THE SECURITY PROFESSIONALS

by Ramli Bahari

The robust growth in the manufacturing sectors contributed by foreign and domestic investors; in line with Malaysia's vision to be a fully industrialized nation in year 2000, has resulted in the increasing need of more experienced security professionals particularly by the multinational companies in the industrial and commercial sectors.

The government's policy in allowing early retirement further facilitates the evolution of much younger generation of ex-services officers particularly from the Police to take up the challenge in this sector. The opportunities are not only available in the local scene but have also led to the creation of several key security positions in the Asia Pacific region.

The article is to provide an insight and guidance for those who seek to venture into this career. Simultaneously, it is to highlight the expectations of these multinational companies in their attempts to search for the right candidates. The familiar requisite appearing in the local media consistently includes the clause "Police/Military background will have an added advantage".

To understand this issue it is critical that we look at the strength as to why those with ex-service background is the preferred choice. First, they have attained the maturity level and valuable experience from interactions with all levels of the communities. Second, they have gone through the relevant training that has gradually developed their instincts to deal effectively with delinquents or those with criminal conduct. Moreover, they have substantial good knowledge in conducting interviews and investigation techniques. Third, they demonstrate a high degree of sensitivity to security consciousness and possess a natural flair to the general security roles and functions. Finally, they match in experience their difficult circumstances and trying times make them withstand hardship. Their allegiance and loyalty is another unquestionable trademark of their moral strength.

In reality, with the diversified experience and the expertise acquired over the years has positioned them to the competency level for quick transition and growth in the industrial environment. Henceforth, they will undergo a process of change transformation tailored to suit the business environment. Khirudin Tajudin, Sime Darby Security Adviser, supported this strongly by commenting, "Being former Police Officer we should have the attributes and traits to easily suit any high performance organization." He further emphasized that "We must believe in continuous learning and there shall be no end to our professional usefulness i.e. in providing the necessary illumination to our employers who aspire to attain peak performance."

In contrast, the inherited service culture developed over the years of service invariably provides an interesting phenomenon that has a considerable influence over them, to be fascinated by authority and power which in many situations are not compatible to the industrial culture. Concisely, they have strong inclination to rely on rules rather than

focusing on the outcome i.e. employee compliance rather than employee commitment. In some other instances, they would favor leaning to hierarchy instead of networking.

These officers who have been enforcing laws of the country that adopts the adversary system will be compelling in the mind-set tending to strive for WIN-LOSE situation rather than WIN-WIN situation in resolving crisis. This behavior may induce them to operate in isolation with complete secrecy rather than for a total involvement with a fair degree of information sharing. Ghani Merican, Motorola Asia Pacific Loss Prevention Regional Manager described that those who were not too successful were either it could not adjust to a highly competitive environment or simply refuse to change. He further emphasized that "They will continue to operate at a distinct and self-sustaining disadvantage."

What exactly are these companies looking for; they want a broad profile professional that has the ability to anticipate problem and the capability to address it positively in a timely manner. They are looking at someone who not only does the right thing but someone who can do the right thing at the right time. Most transparent of all, they are apprehensive about changes; contributions and the value added activities he will bring to benefit the organization.

Most companies have their own distinct culture. The potential candidate must strive to discover that 'personality'. He should be able to adapt that style to fit and compliment without compromising his basic principles. He needs to exhibit high visibility but not to the extent of being offensive. He must radiate the atmosphere of fairness and willingness to render his services both for business or personal needs.

During that transition period, I could feel that I was in an unfamiliar ground for a while. I had to review the situation and instantly look for the necessary adjustments. At this point of time, the thoughts and the views of your colleagues, peers and subordinates are most precious gift that can help to position you on the right track. I realize after some time that understanding and appreciating the beliefs and the values of the people is the key success factor in the transition. Saiful Ahmad, Advance Micro Device Security manager shares the same view on the need for adjustments by stating further that" Apparently, the most difficult part was to find out what areas that require the adjustments."

