ENGAGING MALAYSIA'S ABROAD

S Malaysia transitions into a high-income country, there is a greater demand for Malaysian professionals with international experience and diverse skill sets. This demand for global Malaysians is further amplified as more home-grown Malaysian companies become regional champions and multinationals headquartered their operations in Malaysia. Beyond raising awareness of available world-class professional opportunities in Malaysia and enabling overseas Malaysians to contribute from abroad, TalentCorp’s principal focus in engaging Malaysians abroad is to facilitate the return of top Malaysian talent living and working abroad to meet Malaysia’s critical skill gaps.

“Every growing economy has a need for labour and human capital from abroad. The REP and RP-T programmes succeed at attracting people with the skills that Malaysia needs.”

Source: Malaysia Economic Monitor Towards a Middle-Class Society (The World Bank, Dec 2014)

KEY FACT

- There are 310,000 Malaysian professionals living in OECD countries.
- Source: Malaysia Economic Monitor Towards a Middle-Class Society (The World Bank, December 2014)

FACILITATING RETURN

TalentCorp’s focus on facilitating return of top Malaysian talent to meet critical skill gaps involves working more closely with employers to connect with global Malaysian talent and vice versa. This focus has been reflected by:

- Right Incentives, Right Talent: a revision of the Returning Expert Programme (REP) in April 2014 tightening incentive and approval criteria to better target Malaysians with critical skillsets for Malaysia.
- Fast-track application process for REP to prioritise company supported applications.
- Global Malaysians job board collaboration with myStarjob.com, launched in September 2014 to showcase opportunities targeted at Malaysian talent with international experience.
- JPA Management Apprenticeship Programme to place Malaysia’s scholars to serve bonds with companies driving Malaysia’s economic transformation.

RETURNING EXPERT PROGRAMME

In the Malaysia Economic Monitor December 2014 report, the World Bank found that REP participants fill skill gaps in the economy. Key professions for returning Malaysians under the REP include managers, engineers, health professionals and specialists in the financial and education sectors. These occupations correspond to the professions that are in short supply in Malaysia. The REP eligibility criteria were revised in April 2014 to better meet the demands of the labour market and the economy, while ensuring transparency and accountability in the dispensation of a tax incentive by the Government to top Malaysian talent. Prior to that, the approval criteria principally focused on length of experience abroad. The revisions involved more holistic approval criteria taking into account not only academic qualifications and experience abroad but also income level, total work experience and criticality of skillsets.

"The most valuable thing was gaining a diverse perspective…"

- Antony Fook Weng Lee
- Company: AIG Malaysia Insurance Bhd
- Position: CEO
- Years Overseas: 12

ON WORKING OVERSEAS...

The most valuable thing was gaining a better understanding of cultural differences, which allowed me to communicate better. I believe it is important to be collaborative if we want to get the best out of any situation and to get things done.

ON THE MALAYSIAN START-UP SCENE...

There is a real culmination of talent, passion from the community and desire to create successful global ventures, coupled with government support and the influx of private funds.

Malaysia has more than 250 mid to senior professional positions from over 45 companies covering key sectors of the economy, including:

- Global talent boards
- In higher education
- In multinational and regional champions
- In home-grown Malaysian companies

Since 2011, more than 3,100 REP applications have been approved. In 2014 alone, TalentCorp approved REP for more than 600 global Malaysians with expertise in key sectors, particularly finance, oil and gas, electronics, business services and healthcare.

"TalentCorp’s REP fast-track application works well to support our efforts to bring back top talent."

- Nora Manaf, senior executive vice-president, head, group human capital Maybank

"Oil and gas is a global business. Hence, we need world-class talent – highly productive, globally competitive Malaysians with global mindsets and complemented by top international talent."

