

# RSOG INSIGHT

COURAGE . INNOVATION . CHANGE

## IN THIS ISSUE

02

**LEADERS MOVE OTHERS FORWARD,  
ENGAGE YOUR PEOPLE**

*By Nurul Nadiah Mohd Azib*

06

**SORRY SEEMS THE  
HARDEST WORD**

*By Ismail Johari Othman*

09

**LISTEN, SHARE, ENGAGE!**

*By Hal Mahera Ahmad*

13

**THROUGH THE EYES OF A GEN Y:  
WHAT IS EMOTIONAL  
INTELLIGENCE, EXACTLY?**

*By Tengku Nur Farhana Tengku Abdul Rahman*

16

**BOOK RECOMMENDATION:**

*Written by Ismail Johari Othman*

**TUNKU - An Odyssey of a Life Well-Lived and Well-Loved** by *Kobkua Suwannathat Pian*

# Article

# LEADERS MOVE OTHERS FORWARD, ENGAGE YOUR PEOPLE

By Nurul Nadiah Mohd Azib

In the recent 'Advanced Leadership and Management Programme' (ALMP) Series 54 2/2017 held at INTAN, RSOG's newly-appointed CEO, Mr. Azman Hisham Che Doi, gave a talk entitled "Leading Organisational Change". This is consistent with RSOG's new strategic direction plan to carry its mission beyond nation building. He believes that the key success factor in organisational performance is to engage the whole team and the leader needs to bring hope to the organisation. "It's about you" - an apt statement, as true leadership is about how passionate that person is to lead their team. A leader must be facilitative in empowering the people and moving the organisation. An innate sense of responsibility must be ingrained among staff, and the mindset must be transformed.

Great leaders leverage on trust. They also need to build a positive eco-system. Training should be provided where needed, and the environment should be conducive to bring about a common culture of openness, trust, and respect. He also stressed upon the need to have a common set of values to hold on to which are not difficult or confusing, but something simple and easily practiced. Additionally, coaching and mentoring should be the style of leadership

practiced - collaborate to solve problems rather than spoon-feeding the answers. This way, staff can cultivate self-governance and self-enterprise within them, hence keeping check on themselves.

Many issues concerning leadership in the public sector were highlighted by the attendees during this session that revolved around connecting with people and constantly engaging the team. The issues raised serve as useful findings in improving the public-sector culture, and we are delighted to share them here.

**Q: As people come from different backgrounds, how do you come up with a common culture? Must we have an engagement person?**

A: Trust and passion in people potential and being a role model is key in creating a common culture. Consistency in expectations, practices and actions are important to gain trust and confidence from others. People normally will observe and assess what their leaders do and will behave accordingly. We as leaders need to champion, create and show our commitment in pushing for common culture. Those who are not in line with the culture should be dealt with through coaching/mentoring to bring them to the

level that we want. We should only go for procedural measures when we are really sure that despite our best efforts, they really don't want to change. In addition, in the organisational reward system, perhaps we can reflect the importance of culture as a part of assessment. I choose an open, fun, creative, respectful and performance culture so I create an environment where people can be free to speak and give ideas but in a tactful manner and respect each other. For small to mid-sized organisations, we ourselves as leaders can be the engagement person. But perhaps for bigger organisations, you will need an engagement team to champion the culture.

**Q: Environment of the public sector is different from private's; it is bound by systems and procedures, and there are lots of challenges faced. Additionally, we can't force people out.**

A: I think what we should focus on are areas that we can do and make the most of them rather than taking constraints as obstacles to what we want to do. I believe within those constraints, we as leaders can decide on our own areas. In the end, we need to give our best to the organisation. Therefore, our people are most important in making things happen. Perhaps if we can create an open and trusting environment despite the constraints, we can do better than what we do now. We should not look at forcing people out as the solution, instead we should challenge or focus on bringing out the true potential of the people even though he/she is perceived as incapable. The key is to do our best to retrieve their value for the organisation.

**Q: As opposed to private sector where top management gets 100% power, public**

**sector leaders only get 20% power while the other 80% consists of professional engagement with under-performing staff. Also, hiring creative people is one thing, but people with a non-conformist style (who bring 'colour' to the organisation) probably won't be hired in the first place.**

A: As I said before, as leaders we need to embrace the unexpected. We must not discount people's ability and have presumptions on their capabilities until we put our best effort to bring their potential out. I must say sometimes people we perceive as incapable can be the most valuable if we correctly position and develop them. Let's start with believing in people potential and build it from there. I guess the success of a leader is also in turning the perceived incapable person to a capable person. You will be very proud when you can make them high-performers and contributors to the organisation. Again, have trust in people's potential and exercise coaching & mentoring in helping them to develop.

