



# Case Study **2** At the Crossroads of Career and Camaraderie

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**Abstract:** This case study presents a sunny scenario of a hard-working, talented and competitive employee who is seen to be recognised and rewarded for her efforts by her superiors. This case analysis elucidates the fact that for achieving success, recognition and excellence in an organisation, two factors are of substantial importance. One would be personal attributes of an employee such as hard-work, competitiveness, talent and skills and second the presence of an inspirational, motivating, helpful, friendly, trusting, supportive, and an unbiased leader. The case study clearly depicts that when these two factors combine, they bring about highly positive developments for the employee as well as for the entire organisation. However, difficult choices are to be made by a manager and the employee herself when opportunities for recognition and promotion knock on the door.

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## **Prologue**

“So, when can we expect a call from you to confirm your new job here at TM Global?” asked Mr. Yusa to Zulaikha, with high hopes that she would accept the offer soon to begin a new project for the global communications business. Fidgeting with the telephone cord, Zulaikha hesitated and laughed shyly, with no firm answer to give to the General Manager of TM Global on the other side of the line.

“I have not made a decision yet. May I notify you by the end of this month?” Zulaikha cleared her throat and waited for a response.

“Yes, of course. Well, I hope to hear good news from you. Assalamualaikum”, ended Mr. Yusa before hanging up the phone.

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“Wa’alaikummusalam”, replied Zulaikha. She stared at the phone for a few moments, after hanging up, with several thoughts going through her mind and then looked at her computer screen to continue her work that was pending for the day.

### **All in a Day’s work**

To Zulaikha, every day is a great morning to go to work. Whether it is the clear blue sheet of sky draped beautifully above the busy pedestrians, crossing the roads of the congested traffic in the city, or the gloomy dark clouds covering the city skyscrapers, the nice ten-minute walk to the office from the train station is what Zulaikha enjoys almost every day. She considers it as her morning exercise before beginning her tasks in the office.

She also enjoyed watching birds chirping and flying from one lamp post to another, the wonderful smell of brewing coffee from the nearby cafes and anything that caught her eye while she strolled along the sidewalk to her office building.

“Good morning, Pak Man!” Zulaikha greeted the security guard with a smile on reaching the entrance to her office building.

“Good morning, Miss Zulaikha”, replied Pak Man while he tilted his security cap and smiled at the cheerful woman who never missed to welcome him in the morning.

“Hope you have a pleasant day today”, said Zulaikha as she proceeded to the elevators. Pak Man nodded in response and looked on as Zulaikha entered the elevator before turning back to his previous position by the door.

Entering the empty office in the morning, Zulaikha sat at her desk and looked around her cubicle. She still couldn’t believe that she had been offered a position at Telekom Malaysia Berhad (TM) after her graduation, which she accepted without a doubt. Upon acceptance, she was placed under the supervision of Mr. Amir in the Mobile Maritime & Infra Management Department of TM Retail that dealt with providing mobile satellite communications services to consumers. The major industry requiring this service is the Maritime industry which includes the Malaysian Navy, local fishermen and Marine Department for communication purposes while at sea but not all use the services through TM. Within her first year in the department, she soon realised that not many local consumers were aware of TM providing mobile satellite services as TM was generally known for its fixed line, Internet and as a broadband service provider. Additionally, Zulaikha observed that though this department had been established for well over two decades, a deficit budget and limited manpower, had constrained marketing activities over the years. Lack of support and marketing promotion of this service in TM had led to a decrease in potential sales of the TM mobile satellite services. However, lately, this service had contributed high revenues to TM. Zulaikha liked her job because she was given the opportunity to explore the mobile satellite business field, guided by Mr. Amir. He had given her the opportunity to assist in selling the service though she had been in the department for almost two years only and was still considered a newcomer.

“Ah yes, Zulaikha,” Zulaikha was startled by Mr. Amir’s voice suddenly interrupting her concentration. “I just got a call from Mr. Yusa, General Manager of TM Global asking us to do a presentation about the mobile satellite services as they want us to assist in expanding the market. We need to present it next week.” Zulaikha nodded and jotted the date down on her notepad.

“Could you please prepare the presentation, complete with recommendations or solutions. We need to give some ideas on business improvement and outline some strategies for them to consider for implementation as they are new in this area,” informed Mr. Amir. He continued, “I want you to think of something that will enhance this business, but if you are not sure, please let me know and we can discuss it together. If there are any other issues, please come and see me by noon. I have a few meetings in the evening and will not be in after lunch,” said Mr Amir before leaving her office.

