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# GOING THE EXTRA MILE

## TECH-DRIVEN: A STEADY PRESENCE OF CONTINENTAL

Malaysia MIHRM  
HR AWARDS 2014

**T**rust, passion to win, freedom to act and employees being there for one another – these are the key words that summarise the corporate culture of Continental Malaysia.

Set up as a joint venture in Malaysia in 2003, the leading automotive supplier worldwide, goes the extra mile to ensure a people-oriented environment for its employees and clients.

In recognition of its tireless efforts, Continental Malaysia won the silver in the Employer of Choice category at the 14th Malaysian Institute of Human Resource Management HR Awards.

### EVERYBODY MATTERS

In a recent interview, Ahmad Kamal Samsuddin, head of human resources (HR) in Malaysia and Indonesia, and Priscilla Prasena, communications manager, explain that the company holds its employees in high regard.

One way to ensure success is to listen to them. This is evident through initiatives such as an open door policy, a return employment programme, an internal HR portal for employees' 24/7 access and many more.

Ahmad says that the company places emphasis on internal communication – not just having messages passed from top down, but from bottom up.

"Since 2013, we have established a communication department in order to ensure a good flow of information in the company."

The welfare of employees and their families are of utmost importance to Continental.

The company has flexible work arrangements for the employees in view of the importance of work-life balance.

"We are planning more programmes for our employees and their families," Ahmad says.

Best employees (selected quarterly) are rewarded by the company's "A Day Away" programme where they and their families are given a holiday package.

The company also has a monthly internal newsletter.

"We share our common goals, focus on improvements and also our successes, small or big.

"We celebrate with our employees and make them feel proud of themselves," Ahmad says.

"I hope that their families will be proud to have one of their family members working here," Ahmad says.

### TRAINING THE YOUNG

Continental provides training and development programmes to its employees. One of the many initiatives that stands out is the Trainee Pool programmes, where young people are trained for one year.

"During their first six months, they will be sent to Germany," he said.

The trainee pool programmes are sponsored by Continental.

"After the six months, they will go back to the market for plant stay where they rotate between different roles to gain an overview of Continental.

"Upon completion of the programme they will be placed based on their performances.

"We are looking for the best candidates in the market – young, fresh graduates – to join this training programme," he says.

### WHAT'S NEXT

With many exciting things ahead of them, Ahmad shares that the company's main aim is creating a better plat-



Team Continental Malaysia giving the thumbs up at the HR Awards night.

form to engage with its employees.

The initiatives are the Mission Directed Work Teams (MDWT) programme and employee exchange sessions.

The first stage of the MDWT is held between the shop floor operators and their team leaders or shift managers.

The second meeting is held between team leaders and heads of departments, where they bring out issues which couldn't be resolved in the first stage of the activity.

In the employee dialogue sessions, a small group of employees get a chance to meet with the heads of departments to discuss various issues.

"We are open to criticisms or negative input," Ahmad says. "That's the kind of culture that we would like to have."

■ For more information about the organisation, check out [www.continental.com](http://www.continental.com)



Continental Malaysia head of human resources Malaysia and Indonesia Ahmad Kamal Samsuddin (2nd from right), receiving the silver award for Employer of Choice.

## LEARNING TO UNLEARN

### BE AGILE OF THE UNKNOWN

By MILLIE ONG  
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*"The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn."* – Alvin Toffler

SO you've graduated after spending the last three to four years of your life absorbing an inane amount of knowledge.

Congratulations! The job search went well and here you are at your first-ever job, ready to practise all the things that you learnt in class. First task on the job? Learn to unlearn.

### WAIT... WHAT?

Yes, it's essentially time to forget everything you know and start afresh.

It's not that what you learnt was wrong. In fact, it will be extremely useful to you at many points in your career. But it can also hold you back.

Relying on what we are sure of and what

we have learnt can be comforting against the multitude of uncertainties in life.

It's the comfort zone that we fall back on when we need assurance. Instead of embracing change or new things, it is simply much easier to just focus on what you know and go from there.

