



The Choice to Put People First

PEOPLE AS THE DRIVING FORCE

When I describe our people as the driving force of AmBank Group, I am describing the very foundation of our success. Buildings, systems and capital form the skeleton of a bank, yet they do not create an institution, people do. It is their character, their commitment and their sense of belonging that determine whether we merely function or truly thrive.

This belief was shaped in the early years of our journey. Back then, we did not have the scale or the vast resources of our competitors. What we had was a close-knit team that believed in the dream. I remember clearly the periods of deep uncertainty where our people stood together, often going far beyond what was expected. I realised then that human capital is our primary value driver to cultivate a dedicated workforce and safeguard AmBank's future.

To me, culture and commercial success are inseparable. A strong culture builds trust, and trust drives performance. Customers can feel when they are being treated with sincerity, and employees perform better when they feel respected and valued. This is why I have always championed the "family spirit" within AmBank Group.

It is a conscious choice to remain human in a large, listed institution. Whether it is through the bonding of *Kelab AmBank Group* (KAG), celebrating festivals as one, or recognising personal milestones with a simple gift, we choose to be more than just colleagues. That sense of belonging creates a resilience that money cannot buy.

A CULTURE TESTED AND PROVEN

Values only mean something when they are tested. It is easy to speak of a "people-first" culture when the economy is booming, but the true measure of an organisation is its conduct during a crisis.

During the pandemic, and indeed during the Asian Financial Crisis, we were faced with a choice to either protect the balance sheet at all costs or protect our people.

We chose our people.

"The last fifty-one years have been a journey of character. I see the faces of those who stayed when times were hard and the families who have trusted us for generations. Last year, we honoured the milestones of our history. But this year, I want to speak of our heart."

We made the deliberate decision to maintain bonuses and, crucially, to avoid retrenchments. I believed then, as I do now, that our staff should not bear the brunt of circumstances beyond their control. Leadership is responsibility, and that responsibility is greatest when times are hardest.

I am often told of staff who leave for other banks, only to realise that the grass is not always greener as the culture can be different elsewhere. Many eventually return home to AmBank Group. This consistency builds trust that cannot be manufactured. It must be earned over decades of doing the right things.

ENDURING VALUES THAT WE MUST CARRY FORWARD

As AmBank Group continues to evolve, we must anchor ourselves in non-negotiable values. Fairness is the first. Everyone must be treated with respect and given equal opportunity, regardless of background. Meritocracy must guide our rewards, and inclusivity must remain our strength by embracing the diversity that makes Malaysia unique.

My only fear is that as we grow and modernise, we might unintentionally overlook the human element. Processes can become more efficient, but they can also become impersonal. We must guard against this. Digitalisation will accelerate and it must, but banking remains a relationship business. The future belongs to those who can combine technological excellence with genuine human engagement.

A SHARED JOURNEY FORWARD

Malaysia remains a land of immense potential, rooted in its strategic position and resilient foundations. AmBank Group will continue to play its part in the nation's growth by supporting businesses and empowering individuals. To the next generation of bankers, technical skills are the entry requirement, but integrity and empathy are what will define your success.

As I look to the next fifty years, my message to every AmBanker is simple – **Never lose sight of who you are.** This organisation was built on relationships where we treat customers as friends and colleagues as family.

If I could ask one thing of you, it would be to embrace stewardship. Care about your work, the people around you, and the impact you have on the community. A bank can be efficient and profitable, but to be truly meaningful, it must have heart.

That is what it means to be a people's bank. That is the legacy we carry forward together.

Honorary Adviser Tribute

Tan Sri Azman Hashim

TO THE NEXT GENERATION

As you step into the next fifty years, the world will demand that you be faster, more digital, and more efficient. And you must be. But remember that while technology is our tool, humanity is our purpose. We did not build this institution on algorithms; we built it on handshakes, personal conversations, and the unwavering belief that we are in the business of people, not just the business of money.

I have one request of every person who wears the AmBank Group name: let that care be the lens through which you see our customers as friends and your colleagues as family. When you ensure that your work leaves our community better than you found it, you realise that true success belongs to those who have the courage to lead with their heart.

The next generation's responsibility is not merely to grow assets, but to guard the bank's spirit – because progress that costs our values is empty, and profit without purpose is fleeting.

This bank has always been a "People's Bank", and it has always had a heart. I am now placing that heart in your hands. Guard it. Live it. And above all, never stop caring.

That is the AmBank Group way.

