BOOK REVIEW

BORN TO SERVE, BUILT TO LAST
THE PERNAMA STORY:
SECRETS OF MALAYSIA’S HOME-GROWN RETAIL CHAIN

BORN TO SERVE, BUILT TO LAST is a book dedicated to stakeholders of PERNAMA – the Malaysian Armed Forces, the Ministry of Defence, Lembaga Tabung Angkatan Tentera and the staff of PERNAMA, past and present. It is the PERNAMA story on how despite facing stiff competition, the company has continuously undertaken various innovative initiatives to stay relevant to its customers.

It chronicles the journey that PERNAMA takes from its conception, its birth in 1983 and right to 2013 – a whole 30 years of existence.

The idea to chronicle this book began during the celebration of PERNAMA’s 30th anniversary. Whilst collating past pictures of our rich heritage we realized that we have not documented our success story for the future generations to emulate. There begins our first journey to put pen on paper and ideas into motion.

It’s not difficult to start the ball rolling. Files and pictures since 1983 were readily available in our archive and marketing department. It is a matter of putting them into the right pieces and pen out the story. To this end we are grateful to have the assistance of our learned friends from the Faculty of Business Management, UiTM to help us sieve through the old files and relevant notes to start building up the picture.

After compiling the facts and narrating the events since its inception, we then attempt to interview the past, surviving office holders. We are very lucky to see that most of the early personalities are still around. It is unfortunate however that Dato’ Jaafar Onn did not manage to see the culmination of this effort, as he passed away in 2014.

This book is also a business case study on the journey that PERNAMA has undertaken to be where it is today. This book shall appeal to those interested to know more about how a Malaysian company makes it on its own, to budding entrepreneurs and even business students.

In BORN TO SERVE, BUILT TO LAST, all chapters are compartmentalized into sections, so the readers will have a more structured reading experience.

The first section takes readers to the early days of PERNAMA and how it has evolved since it took over the management of retail outlets previously managed by NAAFI from the very beginning.

The second section deals with challenges that PERNAMA has had to endure and milestones they achieved. It also features the many initiatives that PERNAMA has undertaken throughout the years.

Section three features how PERNAMA applied the various management and business models within the company in order to attain more success. This section should be a great reading especially for the business students.

The book ends with its outlook into the future.

The narration of this book is done in such a way that it makes easy reading. There are various themes that we would like readers to take away after reading this book. First, it tries to relate the difficulty of nurturing a new company from the base of an existing old company. Second, it shows that we have to evolve new strategies all the time in order to survive. Third, we need transformative leadership in order to bring change to an organization. Fourth, we need to be bold to think ‘big’. We need not fear the unknown. We must be daring to be different. Fifth, to be successful we have to work as a team. To have faith at each level of the management hierarchy.

PERNAMA is fortunate to these days that the Board, the Management and the supporting staff are able to work hand in glove with one another in the pursuit of one objective; to provide the best retail services to the Malaysian Armed forces and their families.

This is well manifested in the sales and profit trend of the organization since 1983 to 2013. It is no easy feat to reach RM300 million annual turnover, a positive growth rate year on year and ever increasing profit year on year. This is further supported by the achievement of its Customer Satisfaction Index which surpassed the seventy percent indicator.

All in all, the book, BORN TO SERVE, BUILT TO LAST attempts to encapsulate the winning formula of PERNAMA and its ability to survive the test of time. It will no doubt benefit those who seek to emulate the success story of an indomitable government link set up.

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