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Creativize Sdn. Bhd.

A Simple Question that Seeded a Global Business

‘Why are these stickers not produced locally as there is huge potential in the local market and people are willing to pay a high price for these imported stuff,’ Joachim Sebastian asked himself.

Joachim Sebastian, the founder of creative design start-up Creativize Sdn. Bhd., described himself as a persistent person. Born with an entrepreneurial instinct, he was always on the look-out to make a buck through small-time business ventures even in his teens, like repairing computers. Now at the age of 31 years old, Joachim is selling his products in more than 100 countries, thanks to the advancement in e-commerce. Not only that, the range of products he offers online has grown tremendously to include even machines and motorcycles!

The idea for his business came in 2012 when he bought stickers for his motorcycle online from a retailer in France. He asked himself ‘why are these stickers not produced locally as there is huge potential in the local market and people are willing to pay a high price for these imported stuff’. So he began researching the products to learn how they are produced. Within six months he had sorted out the production process for stickers and had obtained local materials and a small machine to make them himself. In 2013, he and his wife started selling the stickers to an international market through eBay. Within a year, they were selling between USD1,400 to USD1,700 worth of stickers a month.

That was catalytic in pushing Joachim to further expand his business. He obtained funding from the Graduate Entrepreneur Fund under the SME Bank which enabled him to acquire more machinery and raw materials to grow the business. “That was the beginning of my entrepreneurial journey but that first year was tough. The tools and systems required for e-commerce can exhaust your capital pretty fast. Trying to obtain more funding was a lot of hard work. It was a rollercoaster ride,” he recalled.

It has been said that when the going gets tough, the tough gets going and Joachim was definitely one tough-minded entrepreneur who stubbornly pushed on. In the process he learned valuable lessons that have stood him in good stead ever since. The situation began to change when a second bigger funding was secured. Two partners onboard, one of whom brought with him vast business experience, new ideas and knowledge on strategy, budgeting, leadership and processes.

Between December 2014 and November 2015, the company chalked up sales of about RM400,000. By the end of 2016, their sales had tripled to RM1.2 million. Manpower had also grown from merely three staff to seven in 2015, then 12 in 2016 and currently 25 in total in the



Creativize now sells its stickers through multiple brands on twenty different eBay and Amazon platforms. Through its premium logistics services provider DHL Express, the Company was able to provide high quality delivery service to its customers



group of companies. Along the way, additional funding was obtained from MyCreative Ventures to finance the up-scaling of facilities and hiring of additional manpower.

Creativize now sells its stickers through multiple brands on twenty different eBay and Amazon platforms. Through its premium logistics services provider DHL Express, the Company was able to provide high quality delivery service to its customers. The Company's global footprint had also attracted the attention of Payoneer which provides online payment services to Amazon and Joachim has been appointed a brand ambassador for Payoneer.

"Network support is vital in business. We were blessed to have a great partnership with our key logistics partner DHL Express. They provide not just logistics services but also advice on international taxes and customs duties as well as facilitating pathways in order to minimise risks and loss. It was through their support that enabled us to expand our sales to 83 countries by 2017. We are now selling in 100 countries including United Kingdom, France, United States, Australia, Germany and other European countries", he added.

Joachim is also grateful for the support he has received from various agencies in the form of funding and guidance. He is particularly grateful to SME Bank, MyCreative Ventures and Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation

(MATRADE) for funding. MyCreative Ventures and SME Bank were also key strategic partners in the business expansion. Joachim was also a beneficiary of SME Corp. Malaysia's Business Accelerator Programme which helped to enhance his business capabilities through business advisory and financial assistance.

Creativize's growth was also augmented by the creation of a new brand – Kismet Decals. The brand provides wall art in the form of removable wall stickers using designs by artists from around the world including Malaysia. The artists get a 20% royalty from the sales of their designs and altogether 16 artists have signed on with the Kismet Decals brand.

Moving forward, Creativize is opening a new sales channel in the business-to-business market and is approaching car and other manufacturers for OEM deals. Joachim has also branched out into the manufacturing, distribution and retailing of high premium motorcycle components under another company, Kratos Motorsports, as well as providing consultation for other companies to expand globally via e-commerce, through Everpeaks Consulting. Looking back when he first started, Joachim has never thought by asking a simple question on the supply of his motorcycle stickers has brought him this far in the business but one thing for sure, he could not have achieved so much without leveraging on e-commerce.

Green Initiative Sdn. Bhd.

A Small Battery Business Recharged Through the Social Media

“My vision was to create great customer experience based on convenience, quality and security but minus the high cost,” said Azarol Faizi, CEO of Green Initiative Sdn. Bhd.

