



IJM offers yearly scholarship to students from various walks of life.

IJM: A GREAT MALAYSIAN STORY TO BE TOLD

RIDING THROUGH THE ECONOMIC CYCLES AND EMERGING STRONGER EACH TIME

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A story of great trials and triumphs ought to be told throughout the generations, lest we forget how our forefathers sacrificed and gave themselves so much for an aspiration they held on to or a cause they believed in.

We are often intrigued by the stories of how humble beginnings turned into great and admirable organisations that impact communities and nations like today's General Electric and Starbucks.

It is therefore a rare occasion that we get to share the story of a Malaysian company built by a group of determined local professional engineers from scratch to become what it is today, 33 years later, as it continues to leave its footprints around the globe.

Leaderonomics caught up with Datuk Soam Heng Choon, chief executive officer (CEO) of IJM to get his insights about the IJM legacy and its future.

A SHARED DESTINY, A SHARED FUTURE

It has been an amazing journey for IJM to grow by leaps and bounds to be one of Malaysia's most respected home-grown conglomerates and key player in fulfilling Malaysia's national agenda toward becoming a developed nation by 2020.

IJM has since diversified its business to cover five core divisions (i.e. construction, infrastructure, property, industry and plantation) and has a strong pool of dedicated 4,600 diverse talent ranging from baby boomers to Gen-Zs in 10 different countries.

Under Soam and his team's leadership, backed solidly by its people (referred as IJM-ers) who subscribe to the shared destiny concept since IJM's inception, IJM is well positioned for sustainable growth.

Soam, who is in his 27th year in the company, recalls vividly the turbulent period of economic downturn that affected many Malaysian companies in 1985, 1997 and 2008.

ON SOAM'S LEADERSHIP

“Visionary and dynamic with high-level of perseverance and energy to overcome hurdles. He is a leader who walks the talk, and even walks the extra mile. He means business, yet he's a caring boss who takes the time to listen and get to know everyone, including the tea lady.”

He maintains an open door policy for all IJM-ers to reach out to him. It has been a great blessing to have worked under him.”
—Hoo Kim See, senior general manager, Property division

“He's very approachable and makes us feel at ease whenever we are with him. He's also very open to new ideas and insights.”

—Puvendran Shanmugam, senior executive, Learning and development



Soam at an IJM-wide family day.

THE GROWTH AGENDA

Since its humble beginnings in 1983, IJM has grown from an initial market capital of RM66mil when the company was listed in 1986 to over RM12bil

Employees are also rewarded with a long-term incentive plan (introduced in 2012) that features share grant and employee share option scheme (ESOS) based on individual performance. This strengthens its shared destiny belief because everyone becomes a shareholder in IJM.

This shows that when you are kind to people, people will reciprocate in due time at different capacities. On hindsight, IJM has emerged stronger as an organisation with each crisis that passed. Over the years, in the spirit of true unity, IJM-ers at all levels have learnt to go through thick and thin together.

today. It has borne fruits at varying intensity, with a compounded annual growth rate of 19%.

“In IJM, we don't rest on our laurels. We constantly have a mindset that we 'aren't there yet.' Yes, we are proud to have accomplished so much as an organisation, but there is always room to do better than yesterday. Nothing is ever a 'business as usual' here,” says Soam.

The working environment provided by IJM has always been conducive to encourage IJM-ers to put their skills to good use and take calculated risks intrapreneurially (entrepreneurial from within the organisation) to continue to grow IJM.

A case in point was when in the early years, the industry division was an in-house supporting business function which supplied building materials to the construction division. The employees themselves expressed their desire to expand their business and the leadership team gave their full backing. As a result, the industry division became a core business in its own right.

“Learning and growing never stop here. Through the years, we have systematically developed various accelerated talent and leadership programmes for all levels; from the young graduates, executives, managerial and right up to senior levels,” explains Soam.

In Soam's words, the key is for leaders to grow responsibly and at their own pace, and to be decisive, regardless of them making the right or wrong decisions, as long as they learn from these experiences.

ROOTS OF FAIRNESS, HUMILITY AND INTEGRITY

Run autonomously by professional management teams, IJM has established best practices and has garnered many accolades over the years.

Principled values like humility and tenacity have stood the test of time for IJM to be

recognised as a trustworthy, credible and highly respected organisation.

These values are embraced and practised wholeheartedly, driven from the top senior leadership in IJM as they are the role models that people look up to. When entrusted with responsibilities, IJM-ers would ensure that they deliver what is expected of them.

IJM also recognises their people based on meritocracy. While one upholds all the right values as a leader, one also needs to prove their mettle to grow and make it far in their career with IJM.

Soam, who came across to us as affable and very down-to-earth, shares, “Some things should never change even after the baton of leadership has been passed on from one generation to another. These include diligence, perseverance and integrity.”

“More importantly, be humble and adaptable in everything you do. Always be in touch with the people that you lead to know what is really happening on the ground. Remember that you are the bridge builder that connects and bonds your people.”

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Soam, who practises collaborative and inclusive leadership, acknowledges that the achievements of IJM are attributed to every IJM-er who has played their respective part throughout the years, displaying commendable teamwork at every level.

“Credit goes to all IJM-ers who made things happen, and I am confident we will continue to drive the organisation to greater heights,” concludes Soam.

Indeed, the IJM of today is built upon a solid foundation: the culture of good governance, high performance culture and the philosophy of shared destiny. This is a story worth sharing.

Check out how you can be a part of IJM family at www.ijm.com.

