

Lalu Sekejap Enterprise: Embracing Ethical Practices and Digital Transformation

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Abstract

Encik Ben and Encik Cha embarked on a humble venture called Laju Sekejap Enterprise in 1990, offering general maintenance services. Despite lacking business experience, they registered their company and secured contracts with the local government. Their commitment to integrity and halal income was deeply rooted in their religious beliefs. Encik Ben, a dedicated employee with limited education, grew from a general worker to a supervisor, acquiring essential knowledge of the maintenance industry. Encik Cha, having witnessed corruption during his time in the treasury department, recognized Encik Ben's ethical approach and engaged in discussions outside of office hours. Together, they explored the possibility of starting their own business, driven by their shared vision of conducting business ethically. While Encik Ben and Encik Cha faced challenges due to their lack of business expertise, they persisted in their commitment to integrity. They overcame compliance issues and rebuilt their business, focusing on delivering high-quality services. Their dedication resonated with like-minded clients, and they established a reputation for honesty and trustworthiness. Years later, Encik Ben and Encik Cha attended a digital business training program that opened their eyes to the potential of digitalization in the maintenance industry. Recognizing the need to ensure the continuity and growth of their business, they started grooming their children and loyal employees to take over key responsibilities. With a strategic focus on digital transformation, Laju Sekejap Enterprise integrated digital tools and platforms into their operations, enhancing efficiency and expanding their customer base. The business thrived, driven by a new generation of leaders who shared Encik Ben and Encik Cha's commitment to quality service and community well-being.

Keywords: *Ethical practices, Digital transformation, Integrity, General maintenance, Small business*

In a small town named Sekejap, there existed a humble enterprise called Lalu Sekejap Enterprise owned by a determined duo named Encik Ben and Encik Cha. In 1990, they ventured into the general maintenance business, offering services such as grass cutting and solid waste collection. They registered their company as Class F with the Ministry of Finance and managed to secure work from contractors who held contracts with the local government.

In the fiercely competitive landscape of the general contract business, Lalu Sekejap Enterprise, owned by Encik Ben and Encik Cha, faced challenges in securing contracts while maintaining their commitment to ethical practices. While some competitors resorted to bribing government officers and contact personnel to secure jobs through the back door, Encik Ben and Encik Cha firmly adhered to their principles and refused to engage in such unethical practices.

Recognizing the importance of legitimacy and transparency, Encik Ben and Encik Cha registered Lalu Sekejap Enterprise with the government as Class F, enabling them to participate in tender processes and secure small-scale contracts. By doing so, they positioned their business on a level playing field, competing based on their skills, expertise, and competitive pricing.

The decision to abstain from bribery was rooted in their religious beliefs as practicing Muslims. Encik Ben and Encik Cha firmly believed that bribery was haram, forbidden in Islam, and they refused to compromise their principles even when faced with intense competition. They were committed to conducting their business in a halal manner, ensuring that their income provided for their families in a morally upright way.

However, their refusal to engage in bribery meant they had to face the challenges posed by competitors who resorted to such unethical means. Despite the obstacles, Encik Ben and Encik Cha remained steadfast, focusing on delivering quality services, building strong relationships with clients and contractors, and establishing a reputation for honesty and integrity.

Their commitment to ethical practices resonated with like-minded clients who appreciated their principled approach. Encik Ben and Encik Cha's reputation grew steadily as clients recognized that they could rely on Lalu Sekejap Enterprise not only for reliable services but also for their commitment to ethical business conduct.

Over time, Encik Ben and Encik Cha's perseverance paid off. Their dedication to ethical practices and their refusal to compromise their values became a distinguishing factor in the market. Clients increasingly valued their principled approach and recognized the reliability and trustworthiness that Lalu Sekejap Enterprise offered.

While they faced fierce competition from rivals who resorted to bribery, Encik Ben and Encik Cha remained steadfast in their commitment to providing legitimate services. Their faith-driven values served as a guiding light, enabling them to build a successful and respected business while ensuring that their income remained halal.

PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

Encik Ben had previously served as a maintenance supervisor for a company that held contracts with the local government. Leveraging his experience, he secured some jobs from

his former employer. Encik Cha, on the other hand, had worked as a clerk in the treasury department of the local government but resigned to focus on the contract work in maintenance alongside Encik Ben. However, their business was not able to secure large-scale projects, and they had to rely on their limited network of contacts.

Encik Ben

Encik Ben's journey in the maintenance industry was a testament to his determination and resilience. Coming from a poor family, he had limited educational opportunities and could only complete his *Sijil Rendah Pelajaran* (SRP), the Form 3 secondary public examination certificate. However, Encik Ben's fate took a turn when he learned about a work opportunity through Pak Salam, the gardener at his school.