How many ways can you sell car batteries? By a simple tweaking of his sales concept, Azarol has taken the mundane business of selling batteries to a whole new level! Azarol, a mechanical engineer by profession, had dreams of being an entrepreneur from young. After employment stints in steel fabrication as well as oil and gas firms, he took the plunge into business in 2005 by setting up Astra Simfoni Sdn. Bhd. and later Astra Manufacturing. Astra Simfoni is a total battery and industrial power solutions provider and a vendor to Proton, Perodua and Mitsubishi as well as an industrial power vendor to Telekom Malaysia.

During the early stage of his business, Azarol was toying with the idea of a car battery delivery service as he saw huge potential with the increasing number of vehicles on the road. His vision was to create a great customer experience based on convenience, quality and security but minus the high cost. Nevertheless, the challenge remain on how to make his business different from others and provide great customer experience so it

stands out in the crowd. After much brainstorming, the Bateriku.com branding under Green Initiative Sdn. Bhd. was born in early 2014.

Essentially, what the Company does is to deliver and install batteries on-site in response to a distress call from motorists whose vehicle could not start possibly because of battery failure. These distressed motorists can contact Bateriku.com through various channels such as online, toll free numbers, Facebook, Instagram and e-commerce platforms. The service is available every day, any time between 7am to midnight for any location be it on a busy highway, at a customer's home, workplace or a parking lot.

Azarol said, “Our mobile technician will come immediately and ascertain the actual problem. Customers can even call us for a free check if they are in doubt about the condition of their battery. Bateriku.com is all about delivering





“Bateriku.com is all about delivering and installing batteries on-site but what sets us apart from the rest is the use of e-commerce technologies and social media and we believe that our business model fits nicely into the digital economy landscape”

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Azarol must be doing something right as sales now average 300 batteries daily and about 8000 batteries monthly nationwide. In Bateriku.com’s first month of existence, the company had sold only 54 batteries due to the fact that many customers were not aware of their existence. Since then, revenue has been doubling year-to-year and the company’s presence has spread out from its original Klang Valley base to major towns and cities in Johor, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Terengganu and Penang. Azarol is proud of the fact that Bateriku.com has been making steady progress.

On the challenges encountered in setting up Bateriku.com, Azarol said, “The battery business is not a glamorous one. It is old business, even the delivery concept, but we have stood above the crowd by leveraging on e-commerce. There

are competitors in the business but we have had a head start because we have been in the battery business for over 10 years under the parent company Astra Simfoni. Initially it was tough creating market awareness and getting acceptance from customers but we are still leading in terms of delivery volume and number of employees, with approximately 80 people working with us.”

On what he considers to be his biggest achievement so far, he said, “Business is not just about making money but contributing to society. I am proud of the fact that we are creating employment opportunities not just for our own staff but for those who want to earn extra income, for example, freelance mobile technicians. Where our in-house delivery team is concerned, I want to take them to the next level to service high-end vehicles like Mercedes and BMW while the freelancers concentrate on the general market. I envisage a time when even our call centre would be manned by freelancers.”

As there is a huge potential for the business with an estimated 400,000 batteries being replaced every month in Malaysia, the company is looking at new growth areas like battery charging, OEM and customisation and collection of scrap batteries as well. The company also wants to be part of the sharing economy where they can collaborate with other parties related to vehicle servicing like repair workshops. Azarol believes that as long as the other party is in sync with Bateriku.com’s philosophy on quality and reliability, they can be network partners.

With the success of Bateriku.com, Azarol has carved out yet another notch in his entrepreneurial credentials. He is very excited about Bateriku.com as the business allows space for innovation since it follows the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) framework. From 2019 onwards, the company will continue to leverage further on technology – big data, Internet of Things to name a few. Azarol is also looking at expanding the replicable Bateriku.com business model to Indonesia, then further afield in the ASEAN region and ultimately globally. However, right now, the company’s priority is to continue expanding the local market share.



Inang Suri Sdn. Bhd.



Taste of Sweetness in Chocolate Venture

“To succeed, my chocolates have to be of better quality in every way if it is to stand out from the crowd. I need professional training not only in product development but in business management as well,” reflected Hazleen.

The late motivational speaker Robert Schuller used to say that high achievers spot rich opportunities swiftly, make big decisions quickly and move into action immediately. Follow these principles and you can make your dreams come true. Schuller could have been describing 36-year-old Hazleen Syafiza Mansor whose entrepreneurial instincts for opportunities, daring and decisiveness has made her the proud owner of a chocolate business with a brand that carries her name.

Hazleen, a mass communication, media studies and advertising graduate from Universiti Teknologi Mara, is a native of Sungai Petani, Kedah. She recalled during her school days in 2000s when the economy was bad and how the community including her family tried to make ends meet by selling food such as burgers and *pisang goreng* (banana fritters).