**Q: What is the constant factor for change? Is it the employer or the employee?**

A: I believe what the organisation wants to achieve must remain constant as we are serving the organisation. But how leaders choose to drive their people towards achieving the organisational goals can be different. We can choose to achieve things with stress or a fun and enjoyable environment. It is all our choice and strategy as a leader. I choose working in a fun, creative, open and transparent environment with no unnecessary stress. Different ways of getting things done can have different impact on the working environment, people and performance. No one style can be claimed as the perfect style but for me the best is to achieve with a great working environment

and let the people realise their full potential.

**Q: In private vs public, how you create action is completely different. You have total power in your own company, while in the government every decision needs to be made collectively and through series of engagements.**

A: I think we must first check whether what we thought as a constraint really is a constraint or just a perceived constraint? I am sure there must be an answer to manage things within the constraints in the public sector - perhaps we should dissect to see which part is restraining and which part is within our capacity. We must give our best in fulfilling our roles and if we see things that can be done better, we should bring them up to the higher authority. We should find creative ways to work within the constraints and exercise our wisdom to collaborate with relevant parties in decision-making. As a leader, we should look forward for the betterment of public sector services and contribute to the best that we can instead of taking constraints as a stopper to our creativity or potential.

**Q: Staff sometimes have the attitude of going straight to a leader for an answer to their problems. They do not discuss and come up with ideas among themselves and respective department heads first before escalating it to a second layer discussion among management.**

A: Inspire people and create an environment where people want to give their best, and not just come for their pay check. Be people-oriented, have agility & authenticity and create an environment where people feel responsible for what they do and respect the process required. I believe that should we have a good

environment, we will see that all matters that are brought to us has already gone through a proper thought process and relevant procedures before they reach us.

Secondly, we must always make sure we ourselves respect the management layer below us by making sure that what is being brought to us are matters that have already been discussed and agreed upon by our second layer. Sometimes it is best to discuss in the presence of both the staff and supervisor to ensure all are aware of any issues or decisions.

**Q: Staff do not appear committed to doing their job. Some are even happy to quit the organisation. How do we engage them?**

A: Public sector leaders cannot choose their staff, therefore take the soft approach of coaching & mentoring, and give enough opportunities to improve. Only if all efforts fail, then, can we follow the procedure. In my experience, we introduced the concept of FIFO (fit in or fall out) in our corporate values. In the public sector, if people are happy to 'fall out', perhaps it may be due to the mindset that still equates their services to the compensation that they get. At the same time, perhaps the current reward and punishment structure may not be effective enough to deter or avoid such a situation from happening. Anyway, as leaders, we need to live in this imperfect situation. I think it's best for us to encourage and create a working environment where people want to contribute and give their best as the main motivation. Of course, supported by a reasonable reward system, it will lead to better performance. On top of that we must encourage staff to give their best by pushing to their personal best rather than comparing or competing with others.

**Q: Some contract staff want to quit as the job market outside is huge, and there isn't enough time to ensure fast transfer of knowledge to retain them.**

A: We must have a better retention structure if we need to retain our contract staff. The retention system must be well thought of to ensure they continue motivated to stay as what I call as 'permanent' contract staff. We must understand the psychology of contract staff and what attracts them most to be with us. Understanding their motivation will allow us to structure the long-term retention of contract staff. On another aspect, we need to manage the risk of disruption to our projects when they leave. I would suggest that the project owner should be our permanent staff, whereas the contract staff is the expertise provider. Our staff must lead and understudy the project, therefore should the contract staff leave, the project will not be severely affected.

**Q: How do we ensure that the next leader/successor can sustain the organisation and continue the job?**

A: In my view, leaders should not make themselves seen as the only shaker or mover of the organisation. When they leave, the organisation should not be affected and should remain as strong as before. Therefore, leaders need to develop leaders within the organisation to be able to do similar or better than them to the extent that you feel you are redundant. With strong leaders behind the organisation, it will remain as is and when new leaders come, they will be able to focus their job to bring the organisation to the next stage with support from current available leaders. Thus, the style of leadership may change but the thrust of the organisation will remain.

