

RSOG SEMINAR

I Hate Reading the Teleprompter: My 25 Years in Broadcasting

with

Suhaimi Sulaiman

When : 27 October 2016
Where : Razak School of Government
Speakers : Suhaimi Sulaiman

About the Seminar

Intelligent, hard-working, charming: these words are fitting for Suhaimi Sulaiman, who has graced Malaysian television sets since the early 1990s. Since his start in TV3, this former retail banker managed to transform himself into a household name by building a reputation around himself as an all-round broadcaster. Suhaimi Sulaiman's talents shone through during Astro AWANI's coverage of MH370 and MH17 tragedies in providing up-to-date coverage, as well as what many consider a balanced analysis of the Malaysian General Elections. In an era where society thrives on public perception, Suhaimi Sulaiman has become a true master at branding his journalistic work with his own unique twist. In his memoir "I Hate Reading the Teleprompter", this anchor of prime-time news reveals the many people who have inspired him and the experiences which resulted to a fruitful career in media, entrepreneurship and consultancy. This seminar will explore how Suhaimi Sulaiman achieved success through his distinctive branding approach, the future of the media landscape, and to share the secrets to longevity in any given career.

Summary

Stories have a way of enthralling us whether for educational purposes, as source of entertainment, means of inculcating moral values, or to preserve customs, culture or conduct. Equally important is the art of storytelling - how one conveys the stories for the intended audience. In this seminar, Suhaimi Sulaiman initially pointed out that news presenters read the teleprompter as visual cue cards. While the display device has its merits, and ensures efficiency of communication, he personally believes that by knowing the stories behind the news, any message conveyed is more meaningful and gives the right impact to the recipient.

Storytelling creates connection, engagement, shared meaning, and influence. Therefore, it is crucial to own the space - a metaphor for ownership of who you are, what you have, where you are, and what you can contribute. Essentially the differentiation between one and another is our personal experiences and these experiences become our unique selling

proposition. It leads to credibility and ensures one can become a point of reference for any subject based on ones' experiences. More importantly, once credibility is earned and the space is owned, getting buy in for your ideas, proposals, products, or services becomes easier. Thus, to be an influencer, one needs to know how to create, develop, and more importantly, preserve the said space by ensuring that one is always ahead of the curve.

A question was posed to the audience that comprise mainly from government agencies and government linked companies – “what space do you occupy?” Whilst understanding that there may be a certain negative connotation to government agencies, therein lies some potential opportunities of addressing the stigma. For instance, government agencies websites could be redesigned as an avenue for latest knowledge sharing centre for the particular jurisdiction covered by incorporating compelling storytelling in the narrative instead of dry and standardised information as content.

Too often, mindset is identified as pitfalls of any potential change. Resistance towards anything new is expected but can be combated with courage to change. This lack of courage can be due to our aversion of making mistakes in decision-making. However, experience, thorough research and courage can aid in decision-making. In addition to experiences, the speaker also outlined two crucial requirements in ensuring one is different from the other – the importance of sense-making and capitalising on niche areas. He shared that the success of the Astro AWANI brand was in understanding what the audience may want to view (types of presenters for different audience groups) and what the audience want to see, that is lacking in other channels (24/7 news, breaking news, relatively balanced elections coverage, and special programmes).

His secret to longevity in any given career? Always reflect on what you do as everything that happens in life can become stories that show your leadership values. Once these experiences are reflected upon, they must be communicated. More importantly, effective communication is when one informs, educates, and entertains. For instance, kisah sang kancil and buaya (the tale of the mouse-deer and the crocodile) still permeates over time and used to explain certain situations, impart specific values, and at the same time, entertain the audience. That is essentially what storytelling is all about.

Key Issues Raised

- While it can be argued that imitation is a form of flattery, the act itself lacks soul and originality. What is valued yet missing are new ideas. To come up with new ideas, one must disrupt the usual way of thinking by moving out of comfort zones and opening to other people.
- While personality is important, credibility is equally, if not more, vital. Credibility often comes when one is passionate about their subject matter expertise.

- Word of mouth may sometimes be more powerful than paid advertising space.
- A good leader is measured by the subordinates that he or she trains.

About the Speaker

Suhaimi Sulaiman is a renowned Malaysian media personality with 25 years of experience. In 1990, he joined TV3 as a reporter and assistant producer and started anchoring TV3 News in 1993. He was later given the opportunity to produce and host various news and current affairs programmes, including Face to Face, Teleskop, Malaysia Hari Ini, and Bincang Petang, in addition to anchoring the prime time news Buletin Utama and Nightline. Between 2003 and 2006, he provided content consultancy services and public relations advice to various organisations such as Telekom, PETRONAS, and 1901 Hotdogs. He later joined Astro AWANI in 2007 until 2015, where he left as Group Editor-in-Chief. Suhaimi Sulaiman has since focused his talents on conducting training workshops on media, content, branding, public relations, and crisis management.

Contact

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