It was in observing such business that her entrepreneurial instincts blossomed and grew,

with the focus on the food business mainly because she wanted to be in a business that is recession-proof. In 2005, the domestic chocolate business was growing fast and there were many handmade chocolate makers in the market. Hazleen was fast in jumping on the bandwagon. She was lucky as she was able to learn it at first-hand from her mother who had acquired the skills of making handmade chocolate from a friend.

With RM1,000 as capital, she started Inang Suri Sdn. Bhd. in a very small way by selling her handmade chocolates to neighbours, friends, school children and at farmers’ markets. The chocolates were well-received by the market and demand began to grow. A bigger workforce was needed to increase production volume. Hazleen’s previous work experience with the Social Welfare Department prompted her to recruit people with disabilities. She explained, “It has always been part of my vision and objective to provide employment opportunities to those with disabilities and also as a means of educating society to empower them

to serve the community." The initial two trainees with disabilities soon grew to 10. During the early days, production of the handmade chocolates was carried out at the Sungai Petani Social Welfare Department's workshop.

She added, "To succeed, my chocolates have to be of better quality in every way if it is to stand out from the crowd. I need professional training not only in product development but also in business management as well. Fortunately, I was accepted into SIRIM's Groom Big training programme." The Programme aims at nurturing, grooming and developing SMEs to be competitive, resilient and sustainable in the local and international market. It is centred on three aspects namely, product development, capacity building as well as marketing and promotion. From that moment on, Hazleen had relentlessly attended more trainings provided by Government agencies to improve the chocolate's packaging, pattern and overall image. After a few branding exercises, the Hazleen handmade chocolate brand was born.

However, it was not until 2012 that Hazleen's dream of having a proper factory to produce her sweet treats came true. In that year, she entered her company as a participant in the Rural Business Challenge, a programme sponsored by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development to provide opportunities for Malaysian youths to showcase their entrepreneurship. Inang Suri emerged as runner-up in the challenge which carried the prize of a RM1.5 million grant.

The up-scaling of her business began in earnest with the move to the factory. She then installed 15 new machines which handle all the aspects of

chocolate production - from cleaning of moulds to paste-making and up to packaging. More workers were employed, with the current workforce stands at 14. Production capacity was increased up to three tonnes of chocolates a month, with actual volume produced subject to demand. The company now has a marketing office each in Selangor and Pahang.

The commercialised Hazleen chocolate brand has since then penetrated markets throughout Malaysia. 500 retailers now stock the brand which is sold in the form of bars and mini chocolates. The chocolates come in 12 tropical fruit flavours such as durian, mango, pineapple and jackfruit as well as continental flavours like strawberry, orange, blueberry, cappuccino and almonds.

Hazleen said the company will continue to leverage on the exposure given under the Amaxx Mall showcase in 135 Giant Malaysia outlets throughout the country starting from May 2018. As for her future market expansion plans, she is also targeting to penetrate the Thai and Indonesian market before the end of the year.

Hazleen is optimistic that her products will find acceptance in the international market based on the response received at the Agro Bazaar Singapore in 2017. Inang Suri Sdn. Bhd. is currently talking to Thai Muslim cooperative which has shown interest in their products. With

a new market to cater, the chocolate production volume will increase to seven tonnes a month. Hazleen is also aiming for online sales. She said, "We can't afford to ignore the opportunities emerging with the rapid development of the digital economy and have set up a special unit to handle online sales."



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Peppermint Avenue LLP



A Thriving Digital Apparel Store for Kaftan Apparel

“I wanted to express fashion that’s not bound by ethnicity or religion or body type. I wanted vibrant colours and patterns that resonate with one’s feelings as a woman. I wanted to introduce women to feel-good fashion wear,” pledged Irda Nurhidayah to herself.

Long associated with Islamic culture, the kaftan became popular in the west during the late 1960s-70s when interest in comfortable clothing and ethnic styles made it a popular Bohemian style and an icon of the hippie movement. Kaftans can be a rustic garment of a peasant or a magnificent robe fit for a sultan. Today, the kaftan is back in a big way and a Malaysian entrepreneur has leveraged on kaftan fashion to build a thriving business. Irda Nurhidayah Mohamed Salleh or better known as Didi, is the founder of Peppermint Avenue Sdn. Bhd., an emerging brand for high-end kaftan apparels.

In 2011, Didi followed her entrepreneurial desire by embarking on a part-time business to sell casual and resort wear. She started by consigning apparels at brick and mortar stores. That baby step into entrepreneurship soon turned into a full-time business and her product line soon changed from casual and resort wear to kaftans after she saw the potential in that line at an

overseas fashion event. Since 2016, kaftans have become Peppermint Avenue’s core product line. Kaftans are so versatile that it could be worn at various occasions ranging from outing to the beach, to casual brunch with friends up to visiting families during festive seasons. She said of her vision back then: “I wanted to express fashion that’s not bound by ethnicity or religion or body type. I wanted vibrant colours and patterns that resonate with one’s feelings as a woman. I wanted to introduce women to feel-good fashion wear.”

