



LESSONS LEARNED TO BE A PERFECT FIRM



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THERE IS ALWAYS A VALUABLE LESSON FROM EVERYTHING, EVERYDAY. THIS PRINCIPLE APPLIES IN MY LIFE UNTIL NOW, INCLUDING IN MY ROLE AS AN EMPLOYEE. ALTHOUGH, FOR THAT ROLE, I NEED A HARDER EFFORT TO LEAVE MY COMFORT ZONES. I AM ALSO REQUIRED TO BE OBSERVANT, AND TRY TO SEE THINGS FROM A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE – NOT MERELY FROM MY POINT OF VIEW. THAT’S PROVEN FROM MY EXPERIENCE OF 12 DAYS ATTENDING JHI CONFERENCE AND INTERNING AT CHARTS PARTNERS IN BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA.

ONE PLAN FOR BIG YET ABSTRACT VISIONS

It all started with a meeting call by Management right on August 1, 2018. Management intended to assign me to attend the JHI conference in Brisbane, Australia on October 31 – November 3, 2018. How did I feel after I was told to go abroad? Happy? Definitely! I got the opportunity to see and gather with people from various countries, with different cultures and of course with different mindsets. Here is where I can get valuable lessons about how people think globally, how I can broaden my horizon by meeting people from other countries and listening to their thoughts about various issues, and the most important thing is how I can use this opportunity to develop our firm, to inspire all team in our firm to move forward toward our visions. Sounds good? Of course! Sounds abstract? Obviously! Why? Because, to be honest, at that time I had no idea about how this conference could develop our firm, and how our team could be inspired towards our visions. All were still so abstract.

This year I was assigned not only to attend a JHI conference, but also to do an internship for 5 working days in one of JHI member's offices in Brisbane, **Charts Partners**. I was assigned to learn from their best practices, and to observe their daily operations to find what we can implement in our daily practices later for my firm's continuous improvement. The last assignment made me a little more relieved because at that time I thought that maybe I could bring something more concrete to our firm because this time I was given the opportunity to see directly Charts Partners' best practices, such as Paperless Office and the use of Xero and other business softwares – concepts that we already know, but not sure how and where to start.

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE PERFECT FIRM?

This 2018 JHI Conference was about **Perfect Firm** hosted by **Colin Dunn** from **Panalitix**. It never came to my mind about what a Perfect Firm was. What I often hear is "No Body Is Perfect" - and how is it possible for a firm be a perfect firm? "Okay, this was getting abstract", that was what I thought at that time, on the first day of the conference. However, since the materials were delivered by Colin in a structured and clear manner, I got very valuable lessons about how we, as a firm, can achieve our goals. From here I realized that The Perfect Firm means that one firm has achieved its goals, in terms of Revenue, Profit, Capacity, Community, Lifestyle, or Succession. Besides, I also learned that you cannot be perfect without knowing well your strengths and weaknesses. This also applies to a firm, where we are encouraged to assess our strengths and weaknesses in Five Key Business Areas, which are Attracting Clients, Managing Clients, Developing Teams, Optimizing Processes, and Developing Products.

It turns out that the concept of “The Perfect Firm” was not as abstract as I imagined, although I have to admit that there were a lot of new things that surprised me throughout the conference, including the **18 Step Workflow Process** - which can help every member of the firm, especially the associates, to work more efficiently because they don’t have to handle administrative matters, and **Paperless - a Cloud System** which can reduce much time for filing documents or administrative works. Before, what I knew was just that it could help us to reduce paper usage so that, at least, we can save cost on paper consumption and make our workstation tidier. But, from the conference, Colin showed that we not only talked about cost reduction, but also about efficiency – the capacity we could expand by saving time spent in filing all those documents.

You cannot be perfect without knowing well your strengths and weaknesses. This also applies to a firm, where we are encouraged to assess our strengths and weaknesses in Five Key Business Areas, which are Attracting Clients, Managing Clients, Developing Teams, Optimizing Processes, and Developing Products.



Breathtaking view in Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary

HERE IS HOW A PERFECT FIRM LOOKS LIKE

Monday, November 5, 2018 was my first day visiting Charts Partners to learn from their best practices. They showed me their daily operations, which honestly surprised me when I compared with how we worked. They work efficiently and in a timely manner which allows them to have an average work time of less than 8 hours per day! During the 5 days, they showed me how they could do it, showed many things that were very valuable lessons for me, and of course for my firm - changed my mindset and made me see things from a different perspective, especially in terms of working effectively and efficiently.

They have a clear distribution of tasks. Technical works will be performed by the Associates, while the administrative works will be performed by the Administrators. This allows Associates to get and finish new assignments quickly because they do not need to think about administrative matters. This distribution of tasks is actually a form of the 18 Step Workflow Process described by Colin at the conference last week.

Moreover, they also showed me the importance of controlling budgeted hours, and how to do it. The point I learned here was that all members in the firm must know the budgeted hours for each project they handle and stick to it. Therefore, everyone will strive to work as optimally as possible so that the budgeted hours are not spent uselessly. The administrative coordinator will control the use of these budgeted hours and communicate regularly with the in-charges on the status of these hours.



Last day with Charts Partners team

One of the best practices I know from Charts Partners is about Paperless Office. I was so excited for finally being able to see how they started with Paperless Office, what challenges they faced, and how they handled those challenges. I still remember how impressed I was because all documents were neatly arranged, but not in physical folders stacked in the filing room, but arranged neatly on the server. The entire working process has reduced paper usage, from the preparation process to the final reviewing process. I imagined how difficult it was when they began using this paperless system, but now they have finally reaped the results. As I learned at the conference, Colin said that it might take some time, but after that we will be able to see the results: not only on the cost efficiency, but also on the time efficiency.

No matter how good the standards have been made, no matter how sophisticated the technology has been provided, but without the awareness of the importance of working efficiently from each member of the company, all those things will not work.

On my last day in Charts Partners, I got one more valuable thing from one of their partners, Brian Pashen. Brian said that the main key of their success is efficiency. No matter how good the standards have been made, no matter how sophisticated the technology has been provided, but without the awareness of the importance of working efficiently from each member of the company, all those things will not work. The size of our firm is the same as Charts Partner. We are not as big as big 4 either, but our capacity is totally different, and efficiency is the reason why. This took me back to the JHI conference. Colin said that there are 3 sources of inefficiency, which are internal inefficiency, external inefficiency, and government inefficiency. We have limitation or even no control towards both external and government inefficiency, but we have a full authority to control our internal inefficiency. I agree with this and have already witnessed it during my 5 worthy days in Charts Partners.

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE I GOT FROM JHI AND CHARTS PARTNERS!

I have long notes from my 9 days in Brisbane: notes which show me that there are many things that should be eliminated or improved in my company. How grateful I am to JHI and Chart Partners for the priceless opportunity, experience, knowledge and input. I feel grateful for this facility provided by JHI because honestly, we need this program - not just the theory, but the opportunity to witness directly on how the process of the theory is implemented. I am also thankful to Charts Partners for their kindness in giving not only their time and experiences, but also input to our company so that we can move forward towards our vision to be a Perfect Firm.

Special Thanks to:

