

THE MAGAZINE FOR MALAYSIAN PETROLEUM CLUB MEMBERS (MALAYSIA)

RESOURCE

VOLUME 24 NO. 3 JANUARY 2017 KDN: PP 7878/12/2012 (031611)



25 YEARS
RESOURCE

LEARNING TO ADAPT

In the current cycle of volatility in the oil and gas industry, business leaders must continue to learn, unlearn and re-learn to adapt to market forces, says Satumarin Founder and Managing Director, Captain Mohd Zailani Abdul Razak.

By Jacqueline Pereira



Capt Zak packs a punch
with competitive muay thai



SATUMARIN Founder and Managing Director Captain Mohd Zailani Abdul Razak has been a sailor at heart ever since he started as an apprentice on an ocean-going vessel. The South China Sea and the Strait of Melaka are his favourite waterways. And he remembers long periods at sea, sometimes nine months at a stretch. “We would all be so excited, looking through our binoculars to see if we can catch a glimpse of home.”

When Captain Zak, as he is fondly known, was young he wanted to see the world, assuming that the easiest, fastest and cheapest way to do it was by boat. “Little did I know that I would see more sea than the world.”

The Royal Military College alumnus’ more challenging seafaring journeys in the last 20 years include evading a typhoon in the Pacific Ocean, dodging bullets off the coasts of Indonesia and Iran, and battling 15m swells in the Indian Ocean. “In the open sea, we are at its mercy. It’s not always as simple as sailing away to shelter behind an island.”

Niche Market

The sea taught this Master Mariner Class 1 to be self-reliant. From medicating himself to cooking, from training people to changing light bulbs, he has navigated vessels and even repaired their engines. “A ship is like a floating country,” he says. “There’s no one to ask for help. It made us become very resourceful and adapt at multi-tasking.”

All of which has stood the PETRONAS scholar in good stead for the future in the business that he envisaged. Six years ago, he turned 35. Equipped with knowledge and work experience at 13 companies, he set up Satumarin.

It was while working for international oil majors that Zailani had realised the lack of competent specialists to provide quality maritime services globally. To fill this

chasm, Satumarin, incorporated on 5 October 2010, offers a range of services including pilotage and marine project management, dynamic positioning assurance, vessel inspections and marine audits.

While the industry outlook still looks grim for 2017, Zailani hopes the ride will not be as rough. In positioning itself to service both the upstream and downstream sectors, he is certain Satumarin will weather the storm.

To differentiate his company from competitors, Zailani ensured that Satumarin acquired German TUV NORD & Dakks ISO 9001:2008 certification. It also excelled at passing the very stringent audits by international companies such as Shell and Schlumberger. “We provide competent services at very competitive rates,” he says. “Business-wise we have grown ever year more than 30% on average.”

Early on, the company’s got a few overseas stints which built credentials quickly. “We not only operated abroad in the beginning, we also achieved a number of firsts,” says Zailani. Satumarin was involved with Leighton Offshore in Iraq when the first Iraq Offshore offtake oil gushed from the Single Point Mooring back in 2012. They were the Marine Project Advisors/Consultants for P.T. Shell Indonesia for the breakwater terminal and jetty construction in Banjarmasin, Indonesia. When Hess Petroleum’s first gas offtake in the Early Production System (EPS) was delivered in the North Malay Basin, Satumarin provided pilotage and loading master services.

“I saw this gap in a very niche market and was convinced that my highly experienced colleagues and I were able to offer complete business solutions in marine services. We are a small company but with big dreams.”

PERSONALITY

Finding Balance

Satumarin keeps itself updated with the latest technology, such as Dynamic Position (DP), Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull (SWATH) ships, drones and Remote Ocean Vehicles (ROV). In their team, he is proud to say, they have the only approved Malaysian expert in dynamic positioning audit and assurance. Satumarin Project Director Captain Hakeem Haron is respected international authority on Dynamic Positioning. A year ago, they signed a MoU with Universiti Teknologi Petronas, under the auspices of Malaysia Petroleum Resources Corporation, to develop new technology on Remote Operated Vehicle for local subsea and inspection services.

Satumarin is also involved in associations such as Malaysian Oil & Gas Services Council (MOGSC), Ikhtisas Kelautan Malaysia (IKMAL) and Dewan Perniagaan Melayu Malaysia (DPMML). It is among a few companies in Malaysia to be a member of the International Marine Contractors Association (IMCA). Other accolades include the SME 100 Fast Moving Companies 2015 award and achieving a 5-star rating from SME Corp in 2016.

Most of the systems and processes are in place now. "And, in whatever we do we must make a difference. That's why they call me MAD (Make a Difference) Zak." When Zailani started Satumarin, his partner took care of the paperwork while he did everything else. In the early days, he was occasionally hospitalised for exhaustion, when not spending long stretches in hotels living out of a suitcase. He is still very hands-on and trains his staff accordingly. That's their advantage, he says. They grew to 22 when the industry was booming but have since cut back to eight with project hires filling in the gaps.

Believing in personal and business mentorship, he never hesitates to call on his friends for advice. "People are willing to share because of our relationship, we were friends long before we did business together."

In the future, he hopes to contribute more to society through social entrepreneurship. His team are involved with NGOs in Kelantan and were part of the flood relief efforts there in December 2014. He is also setting up his own foundation.

In these trying times, he continues to motivate his staff. "If we think we are suffering, just know that there are more people who are suffering more than us." He encourages his staff to be grateful, to enjoy each day and make the best of it. "We must adapt, stop complaining and, since we all have survival skills, we must sharpen them."

Building Brotherhood

Zailani's enthusiasm is infectious. He strives to instill the same positivity in his colleagues, most of whom he has known since childhood. Grateful for his team's loyalty and respect, he ensures he returns that trust in equal measure. "It's like a brotherhood of friendship, trust and loyalty," he says.

They even call themselves a mini mafia, operating like a family, because when competitors approach his staff - bypassing him - everything is reported back to The Don. "My people are my most valuable asset. If they are not happy, then I'm not doing my job."



The Kelantan native thoroughly enjoys his work, so much so that weekends and public holidays often morph into work days. His wife, he says, does not mind as she sees him more often now than when he was sailing. They have a 16-year-old son and support the studies of eight other children. He gets by with four to six hours of sleep every night and sends out e-mails and messages to his staff at 4am. "But I have told them to put their mobiles on silent mode. I just want to get my ideas across!"

Zailani likes to take life as it is, for it is too short. When he has the time, he likes to travel and is keen on shooting, muay thai, horse riding and diving. He would love to venture to the North and South Poles, as he has never been there. Occasionally, he charters a yacht to take his friends for a cruise to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Singapore or Langkawi. After a short pause, he declares: "Yes, I still love the sea." ■