**Q: How do we tackle silo mentality and come together as a team in a huge workforce?**

A: To avoid silo mentality, it is important for us to create a clear line of sight for all our staff. Thus, everybody knows that we are moving in one direction. It is also important at the senior level that they be given the role as enterprise leaders with accountability on certain functions rather than position them to focus on a specific department/division only. Their thought process should be at enterprise level as a whole while running the functional activities. This will allow close collaboration among functional leaders thus creating a less silo mentality.

**Q: Political influence in the public environment exists, and there is a lack of options when it comes to succession planning.**

A: In circumstances where you are sure you can't make any change; you must focus your attention to where you can influence and change. I am sure as leaders there are areas that you will have an influence. Hence, focus your energy there instead of focusing on something that you know you can't change.

**Q: How do you envision to bring RSOG to the next level?**

A: Do things from the heart and think of what's best for the organisation. RSOG is in the process of developing a new strategic direction. We have studied other schools, e.g. LKY, to identify our future direction. RSOG should be strong in executive education, be the thought leader in public policy, carry out strong research & foresight, and be recognised as a regional centre. Currently, we are perceived as an event organiser, but we want to move towards being an originator and

developer, and finally as expert consultants. We want to develop our own programmes and set a standard for others. We also want inclusiveness for everybody with interest. RSOG staff has

great potential to realise this vision, and we want to work effectively with the public sector in doing things that are truly needed for the country.

# Article

## SORRY SEEMS THE HARDEST WORD

By Ismail Johari Othman

By the time this article goes to print, Muslims all over the world will be ushering in *Eid*. The hallmark of the celebration, particularly in this part of the world, is seeking forgiveness from each other. Though technology may have influenced the way people convey it, the message of *Maaf Zahir dan Batin*<sup>1</sup> is still central in the exchanges. Psychologists<sup>2</sup> have argued that such a polite behaviour is common to humans who have the need to belong and to be included in social circles. Apparently, this simple, five-lettered “sorry” attracts a lot of research interests and there are books specifically written on this subject. For this article, sorry is defined as the feeling of *guilt* that motivates a person to seek forgiveness and in some way patch-up the damage in the relationship. This article will discuss the common reasons behind the reluctance to do so and its impact on relationships.

Interestingly, the fear of being sued has made people (including organisations) reluctant to say sorry – a sign that they have admitted to a wrongdoing and could be held responsible. Often, carefully worded apologies are offered instead. In a related example, a survey<sup>3</sup> by a supervisory body in Australia found that the majority of public authorities have said that they seldom apologise to substantiated complaints generally because of its potential legal consequences. Whilst such legal avenue is a sign of maturity as far as procedure and framework is concerned, one could also ask “where has mankind gone in the pursuit of living?”. In this country, the strings of litigation cases reported in the media lately is naturally a concern on whether such an approach is preferred going forward.

The second reason is somewhat linked to the first. Apologies are becoming harder because it involves reputation. Fertik &

---

<sup>1</sup> Literally means “I seek forgiveness (from you) physically and spiritually”.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/darwins-subterranean-world/201403/the-history-im-sorry>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/victoria/sorry-is-the-hardest-word-why-our-authorities-dont-apologise-for-stuffups-20170502-gvxdyn.html>

Thompson (2015)<sup>4</sup> argued far-reaching implications of having a good reputation which even includes one's marriage prospects. In many organisations nowadays, reputation is identified as one of the strategic risks that needs to be managed skilfully. Generally, people want to be associated with certain images that could contribute favourably to them. Saying sorry is often perceived as less encouraging; showing weakness and incompetence. Such a perspective is usually observed in an extremely competitive environment.

In a more intimate relationship such as marriage, the reluctance to apologise is related to the fear of assuming full responsibility and to relieve the spouse of any culpability – *you have the share of blame too*<sup>5</sup>. Such attitude could potentially be damaging to the relationship in the long run.

In recent years, a group of researchers<sup>6</sup> discovered that there are indeed psychological benefits in refusing to apologise – it makes one feel more empowered, having greater feeling of self-worth, and boosts feelings of integrity. It is worth noting that the respondents of this study consisted of only residents of the United States.

---

<sup>4</sup> Fertik, Michael, and David C. Thompson. The Reputation Economy: How to Optimize Your Digital Footprint in a World Where Your Reputation Is Your Most Valuable Asset. New York: Crown Business, 2015. Web.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-squeaky-wheel/201305/5-reasons-why-some-people-will-never-say-sorry>

<sup>6</sup> Okimoto, Tyler G., Michael Wenzel, and Kyli Hedrick. "Refusing to Apologize Can Have Psychological

Another possible reason which may sound familiar in the local social scene is the inclination to wait for *Hari Raya* to what is popularly known as *kosong-kosong*<sup>7</sup> – seeking one grand apology for all the mistakes that took place in the year whether intentionally or unintentionally. While sounding practical, *taking things for granted* may result in a lifelong regret considering the many uncertainties in life.

