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RAISING THE BAR TO SUCCESS THE APPRENTICES' WAY

DO YOU believe in your ability to contribute to something greater not just as a dedicated employee but also as a loyal citizen? Do you have the passion and what it takes to succeed when the going gets tough? Are you confident enough in yourself, knowing you have that something special in you, to make that difference? These are just some of the hard questions that many who have taken the offer and challenges as an apprentice in Brunei Darussalam's leading oil and gas major have searched deep within themselves to know without any doubt, that they do have what it takes.

Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sdn Bhd (BSP) initiated its Apprentice Scheme with just two pilot pioneers in August 2009. Since then, exceeding all expectations and raising the bar for those that would come after them, Muhd Radi Bin Hj Abd Wahid and Mohd Shahrol Azwan Bin Hj Mohd Alinor, spoke with the Weekend Bulletin to share in their experiences with other potential jobseekers and unemployed graduates in the country of their winning formula for a rewarding career and successful life.

Pursuing a Higher National Diploma in Computer Engineering at the Institut Teknologi Brunei, Muhd Radi had already been awarded a government scholarship to pursue his studies further overseas, but opted instead for the road less travelled.

"It all started on August 3, 2009. There were lots of HND and undergraduates applying for the opportunity to be BSP's first batch of pioneers, but out of the lot, Hj Malai Anwar only chose the top two. Despite the scholarship, I decided to take the risk because I knew that I really wanted to be one of the first pioneers," he recalled, explaining: "I accepted the challenge because I wanted to work in one of the most dynamic companies in Asia, especially in Brunei."

Mohd Shahrol was the other lucky individual that made up the pair of pilot pioneers. "Back then it was just the two of us so it gave us a lot of focus of readying ourselves and pushing each other to be better." Instances where they both had to assist, help and support each other whilst still maintaining a healthy competition were an everyday occurrence during their six-month stint as the pioneering pair. "In BSP, you cannot work alone. It has to be teamwork."

Told upfront from day one of what was expected of them and the demanding and challenging regime that lay ahead, both Mohd Shahrol and Muhd Radi eagerly accepted and gave more than they were given.

"Always being hungry for success was one of the codes of practices taught to us and this still persists to this day," said Muhd Radi, exuding charismatic confidence as he recalled his memories of his apprenticeship days. "Every day we had to come up with something new. We had to actively seek out and find work to do, to find out processes to work on. We were always hungry. This was our code of practice."

Placed in one of the many production departments at BSP, the pioneers were told to find and seek out ways to improve its IT systems and processes as part of their Business Improvement training. "I found some gaps in it and streamlined the process that is still being practiced to this day," replied Mohd Shahrol as he gave off a hint of a modest smile.

Finding his own niche to work on, Muhd Radi “streamlined five Excel spreadsheets into one master spreadsheet, which would normally take two to three days to process that was now reduced to just 20 minutes to process”, was also his outstanding contribution that continues to be standard practice to this day.

“We weren’t given any assurance, we were taught to be self-pushers, to be goal-orientated, which was almost like being told to swim at the deep-end of the pool as your first swimming lesson,” said Muhd Radi. “We were warned that we would be shaken and pushed every step of the way and at any time of our six-month period, we could be terminated with just 24-hours notice. It can be overwhelming at first. It has to be because that’s how they push us to deliver but we knew that that was actually our time to shine and we knew that we were just being pushed towards success.”

“Definitely, yes,” echoed Mohd Shahrol when asked if the experience was equally daunting for him, “but we had to start somewhere. It taught us to get outside our comfort zone and to think outside the box because without the challenges, we couldn’t have done it ourselves otherwise.” Recalling further, “it was a tremendous opportunity for us to delve deeper into the organization, to get to know about it, the people, its process, mindset, but above all, the whole idea of the scheme was to ensure that we would get used to a challenging and professional working environment, where we just wanted to make sure that we delivered everything that was asked of us”.

Since those initial heady days as the initial pioneers three years ago, the growing number of applicants vying for BSP’s Apprentice Scheme stands as resolute testament to its growing success. Offering words of wisdom as living proof that if you have what it takes, and you deliver results with ingenuity, passion, commitment and determination, that something better would await you, Mohd Shahrol, who is now an Engineering Resource Planner spoke: “Apprentices should take full advantage of the opportunity to always enhance their skills and never tire of striving for excellence. At the end of the day, it’s all about delivering results and always keep a positive outlook. It’s like gold dust.”

Muhd Radi, a Champion 7 Production Operator meanwhile, advised: “If you get this opportunity, unleash your innovativeness, your creativity into something better. Take whatever work is given you and make it yours; put your stamp on it and don’t put up with a quitting is an option mentality. This is how we raised the bar for future apprentices.”

Three years on, as one of the latest successful newcomers to join BSP as an apprentice, Qaini DP Hj Mohd Adnan, entered the job market with a Criminologist Degree from the United Kingdom. Having undergone work attachment with the Royal Brunei Police Force and the Community Development Department whilst waiting for job offers for 12-months, she decided to participate one fateful day at an engagement session by the Energy Department at the Prime Minister’s Office, where she asked the Minister of Energy a simple question: “How can I get a job?” and for her courage and conviction, the rest, as they say, is history.

“You have to have that passion, that drive, that commitment and that perseverance to follow through whatever it takes to succeed,” reaffirmed Qaini. “I had never thought of applying in the oil and gas industry, but because of the scarcity of job offers in the market now, despite your academic qualifications, you really have to accept what you are offered and grab hold of it with both hands and make something of yourself. Open your mind to other possibilities.”

Employed as an Employee Relations Advisor at BSP, Qaini joins its growing ranks of young professionals in the non-technical fields, where “you have to give it all you’ve got where, you have to work hard every day, and unlike university, you have to learn quick”, as she snapped her fingers to emphasise her point, “at a faster speed because it’s Shell, so because of that, you constantly have to impress them, so you have to push yourself to get up to their speed, their mindset, to learn everything you can so you have to have that drive to get that edge”.

Sharing her experiences as a junior employee, Qaini explains that “their expectations of you are still high where you have a role to play in the business, so you can see and feel that you are actually positively contributing to the business, where you can feel that you appreciate yourself for having done that every day and it feels really rewarding to have achieved all that with very experienced people who have worked all round the world”.

For these three pioneers who grabbed that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make a difference at BSP, they have realised that they only had ‘right now’ in which to make a difference for themselves, for the company and for the people around us. Having made the right choice; of choosing to make a difference in the moment, every moment to move us all forward, the opportunity is still available to become part of something important to Brunei, something growing and exciting, as well as something special.

ENDS.

Notes to Editors: Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sdn Bhd (BSP) should be referred as BSP or Brunei Shell Petroleum for abbreviation or headline purposes. Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Sdn Bhd’s activity is primarily for the exploration and production of crude oil and natural gas from onshore and offshore fields. The Government of Brunei Darussalam and a company in the Royal Dutch Shell Group of Companies each owns a 50% stake in BSP.