### WHEN UNCERTAINTY IS CERTAIN

However, the workplace is often uncertain and constantly changing, requiring the ability to adapt in order to be successful.

A key leadership characteristic often cited is learning agility – being open to alternate ways of thinking, and the ability to learn continuously.

There will always be new ways of doing things, and revisions to prior understandings of the world. That means there is a need to be able to keep up with learning new things.

Old habits may be hard to let go, and we can become entrenched in old ways of thinking that may restrict one's agility for learning.

Unlearning what one knows does not

mean that your prior knowledge is wrong, but merely that it may be unsuitable for the present situation.

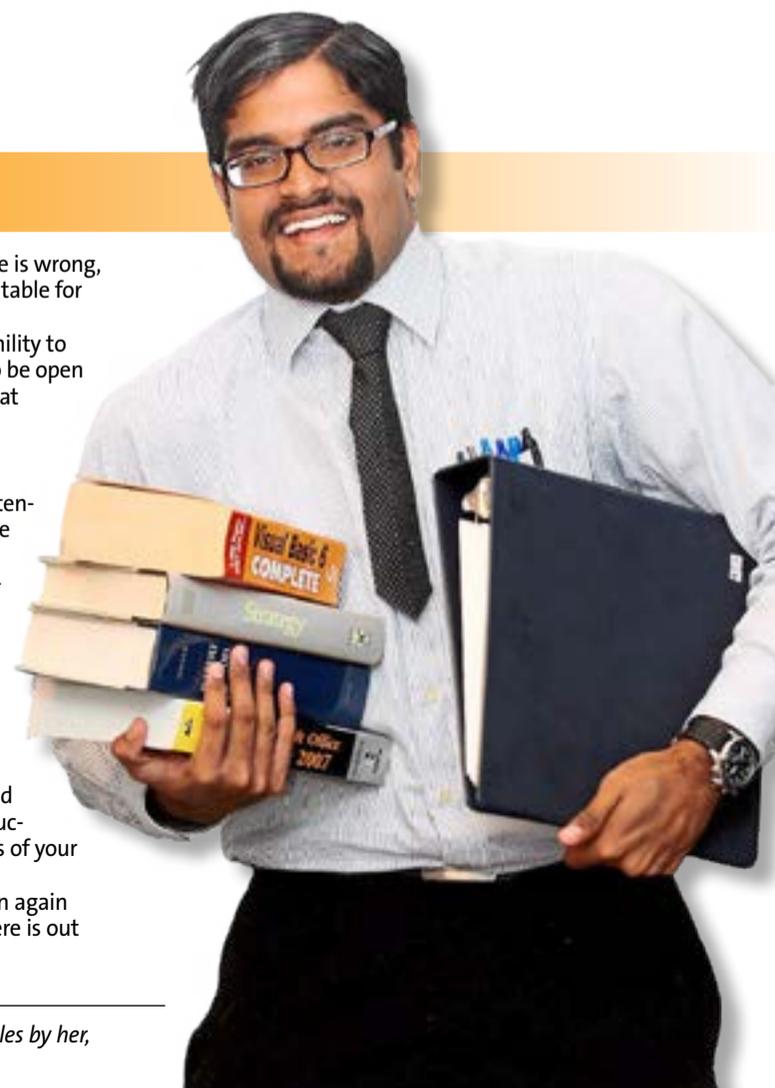
It requires an amount of humility to be able to recognise this, and to be open towards learning new things that would be able to aid you.

### CHANGING TIMES

Many of the jobs and competencies needed in today's workplace did not exist five years ago, meaning that all who were successful in them had to unlearn and relearn at some point in their careers.

Being willing and able to unlearn leads to one being more open towards new ideas, perspectives and knowledge. Even if your prior knowledge and skills were able to lead you to success in your present, the success of your future is vastly different.

So, take a step back and begin again – you never know what else there is out there.



■ Millie is always learning, unlearning and relearning leadership values from the animal kingdom. For Terrific Thursday Tails articles by her, visit [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com). To engage with Millie, email [editor@leaderonomics.com](mailto:editor@leaderonomics.com)