Of course, the list could be longer depending on context and situation. The human mind is unique and at times unpredictable to be summed up in a simple checklist. In 2015, Dr. Patrick Dunlop and his co-researchers conducted a study<sup>8</sup> using a six-dimensional model of human personality: Honesty-Humility (H), Emotionality (E), Extraversion (X), Agreeableness (A), Conscientiousness (C), and Openness to Experience (O) (HEXACO) to predict forgiveness-seeking, or apologising. The study found that the Conscientious people tended to be apologetic as sorry is viewed as a means of resolving an unfinished task; like resolving a conflict. On the other end, people with low Honesty-Humility scale found apologising a struggle, as saying sorry lowers themselves.

Depending on timing, authenticity<sup>9</sup>, method, and frequency<sup>10</sup>, saying sorry contributes positively to our relationship with others. It allows one to move on,

Benefits (and We Issue No Mea Culpa for This Research Finding)." European Journal of Social Psychology 43.1 (2012): 22-31. Web.

<sup>7</sup> After the exchange of forgiveness, the record between the two actors in this relationship is reset.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.news.uwa.edu.au/201503317443/research/sorry-its-ok-say-sorry>

<sup>9</sup> Sincere and means it.

<sup>10</sup> Saying sorry too frequently may jeopardise credibility.

makes us humble, and keeps us emotionally *healthy*. At a personal level, a well-timed<sup>11</sup> apology increases one's influence and likeability. Organisationally, an authentic and well-timed apology can motivate staff, builds confidence, and trust. In a more expressive society, organisations and even individuals apologise in public. For example, PepsiCo, Apple Inc., Hyundai, and BP have apologised to their stakeholders for many reasons; ranging from product mishap and reckless advertisement to operational errors. Michael Phelps, one the most successful athlete in the history of the Olympic Games, apologised to the public for his inappropriate<sup>12</sup> behaviour – unexpected from a role model like him.

Based on the foregoing, it appears that sorry seems to be the hardest word because of certain fears that could be

legal, reputational, or psychological; or norms that are unique to certain groups. In all fairness, such fear is generally understandable given the context of living today. In addition to that, personality evidently has a role too. Part of policy related responses is to give more emphasis on social skills, as evident in the world's leading education system<sup>13</sup>. In Razak School of Government, cultural awareness is infused in development programmes, including psychology-related instruments to create awareness of inherent limitation of the individual, as well as the larger group. Above all, given the positive impact to relationship that could be derived, change ideally comes from within. As the legendary P. Ramlee wrote in his song "*buang yang keruh ambil yang jernih, baru teguh peribadi*". The choice is ours. *Selamat Hari Raya*.

---

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.managementtoday.co.uk/sorry-seems-hardest-word/article/1281578>

<sup>12</sup> A photograph showing him inhaling from a marijuana pipe was published in 2009 in a British newspaper.

<sup>13</sup> Crehan, Lucy. *Cleverlands: The Secrets behind the Success of the World's Education Superpowers*. Kansas City: Unbound, 2016. Print.

# Article

## LISTEN, SHARE, ENGAGE!

By Hal Mahera Ahmad

Recently, Razak School of Government (RSOG) organised an experiential visit to DiGi, where among the key learnings was about innovation. We learned that in DiGi.com, innovation is the engine of growth in the company. DiGi.com Berhad (DiGi) was listed in the Forbes World's Most Innovative Companies in 2014 and was the only Malaysian company among the 100 companies listed by Forbes, and the only telecommunications operator from Asia. Being in the business of connecting people, they want to ensure they provide internet for all at low cost rates. It is difficult to predict what lies ahead for the future but we can do our best to anticipate it. For DiGi, their innovative ways have allowed them to engage with customers in order to study the changes of consumer behaviour. Today, they are leading innovation as the first company to launch 4G LTE in Malaysia.

This visit allowed us to look at the elements of leadership. Leadership means influence and consistent engagement. It takes more than shaking hands at events with people. In order to be connected, you must first be engaged. So, the next question for leaders out there is: how engaged are you with your team?