In 2014, Didi ventured into another channel to market her kaftans by embarking into e-commerce through her website - www.PeppermintAvenue.com. She also ventured into local e-commerce marketplaces and subsequently joined e-commerce market across border at amazon.com in 2015. After successfully participated in MyCyberSales in 2016, she marched ahead to export to other markets via the Digital Free Trade Zone initiative in 2017. Peppermint Avenue’s sales are now derived equally from on-line and hotel



After successfully participated in MyCyberSales in 2016, she marched ahead to export to other markets via the Digital Free Trade Zone initiative in 2017. Peppermint Avenue's sales are now derived equally from on-line and hotel outlets

outlets. Didi said annual sales volume has been growing consistently from four-digit figure per month before venturing into e-commerce to five-digit figure per month.

"I have not quite arrived yet but the fact that Peppermint Avenue has been able to achieve so much in a relatively short time can be attributed to a good support network," added Didi. By participating in MyCyberSales organised by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) in 2016, she managed to build a network of supporting peers who had helped enormously in developing her business. In addition, being part of Gorgeous Geeks (a Kuala Lumpur-based platform to empower women to leverage on technology) has also been of remarkable help. Looking back, her steep learning curve in e-commerce and marketing are acquired through trial and error, as well as learning from others. Didi is also fortunate to receive great support from her logistics partners, as most of her materials are imported.

Didi is excited with the prospects of e-commerce in Malaysia. When she was studying in Australia, she saw how far ahead it was in e-commerce. Now, within several years, Malaysia has caught up with the digital economy. E-commerce platforms have proliferated with all sorts of businesses - from food delivery to beauty to practically

across all sectors of the economy. The function of traditional brick-and-mortar set-ups has been up-ended. Brick-and-mortar outlets now serve as advertising points while the online business does the selling. Didi believes that the future is digital, therefore, steps must be taken to develop the digital economy further through education to cover even non-commercial sectors if Malaysia is to reap the huge potential there.

As an energetic and robust entrepreneur, Didi is passionate about contributing to the development of women entrepreneurs. She would like to put the experience and expertise that she had acquired in business into good use. She really want to help young girls and women to pursue their dreams. From her observation, women entrepreneurs often face a different set of challenges from men. Many who have the desire to enter business are afraid to do so because of lack of self-confidence.

"My advice to aspiring women entrepreneurs is be passionate about what you want to do as having passion is half the battle won. Be thick-skinned and do not be ashamed to ask for help especially when you need it. Make sure you conduct your business with integrity in the marketplace. Above all, go for your dream and do not let your fear kill your dreams, as you never know where it will lead you. In essence, always live in a beautiful and positive state of mind," she ended.

Plaza Merdeka Management Sdn. Bhd.

Plaza Merdeka Joining the Digital Landscape



“Plaza Merdeka is an innovative shopping mall that is moving in tandem with developments in the digital economy. Fashion retailers may be moving into online shopping but they are also maintaining their brick and mortar presence for more visibility and branding.

Plaza Merdeka is a relative newcomer to the shopping mall scene in Kuching but it is creating a buzz and becoming a happening place for families and tourists. So what is it that makes Plaza Merdeka different from other malls in Kuching? General Manager of Plaza Merdeka Management Sdn. Bhd., Cheah Kheng Mun believed it is all about efficiency, quality products, friendly service, innovative ideas as well as greater engagement and collaboration with the local community and business partners.

Mr. Cheah added, “Our ultimate aim is about making our mall a preferred destination for shopping, leisure and dining in the city by offering a great shopping experience to people from all walks of life. The Mall offers local and international product brands, local and western cuisines, entertainment for all in the family and excellent security. We are rather proud of our food and beverages (F&B) set-up. We like to describe our Food Plaza as Your Downtown Kitchen”.

Cheah said that there was also a deliberate strategy to locate the Mall in the old historical

district of Kuching. Shopping malls, are also tourist destinations. So he wanted to combine great shopping experience in the Mall together with the tourist attractions in their vicinity. At the same time, he wanted to help revitalise the old city area. He is particularly proud of the fact that their presence there has helped to transform a quiet section of the city into a vibrant and fun place for families and tourists.

The result of the company’s vision is a modern mall juxtaposed with historical landmarks - like Chinatown, colonial-styled cathedrals, the Sarawak Museum, century-old Chinese temples - and modern ones like the waterfront and Kuching’s latest landmark, the Darul Hana Bridge (popularly known as the Golden S Bridge). All these attractions are within walking distance from the Mall.