In communication skills, it is not what he says but how he says it is important. In the interpretation of issues and success stories, it would be intriguing to look at the matrix used in measuring performance and productivity respectively. As a leader, he should be one who believes in the development of his personnel by supporting an aggressive training program and subsequently propagate a succession plan in line with the company's vision.

In the development process, the company being a learning organization will invest to support the basic security training needs on subject related to first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, self contained breathing apparatus, blood-borne pathogens, safety, environmental requirements, fire fighting, chemical spillage response, civil defense,

hazard control, ergonomics and confined space management. On the job training, the essential requirements includes telephone courtesy, public relations, emergency response, clocking, evacuation drills, car park security, virus scanning, key control and skills in electronic surveillance system.

On the other hand, his major responsibilities will include matters related to hiring security personnel, pre-hire screen, exit interviews, awareness programs, executive protection, new hire orientation, loss prevention strategy, buying and maintenance of security equipment. Other important functions are computer security, proprietary information protection programs, shutdown operation, archives protection, warehouses, freight security, and scrap security management, access and property control and drug abuse at workplace. Equally important responsibilities include updating the Standard Operating Procedure, risk analysis and evaluation program, crisis management and disaster recovery plan.

In business acumen, he must think what security must do for the company and not what is good for security. He must maintain the same wavelength of how security will benefit the bottom line of the corporation. In other words, he must realize that without the company the security would not exist. He must be familiar with the company's key financial terminology and its concept. This will make it easier for him to manage the department's spending and qualify its justifications in order to remain cost effective.

Apart from that, the exposure to the company's required learning will broaden his horizon on matters relating to corporate mission and vision, goal alignment, career development, team work, headcount, values, beliefs, core competencies, imperatives, cycle time, yields, inventory, customer delights, empowerment and other important tools to achieving productivity in the quality environment.

With significant development of technology as to the much heralded information highway, security functions will encounter with the more sophisticated technical problems in the near future. The role will expand beyond the normal limit to deal with the complexities involving major frauds such as telephone frauds, hackers, virus computer related crimes, Grey market activities, copyrights, trademarks and patent violations.

In terms of people, we need to interface with the matured, intellectual, multi-skilled and flexible workforce. This will include issues relating to heavy dependence of foreign labor, aggressive headhunters, and struggle of women power, third party, pressure groups, extremists, and threats from Unabomber and violence at workplace inclusive of sexual harassment. We may experience extensive industrial espionage threat that may resort to activities such as blackmailing, Internet abuse, computer 'hacking' and other covert means to compete in the new economic world order.

The contemporary professional has to keep abreast with the changes in the respective industry, be familiar with the local laws and regulations, technology, systems, trends and state-of-art. Security professionals must be sensitive to the environment and be ready for paradigm shift. We may want to look at possible changes such as role transformation

from specialist to generalist and in terms of authority from centralization to decentralization according to the needs. One may also like to consider the option of administering security as a profit center. Perhaps, the challenge is to be able to develop and sustain a quality security service that qualifies the prestigious ISO 9000 certification and recognition award. Capt. (Rtd.) S, Arunasalam, National Semiconductor Head of Logistics and Investigation, Asia Region reiterated at one of the security seminars that "In the age of empowerment, we must be ready to be part of the quantum leap for major improvement in supporting the business continuity."

In security as in any other profession today, precisely the expectation is not for someone who claims to know all but rather for someone who knows how to find it all. In order to acquire such skills with the privilege of having to blend knowledge and experience of both Police or Military and industrial security, TIME is the essence. Intel Technology Security Manager, Eric Stephen Foong with 32 years of Police service expressed that "This clearly limits the time available for me to adjust to civilian ethos and develop a second career in security." It has always been his view point that" Security is only good as the local manager and his team."

It is my personal fulfillment that this article brings a collective understanding of the expectations in the industries, the security manager's role, and its anticipated complexities. The views reflected by our current security professionals will strengthen our beliefs that change is a permanent fixture in security business. With it, the security business shall always be exciting and challenging for those who wish to pursue this professional career.