If the private sector is very much business-led, profit oriented and performance driven, what can we say about the public

sector? How much does the public sector differ from the other sectors? There is no straightforward answer to this, as to work in the public sector alone requires you to develop a different kind of motivation. You must have the mind of an entrepreneur, the spirit of a philanthropist and the drive to influence like a politician. You don't get a handsome bonus by the end of the year (maybe occasionally a small token of reward) either financially or through career promotion and other opportunities. As a public servant myself, the satisfaction you get in serving the people is more rewarding than the money.

Gallup findings revealed that only 13% of employees all around the world are really engaged at work. This research has been conducted since 2010. This scenario reflects how they are performing because of the lack of motivation. In his book, Swindall<sup>1</sup> categorised 'the bad people' as those who have been engaged in a routine, vicious cycle of work and collect a paycheck at the end of the month. Motivation is driven by passion and inspiration. In light of this premise, the leaders' role has become more significant than ever.

Through our experience welcoming various leaders from the public sector, private sector and even the community in

---

<sup>1</sup> Engaged Leadership by Clint Swindall

RSOG, we have found striking similarities in their stories. They have often talked about managing their people or in another term, the talents in the organisation. Leaders must have the ability to bring out the best in others and to grow other leaders. While technical expertise and excellent performance are among the indicators of career promotion and progression, there is a fine line between distinguishing those who have the potential to lead the team and the organisation at large. You need to inspire and motivate people around you. This role is not just for the bosses, because leadership in the best scenario means leading at all levels and dimensions. Getting into this practice groove means we must make a commitment within ourselves. Endless practice will later be translated into a habit, and each consistent effort will be rewarded in your leadership journey, which can begin instantly.

Malaysia is going through a multitude of change. From the early 90's where we first heard about Vision 2020, we are now moving towards *Transformasi Nasional (TN50)*. In 2012, the government introduced 1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now. As part of the initiative, Tan Sri Dr. Ali Hamsa, the Chief Secretary to the Government also introduced the Humanising Public Sector<sup>2</sup> concept where there are six key pillars - openness: going down "on the ground"; engagement; striking a balance between spiritual and physical aspects; camaraderie or a sense

---

<sup>2</sup> Running Like Clockwork (2016) (<https://www.thebusinessyear.com/malaysia-2016/running-like-clockwork/vip-interview>)

of belonging; and collaboration and resource-sharing through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and NGO partnerships. Engagement has already become part of the DNA in the new 'public sector culture in Malaysia' narrative.

Engagement in a global perspective is the future focus of many organisations. Thus, leaders need to be genuinely creative in sharing their information. Interesting people, mindset and culture draws people together. In a networked world that we live in today, it is almost impossible not to have access to the information around you. Uninformed employees are, in fact, the disengaged employees. Leaders need to craft their way to win the hearts of the people and they have to find ways to improve communication by focusing on very basic face to face communication. Engaged leadership is a combination of both the arts and science<sup>3</sup> of connecting people. The art of engagement means knowing to decide when and how to connect with your team. To make communication effective, we must be able to utilise and optimise digital tools using both technology and social media platforms. An effective engagement requires a leader to be thinking from different angles to spread their influence, whether for their employees, customers and stakeholders. Often in performance management we are evaluated based on our previous performance but less on our potential, which makes us clueless when we assume

<sup>3</sup> The Engaged Leader: A Strategy for Your Digital Transformation by Charlene Li (2015)

new positions. Therefore, to prepare for the future, potentials should be invested<sup>4</sup>. The most conventional way is to send these people for training, which can be a costly affair. As an alternative, the bright talents can be developed through consistent coaching and mentoring and self-directed learning. As such, leaders need to create new opportunities within the organisation and a positive environment to promote culture, growth and innovation.

Oftentimes, leaders make the mistake of creating tension in the organisation and they do not take time to engage with the employees. Instead, the whole dimension of the workforce should work like an innovation lab. Leaders need to take a step back, let go and observe things happening around them. This requires them to listen strategically, sharing information and finding genuine ways to engage with others. When there is absence in communication, the person usually becomes bitter and the employees lose their motivation. Moving forward, engagement has become part of the crucial skillset of a leader and it has to be acquired and practiced. While leaders need not only set directions through their mission, but explaining why and how to get there is equally important. Each message that you convey to your team must be carefully crafted and delivered with clarity and conviction. According to Forbes, in building the capability of their organisation, leaders need to discover the

potential talents. This can be done through empowerment, in which the employee needs to be exposed to challenging situations that build their confidence and further strengthen their skills. This must be coupled with someone in a position of influence to witness how they lead and collaborate with others. Throughout this process, more observation and listening skills are required and they must prevent themselves from micromanaging the team as they disengage.

