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People Process and Tech Go Hand In Hand As Malaysia Embarks on Journey to Digitisation

Syed Ahmad Hafez

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During the OpenGov Leadership Forum 2017 held in Putrajaya, we had a brief interview with John Michael, Technology Director of Glocomp Systems, who was one of the moderators of the Open Dialogue Table (ODT) discussions. Glocomp is one of the diversified privately owned IT groups in Malaysia, focusing on technologies that make an impact on the livelihood of the people, create competitive differentiation for business enterprises and help government agencies to adopt the right technology to enrich the citizens.

John briefly touched upon Glocomp's partnership with Netapp and how NetApp's transformation from a data storage provider into an organisation that provides data management technologies, especially with regards to hybrid cloud, comes at a time when the volume, velocity and variety of data is on a steep rise. Not only that, it is increasingly common that data doesn't reside in only one place. Thus, organizations need help in terms of data management and cloud solutions to make significant or intelligent use of data. In the country's push towards Digital Transformation, the Malaysian government recognises that non-government technology companies like Glocomp and NetApp have a significant role to play. Tech companies are being asked not only to provide the technology to build the infrastructure, but to understand Malaysia's strategic aims and align with them.

The transformation is already underway, according to John. Without them actually calling it an IoT or Big Data initiative, many agencies within the government are already handling a substantial amount of data. The Department of Statistics, for example, have begun digitizing their processes to generate reports and produce information more efficiently and at a much shorter time frame. The Penang state government, meanwhile, is working on a smart-city, open data initiative which will allow them to integrate data, make data more accessible and leverage the power of analytics. Hence, John believes that it isn't just a hype. It is happening right now and the pace is going to get accelerated more and more.



"All of this comes together", John continued. "IoT is just one aspect of digitisation. IoT is about connecting the physical world to the internet, the digital world. A lot of data then gets generated and people tend to think of the most economic and elastic way of actually storing the data. Certain data is very sensitive and has to be stored within the premise. But there are also data which can be stored in any other location. This is where we see cloud computing and hybrid cloud, and all of this coming together to empower the pace of digitization and make things possible in the most sensible and economic way."

Based on a poll conducted at the OpenGov Leadership Forum, the main reasons (over 40%) IT projects had failed in the past were due to a lack of clearly defined requirements, project methodology as well as the implementation of a solution before understanding the problem. John stated that it's essential for organizations to think through the core purpose of digitization and have a digital strategy in place. "When it comes to digitization, there are three things that we need to look at. The people aspect of it, the process aspect of it and the technology aspect of it. Technology is not the only thing that you need to think about. It's not about what cool technology that's available that can fit into my organisation, but what am I trying to solve."

He goes on to add, "Our digital transformation starts from the core motive of digital first, people focused. So it is about participation. The digital government is about how we interact and engage with the population, the citizens of Malaysia. It isn't about just automating the existing manual processes, but also to open up things to become open and transparent". In this regard, the Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Management Planning Unit (MAMPU)'s focus on data and initiative to create Malaysia's first "Data Lake" in a serious attempt to open data to the public is certainly a very strong step in the right direction.

Security is the number one concern for many agencies with regards to cloud adoption and open data policy, but it is a challenge they're finding ways to manage. John doesn't believe it will deter them from embarking on the digital transformation journey. "The technology is mature enough to safeguard the information or data that you gather and to keep your data well protected whenever a breach does happen. All of the technologies are in place. The digital strategy encompasses technology as an overarching umbrella. So everything that they do, technology is to be thought of. Will people take a step back because they're sceptical about security? I say the answer is no. Realistically, talking to them, they are embarking the initiative with adoption of the right technology capabilities because the benefits override the risk factors".