With a recommendation from Pak Salam, Encik Ben approached a maintenance company, and despite his limited qualifications, they recognized his potential and accepted him as a general worker. Earning a daily wage of RM10, Encik Ben displayed unwavering diligence and commitment in his role, quickly gaining the trust and respect of his superiors.

Encik Ben's strong work ethic and dedication did not go unnoticed. Over time, he acquired in-depth knowledge of the maintenance industry, learning the intricacies of various processes and how to effectively navigate the dynamics between contractors and the local government. His experience and expertise propelled him to a promotion as a supervisor within the company.

With each passing day, Encik Ben's confidence grew, and he began to believe that he could achieve even more by venturing out as a contractor himself. Armed with his valuable experience and understanding of the industry, Encik Ben saw an opportunity to offer his services directly to clients and the local government.

Drawing on his connections and reputation, Encik Ben secured some maintenance jobs from his former employer, leveraging the trust he had earned during his time as a supervisor. This marked the beginning of his journey as an independent contractor, responsible for managing his own projects and building relationships with clients and contractors alike.

Encik Ben's journey from a general worker to a supervisor and finally to an independent contractor is a testament to his tenacity and resourcefulness. Despite limited formal education, he acquired valuable skills through hands-on experience and a determination to excel in his field. His rise within the maintenance industry exemplifies the transformative power of hard work and the ability to seize opportunities, regardless of one's background or qualifications.

Encik Cha

Encik Cha's experience in the treasury department of the local government exposed him to the corrupt practices prevalent in the tender and payment processes. He observed that unlike other company representatives, Encik Ben, a supervisor from a maintenance company, refrained from bribing officers to secure contracts and payments. Encik Cha became increasingly intrigued by Encik Ben's integrity and the possibility of finding a way out from the corruption that plagued his workplace.

Driven by a shared commitment to ethical conduct, Encik Cha and Encik Ben began engaging in conversations outside of office hours. They would meet at the masjid and

participate in community work together. Through these interactions, Encik Cha gained a deeper understanding of Encik Ben's principles and values, which further inspired him to resist the temptations of corruption.

Encik Cha's daily exposure to corrupt practices at his office left him with a constant concern that he might one day succumb to the pressure or be forced to accept bribes. It was during one of their serious discussions that Encik Cha proposed the idea of forming a business together in the general maintenance industry.

Recognizing the shared vision of conducting business with integrity and adhering to ethical practices, Encik Cha and Encik Ben decided to embark on this new venture. They believed that by combining their skills, experiences, and unwavering commitment to ethical conduct, they could build a successful enterprise while upholding their principles.

The decision to form their own business in general maintenance held significant importance for both Encik Cha and Encik Ben. It offered them an opportunity to create a positive impact within their industry, showcasing that success could be achieved through honest means. Their determination to break free from the corruption that had surrounded them was the driving force behind their decision to establish a business that would prioritize transparency, integrity, and professionalism.

With their shared values and complementary skills, Encik Cha and Encik Ben embarked on a new chapter in their professional lives. They established their general maintenance business, focusing on delivering high-quality services to clients while maintaining the highest ethical standards. Their joint efforts would prove instrumental in not only providing reliable services but also setting an example for others in the industry.

The partnership between Encik Cha and Encik Ben represented a significant turning point for both of them. It demonstrated their unwavering commitment to integrity and their desire to contribute positively to their community. Together, they would navigate the challenges of entrepreneurship, fueled by their shared vision of conducting business in an ethical and principled manner.

TEST OF LIFE

Encik Cha and Encik Ben's decision to venture into entrepreneurship despite lacking prior business experience was met with numerous challenges. Encik Cha, having worked in the government office, had some knowledge of business regulations, but it was far from comprehensive. Encik Ben, on the other hand, had been an employee without any managerial experience. As they embarked on their new journey, they encountered unexpected obstacles that tested their determination to maintain their ethical stance.

Government agencies began visiting their business premises, demanding various licenses and permits that Encik Cha and Encik Ben were unaware of. Caught off guard, they found themselves facing hefty penalties for non-compliance. It seemed as though their dreams were slipping away, as all their hard-earned revenue was now being depleted by these fines.

Feeling overwhelmed and on the brink of giving up, Encik Cha and Encik Ben sought solace in the stories of other business owners known for their ethical practices. These individuals

had shared their own tales of perseverance and success, achieved through steadfast adherence to ethical principles.

While tempted to resort to bribery as a quick fix, Encik Cha and Encik Ben remained steadfast in their commitment to conducting business in an honest and principled manner. They refused to compromise their values, knowing that resorting to corruption would tarnish their integrity and go against their beliefs.

Instead of succumbing to the pressures, Encik Cha and Encik Ben sought guidance from experienced mentors and sought out resources that could help them navigate the complex landscape of business regulations. They educated themselves on the necessary licenses and permits, ensuring compliance and establishing a strong foundation for their enterprise.

