

Counting On Strength of Purpose And Balanced Business Approach

Business executive Ika Heru Bethari finds the value of combining scientific and human approaches when dealing with corporate issues.

The chief finance officer (CFO) and corporate planning director of PT Mitrabahera Segara Sejati Tbk (MBSS) believes a leader needs to weigh different angles before making a critical decision.

“I am fortunate because as a woman, I can take advantage of a female attribute – I do not surrender easily, especially when it comes to negotiation,” says Ika Heru Bethari.

A case in point is her success in refinancing MBSS in 2013. It is an integrated coal transport and logistics services company that provides river and sea-based coal transport solutions to Indonesia’s coal mining industry. It also as operates on-shore and off-shore coal loading terminals and provides a broad range of services, including loading, shipping, trans-shipping and ocean trade stevedoring.

In her dual positions, Ika, 43, was fully engaged in conducting the company’s refinancing which was driven by an aim to optimize internal potential.

Ika’s extensive experience as auditor and risk management consultant was instrumental in implementing the refinancing program. She managed to unveil the company’s hidden strength, what she terms a “beautiful risk profile”, resulting from the company’s long-term contracts.

The latter meant added value for the company as sources of income to pay its credit.

“We finally succeeded in getting a lower interest rate from the previous 5.75 percent to 3.25 percent for long-term credit, and to 3 percent for capital expenditure,” says Ika.

“This was a unique approach. Besides using my previous experience as a risk management consultant, which favored me when it came to scientific arguments, I also used a ‘motherly’ approach,” she says with a chuckle of housewives’ need to bargain in the market.

“I adopt scientific and human approaches. A human approach is embedded in women.

Somehow, women have more strength to struggle,. This is my view, maybe because I am a woman!”

She compares MBSS to a diamond. “If a diamond is polished well and cut in the right way, its appeal will be seen and it will shine. I tend to look at things from that direction. So it is not my approach that is so special, but MBSS is a diamond.”

Apart from leading the finance division, Ika, as corporate planning director, assists the CEO in setting its future business strategy, which requires her to know the details (of the company’s business and issues) so that what has been planned can conform to real conditions.

Auditor experience

Her previous experience as an auditor has helped her successfully carry out her tasks. She says being an auditor was a challenging and sometimes painful experience.

“People are hostile to auditors. They feel uncomfortable when their work is checked or reviewed by others,” she says,.

Ika came up with her own approach to dealing with the public’s cold shoulder.

“I make sure that our presence as an auditor is to invite them [the assessed company] to become a strategic business partner,” she says, laughing.

“For me, whatever the form is, assessment from a third party is helpful [for the assessed company]. Recognition from a third party is important,” she says.

And she always learns from experiences, good or bad.

“I look back to learn from mistakes and based on that, I try to find a better way, which then I translate it into future planning.”

Ika started her managerial posting at Price Waterhouse, Australia (1996-1997) as manager of business advisory and assurance, followed by senior manager global risk consulting management solutions, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Jakarta (1998-2001), and senior manager business risk consultant at Ernst & Young, Jakarta (2001-2004).

The University of Indonesia graduate acknowledges the values that her father cultivated in her when she was a child, and how they influenced in her later life, including her current career and her life motto of “never stop learning”.

Initially, she took psychology as her major but her father believed numbers were her real strength . With his encouragement, she shifted to economics and it turned out that her father’s advice brought her success.

“Apart from my father’s encouragement, my decision to take a career path was also linked to people’s opinions of me. They thought I had a machine in here,” she says, pointing to her head. “They thought I was a ‘paranormal’, as the result of my counting was right even though I didn’t use any counting tools.”

She is modest about her talents. “Every talent I have is a blessing from above. If God takes all of my talent, I won’t be like what I am now,” she says.

The words of her father still linger in her mind: In this world there is no certainty, the world is not static.

“So we should do better and better. But doing better and better should also involve expressing thanks to God. Never feel content with your achievements, but aim to be better. These are the remarkable values I received from my father,” she says.

Another value is maintaining a good reputation, which is related to integrity.

“These are the values from my father that until now have influenced my life, either at home, in a workplace or anywhere.”

To provide an objective picture of herself, especially with respect to her managerial style, Ika refers to the opinions of her close friends or colleagues.

Two things stand out in her own opinion of herself: a talent for teaching and also tendency to become dominant in particular working situations.

“I’m always eager to share my knowledge with anyone, including underperforming subordinates,” she says.

“There is are times when I am fierce or dominant, especially because I demand an achievement target from all my subordinates and I always prepare deadlines,” she says, pointing to a whiteboard.

Targets and deadlines are keys to employees' performance, or else they work with no direction.

"That's why employees that have set a target have to be laser focused. When the deadline is approaching, but they have yet to reach the set target, I turn into a tyrant," she says, laughing.

"But this is just to ensure that the target is met."

(Sudibyo M. Wiradji)

Ika Heru Bethari

Place/ Date of Birth

Salatiga, Central Java, Sept. 21, 1970

Experience

Chief finance officer (CFO) and corporate planning director of PT Mitrabahtera Segara Sejati Tbk since 2012. Director of MBSS since 2010. Senior vice president of corporate planning of PT Indika Energy Tbk since 2008. Previously, with the audit committee of PT PP London Sumatera Tbk from 2005 to 2010, vice president of risk management and corporate control of PT Surya Citra Televisi and PT Surya Citra Media Tbk from 2006 to 2008, chief audit executive and vice president of research and development of PT Surya Citra Televisi from 2005 to 2006, independent commissioner and head of audit committee of PT Courts Indonesia Tbk from 2004 to 2006, senior manager for business risk consulting of Ernst & Young, Jakarta, from 2001 to 2004, senior manager for global risk management solutions, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Jakarta from 1998 to 2001, manager of business advisory and assurance at Pricewaterhouse Australia from 1996 to 1997 and audit supervisor of Prasetio Utomo, Arthur Andersen, from 1993 to 1996.

Education

School of Economics, University of Indonesia (1994).

Out of the office

My hobby is making artwork for interior design. For me, creating art is stress reliever. Once I finish a piece of art, I can return to my job with a new spirit. I feel like I have a new spirit and new energy, like a recharged battery.

My favorite activity with my family is walking, including with my dog. While taking a walk, I observe the surroundings and discuss them with my husband.

My best advice to young executives is don't easily give up and surrender. That is especially when hearing bad comments or assessment from others, however bad it is. In this world there is no certainty, and nothing stands still.

I have a dream of writing a book. But I have not started yet due to a lack of time. I feel that God has given me talents and so, in return, I am called upon to share the best with others. I may write a book on spiritualism. This does not refer to a specific religion. Spiritualism is universal.

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