

It takes **vision, foresight and true grit**

► This week SunBiz gets the thoughts and views of MSM Malaysia Holdings Bhd executive director Datuk Khairil Anuar Aziz

SUCCESS: THE INSIGHT STORY

How has your life experience made you the leader you are today?

Born as the second generation of Felda settler from Felda Sg. Klah, Sungkai, Perak, I have been raised through hardwork and perseverance with strong core values. My determination to change my and my family's lives has made me what I am today. The early years provided me with a good platform for personal growth and development. As a result of this foundation and life experience, I quickly learned the importance of humility, integrity and commitment, which are the cornerstones of a successful and effective leader.

What traits do you look for in your talent or how do you decide who is right for the job?

Often, IQ is the revered quality in a talent. While I agree with that, the other trait which is often overlooked is EQ. Talents with high work ethics are more focused and driven. You can have the brightest talents but if you don't have the right attitude, you will fail in your life.

How do you think the industry you are in will evolve in the future?

The sugar business can be narrowed to three words - competitive, volatile and dynamic. Increasing regulations, market, economic and weather factors are essentially the challenges. Like all others, we must continue to evolve to remain significant. Back in 1964, when MSM started producing refined sugar, the intention is to make Malaysia self-sufficient in the production of sugar, a much needed commodity at that time.

Fast-forward, our capacity increased to 2.25 million metric tonne per annum. With extra capacity and ever increasing pressure from health enthusiast NGOs, the future of sugar is evolving to a different direction. To remain relevant, we are now preparing ourselves to explore other revenue stream along the sugar value chain, i.e sweeteners.

What advice can you offer those looking to start their career/own business?

Vision, foresight and true grit is the

first step. Then it boils down to successful execution - which sets apart yourself against the budding entrepreneurs. Combine your passion and business, and everything will fall into place. You cannot achieve success without putting your whole self into the process. Elicit genuine, constructive feedback, and make it a priority to ensure your strategy is responsive to reflect what your customers have to say. At the end of the day, it is what they think that truly matters.

We all know about the industrial revolution, are we in for a technological revolution? Your thoughts.

Both revolution go hand-in-hand and let's face it, we are in that current period. Technology has definitely changed our lives. The rapid changes over the past centuries was initiated by man-made technologies and transformed how we conduct business and provided vast opportunities for many. Embrace the change, harness the benefits but remain cautious. The human brain element always supersedes to that of any technology marvel or computers.

How has mentorship made a difference in your professional life?

Over the years, I was very fortunate to have great mentors who nurtured me. Not only providing guidance on my professional career but the techniques on managing work-life balance too. Networking and the relationship forged with them all these years has never been a waste because I always believe in the human touch. To date, it is a privilege to work alongside these mentors as the knowledge imparted gave me the confidence to stride forward without feeling the need to stop or pause.

What do you want to accomplish in the next five years?

I am proud to be

associated with MSM Group and its Gula Prai brand, which continues to serve Malaysians for the past 54 years. However, as every business owner knows, success does not come without challenges. MSM cannot afford to rest on its laurels as its past success can never guarantee its future success. I am committed to work very hard to sustain and strengthen its market leadership in the domestic and global front.

My goal is to ensure sustainable business growth for MSM, which will ultimately bring profit and provide dividend to our shareholders. To accomplish this, continuous efforts to focus on optimum cost management, operational efficiency, prudent spending and performance-driven culture are my top priorities. Having said that, providing a personal touch and creating that "wow" factor for our customers continue to be a differentiator for us in this industry, and we can't lose sight of that as we scale forward.

Best piece of advice you ever got on your career?

In one of my early leadership roles, my mentor told me, "your team is a direct reflection of you." That stuck with me throughout the years and has shaped how I evaluate myself in light of my team.

Most admired business leader?

Why?
Robert Kuok - Malaysian

Captain of the sugar industry, a gentleman and leader who needs no introduction in the annals of corporate Malaysia.

A man with tremendous foresight and vision who has made name in Malaysia as well as the world but remained humble. His philosophy of people being our greatest asset is proven.

How do you stay abreast of issues affecting your industry?

Staying abreast of issues and challenges is very demanding. That is why I continuously revisit business strategies to suit current industry changes as they are not static. Gaining insights by reading, studying and listening to market talk has kept me ahead of the curve and in making firm business decisions, which are vital for the company.

If you could have an hour with any thought leader in the world, who would it be and why?

Bill Gates - because he is a successful leader and great philanthropist. His keys to success are true and inspiring for everyone from aspiring billionaires to owners of the smallest businesses.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced? And what did you learn from it?

To turn around a public listed company, which is ongoing smoothly. We didn't put our energy into figuring out the strategy. Instead, we concentrated on changing the behaviour of our team members to help them grow as leaders. It wasn't the strategy that would carry us, it was leadership.

created through cultural change - what we call "winning culture." It was important for our leadership team to understand that there were consequences to what we decided to do or didn't do, and that as leaders we "owned" those consequences.

What was the most outlandish business proposal you have ever heard of?

Alipay (founded by Jack Ma, Alibaba Group). Who would've thought their business proposals would end up to be globally successful. This proves that ideas churned can be successful, given the right attitude.

What man-made innovation confounds you?

It would be the fast-paced technological advancements. From the world wide web, social media to artificial intelligence, it is a constant challenge to keep up with the growth pace where everything happens at your fingertips. Yet, these advancements will shape future businesses ahead.

Malaysia's greatest brand?

I am proud to say that Malaysia's greatest brand is "Gula Prai" - the No. 1 selling brand in Malaysia. It has been in existence since 1964 to make Malaysia self-sufficient in the production of sugar, a much needed commodity at that time until today. It carries a strong brand value and is an iconic home-grown brand.

A must-read for every business owner/manager is...

Good to Great by Jim Collins, a highly recommended read. Interesting findings on research conducted by Collins and his team over five years discovered the key determinants of greatness - why some companies make the leap and others don't.

What are the top three factors you would attribute your success to?

Family, Friends and Colleagues. Success is a test. It's a long way up but you'll end up at the bottom in a split second if you don't stay razor-sharp. You must roll-up your sleeves and be on the ground together with your team. There is no secret recipe nor short cut to success except for the

universal attributes of hard work, perseverance, honest, open to change at all times.





18 Feb 2019
The Sun, Malaysia

Author: No author available • Section: Business • Page: 12 • Printed size: 690.00cm²
Region: KL • Market: Malaysia • Photo: Full Color • ASR: MYR 17,708.00
Item ID: MY0035145658

 isentia.mediaportal

Provided for client's internal research purposes only. May not be further copied, distributed, sold or published in any form without the prior consent of the copyright owner.



Page 2 of 2

SUMMARIES

OThis week SunBiz gets the thoughts and views of MSM Malaysia Holdings Bhd executive director Datuk Khairil Anuar Aziz

How has your life experience made you the leader you are today? Born as the second generation of Felda settler from Felda Sg. Klah, Sungkai, Perak, I have been raised through hardwork and perseverance with strong core values. My determination to change my and my family's lives has made me what I am today.