According to Harvard, the hidden principles behind organisational agility<sup>5</sup> are growth and innovation. It would be difficult to reach this state if you have disengaged employees. Often, people don't remember what you did but how you made them feel, the latter which has a greater impact on the individual. An engaged leader is a person who can draw from his early formative experience and be reflective in his journey. A person who reflects will learn something based on his personal experience and gain self-confidence to move ahead. Most importantly, he acquires the sense of humility and empathy by developing this habit. It will later translate into emotional bond between the team and can be witnessed through engaged behaviours; for example, through unifying the team and stabilising their emotions and reactions.

In the public sector context, one might have experience in leading a small unit

---

<sup>4</sup> Forbes: 6 Things Wise Leaders Does to the Employee (2015)

<sup>5</sup> What Makes Someone an Engaging Leader by Ken Oehler, Harvard Business Review (2014)

which performs a routine task, or a larger department with various schemes of services, but now faces the challenges of reducing the hierarchical structure and to make the organisation more flexible and adaptable. A public sector practitioner might also be facing challenges in the form of job functions, structure and the changes of leadership and these are the elements that is beyond his control. On the flipside of the coin, leaders, be it public or private sector, have similarities in managing people in the organisation. This is something that we can focus our energy on. As a leader, create motivation for your team members, listen to them, guide them to find solutions to issues and reward them. Engagement practice should also come

in the most effortless manner, such as having a prior understanding of the local culture and idiosyncrasies. In addition to that, leaders who have knowledge on the cultural dimension of Malaysia<sup>6</sup> stand a better chance in building relationships, trust and collectivism. Events such as “*makan-makan*” and “pot luck” cannot be seen as disruptive but more like rapport-building and fostering close-knit relationship while maintaining professionalism. In essence, leaders in this context must be able to do these things: Listen, Engage and Share!

---

<sup>6</sup> Understanding the Malaysian Workforce by Asma Abdullah (2001)

# Article

## THROUGH THE EYES OF A GEN Y:

# What is Emotional Intelligence, exactly?

By Tengku Nur Farhana Tengku Abdul Rahman

Have you ever been in a situation where you are confused on how to respond to your feelings? Or that you just cannot connect when you are dealing with someone who is angry, sad, crying or even laughing at something? If your answer is yes, you have a strong reason why you need to read this article.

### **Why Emotional Intelligence (EI) is such a big deal nowadays**

We are now living in the age where Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is no longer the only factor that leads us to success. IQ skills alone do not guarantee an individual's ability to achieve their dream job. Before we dive deeper into the topic, let us explore the definition first. Emotional Intelligence (EI), also known as the Emotional Quotient (EQ), is the ability to join intelligence, empathy and emotions to enhance thought and understanding of interpersonal dynamics.<sup>1</sup> In other words, it is the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and emotional sensitivity as a source of human

energy, information, and influence. The concept of emotional intelligence has evolved over the years: from its roots, as "social intelligence" all the way back in the 1930's, to "emotional strength" in the mid-20th century, to its current terminology, "emotional intelligence". This term grabbed our attention in 1996 after the release of Dr. Daniel Goleman book entitled "Emotional Intelligence". In it, he promotes a deeper and more complete understanding of oneself and others. Simply put, emotional intelligence is a component that makes a person become smart using emotions<sup>2</sup>.

### **Why it matters today**

Managing EI has been a challenge since early civilisation. Even the legendary Greek philosopher Aristotle once said "*Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right*

---

<sup>1</sup> Mayer, John D (2008). "*Human Abilities: Emotional Intelligence*". Annual Review of Psychology. 59: 507–536. Retrieved June 1, 2017, from <http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/abs/10.1146/annurev.psyc.59.103006.093646>

<sup>2</sup> Vircus, S. (2009). *A Brief History of Emotional Intelligence*. Tallinn University. Retrieved from [http://www.tlu.ee/~sirvir/IKM/Leadership%20Attributes/a\\_brief\\_history\\_of\\_emotional\\_intelligence.html](http://www.tlu.ee/~sirvir/IKM/Leadership%20Attributes/a_brief_history_of_emotional_intelligence.html)

time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – this is not easy.”<sup>3</sup>

With competition in the professional world getting tighter, EI has become more important. Future challenges are more complex than years before and there is a growing need to improve the quality of self. Some of us have been witnessing people who have struggled due to failing emotional control competence, inabilities in handling interpersonal problems, dissatisfaction in dealing with conflicts at work, and the inability to adapt to organisational culture among others. In many ways, success in an organisation largely depends on a person's EI. Emotional intelligence demands to acknowledge and appreciate the feelings of self and others and to respond appropriately in effectively applying emotional energy in everyday life and work.

