

# FIVE STAGES OF 'DATING' OR MAKING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MoU)

## ESTABLISHING COLLABORATIONS WITH THE OIL & GAS INDUSTRY



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Entering into a collaboration is like taking a relationship from an advertisement on Craigslist to a marriage contract. To make the story relatable, the journey has been structured around the concepts in the book, *Mars and Venus on a Date*, as summarised by the author John Gray, with reference to the experience of the Oil, Gas & Mining Technical Division (OGMTD).

OGMTD has been privileged to facilitate Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with the Malaysian Oil & Gas Engineering Council (MOGEC, <http://mogec.org.my/>) and Malaysian Oil & Gas Services Council (MOGSC, <https://www.mogsc.org/>).

### STEP 1: ATTRACTION

*"The secret to the Attraction Stage is staying true to who you are, while still expressing your best and most positive self. This can be a challenge for both men and women because our language and behaviour may be misinterpreted. The challenge during the first stage of dating is to make sure you get the opportunity to express your attraction and get to know the potential partner."*

This is the stage where an MoU partner is selected. Here are some characteristics that attract IEM to a potential partner.

- 1. Specialty:** The IEM is interested in multiple trades and disciplines. It may be that certain sectors do not have a large interest and the IEM cannot spend resources for a disproportionate benefit. If a partner is seen as an auxiliary arm of a Technical Division (TD) or Special Interest Group (SIG), then it can strengthen the offerings of the TD/SIG in question without committing internal resources. For the OGMTD, it needs heavy muscle to provide oil & gas relevant services to IEM members.
- 2. Contacts:** Potential partners may have better access to higher echelons of the industry as compared to the TD/SIG. Their executive councils and/or management would consist of experienced leaders and well-known corporate figures. For example, MOGSC and MOGEC will have better access to the PETRONAS C-level than IEM.

- 3. Wider Exposure:** A potential partner should have access to audiences that IEM would find hard to penetrate without extraordinary efforts. In this example, if oil & gas has not been a focus for the IEM, engaging in a profitable MoU will help facilitate entry and access to the industry such as IEM branding at trade fairs, conferences and exhibitions, invitations to be panel speakers and to participate in organising committees.
- 4. Make-Up of Potential Partner:** For example, MOGEC and MOGSC members are made up of trade companies in the oil & gas sector, so this will allow IEM to potentially access thousands of individuals who may not be aware of the existence of IEM.

### STEP 2: UNCERTAINTY

*"Just as the first stage of dating is a time to meet and get to know a variety of people, the second stage is the time to focus on one person and give that relationship a chance to grow. Men and women experience uncertainty differently. While a man tends to question whether he wants to pursue a relationship, a woman tends to question where the relationship is going."*

*"The challenge here is to recognise that uncertainty is normal during the dating process. Without a good understanding of the uncertainty stage, it is easy for a man to drift from one partner to another and for a woman to make the mistake of pursuing a man more than he is pursuing her."*

Now that the IEM has selected a potential partner, it needs to clear up any uncertainties the partner has about the IEM.

- 1. Wider Exposure:** An MoU partner should have access to a non-profit multi-disciplinary and multi-trade organisation, with an established history, support for obtaining recognised international and national qualifications (MIEM, PE, AER), strong administrative services Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities, and a home away from home in historic PJ state.

- 2. Contacts:** The strengths of IEM lie in a more diverse set of contacts, especially in the national executive level and public sector. The partner can make use of these special relationships.
- 3. Administrative Strengths:** IEM has a strong and well experienced Secretariat which can support boutique MoU partners to carry out their activities. For example, IEM provided the logistics support to carry out a visit to RAPID in Pengerang together with MOGEC. In addition, IEM has a commercial arm, which can be made use of.

During the wooing stage, it is helpful that the IEM has active members in the management of the potential MoU partner. In this example, OGMTD has embedded members in the councils (MOGEC, MOGSC) and important member companies (MOGEC, MOGSC) to ensure that any fear, uncertainty and doubt are addressed so the relationship can move to the next level.

### STEP 3: EXCLUSIVITY

*"The third stage of dating begins when both people feel a desire to date each other exclusively. Both of them want the opportunity to give and receive love in a special relationship without competition. They want to relax and have more time to share with one partner."*

This is where an IEM MoU differs. It is beneficial to IEM to commit to a number of MoUs. However, if there are multiple relationships, there should be different strengths that each partner brings to the table for maximum optimisation:

- 1. Speciality:** Different MoU partners should bring different talents to the relationship. In our example, MOGEC is focused on engineering consultancy services, while MOGSC is focused on the oil & gas industry with engineering as a major part of the business process.
- 2. Shopping Around:** At this stage, IEM may find that there are other potential partners which can fill in gaps left by the current suitor list, such as Society of Petroleum Engineers (subsurface engineering) and Malaysian Offshore Contractors Association (fabricators).

### STEP 4: INTIMACY

*"Once both people have experienced chemistry on all four levels – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual – they are ready to experience the real and lasting love that can grow in the Fourth Stage of Dating: Intimacy. This is the time to relax and just get to know each other on a deeper, more personal level. It's also important to point out that the intimacy stage is a life-long journey."*

*"She should continue to open up more and share her thoughts, feelings and vulnerabilities. He should continue to express his love, show more interest and desire, and look forward to regular physical intimacy. Both of them should grow closer and feel the joy of a deeper emotional connection and increased physical contact."*

This is the stage where both parties can further define whether an MoU is beneficial, as more information is shared before committing to the next stage.



IEM-MOGEC signing of MoU

- Writing the MoU: At this level, a draft of the MoU is presented to all parties for approval and alterations as required. In this example, an MoU needs to take into account that members may be either individuals (IEM) or entities (MOGEC, MOGSC).
- Mutual benefits are to be made clear in MoU: This may be a cause for concern if fees to participate in activities are markedly different.
- Opening the kimono: This is where items listed in Steps 1-3 are audited and clarified, to make sure there are no misunderstandings and that what you see is what you get. For the relationships pursued by the OGMTD, this stage presented no surprises, as all was made clear in Step 2.

### STEP 5: ENGAGEMENT

*"The final stage of dating happens when the couple decides to make the ultimate commitment and get married. Both people are clear that they want to be with one another forever. It is a time to build a life and future plans."*

*"Engagement is also the best time for a couple to practise before they are married. Marriage is like a magnifying glass. Everything becomes bigger. As the love grows, so do the problems and pressures."*

For an MoU, this is pretty much the anticlimax. MoU documents are prepared, t(s) are crossed and i(s) are dotted. There is no hesitation. It's pretty much over except for the signing ceremony and making the marriage work, which will be the subject of a future article.

### CONCLUSION

The article attempts to structure the development of MoUs with industrial oil & gas entities within the context of a classic journey as described in Mars and Venus on a Date. It is seen that the journey is the same, with customisation due to the nature and needs of the relationship. ■

### Author's Biodata

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