



Progressing Towards a More Dynamic Culture within IEM

by Ir. Choo Kok Beng

"REFRESH the existing IEM!" was my very first remarks when I was asked about my future plans for IEM upon taking office as the President of The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM), for session 2013/2014. In order to achieve this, it is inevitable to have the cooperation from all involved parties including the Council members, leaders and committees of all technical divisions, the IEM Secretariat, IEM branches as well as all members of IEM.

In line with the aspiration to enhance IEM, there are a few vital areas that will need to be given extra thought and attention, namely the culture within IEM, the membership services it provides, the recognition of outstanding and deserving members, and the position of IEM when dealing with issues pertaining to the general public. Indeed, we have plenty of work that needs to be done to enhance all the above-mentioned areas.

However, to start the ball rolling, we ought to first examine the existing culture within IEM that has an immense influence on every aspect of IEM from administration, operation to functionality. How can our existing culture be improved? Progressing towards a more dynamic culture within IEM is the key. By this, I regard IEM members as being part of the system, the problem and the solution, that would act as the driving force in the development of IEM.

Therefore, promoting proactive participation among members in the decision-making process is crucial to enable such a cultural shift to happen. I strongly urge all leaders, from the Council and technical divisions, to the IEM branches and Secretariat, to begin adopting a more dynamic leadership model in terms of managing their respective areas of responsibility, by creating a shift in their current decision-making paradigm.

For instance, if you want more members to engage in more collaborative problem solving, you may need to model this by first implementing it within your own committees respectively. In addition, for leaders to develop and implement their strategies that promote features of a dynamic leadership, they will first have to understand how each member's cultural perception affects their performance and productivity. On top of that, the key members would need to have the necessary instruction, coaching, and performance feedback for a more effective problem-solving process and work collaboration.

In brief, one ought to understand that people do what they do to gain what they desire. Hence, leaders have to explain to the rest of the members how they can benefit from the vision, that is, from their actions to achieve the vision and objectives. Leaders are recommended to model their management style to assist others to gain the knowledge, skills, resources and expectations that are essential to realise the vision. Otherwise, the desired culture shift will be less likely to happen.

Although a culture shift can be kick-started from any level within IEM, I foresee a more effective change if the culture shift is first embraced by the leaders of all technical divisions and branches, as such a shift driven from the top levels of a culture's hierarchy of authority or influence would be executed more easily and with less damage as compared to a culture shift that is initiated by those lacking in support from the culture's official power base.

For a start, the President's Corner is a platform to get my vision for IEM across to all IEM members. In order to 'walk the talk', I shall be actively involved in promoting a shift within IEM towards a more dynamic culture. ■