**Emotional intelligence is a skill that we must develop because IQ alone won't bring us success. But how?**

A person with well-developed emotional skills is likely to be happy and successful in life. As the first step, we must master the habit of being smart with our own emotions. The people we engage in everyday life are creatures with emotions, and when emotional factors are involved, then there is also a need to sharpen the EI skill. No matter who you are, if you want to succeed and survive, special skills like EI are mandatory.

<sup>3</sup> Goleman, D. (1995). *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ*. New York, NY: Bantam Books, Page ix.

Being able to create a perfect interpersonal and social relationship is absolutely the dream of most professionals. In this sense, EI is exciting in that it can be developed and nurtured. According to Daniel Goleman, there are 5 dimensions of EQ, namely (i) Self-awareness, (ii) Self-management, (iii) Self-motivation, (iv) Empathy and (v) Social Skills.<sup>4</sup> These 5 dimensions can be a useful guide in gradually developing our overall EI.



**Self-awareness** can be also viewed as recognising our self-emotion. It is the ability to read and understand our emotions as well as recognise their impact on

work performance, relationships and the likes. It is a realistic evaluation of our strengths and limitations and therefore the basis of our emotional intelligence. The ability to monitor feelings from time to time is important for self-understanding and we are constantly required to remind ourselves how to control our feelings and emotions.



**Self-Management** is an adaptability skill that relies heavily on self-awareness. This second dimension's competence is to withhold negative emotions and

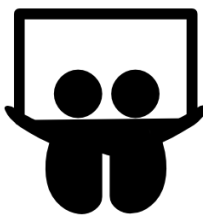
impulses, be responsible for personal performance, become flexible towards change, and being open to new ideas

<sup>4</sup> Goleman, D. (2004). What Makes a Leader? *Harvard Business Review's 10 Must Reads*. Retrieved June 3, 2017, from <https://hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader>

and information. Managing wise emotions is in a nutshell, trying to stay optimistic and being patient, all while focusing on the goals. The inability to control our feelings might lead to decision-making problems. Emotions are said to be successfully managed if we are able to entertain ourselves when afflicted by sadness. This can release anxiety, moodiness or irritation and enables us to bounce back quickly from negativity. Conversely, inability to manage emotions will lead to feelings of melancholy or lead to a self-defeating mindset.



**Self-Motivation** is the ability to encourage ourselves in assessing everything that happens in life. This competency can be traced to the power of positive thinking that helps us focus on goals. People who are strongly driven through achievement continuously strive to improve. Hence, no matter how good we are today, we have to keep the momentum and try to achieve better.



**Empathy** is recognising the emotions of others. This dimension consists of the competence in understanding the emotions of others, and emotional self-sufficiency. It is a skill to interact and treat people according to their emotional reactions. At this stage, we must be aware and concerned about other people's emotions, perspectives and needs. If a person has high empathy skills, such situations can lead a person to feel

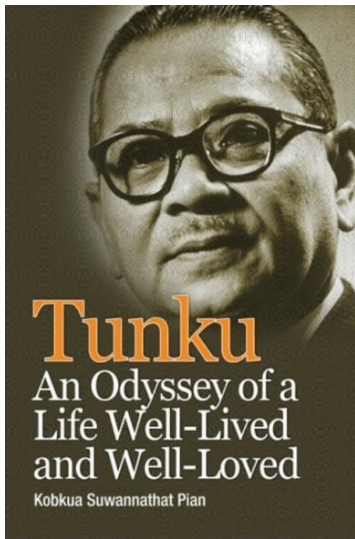
emotionally attached to us and may help in sharing the same interests.



**Social skills** is the art of fostering relationships with others. It is managing relationships, developing networks, building rapport and finding common ground. Relationship building skills are part of social skills, where it can support a person in developing an association. It can be seen through the ability of persuasion, the ability to listen and the ability to convey a clear message, which form the spirit of leadership. Without this skill, one will have difficulty in collaborating, cooperating, and even working in a team.

#### **Start now**

In conclusion, the model proposed by Daniel Goleman seeks to recognise, understand and manage our own emotions with others. EQ will benefit everyone anywhere as human interaction is based on emotions that need to be understood. Last but not least, always remember that this skill can be developed and improved. Start by paying more attention to our own emotions on a daily basis; only then can we reflect on how emotionally intelligent we are.