The Mall has a gross area of 550,000 sq. ft. with a net lettable area of 350,000 sq. ft. It was 90.0% occupied when it first opened in 2012. The Mall’s eclectic mix of tenants offers shoppers a wide range of local and international brands. Among

the tenants are Parkson Departmental Store, Everrise, Cotton On, Esprit, Dorothy Perkins, Guess, Swatch, Hush Puppies, H&M, SenQ, Super Save and Mr. DIY. Fast food chains like Subway, McDonald and Yubiso located their first outlets in Borneo at Plaza Merdeka. Among the internationally recognised brands to locate their first outlets in Sarawak at Plaza Merdeka were Gloria Jean's Coffees, Dorothy Perkins, Burger King, Swatch and Subway. The opening of a Nene Chicken outlet is imminent. In 2017, the Mall's sales turnover was nearly RM11 million.

Significant leaps have been made in realising its vision judging by its recent achievements. Plaza Merdeka won the 2015/2016 edition of the Malaysia Tourism Awards for Innovative Shopping Centre (Stand-Alone Category). In 2017, the company was listed in the SME Corp. Malaysia's elite Enterprise 50 (E50) Award. The Award honours the top 50 SMEs in the country in recognition of their achievements in financial capabilities, operations and management competencies. In 2018, at the 2016/2017 edition of the Malaysia Tourism Awards, Plaza Merdeka was a Certificate of Merit recipient when it was selected as one of the top three finalists in the Best Shopping Centre (Stand-Alone Shopping Centre) category.

Cheah said, "Plaza Merdeka is an innovative shopping mall that is moving in tandem with developments in the digital economy. Fashion retailers may be moving into online shopping but they are also maintaining their brick and mortar presence. Digitalisation is an obvious move forward for mall managers." With e-payment increasingly becoming part of the digital landscape, Plaza Merdeka is looking at this mode of payment to enhance shoppers' convenience. It is collaborating with Sarawak Pay, a mobile payment system to cater especially to Sarawakians and also partnering with Boost, the mobile payment system from Axiata, as well as providing other e-payment options for shoppers, including for parking and premium washrooms via e-wallets.

Plaza Merdeka has become a prime shopping destination in Kuching which caters to the urban lifestyle of executives, students, families and tourists. The impact of the Mall on the community can be seen from the annual average footfall which is 4.5 million. As to the management's plans in the next five years, Cheah said, "The Mall's primary target market is the younger generation, particularly working adults with young families. We are strategising on optimising our tenant mix in relation to products, services, entertainment and F&B in combination with various types of promotional events to cater to our demographic targets."



With e-payment increasingly becoming part of the digital landscape, Plaza Merdeka is looking at this mode of payment to enhance shoppers' convenience



Seri Elf Enterprise

Turning a *Dusun* Heritage into a Global Business



“The internet has made it possible to take my products from a humble kampung to the world. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are so useful in promoting our products, especially for people in remote locations like us. Imagine that a village-based business like ours could reach out to Europe and Asia so conveniently at a lower cost,” said Emily.

Sabahan Emily Jeneble @ Nurfarain Abdullah may be a kampung girl but she possesses enough entrepreneurial savvy to see potential in a heritage craft of her *Dusun* tribe and parlayed that insight into a thriving woven-bamboo handbag business. Emily, 37, the owner of Seri Elf Enterprise, and a native of Kampung Batu Lungunyan in Keningau, has been involved in making woven bamboo products for 20 years now.

She said, “The art of making woven bamboo crafts is part of the *Dusun* heritage and a source of pride for our *kampung*. This part of our culture and tradition has been passed down from generation to generation in our community.” Her interest in making such crafts was inspired during childhood by watching her grandmother weave traditional headgear and fish nets. Her skills were then developed and enhanced by training from her mother.

The turning point for Emily came in 2011 when she began to see the potential in hand-woven bamboo handbags as marketable products. By following her entrepreneurial instincts, she has since then grown a village-based enterprise that produces hand-woven bamboo handbags not only for the Malaysian market but also for customers from Europe and other parts of Asia.

Emily's handbags are rather unique as they are a fusion of her *Dusun* heritage and modern designs and production processes. Through the artistic rendering of natural elements like the moon, rain, flowers and precious stones, each motive in a bag echoes the tradition and heritage of the *Dusun* community. Even the colour scheme of each handbag has its own story to tell. Ultimately, the final product is an interesting mix of the traditional and modern as the handbags not only incorporate woven bamboo as its core element, but also materials such as PVC, leather and canvas which

However, for Emily, the business is more than just about making money. It is a way to preserve her cultural heritage. By introducing her products to the world, she is raising the international profile of indigenous cultures such as hers



are then finished by modern sewing techniques. The result is a high quality product that showcases the artistry of *Dusun* craftsmanship.