- Lokman Baharuddin, director of human resources, ExxonMobil Subsidiaries of Malaysia

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CONTRIBUTING FROM ABROAD

CONNECTING MALAYSIAN SCIENTISTS AT HOME AND ABROAD

Malaysian scientist and a returning expert, Professor Chau De Ming, specialises in research on cancer and Alzheimer’s disease. His focus is on drug discovery. A PhD holder in pharmacology from Cornell University’s Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences in New York, he worked as a research fellow at the renowned Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. He had been living and working in the United States for almost 12 years before returning to Malaysia in 2012 under the REP programme. He is now a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Before returning home, Chau started the Malaysian Scientists Abroad, a Facebook group that connects like-minded Malaysian scientists abroad. It provides a platform for Malaysian researchers abroad and those at home to discuss and collaborate on various research topics. Chau continues to work alongside TalentCorp in meeting and engaging with Malaysian researchers and scientists abroad. At the Science and Technology Malaysia Conference at the University of Oxford last year, he shared his views about the current research landscape and opportunities back home. Passionate about giving back to the country he is currently working on a community project with his Malaysian Scientists Abroad members to nurture interest in science among young Malaysians.

In addition to the overseas career fairs targeted mainly at Malaysian students studying abroad, in 2014 TalentCorp also supported selected professional outreach focussed on key sectors such as oil and gas and healthcare.

"To support our growth, private hospitals reach out to Malaysian medical specialists abroad as part of supplementing our future talent pipeline."

- Datuk Firdaus Abdullah, CEO, Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur

MAP helps scholars gain valuable experience in a professional work environment, and gives employers, or Host Organisations (HOs), an on-going talent pipeline. During the apprenticeships, they are rotated to various departments within the HOs with the opportunity of being absorbed as permanent employees.

BREAKFAST WITH CEO

The Breakfast with CEO series, conceptualised by TalentCorp, has become a popular and much sought after platform for overseas Malaysian students to network and interact closely with leading industry players from top companies in Malaysia.

By including top employers in the Breakfast with CEO series, TalentCorp is raising awareness among young Malaysian talents abroad of the exciting career opportunities in key sectors of the Economic Transformation Programme by providing key insights from leading corporate personalities.

SCHOLARSHIP TALENT ATTRACTION AND RETENTION (STAR)

This high-impact joint initiative between the Public Service Department (JPA) and TalentCorp enables government scholars, who are among the country’s top young talent, to serve in the priority areas of Malaysia’s ETP and build their careers in National Key Economic Area (NKEA) sectors. In 2014, more than 1,000 Government-funded scholars from overseas universities returned to Malaysia and are serving their bond of service with leading employers in the private sector.

"The STAR initiative demonstrates our engagement with government-linked companies and the corporate sector in Malaysia in nurturing, developing and retaining our own talent to continue to serve the nation." – Tan Sri Mohamad Zabidi Zainal, director-general of Public Service Malaysia

"It is amazing how the STAR initiative enabled me to pursue my interest in engineering, while simultaneously contributing to the development of the country." – Timothy Tan, Alkisia X

NAME: Akmal Hayat Jusoh
Education: Graduated in Mechanical Engineering from Imperial College, UK
Host Company: Jabil Circuit Job: Currently under STAR serving bond, working as a customer quality engineer at Freescale Semiconductor

AKMAL’S STAR STORY

“It was the first time I had a degree-honor apprentice. So I told him what I wanted to get from my three months of training there. My main aim was to increase my technical competency to equip myself with relevant working skills later on.

“I told my supervisor that I wanted to be treated like an engineer, not like a trainee. I then got more challenging tasks; studying the defects of products and coming out with containment actions. My learning curve increased exponentially once I was entrusted to do an engineer's tasks.”

Upon starting my first job at Freescale Semiconductor, I realised how beneficial my experience at Alibel had been as most of the technical competencies I gained there was put into practice at my new job.

“I think it is important for apprentices and new hires to have a mind-set of challenging themselves, to be out of their comfort zones and to really get the most out of any training programme. If every trainee or new hire could think of how they can leave a legacy in their companies, they would learn so much and really develop their professional careers.”

3 Things You Need To Know About Akmal
● Both his parents are teachers.
● The eldest of five children, he is the first university graduate in the family and also the first to go overseas.
● His take on career development: “Don’t work for the sake of working only. Think of how you can leave a legacy at your working place.”

3 Things You Need To Know About Li Ann
● Father is an offshore technician while mother runs a kindergarten.
● She is the first overseas university graduate in her family.
● Her take on being a JPA scholar: “To all scholars abroad, what we’ve learned or learnt is a privilege. What we need to take out from this is the responsibility to give back.”