

# VISION & LEADERSHIP

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## Values and Strategies Towards VISION 2020

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Michael Yeoh

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Values and Strategies

Towards

# VISION 2020

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Michael Yeoh



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## THE AUTHOR

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MICHAEL O.K. Yeoh is the Executive Director of the Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute and Sunway College, as well as the Vice-President of the Institute of Management Consultants, Malaysia. With over 18 years' boardroom, consulting, corporate management and training experience, he has advised Cabinet ministers, multinational corporations, local companies and government agencies. He is a regular columnist on management for *Malaysian Business* and contributes articles to the *New Straits Times* and various professional journals. He has been interviewed on television in Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the United States.

Yeoh specializes in strategic management, corporate planning, human resources development, change management, total quality management and political analysis. He has co-authored three books on Malaysian politics and economics, and is the author of *Management Strategies for Vision 2020: Developing Competitive Strategies for the Winning Edge*. A graduate in Economics and Accounting from Australia's Monash University, he had his post-qualifying experience at Coopers & Lybrand in Melbourne. He has undertaken Senior Management Programmes at Harvard Business School, Wharton's Business School and the University of Melbourne's Graduate School of Management. He is a member of the British Institute of Management, the Australian Institute of Corporate Management, the Institute of Directors, Malaysia, and is a Certified Management Consultant.

## VISION AND LEADERSHIP

From 1986 to 1990, Yeoh served as a Director of Star Publications Bhd. He was Managing Director of the Malaysian Strategic Consultancy prior to his present positions. From 1977 to 1983, he held senior management positions in Multi-Purpose Holdings Bhd. From 1983 to 1986, he was Managing Director of Formis Computer Services Sdn. Bhd. He was appointed to the National Economic Consultative Council and the Advisory Panel of the Citizenship Board. He is also a member of the Human Resources Committee, Asean Affairs Committee and Infrastructure Committee of the Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

In October 1986, Yeoh was made a Goodwill Ambassador for the State of Arkansas by the then State Governor and now President of the United States, Bill Clinton. In 1993, he was appointed to the Board of the Directors of the National Heart Institute as a nominee of the Minister of Finance Incorporated. He also sits on the Board of SB Venture Capital Corporation, the venture capital arm of Southern Bank Group. In June 1993, he was conferred the KMN Award by H.M. the King.

Yeoh has conducted consulting and training assignments for several large Malaysian and multinational corporations. He is a resource for the Young Presidents' Organization (YPO) and was a Faculty of the YPO University in South Africa.

## INTRODUCTION

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MALAYSIA'S Vision 2020 has captured the imagination of most Malaysians who have been stirred into action. Recently, when I was in South Africa, I was struck by the immense interest people in South Africa have in Malaysia, especially about our Malaysian experience and success story. I encountered similar response in the United States, Australia and Europe. We have certainly come a long way.

Much of the credit, of course, goes to our political leadership for their foresight, long-term perspective and pragmatism, especially Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, who has become a leader of the Third World. He is certainly a man of vision. It is his dynamism and abundant energy that motivated me to write about the sort of values and strategies that we need to adopt to achieve Vision 2020. In this regard, I have written a series of articles for *Malaysian Business* on Strategic Visioning, Leadership and Change Management. This book is a compilation of these articles.

The purpose of this book is therefore to stimulate strategic thinking and provoke discussion on what needs to be done to actualize our vision. Not only must a country or a company develop a vision, all managers and leaders also need a sense of future direction, a personal vision for themselves.

In reflecting on your personal vision of the future, you will need to think about the sort of new alliances you need to develop? Who could assist you in getting to your final destination? Who could be your mentor? Who could be your new partners? Who

could share similar hopes and aspirations with you? Who are prepared to embark on the same journey with you? Identifying who these people are can be an important step—the people whom you can rely on to help you actualize your vision and the people you must know to help you get to where you want to go.

You must also be aware of your own skills and capabilities and identify your own skills-gaps so that you can develop new core competencies and achieve success through new capabilities and competencies you have developed. To be successful in life, one needs to have distinctive competencies or special capabilities that can be an asset to one's employer or one's own business. By taking stock of oneself, one can more effectively achieve self-actualization of one's fullest potential. Charging like a bull may not be the smartest way to get ahead. You need a game-plan, a strategy or a road-map. Busy managers need to find time to reflect, to do some quiet thinking. It is through such reflection that one can plan future directions and strategies. "To be what we are and to become what we are capable of becoming is the only end in life," so wrote R.L. Stevenson (1850-1894). How many of us actually become what we are capable of becoming? It is not just a question of ambition but one of self-actualization.

At the same time, the nation too needs to take stock of itself. We need to reflect on our roles as citizens and on the future of our nation. It is gratifying to know that the nation is doing well. But, can we do better? Are we happy with the progress we have made? Are we contented with what we have? As citizens, we need to reflect on the sort of future directions and leadership we want. We need good, dynamic, visionary leadership, and we should ponder and reflect on who can provide such leadership and deliver the goods. As a nation, do we have the capacity to move ahead and achieve Vision 2020? How do we change the attitudes of our people? How do we get our citizens to think of new concepts, ideas, innovations, and to strive for more creativity, greater productivity and enhanced competitiveness?