It is not surprising then that Emily's artistic touch on her bamboo handbags has caught the attention of customers from as far as the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, South Korea and Japan. She said, "The internet has made it possible to take my products from a humble *kampung* to the world. Social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook are so useful in promoting our products, especially for people in remote locations like us. Imagine that a village-based business like ours could reach out to Europe and Asia so conveniently and at a lower cost."

Thanks to the eye-catching designs and unique features of her heritage craft, monthly orders received now have reached RM10,000 in value. However, for Emily, the business is more than just about making money. It is a way to preserve her cultural heritage. By introducing her products to the world, she is raising the international profile of indigenous cultures such as hers. The business is also about empowering the community as it helps to raise the socio-economic status of women in the village by providing jobs and giving them opportunities to acquire skills.

When asked on what is needed to run a business such as hers, Emily said, "For this kind of

business, it's important that one is very skillful and experienced in order to produce various designs. Quality is paramount. The production process is a painstaking one. The skin of the bamboo must be carefully sliced off and then dyed and dried before weaving is done. The bamboo skin must be completely dry to ensure it doesn't get spoilt before or during the weaving process. We only use mature bamboo as it is hardy."

Another important component for success in business, she added, is marketing and promotion. She believed that even though she had good products, the ability to sell them is more crucial, as the efforts would be wasted if there is no buyer. Besides that, she also need to be alert on the emerging fashion trends so that her products are always in demand.

For her outstanding craftsmanship and contribution to the local community, Emily has been awarded the Young Craft Entrepreneur Award (*Anugerah Usahawan kraf Muda*) 2018. It is an inaugural award presented by Perbadanan Kemajuan Kraftangan Malaysia to dedicated youth in the craft industry who has exhibited relentless effort in showcasing Malaysian heritage. As for her future plans, Emily wants to have her own training centre where youth can acquire skills in making traditional handicrafts to do their own business not only to raise their economic status but also to preserve their cultural heritage.

Shamawar Sdn. Bhd.



Electrical Supplies Business Powered by Core Values

“We have never deviated from our vision of providing the best products and services professionally and honestly. We built our business on a solid platform of integrity and professionalism,” says Dato’ Shakir.

Shamawar, which was incorporated in 1997, is a pioneer in the supply and commissioning of test measuring instruments, electrical accessories and safety electrical products. It also serves as product solutions provider for public utility giants like TNB, Telekom, Sabah Electricity and Sarawak Energy. The company represents various international companies from United States, Canada, Europe and Asia as supplier for products ranging from transmission, distribution and testing equipment to smart metering solutions, emergency restoration system, fuses of various voltages to energy equipment and solutions.

It all began in 1994 when a young graduate who had completed his study in the United Kingdom returned home to Malaysia. Having

set his mind to become an entrepreneur due to his early exposure in entrepreneurship during his adolescence years, he was totally set on being his own boss. That man was none other than Shakir Husein Kalid who then roped in his accountant wife Ani Mawar Abdullah to form a team to pursue his entrepreneurial dreams. Thus Shamawar Sdn. Bhd. was born.

Their early days as entrepreneurs was not all smooth-sailing as they encountered daunting challenges. They had neither capital nor network to go into supplying mechanical and electrical equipment and parts. However, he was determined to give it a go in response to the Government’s efforts to create more Bumiputera entrepreneurs. He started by identifying the electrical and mechanical products in demand

and worked on to ensure that his products were up to the industry standards. Datin Ani said since their initial capital was small, they had to depend on factoring to keep the business going. Fortunately for the couple, their main customers were Government-linked companies who made prompt payments and that provided them with a consistent flow of income to keep afloat.

However, there were still formidable hurdles in their attempts to penetrate the market. As a newbie in the market, Shamawar struggled to win contracts against more established competitors. As Dato' Shakir put it, "We had no track record, and certainly no recognition. We really had to think out of the box. So what we did was to market our products according to customers' needs, that is, not merely selling products but packaging and customising them in line with their needs. Besides selling, we are also solutions providers."

nearly 100 people, is helmed by Dato' Shakir as the Group Managing Director and Datin Ani as the Group Chief Executive Officer. For their relentless effort, the Group has won a string of awards and recognition over the years, among which are the TQM Model Award Company from MPC, Best Practice Award SME Category from National Award for Management Accounting, 4 Star Rating under SME Competitiveness Rating for Enhancement (SCORE), Anugerah Kejayaan Cemerlang from PUNB and a gold award at the MPC Regional Team Excellence Convention.

Looking back, Dato' Shakir said, "It was always tough building a business but we have never deviated from our mission to provide the best products and services professionally and honestly. We built our business on a platform of integrity and professionalism."



