



The Knowledge to Decide

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Jeffrey Bahar: Lessons from a “San”

Synopsis

According to the Managing Director of Spire Research and Consulting for ASEAN, Jeffrey Bahar, he feels strongly about the saying “*lain lubuk lain belalang*” (which means different countries have different cultures in Bahasa Indonesia), an important ingredient for success.

To serve various clients that are from different countries, one has to understand their characters as well as their diverse cultures. Otherwise, misunderstandings abound and the road to victory will appear long and winding.

An experience that has guided Jeffrey’s perception was when he first met a Japanese man. His friend had introduced the man to him as Hiroshira-san. “I thought that was his full name,” recounts the Masters graduate in Industrial Engineering from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. “It turns out that ‘san’ meant Mr. or Sir. This was pretty interesting and was an experience as well as an unforgettable lesson to me.”

For Jeffrey, this meeting brought to light the vastness of Asia’s diversity and cultures, and the importance of differentiating when it comes to the business environment. Marketing is a service very much dependent on trust and trust can be built through good communication. Jeffrey agrees: “And this I began to understand from that one ‘san’ experience.”

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