I wish to thank Ng Tieh Chuan, the Managing Director of Pelanduk Publications, for his encouragement and support. I also wish to thank my wife Jessica and my son Jonathan for their patience and understanding, and to my parents for instilling good values in me early in life. I dedicate this book to them. My appreciation also goes to Juliana Lui for her dedication and co-operation in meticulously typing all my articles and speeches.

Michael Yeoh



# Chapter 1

## A NEW PARADIGM IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT FOR MALAYSIA

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VISION 2020 sets out a new paradigm for Malaysia. The country has been galvanized towards a bold and exciting future. The vision of a fully developed Malaysia is a shared dream that unites all Malaysians for the vision has been clearly understood and effectively communicated. The excitement of Vision 2020 has created a paradigm shift in conflict resolution, policy framework and public-private sector co-operation. No longer do Malaysians think in terms of zero-sum game, with one side winning, the other party losing. Today, we talk of the entire nation winning.

It is of interest to many political analysts and historians to analyse the shift in public opinion in Malaysia with Vision 2020. The road to prosperity and to a fully-developed nation status has united Malaysians from all walks of life, creeds and backgrounds.

Today, Malaysians are prepared to challenge the future. We are no longer subservient to Western powers in the international arena. We no longer perceive Malaysian-made products to be inferior to imports. We no longer think that our opinions are not heeded. No longer are we the compliant citizens of a colony. We have found our confidence. Today, Malaysians are more confident than ever. This air of confidence permeates throughout Malaysian society. No longer are we afraid of the future. The attitudes of Malaysians have changed to positive attitudes of success where previously fear, suspicion and animosity lurked.

The paradigm shifts that have taken place in Malaysia since the Vision 2020 concept took root will lead to new thinking and

new ideas among Malaysian businessmen and managers. No longer do we look at our own country as a market. Today, the robust Pacific Rim, indeed the world is our market. Because of this paradigm shift, Malaysian businessmen today are increasingly more aware of international events and macroeconomics, strategic trends that will impact on business. We have broadened our outlook with more and more Malaysians travelling overseas and seeking business opportunities regionally and internationally. Global strategic thinking is therefore a new paradigm for Malaysian business.

If we are to face the future, we must be able to predict the future and anticipate what the future holds. Because of Vision 2020, which is a long-range thirty-year plan, more and more Malaysian businessmen and managers have started to think long-term. No longer are our businessmen thinking short-term in business and investment decisions. Today, more of our entrepreneurs are prepared to think long-term and invest in the future. In a way, the ability to manage long-term risk has improved with greater access to information and knowledge.

Thinking long-term and planning for the future is a right paradigm for today's generation of Vision 2020 managers. Those who succeed in the 21st century will be those who can see beyond the way things are to the way things will be. They are able to create their own future by anticipating trends, recognizing opportunities and taking action to go after these new opportunities. They are people who can effectively anticipate and manage change. They envision new products, new services and new markets. They prepare for the future by improving themselves, learning new skills and developing new competencies.

More importantly, successful companies and managers of the future will recognize that with the rise of cable and satellite television and communication technology, the world will become a smaller place to live in. Increasingly, we live in a global village. Hence, what new trends that take Europe or America by storm

will be the rage in Asia in no time and vice versa. Trends in customer expectations and preference are taking place on a global scale and they must become global in outlook to be successful—in terms of ideas, technology, supplies, production, distribution and marketing.

Today's paradigm has shifted from merely producing a product to providing a service; from hierarchical organizations to self-managing work teams; from control to empowerment; and from traditional factors of production such as land, labour and capital to a new central source—knowledge.

In his recent public lecture in Malaysia on “Managing the Future: Strategies for a New Era”, Alvin Toffler, the world-renowned futurist and bestselling author of *Powershift*, *Future Shock*, *The Third Wave* and *War and Anti-War*, spoke about some of the megatrends that will transform the way we do business, chiefly speed and time will become a critical source of competitive advantage: “Everything is speeding up, transactions, development time, everything that contributes to the creation of wealth.” Hence, fast economies and fast companies will become more successful and profitable in the future.

According to Toffler, another important paradigm shift is infrastructure. We tend to rely on roads, superhighways, ports, bridges as basic infrastructure for a nation. But to Toffler, in a third wave economy which is dependent on knowledge, the information network will be the centre of the new infrastructure. The new economy depends on rapid electronic communications.

The world of work has also undergone a paradigm shift. At one time muscle work—construction and assembly-line work—predominated industry. Today, jobs are becoming more knowledge-intensive. In the future, work will require more mind and less muscle. Yet, skill requirements will keep changing as workers need to continually improve and learn new skills.

“Bureaucracies,” according to Toffler, “are really ways of organizing knowledge and information, not people.” But the in-

It is a certainty your company will sink without management. Management—whether good or bad—will determine the course your business takes.

**VISION & LEADERSHIP:**

**Values and Strategies Towards Vision 2020** brings you the most effective management concepts, techniques, styles and tricks that need to be adopted to achieve Vision 2020.

The objective of this book is to stimulate strategic and creative thinking among corporate managers and executives on what needs to be done so that Malaysian organizations can compete more effectively in the 1990s and beyond. It is only by focusing on excellence, quality, creativity and greater productivity can we compete better and derive greater profitability for our companies—and the nation.

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