Zulaikha lifted her head to look at Mr. Amir after she had finished writing the information and replied, “Okay, Mr. Amir, I will inform you once it is done and if I need assistance, I will notify you. Thank you.” She was honoured that Mr. Amir had confidence in her to the extent of inviting to be involved in any meeting or presentation. Certainl, this would add to her experience and imbue her with confidence when interacting with other staff members or customers.

A week passed. Being an organised person, Zulaikha had prepared herself to start her tasks by listing all the tasks to be completed within the one-week period. The requested presentation was completed and she was now so preoccupied with completing another proposal documentation to submit to Mr. Amir for approval by the end of the day, that she hardly noticed someone approaching her desk.

“Knock knock”, said Ben whilst gently tapping on Zulaikha’s desk and while joking with his colleague, “Why so serious?”

Glancing up, Zulaikha laughed and replied, “My mother didn’t send me to school”, a line from the Batman Begins movie script. They both enjoyed exchanging script lines from any movie, occasionally, and would see whether the other person replied by way of any other lines from that movie, and which had become their game during office hours. Being the only female in the department, Ben treated Zulaikha like his own little sister.

“Good one,” exclaimed Ben, knowing Zulaikha always beat him in their little game. “So, I heard you got to prepare a presentation for TM Global. How’s the preparation getting along?” asked Ben.

“Yup, the meeting is in less than two hours and the presentation slide is done. I’m just waiting for Mr. Amir to go through it again, in case he wants to add some more information”, answered Zulaikha. Proud of his colleague and knowing she would do well, Ben wished her luck before retiring back into his cubicle.

“Alright, the slides are fine. Good job, Zulaikha. Let’s go meet with the TM Global team”, said Mr. Amir after going through the completed slides with Zulaikha for the fifth time. He was surprised at Zulaikha’s competency for she had submitted

the slides within three days after he had asked for her help a week ago. To his surprise, she actually came up with some good and unexpected recommendations along with the ideas proposed. He realised how eager she was to learn more without feeling shy as a new employee. Silently, he was proud to have her in his team and hoped to see her shidden talents shine.

Right from the start, Mr. Amir could see the potential in Zulaikha. He hoped with his knowledge and supervision, he would be able to help Zulaikha build her career in the company; He was confident that they as a team could contribute to TM to generate more sales that could lead to more revenue in the future. Always dealing with male staff in the past years, Mr. Amir seldom had female staff to supervise. At the start, he was worried that Zulaikha might not be able to accept his straight-forward, strict way of giving instructions. Instead, she was completely the opposite. He was happy that she could quickly adapt to his working style. From time to time, he would switch from being a strict boss and behave in a light-hearted manner towards her so she would feel motivated. As a was a married man, he knew how to deal with women. Also, he was glad that Ben and Zulaikha got along nicely, though sometimes there appeared to be some competition between themselves as to who could outperform the other.

After gathering the necessary items, Mr. Amir and Zulaikha headed out of the office to meet with the TM Global team at their office located 33 levels above TM Retail.

### **The Uncut Diamond is Unveiled**

“Welcome, Mr. Amir and Miss Zulaikha”, greeted Mr. Yusa as his guests entered the meeting room. “Please, take a seat”, he said showing two empty seats for them. When everyone in the room was seated, Mr. Yusa introduced his four team members to Mr. Amir and Zulaikha, who nodded their heads in acknowledgement. Humbly, Mr. Yusa continued to speak purposefully, “We are pleased to have TM Retail here. We are also eager to hear what this mobile satellite is all about. I hear this service played a major role in generating increased revenue for TM last year and I hope we can work out something to enhance use of this service from TM even more. The maritime community is expanding and we should grab this opportunity to provide our mobile satellite services to them. Okay, without further ado, I would like to welcome Mr. Amir to present his presentation”.

“Firstly, I would like to thank all of you at TM Global for having us here to make this presentation on mobile satellite services . This presentation was prepared by my staff member, Zulaikha. Therefore, I would like to call upon her to present it,” said Mr. Amir to the members of the floor.

Butterflies fluttered in Zulaikha’s stomach. Zulaikha was surprised to be called upon to make this presentation as it was unexpected. She knew that this presentation was a big marketing opportunity for their department. Hence, it should be explained by a higher management team member. However, since her boss insisted, Zulaikha

put on a game face. “Zulaikha, please proceed,” smiled Mr. Amir and mouthed her to do her best.