Dato Shakir's corporate philosophy also applies to the company's relationship with suppliers as he believes integrity is vital to stay long in business

They took up the challenge to manufacture locally produced products for the energy industry and proved that Malaysian companies have the ability to manufacture products that complies with international standards. Their products finally entered the export market and exports now account for 10% of group sales.

Today the Shamawar Group comprises four companies, the mother company Shamawar Sdn. Bhd., Shamawar Elektrika Sdn. Bhd., Shamawar Technica Sdn. Bhd. and Shamawar Medicare Sdn. Bhd. The Group, which has a workforce of

Dato Shakir's corporate philosophy also applies to the company's relationship with suppliers as he believes integrity is vital to stay long in business. Obtaining flexible credit terms was critical for the survival of the business and Dato' Shakir explained that they were able to obtain credit facilities even though they were newcomers in the market because suppliers trusted them.

The company is also very much into human capital development. 'Sharpen the saw' was how Dato' Shakir described his approach in growing the Group's talents. The Group has two training centres where Quality Hours sessions are held weekly for staff to share on all aspects of the business as well as on personal development.

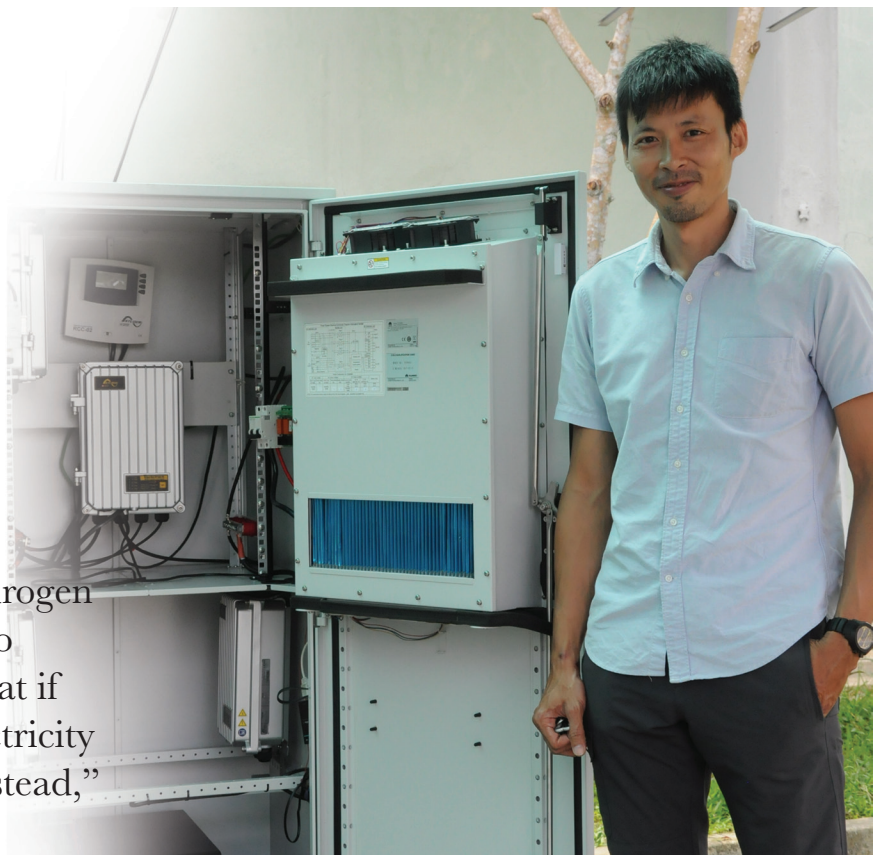
He explained, "Shamawar's core values are succinctly encapsulated in the four characteristics of the Holy Prophet, Nabi Muhammad SAW: Siddiq (truthfulness), Amanah (trustworthiness), Tabligh (advocacy) and Fathanah (wisdom). We can't go wrong if we conduct business on these powerful principles."



Solar NRJ Sdn. Bhd.

Fueled by Passion for Green Technology

“There is huge potential for hydrogen to be widely used in the future to generate energy. Just imagine that if everything now powered by electricity can be powered by hydrogen instead,” told Joseph Koh.



Koh is a co-founder and Chief Technical Officer of Solar NRJ Sdn. Bhd., an incubatee company of Technology Park Malaysia Corporation. The Company is an independent engineering, procurement, construction and system integrator that provides a complete range of services, from initial project design, through to installation, permits, monitoring and servicing. Its renewable technology power systems include solar, wind, fuel cells, energy storage systems, inverters and data monitoring systems.