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—SOAM

IJM GIVING A VOICE TO ITS PEOPLE IN THE WORKSPACE

IN corporate Malaysia, IJM has taken the lead to become the first public listed company here to introduce Facebook at Work, a collaborative tool catered for organisations, to be used by all IJM-ers across countries and business divisions.

IJM deputy CEO Lee Chun Fai (pic) shares with Leaderonomics, “The gap we identified with our previous intranet system was its limited level of interactivity. Communications were very much one-directional and e-mails were not engaging enough.”

“We were in the midst of revamping our system when we chanced upon this user-friendly platform. After our internal assessment, we really felt it made business sense to jump into it sooner, rather than later.”

At the forefront of this initiative is Soam himself, a baby boomer who is relatively new to social media prior to the rollout, but now has been actively using this tool and driving its use among IJM-ers.

“We recognise that Facebook at Work is a vital tool to enhance our corporate 3C goals: connect, communicate and collaborate. A trial run of the platform has gotten IJM-ers excited on how it has greatly helped them at work,” says Soam.



IJM-ers taking a selfie at the Facebook at Work official launch at IJM on April 1, 2016.

BRIDGING GAPS THROUGH COMMUNICATION

Dissemination of information and knowledge sharing among peers and leaders are now instantaneous. Facebook at Work has provided a great and mobile-friendly platform for employees to bond as one IJM family at a deeper level through the various social groups such as Toastmasters and the Wellness groups.

Besides social activities, IJM-ers are now easily accessible from wherever they are in the current borderless world for discussions as long as they have smart phones and Internet connection. With the familiar interface of Facebook, IJM-ers have transitioned to Facebook At Work seamlessly.



Not only does it bridge generational gaps, this tool also “flattens the organisation” by bridging the employer-employee and senior-junior relationship gaps.

“It's encouraging to see more people at the senior level opening up and engaging with the younger ones through this platform. It's a sign of an organisational culture that thrives on authentic relationships and partnerships among themselves. After all, an actively engaged employee is also your strongest advocate for your organisation.”

CONNECTING THE ENGAGEMENT DOTS

This collaborative tool has created a work environment where people actually look forward to coming to work. It makes perfect sense. It has created a sense of a close-knitted IJM community where success stories and celebrations are shared, besides giving a face to every IJM-er in the organisation.

“By seeing it for yourself the intellectual work-related idea sharing and social conversations that are in Facebook at Work, you realise that we are actually quite fun, and very happening too,” says Soam proudly.

“With Facebook at Work, you also have the liberty to choose which work or social groups you want to follow, similar to how our personal Facebook account works.”

“By doing this, you customise the type of information you want to know

according to your preference. Best of all, you are aware of the things that are happening across IJM business divisions instantaneously. This has definitely brought IJM-ers from around the world and across divisions closer,” adds Lee.

Indefinitely, that is key to engage your employees so they will always create an organisational culture that thrives on authentic relationships and partnerships among themselves. After all, an actively engaged employee is also your strongest advocate for your organisation.

UNITING HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH COLLABORATION

It is common to hear that as an organisation expands and grows, we find ourselves asking what our other co-workers in different departments or business units are doing, or what projects they are currently undertaking.

On one hand, you get a scenario where you don't get enough information about company updates and on the other hand, you find yourself being fed with too much irrelevant information via e-mail or other forms of communication. And sometimes, information does not reach the intended person timely, or much time is spent waiting for a decision maker to make the final call.

In this regard, Lee adds, “The time taken for certain decisions to be made because the boss is out of reach physically can now be shortened drastically because everyone is basically connected on this platform.”

“With open and transparent dialogue via Facebook at Work, discussion points are not lost and quick decisions can be made to get things moving.”

While IJM has given a voice to all its employees to share knowledge, it is also a fitting platform to bounce ideas, expedite learning among IJM-ers, and for fellow IJM-ers to collaborate as a team in projects. The IJM-ers, being shareholders themselves, then get to know and appreciate the roles and contributions of their colleagues better.

This platform has allowed for best practices, creative and innovative solutions, and insights to be shared in the organisation to be adopted and embraced by every IJM-er. It is no longer about an individual's growth, but about IJM's growth as a whole, with IJM-ers learning together and moving forward as one.

TRULY A GAME CHANGER

There is no escaping the digital age for any organisation. IJM has taken the lead in embracing it because their leaders realise that for an organisation to grow and accelerate, there needs to be an operating culture that is effective and collaborative.

It starts by uniting the hearts and minds of its people through a common platform where everyone is on the same page and aligned to the same purpose. The journey of IJM into the future landscape of our borderless workforce has just begun.

WHAT IJM-ERS ARE SAYING ABOUT FACEBOOK AT WORK

“Information among colleagues is now a click away. Facebook at Work rocks!”
—Ivan Tan Chee Yen, Construction manager, Construction division

“I feel a sense of belonging in our big IJM family because we are constantly updated with the latest IJM happenings.”
—Tony Chong, Manager of architectural and product development, Property division

“This platform is so powerful! Not only does it boost people's morale, it also touches the hearts of IJM-ers when we appreciate and care for each other.”
—Choy Teik San, General manager of production and purchasing, Industry division

“This tool allows us to connect among colleagues, communicate with the bosses and collaborate with other divisions in IJM. It's awesome!”
—Mohd Halmie Saharudin, Senior executive, Corporation communications toll division

“Facebook at Work makes me feel connected to my colleagues, events and initiatives in Malaysia even though I am based here in India.”
—Harjeet Singh a/l Daya Singh, General manager, Accounts and finance