

SPEECH BY DATIN SERI DR. SITI HASMAH BINTI HAJI MOHD. ALI
HOTEL SHANGRI-LA, KUALA LUMPUR
MAJLIS PELANCARAN BUKU "GET IT RIGHT - CORPORATE CONDUCT"
01 DECEMBER 1995

1. Terlebih dahulu saya mengucapkan terima kasih kepada pihak pengurusan Cygnet Academy kerana menjemput saya untuk melancarkan buku 'Get It Right - Corporate Conduct' pada hari ini.

2. In this multi-racial society like ours, where diversity is the name of the game, I am sure you would agree with me that it is imperative for every Malaysian to understand that the world we live in is not an easy one. All the more so, in the business circles where employers and employees face situations totally unheard of a good 30 years ago. In the age of new technologies, changing roles of women, growth of multinational corporations which brought with it diversified management styles, the corporate environment has experienced major transformation which demands new standards of behaviour; standards that work anywhere from Kuala Lumpur to New York.

3. In this context, let me draw your attention to the changing role of women who traditionally have played a vital role in nurturing social skills for the family. Children, in those days learnt basic manners at home through observation and absorption of values that parents practiced. This was possible because mothers spent a substantial amount of their time raising their children which is no longer true today. The consequence has been that children today no longer share the same values system that was upheld by the generations before them.

4. Besides, economic expansion has added a new dimension to the work force. More and more opportunities are available for men and women which allow little time for cultivation of social skills. In this process one would find young people assuming positions that require not only a great deal of managerial skills but also social skills. The unfortunate experience has been that most of these young people are not equipped to deal with the social responsibilities of the business world. What does this say about social and business skills? That it is not inherited but need to be taught.

5. Let us look at the business world today. It has become fiercely competitive in the last few decades, placing exacting demands on corporations to realign their work philosophy with customer needs. All is fair in business. Customers do shop around. Loyalties change and along with it business ethics. As such, there is very little room for blunders, insensitivity or misunderstanding because we are constantly running the risk of losing our competitive edge in the national and international markets. Whether you are the chief executive of a large corporation or the receptionist at the front desk, every working day offers the opportunity to exercise good manners - an essential ingredient of corporate success. Corporate success reflects the collective behaviour of people.

6. Unless, people, individually or collectively, are willing to change, organizations cannot continuously improve for all quality is dependent on personal quality. That is where good manners make a noteworthy contribution. Manners are social behaviour of acceptable standard. Indeed it is the courtesy, respect and consideration for others that is the basis for good manners.

7. A significant aspect of the Malaysian culture is that of respect for the elders. Respect for elders is a virtue that should be taken seriously. A corollary to this is the need for all workers, irrespective of ethnic origin to work courteously together. The need to belong whether to a group, team or organization is vital in maintaining healthy corporate organisations. This cohesive factor is an important prerequisite. Apart from this~ one should learn to be professional in dealing with everybody from the top of the corporate ladder down to the bottom rung. Reliability, credibility and accountability are important characteristics of a true professional. For example one should be responsible and accountable for what one does when attending business functions, one should ensure that one's attire, manner, attitudes and image should reflect oneself as professionals.

8. It is a truism to say that the corporate environment is a highly competitive place, but workers must learn to compete professionally. Honesty and integrity will certainly put one at the top.

9. This book on business etiquette which is suited to the Malaysian scene is therefore timely. This book entitled 'Get It Right - Corporate Conduct' by Mrs. Ampikaipakan and Puan Asnida Daim covers most of everyday practicalities of office life. I believe this book, the first of two, will go a long way towards helping Malaysians in the corporate world to understand the value of human quality.

10. This book is not just about the code of manners at a personal level. It is not about when we should stand up or sit down during meetings, but rather, it is about interpersonal behaviour at work. It gives us an idea of what is expected of us, by whom or why. It provides the basis for harmonious working relationships in the organisation which will certainly help to achieve one's goals.

11. Business organisations are an extension of society. It is all about people and it is these people who control and govern the various dimensions of the nation. Needless to say, it is the people of Malaysia, their collective behaviour that will veer the nation towards vision 2020.

12. Saya harap buku ini akan mendapat sambutan yang baik daripada orang ramai dan dengan harapan ini, saya merasmikan pelancaran buku 'Get It Right–Corporate Conduct'.