A mechanical engineer by profession, Koh is an entrepreneur whose vision and passion is very much about green technology, particularly renewable energy. He got his interest piqued in fuel cell technology through his involvement in the development of a fuel cell powered tricycle in Australia in 2007. Subsequently, the passion for green technology has set him on a course towards a career in the business. In 2013, Koh together with a partner Mark Bawtree, incorporated Solar NRJ with the vision to develop sustainable energy systems. In the early days, Solar NRJ’s customers were universities, where they offered consultation in fuel cell R&D. It was mutually beneficial as the universities provided the funds whereas Solar NRJ brought expertise to the R&D.

“It would be great to connect the residents to the world at large by providing access to Satellite TV and a desktop with solar powered internet access at the common area (Balai) of the nearest kampung from our site. This will serve as community gathering area as well as education hub”



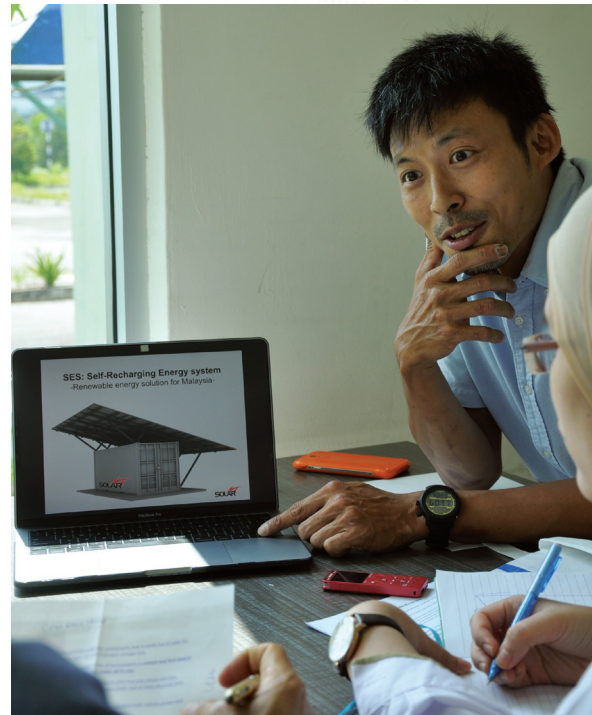
Commitment to sustainability is an emerging trend in the world today. In Malaysia, the increasing emphasis by the Government to develop sustainable energy resources via the Sustainable Energy Development Authority (SEDA) is driving smaller companies to leverage on emerging opportunities. Solar NRJ is one such SME but with a difference. The Company does not solely focus on solar panel installations but also act as a system integrator. Solar NRJ specialises in creating hybrid systems that incorporate fuel cells into the existing solar solutions which can then be adapted and scaled to fit the needs of different customers.

Solar NRJ's recently commercialised product, the Self-Recharging Energy System (SES) BETA is Asia's first hybrid solar-hydrogen energy system. The SES BETA is essentially a prefabricated and modularised solution for remote power which works as a mobile power station for telecommunication towers in remote off-grid locations. In 2016, Solar NRJ was fortunate to receive its first funding from the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) through its subsidiary, Malaysia Technical Standard Forum Berhad (MTSFB), in the form of a grant for the company to roll out a prototype for Digi telecommunication tower in Rompin, Pahang.

Besides that, the company also received a matching grant from the High Impact Programme 2 (HIP2) fund for the commercialisation of SES BETA, with the first project completed for edotco Malaysia Sdn. Bhd. in Borneo. A leading tower owner in the region, edotco Malaysia is the first client to install SES BETA. The company had identified solar PV and fuel cells as one of the potential technology to replace the traditional generator set. The future is promising as the drive to create awareness is intensified.

Currently, the company is surveying about 70 locations in Sabah and Sarawak as potential sites for installing the SES. Koh said these sites are in remote areas without access to internet and television. This has sparked an idea for him to give back to the society. Koh plans to execute a Corporate Social Responsibility project which

would be able to bridge the digital divide in these areas. He envisioned a collaboration with MCMC and Astro. Koh enthuses "It would be great to connect the residents to the world at large by providing access to Satellite TV and a desktop with solar powered internet access at the common area (*Balai*) of the nearest *kampung* from our site. This will serve as community gathering area as well as education hub".



Koh is gung-ho on the prospects for the renewable energy business in Malaysia but there are challenges ahead. The local cell fuel industry is still very small and it is not an easy business to be in. It is most crucial for the market to be educated on green technology. Capital expenditure is high. He said one of the ways investors could invest in the business is by taking up an investment package whereby they invest in the equipment and Solar NRJ packages it for leasing to and operating for end-users thus ensuring investors of returns through revenue accruing from such an arrangement. As Koh gazed at the horizon, he is determined to make an impact to the society. He believes that entrepreneurs need to be passionate with their projects. Eventually, the fruits of labor will be materialised.