# Book Recommendation

By Ismail Johari Othman

## TUNKU – An Odyssey of a Life Well-Lived and Well-Loved

*Writer: Kobkua Suwannathat Pian*

As many of you are probably aware, 20 March is declared as International Day of Happiness by the United Nations. This is primarily to recognise the relevance of happiness and well-being as one of its universal goals. There is also the World Happiness Report that ranked Malaysia 42<sup>nd</sup> globally in the 2017 report. One can always argue what 'happy' means to them, but as rightly pointed out by a famous poet: *"Why should I be unhappy? Every parcel of my being is in full bloom"*. Perhaps, given the choices in life, why not choose to be happy?

Publicly, Yang Teramat Mulia Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, Malaysia's Father of Independence always comes into mind when one discusses happiness. Indeed, he once declared himself the happiest Prime Minister in the world. Earlier this year, University of Malaya Press published a

book that focuses on how Tunku lived his life as a man, servant of the state, politician, Chief Minister, Prime Minister, and his private working life post-premiership.

Divided into three parts, this book broadly discusses Tunku's perspective and outlook in life that could probably suggest the feeling of happiness within him. Firstly, his humility connected him with his people, irrespective of their backgrounds. Such extensive connectivity naturally broadens the horizon and creates appreciation of differences. There was one occasion where Tunku had an interesting encounter with an Indian barber who spoke to him in Tamil while giving him a haircut (The barber could have mistaken him as an Indian given his complexion)<sup>1</sup>. Such humility also made his friendship with the young possible. Despite a considerable

---

<sup>1</sup> Tunku was born with darker complexion as compared to the rest of his siblings. As such, he earned familiar monikers like Awang (country boy) and later Ayah Tam (dark uncle).

age gap, among Tunku's closest acquaintance when he was in England to study law<sup>2</sup> was Tun Abdul Razak Hussein. It was to Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, Tunku confided his vision – a career in law and to enter politics.

Tunku was also noted for his compassion and generosity. As the old saying goes, “the more you give, the more you get”, which could include happiness. Tunku's compassion, especially for the underprivileged, is legendary. For instance, during World War II, Tunku who was then a district officer took the initiative to build a shelter in Kulim, Kedah for neglected prisoners who had returned from the River Kwai Death Railway in Thailand. Tunku also displayed a forgiving nature that could have helped him move forward. He lost his wife, Mariam when he was a district officer in Padang Terap, Kedah. She passed away after being diagnosed with malaria soon after she gave birth to their second child – her life could have been saved had it not been due to the doctor's negligence.

An active mind seemed to be another contributing factor to his happiness. His

passion for sports, especially football, is well documented. Through sports, he saw the element of unity that could potentially bind a multiracial country like Malaysia. Apart from his involvements in non-governmental organisations, Tunku was also active in writing following his retirement.

Lastly, Tunku is known for what his friends described as “what-one-sees-is-what-one-gets”. He would always be Tunku Abdul Rahman regardless of the hat he was wearing. He was also frank about his shortcomings. It was narrated in the book that given a chance to re-live his life, Tunku Abdul Rahman would have wanted it to be the same – except trying to complete his law studies earlier.

This book is highly recommended for aspiring and evolving leaders who want to explore the self-leadership that is crucial in leading organisations, country, and even family. Apparently, being happy is a sensible choice for a leader but to be one is evidently challenging as it requires substantial leadership qualities.

***TUNKU – An Odyssey of a Life Well-Lived and Well-Loved is published by University of Malaya Press and can be purchased from leading bookstores at RM56.00***

---

<sup>2</sup> Tunku restarted his legal studies in 1947 after his much earlier attempt failed. At that time, he and Tun Abdul Razak Hussein were 44 and 25 respectively.

*RSOG INSIGHT* aims to provide timely and, wherever possible, policy-relevant commentary on thoughts on RSOG Core themes – Federalism, Multiculturalism, and Development; and its research focus areas – Digital, Diversity, and Emotional Engagement.

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

*Abdullah Hasan*

*Irma Idliyana Mohd Ismail*

*Umar Zainol Rahim*

**CURATORS**

*Khairiah Mokhtaruddin*

*Hazliza Abu Hasan*

**EDITORIAL DESIGN**

*Tengku Nur Farhana Tengku Abdul Rahman*



The views of the authors are their own and may not represent the official position of RSOG. Get in touch with us via email at [corp.comm@rsog.com.my](mailto:corp.comm@rsog.com.my)

[www.rsog.com.my](http://www.rsog.com.my)



Razak School of Government



RSOGMalaysia



rsog\_insta