

LUNCHEON TALK: BEYOND EXPECTATIONS, PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES
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Moderator:

- **Dato' Yasmin Yusoff**
Media Personality

Speaker:

- **Tan Sri Tony Fernandes**
Group Chief Executive Officer, AirAsia

Objectives of the session:

Since starting AirAsia, in 2001, Tony Fernandes has become one of Asia's better-known business figures and entrepreneurs. He has built AirAsia into the leading low-cost carrier in ASEAN, serving 65 destinations in 18 countries. Indeed, AirAsia is one of ASEAN's biggest business success stories. AirAsia brand has become an umbrella for foreign airlines in which Fernandes has a stake. He bought 49% of the then AWAIR, an Indonesian low-cost carrier, in 2004, rebranding it as IndonesiaAirAsia the following year. Similar joint ventures have brought AirAsia into the Philippines, Thailand, Japan and most recently into India. With large numbers of new planes on order, Fernandes has spoken of AirAsia X linking Europe and Asia via low-cost longhaul in the years ahead. From just two airlines in 2001 the firm's fleet grew to 101 in 2012. Year-after-year AirAsia clocked double-digit growth in the number of passengers it flew and the revenues it earned. Today, the airline carries nearly 15 million passengers a year. What can we gain from Fernandes's life experiences? What are his key factor in success? What are his fear and short come in life? What motivates him? What makes Tony Fernandes different from others?

Key points from presentation:

AirAsia is one of the leading company in Malaysia that practises the National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) concept. Tan Sri Tony Fernandes initially opts innovative approaches by introducing low fair flights to expand their market in Malaysia so that everyone can afford to fly. One of his innovative approaches was his bold idea of proposing AirAsia to fly to Bandung in which before there was no airlines flew to the destination. Now, Bandung has become profitable route for AirAsia and has become one of the holiday destination that is frequently visited by Malaysians.

Besides that, Tan Sri Tony Fernades looks at crisis as the opportunity to propel AirAsia into a new level. For instance, when SARS incident occurred and people were afraid to leave the country, he decided to triple the numbers of flights. He later lowers the cost of the ticket which caused Malaysian to buy and fly despite the SARS crisis. The same approach was adopted during Bali Bombing incident. While no one wants to fly to Bali, he offered 5000 free seats to Bali which were sold out within 5 minutes of sale.

In addition, he also believes in democratizing the workforce and upholding equality. He demolished wall and doors in the organization which had created positive environment

among the employees. He triggered the idea of having female pilots in the company. For him, if a woman can run a country, she can definitely fly a plane. This proves that, he equalised the workforce especially in diversity. He alludes that, in creating a 'blue ocean' company, engagement is one of the factor that need to be taken into account. Engagement with employees and customers is important to recognise talent and challenges. In nurturing or sustaining the talent in a company, there's must be a room for opportunities in career development to polish potential talents. He nurtures potential talent by giving them opportunities to speak their mind to debate or gives ideas, open for criticism and also engage with them personally. He also remarks that, he took the criticism from customer as a challenge to be better and creatively turns the criticism into a strength of his company by correcting and admitting the mistakes or failure.

In order to build success in this changing landscape, he stresses that crisis or difficulties will actually give a chance for a person to be creative. Creativity will eventually give value added to the company in dealing with changes, challenges and crisis.