Zulaikha nervously started the presentation initially. Nevertheless, she quickly got the hang of it and completed the presentation leaving the audience in awe. Then began the barrage of questions from TM Global, all of which Zulaikha succeeded in answering. Mr. Yusa saw the talent in Zulaikha and apart from his interest in the expansion of the mobile satellite services, the idea to make Zulaikha part of his team immediately came to mind.

“Thank you, Zulaikha, for the wonderful presentation. We would like to continue discussing this matter and will notify you on the proposed date”, exclaimed En. Yusuf to the floor members. He thanked everyone and ended the meeting and bid them farewell. As everyone was heading towards the door, Mr. Yusa approached Mr. Amir and praised him, “You have quite a staff there, Mr. Amir. See you at the next meeting.”

“Same here, see you soon,” replied Mr. Amir and together they exited the meeting room.

After several follow-up meetings, Zulaikha’s constant performance and capability to express good ideas and perspectives had convinced Mr. Yusa more of Zulaikha’s intellectual capability in the mobile satellite services business arrangement in TM. He also saw the commitment in Zulaikha towards her job.

One midday, during office hours, Zulaikha’s office telephone rang and she stopped her work momentarily to pick up the phone. “Hello, Zulaikha speaking. How may I help you?” said Zulaikha to the person on the other line.

“Hello Zulaikha. This is Mr. Yusa from TM Global. I have an important issue to discuss with you. Can we discuss it over lunch today?” asked Mr. Yusa.

Fully aware of his busy schedule, Zulaikha accepted his invitation. “Yes, Mr. Yusa. Where shall we meet?”

“Meet me at the Home Secrets at 1 o’clock.”

Zulaikha entered the suggested cafe ten minutes early and selected a suitable table for the business discussion. While waiting for Mr. Yusa’s arrival, she opened an online newsletter about mobile satellite on her Smartphone to read. After reading some articles in the newsletter, she glimpsed towards the door and saw Mr. Yusa approaching the table.

“Hello, Mr. Yusa”, said Zulaikha standing up from her seat to welcome the General Manager and waited for him to be seated first. Soon, a waiter came over to their table and as soon as he taken their orders, Mr. Yusa immediately informed her of the purpose of meet-up.

“I am impressed with you and therefore, I would you to be a part of my team in TM Global to expand the mobile satellite services in our company”, explained Mr. Yusa. He noticed that Zulaikha did not expect any of this, for she looked speechless. Taking the silence as a sign there would be no response any time soon, he continued, “I was also informed that you have worked in TM for two years. Don’t you think it’s time for you to do job rotation?”

“Thank you for the offer,” Zulaikha took a deep breath and found her voice to reply to Mr. Yusa, “As much as I like TM Global to be my next stop for the job rotation, I think I need to think this through and discuss this development with Mr. Amir.” She could not help grinning from ear to ear and felt happy and excited that she was being offered a new job position.

Though Mr. Amir could recruit someone else to be part of his team, he would rather consider taking someone with experience from among the TM staff. This would save cost, time and energy compared to hiring someone new. Also, before being posted inside TM, the candidate must go through a general one-month training stint on TM as well as several other training sessions. After the training, Mr. Amir would personally need to train the newcomer about the business and that obviously was a time-consuming affair. Keeping in mind a fast track, Mr. Amir wanted to expand mobile satellite services to secure its position in TM as it had been a component of TM’s services for quite some time. His plan to establish TM as a major provider of satellite services would require a person with the right calibre to work with him.

Zulaikha was aware that it is a norm in TM to do three job rotations every two years to climb up the management upper level. Usually, the employee had to apply for it through Human Resources (HR). It was very rare for an employee to be offered a new position from another TM staff directly. Furthermore, TM Global was one of the most difficult departments to join as they were very selective on selecting their apprentices.

“That is alright. I did speak to Mr. Amir about this matter and the call is yours to make. Please consider it. Think about the company,” said Mr. Yusa as their food arrived. “Let’s eat and get energised to work!” joked Mr. Yusa to the beaming young female employee. He was delighted to watch Zulaikha’s response. He really hoped she would take the offer.

### **Business, not Personal**

After her short lunch with Mr. Yusa, Zulaikha sat inside her cubicle and recalled the event that had taken place a few moments ago. She was in a haze and was surprised to be approached by the General Manager of TM Global to not only have lunch with him but to be offered a position inside TM Global. As much as she was happy with the offer, she needed to discuss it with her boss to seek his approval to move. Furthermore, she wanted to know what he thought of the new position.

She continued with her pending tasks while waiting for Mr. Amir to return to the office from a meeting to discuss the new development. She earnestly wanted to talk about it to Ben but after fighting with her inner thoughts, she decided to let her boss know first.

