming pool to a stinking Indian latrine – I was 'pissing' everywhere."

Piscine was the joke of the school as he was incessantly teased about his name. The next year, however, he was determined to start anew by introducing himself as Pi in an unconventional and imaginative manner.

He symbolised his name through the

use of the mathematical symbol 'π' and listed out a substantial amount of its decimal places, thus becoming Pi Patel, school legend.

Oftentimes, we find ourselves in a similar predicament. Instead of instinctively raising our voices or our fists, why don't we try to be innovative like Pi?

With his simple yet strategic move, he altered his identity from school joke to school legend. At times, the best solutions are the simplest ones. Most problems can be solved with a little bit of imagination.

THE 'TOOTH' FLOWER

"If I hadn't discovered that tooth, I would have been lost, alone forever."

After a torrential storm, all hope seemed lost and Pi surrendered himself to God.

Later, he awoke only to find himself face-to-face with a mysterious island filled with meerkats. Initially, the island was a source of joy to him with its abundance of food and water.

Until one day, he came across a tree filled with the most amazing flowers. Driven by his curiosity, he decided to peel back the petals of a flower.

To his surprise, at the heart of the flower lay a tooth. It was at this very moment that he realised the island brought not only joy, but also horror in equal amounts.

Had it not been for his discovery of the tooth, Pi would most certainly have spent the rest of his life on the island and be lost forever.

He believed the tooth was a sign from God that it was time to move on. With that, he left the island and headed back towards civilisation.

In our lives, we are constantly plagued with choices. What do we do when the least comfortable choice is obviously the one that would be more satisfying when achieved?

It boils down to the risk aversion of the individual. Complacency further adds to the problem. At times, we are so comfortable with the known, that we become afraid to step into the unknown, so much so that it becomes a detriment to our personal growth.

So shake off the chains of fear and complacency that hold you back. Adventure awaits when you dive into the unknown.

FINDING YOUR WAY BACK

"I suppose in the end, the whole of life becomes an act of letting go."

These words are thought-provoking, for it reminds us that nothing is permanent. By the age of 16, Pi had suffered a great deal. He had left so much behind: his childhood love, his family, the zoo and India. To make matters worse, he was lost at sea for 227 days (curiously enough, 22/7 is used as an approximation of 'π').

It was truly a test for someone of his age. However, Pi remains unbroken. He remains strong in faith and spirit. In the end, we find out that Pi has picked up the pieces of his life, and goes on to have a wife, two children and a cat. Not

bad for someone who had lost almost everything.

Occasionally, life can be unfair. The loss of a job, a loved one or something we truly care about. Yet, life goes on. We must find it in ourselves to keep going forward, pushing past any doubts or obstacles that lie in our way. Persevere through adversity and you will taste the nectar of success.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

From this movie, I learnt that within each of us lies a power.

The power of the human spirit. An intangible and unquantifiable substance that can push us far beyond our wildest dreams. I shall end with my favourite quote from this movie: "Above all, don't lose hope."

DIODE CAMPS

Last call for early birds!

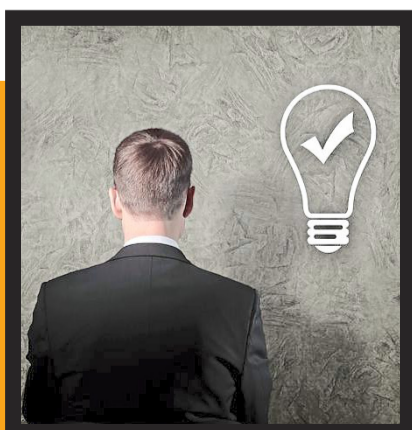
Attention youth! Yes, youth! If you are between ages 11–16 and eager to find your true leadership potential, we have just the right answer for you!

Join us in the upcoming DIODE Camps this June school holiday season as we explore the traits of a leader through our live projects and fun-filled activities!

For those ages 8–11 who are keen to kickstart your leadership journey, fret not, as we have a special DIODE Kids Programme just for you!

To find out more, visit <http://leaderonomics.org/youth/diode-leadership-camps/>

■ Dinesh has a passion for developing young minds and strongly believes that regardless of age, it is important to keep one's "spark" burning brightly. To connect with him, write to editor@leaderonomics.com



Think **big**, think
strategically

The
**Golden
Hammer**

Upskilling
for high impact
HR

Living
beyond your
comfort zone

Also next week