Through perseverance and the support of their newfound network, Encik Cha and Encik Ben overcame the initial setbacks. They rectified their compliance issues and began to rebuild their business, focusing on providing high-quality services while maintaining their unwavering commitment to ethical conduct.

Their determination to succeed through ethical means not only garnered the respect and trust of their customers but also earned them a reputation as business owners who upheld their values. Encik Cha and Encik Ben became an inspiration to others, proving that it is possible to build a successful business while staying true to one's principles.

ISSUES

In 1999, an opportunist named Tuan Ja approached Encik Ben and Encik Cha, promising them bigger jobs with larger companies. Tuan Ja claimed to have an insider contact who could help secure contracts in road sign making and road furniture. To initiate the deal, Tuan Ja requested a cash payment of RM30,000 to grease the wheels with the insider. Unfortunately, Tuan Ja did not deliver on his promises, disappearing along with the hard-earned cash. Encik Ben and Encik Cha learned a valuable lesson about not being overly ambitious and the need to exercise caution when dealing with unfamiliar individuals.

In another case in 2001, Encik Ben's nephew, Mr Bard, underwent a six-month practical training with Lalu Sekejap Enterprise. During this time, Mr Bard encountered a charismatic Datuk at an exhibition who claimed to have the ability to secure substantial contracts with multinational companies for general jobs such as grass cutting and road cleaning. The Datuk, however, requested a share of Lalu Sekejap's business in return. Encik Ben and Encik Cha, skeptical of the offer, instructed Mr Bard to conduct a background check on the Datuk. Unfortunately, Mr Bard lacked the necessary connections to investigate thoroughly. Seeking advice from neighbors and friends in the same business, they discovered that the Datuk had a reputation for swindling unsuspecting individuals. This encounter reinforced Encik Ben and Encik Cha's belief in maintaining a cautious approach to business ventures.

As time went on, Encik Ben and Encik Cha continued their general maintenance business, adhering to their motto of "no need to be overly ambitious." They understood the importance of managing their resources wisely and being prepared for growth. Despite the setbacks and encounters with unscrupulous individuals, Encik Ben and Encik Cha persevered in their business and have continued to operate Lalu Sekejap to this day, offering their reliable services to the community.

FUTURE DIRECTION

Encik Ben and Encik Cha, the determined owners of Lalu Sekejap Enterprise, realized the need to plan for the future and ensure the continuity and growth of their general maintenance business. The realization came when they had the opportunity to attend a digital business training program organized by the local government. During the training, they were exposed to the potential benefits of digitalization in the maintenance industry and how it could enhance their operations.

Inspired by the possibilities, Encik Ben and Encik Cha recognized that they needed to embrace digitalization and prepare their business for the evolving landscape. They understood that handing over the reins of Lalu Sekejap Enterprise to their children or trusted employees could be a strategic move to ensure a smooth transition and continued growth.

Motivated by this newfound perspective, Encik Ben and Encik Cha embarked on a journey to explore the digital aspects of the maintenance business. They invested time and resources into understanding emerging technologies, such as digital scheduling systems, mobile applications for service requests, and online payment platforms. They realized that by incorporating these digital tools, they could streamline their processes, improve customer experience, and expand their reach.

With a clear vision for the future, Encik Ben and Encik Cha began grooming their children and loyal employees to take over key responsibilities in the business. They provided them with proper training, guidance, and opportunities to gain hands-on experience in various aspects of the company's operations. Encik Ben and Encik Cha wanted to ensure that the business would be in capable hands, driven by individuals who shared their passion for quality service and commitment to the community.

As time went on, Lalu Sekejap Enterprise gradually integrated digital solutions into their daily operations. They established an online presence, allowing customers to easily access their services and make inquiries through a user-friendly website and social media channels. The implementation of digital scheduling systems enhanced efficiency and ensured prompt response to customer requests. Encik Ben and Encik Cha were pleased to witness how these changes positively impacted their business, attracting a wider customer base and improving overall productivity.

Through their continued dedication and adaptation to digitalization, Lalu Sekejap Enterprise thrived in the general maintenance business. Encik Ben and Encik Cha's decision to embrace digital transformation and groom the next generation of leaders proved to be a wise choice. The legacy of Lalu Sekejap Enterprise endured, providing reliable services to the community while embracing innovation and technology.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How did Encik Ben's limited educational background impact his journey in the maintenance industry? How did he overcome these challenges and rise from a general worker to a supervisor and eventually an independent contractor?
2. What role did Encik Cha's exposure to corruption in the treasury department play in his decision to partner with Encik Ben and establish a business based on ethical practices? How did their shared commitment to integrity shape the direction of their business?
3. Discuss the significance of Lalu Sekejap Enterprise's decision to register with the government and secure contracts through legitimate means. How did this decision impact their ability to compete in the fiercely competitive general contract business?