Soon after, she heard footsteps walking towards their office and she looked up to see the person she was expecting entering his office. She got up to go meet Mr. Amir. She gave a tentative knock, waited for his response and entered. Zulaikha sat herself down in the leather chair facing Mr. Amir. “Mr. Amir, I have something to say though

I am told you have been notified about it.” Zulaikha cleared her throat and continued, “Mr. Yusa asked me to join TM Global earlier today during lunch.”

“I see. I guess he didn’t waste any time to inform you right after he told me this morning”, said Mr. Amir, visibly upset by the interaction between his staff and Mr. Yusa. “Well, what do you think? Are you interested in taking up the offer?” asked Mr. Amir while sorting out his files on the desk. “Did he mention when will you start there?”

Surprised to hear the disappointment in the tone of his voice, Zulaikha gathered herself to reply her boss, “It is a fantastic offer and I feel happy about it. I have thought about it, and I have decided that I would like to join TM Global. I guess, once I have completed my two years here, I will be able to join them. I will have to inform HR.”

“In less than three months, you would have completed your two years here,” said Mr. Amir as he glanced at the standing calendar on his desk. “Do you have time to complete all the given tasks before moving there? I don’t want you to submit incomplete reports to me”, ordered Mr. Amir. “Also, it does not necessarily mean that once you have completed the two-year duration, on the dot you can automatically move to another job position. There are several things to be considered. Can we talk about this later, Zulaikha.”

“Yes, I understand, Mr. Amir,” Zulaikha nodded. She did not know what to think or what to do when she did not get the support she was expecting from Mr. Amir. She stood up and returned to her cubicle.

She sat in her cubicle ruminating. *“If ever I want to do the job rotation, I need to complete all my tasks here. But how can I leave if Mr. Amir doesn’t approve the transfer? The HR will ask for his consent,* thought Zulaikha sadly. She sighed deeply. One does not get such offers often!

The clock showed office hours to be over. Zulaikha quickly packed her belongings to ready herself to go home. She spotted Ben walking out of the door and decided to walk out with him. “Ben! Wait!” said Zulaikha as she began walking towards him. “How was your day? I barely saw you today”, asked Zulaikha as she stood beside him while waiting for the elevator.

“Hey, you. I’m good today. You know, the usual, meeting with customers asking them to pay their bills”, chuckled Ben. “How about you? How’s the planning for the mobile satellite services?”

Zulaikha felt relieved that they were the only ones in the elevator so she could talk to Ben privately. “I’m fine. The business plan with mobile satellite services is fine with the TM Global. I really hope the execution is fine, as well.”

The elevators opened and each of them said their good-byes and went their separate ways.

After both his staff members had left the office, Mr. Amir sat at his desk thinking of all the possible scenarios if he let Zulaikha leave his department. He was happy with her achievements and would support her, but he felt sad knowing that he would no



longer have her as his staff. He enjoyed having her and thought the three of them made a great team. He had many projects planned for Zulaikha and Ben for the following years.

He was also uncomfortable that Mr. Yusa had made an unexpectedly drastic move by offering his staff a position based on the excuse of job rotation. Mr. Amir knew that Mr. Yusa meant well. All that he wanted was to ensure the expansion of the mobile satellite services of TM and enlarge the customer base so that TM would enjoy increased business and profits. He also knew that with Zulaikha joining TM Global, Mr. Yusa would be assured of an excellent worker as she had the will and spirit to contribute to the company. However, if Zulaikha was to leave, Mr. Amir would then have to start teaching the newcomer the same things he had taught Zulaikha about the mobile satellite services which had taken some time. Only time will tell, thought Mr. Amir to himself. He closed his office door and headed to the elevator.

The next day, Zulaikha was still thinking about the offer. Initially, she had been happy but after thinking about it again, she realised that she enjoyed her current office environment, which had become her comfort zone. She was already well-adjusted with her tasks and responsibilities. If she were to change to a new position, she would have to start adapting to the new environment all over again. However, professionally, Zulaikha knew by taking the offer, she could help contribute more to the company by helping to enhance the mobile satellite services. She knew that TM Global had all the funds and with sufficient manpower, TM Global could accomplish beyond its expectations.

Shaking her head, Zulaikha continued with her tasks so as not to be distracted by the offer and its consequences. *Decisions, decisions*, thought Zulaikha.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What would you do if you were in Zulaikha's place? Give reasons.
2. Why or why should not Mr. Amir support Zulaikha's application?
3. Based upon the case, how would you describe Zulaikha's personality traits?
4. How would you describe the leadership style of Mr. Amir?