

LEADING WITH PURPOSE

Women's Day Perspectives With Our Chief Financial Officer, Mabel Liaw

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MABEL LIAW



The Narrative of Women

Throughout history, women have been catalysts for societal change. Figures like Amelia Earhart, who defied gender norms as the first female aviator, and Ada Lovelace, renowned as the world's inaugural computer programmer, exemplify women's ability to offer diverse perspectives vital for progress.

Despite these strides, achieving gender parity, especially in fields like technology, remains an ongoing challenge. In 2023, a study done by UTM revealed that only 35% of Malaysia's tech workforce consists of women*. With even fewer occupying leadership roles, this stark underrepresentation underscores the need for greater inclusivity in the tech sector.

Mabel's Journey

Since joining Time dotcom in 2015, Mabel has excelled, culminating in her appointment as CFO at IGS in 2022. Armed with a robust financial foundation from Big Four firm, Mabel boasts a successful track record of listing companies on Bursa. Her expertise extends to financial reporting, treasury, and tax management, showcasing her adept navigation of high-stakes financial intricacies.

Beyond her professional prowess, Mabel's presence is a truly a breath of fresh air in the office. Her infectious enthusiasm and high energy infuse our daily routines with laughter and joy, while her team-spirit as well as supportive nature ensured that no one is left behind which evidently has aided in propelling IGS towards success like a force of nature.

THE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

What are some insights and experiences as a woman do you have, about being in a leadership position at IGS?

Being transferred to IGS from our parent company, I feared fitting in. Yet, I was pleasantly surprised. From management to working level, everyone was very supportive and guided me as I tried to navigate my way through my new role as a CFO. The phrase "it takes a village to raise a child" really rings true here as I experienced the meaning of teamwork, inclusiveness and the ability to accept change. I learned that having an open mind to challenge yourself into doing new things also helps a lot.

What are the initiatives undertaken by IGS to empower and support women within the organisation?

In many workplaces, two main issues still linger around women; inequality in pay and the inability to break the glass ceiling. However, I am proud to say that, in IGS, they do not take women's needs as a passing statement. IGS have created a safe space and work environment for women to speak freely of their concerns and reward them accordingly based on work contributions and achievements. In fact, 50% of IGS's management are powerful and capable young women who are highly ambitious.

Why is it important for women to be in leadership role in general?

"Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus" highlights the diverse perspectives of men and women. Men are often viewed as logical and assertive, while women are seen as empathetic and understanding. Embracing both qualities in management creates a harmonious balance, akin to yin and yang, fostering peace in the workplace.

What's the one quirky or fun topic that always sparks conversation and allowed you to connect with others during meetings?

Travelling – I enjoy travelling with my family to restore family bonding. Every once in a while, I also enjoy the peace and tranquillity of scuba diving with my friends. On top of that, I make sure that I always participate in all company activities to build a close bond and understanding of my colleagues. Talking about what I enjoy always build a satisfactory relationship with my friends and family.



What are some of the mental & physical challenges have you faced as a woman in leadership role?

Earlier in my career, I prioritised work-life balance to avoid burnout in a competitive world. Coming out to a highly competitive professional world at a young age, it is definitely a struggle to avoid burnout. However, as I grew as a professional (and in age), and as my network expanded, my perspective on what is "work" has changed. Work-life integration has given me the flexibility to coordinate my personal and work responsibilities in a more efficient manner and enabled me to maintain good mental and physical health.

If you had to describe your journey in tech so far using a movie title or song lyric, what would it be, and why?

I have always been a Disney girl at heart, "A Whole New World" by Aladdin comes to the top of my mind when I see my progression as a fresh graduate to stepping into this unknown territory. It is truly "dazzling place I never knew" with "a hundred thousand things to see".

What steps do you believe organisations can take to create a more supportive environment for women in leadership roles within the tech sector?

Just by being a little bit more understanding on women's needs and requirements will go a long way. I believe IGS has taken a step forward to do so, however, we should never stay complacent as the tech world quickly evolves into a progressive and competitive environment. Consistent and frequent upskilling will definitely give a bigger advantage to lead the company forward.

How do you stay on track in your demanding role as CFO? Any unique strategies or rituals you swear by?

Having a great team that supports me helps a lot. It is not so much as a ritual but a way of living, I always believe in "treating others how you want to be treated". With having a little bit of empathy and sympathy towards your work colleagues goes a long way in helping build a greater organisation.

What advice would you give to women aspiring to pursue leadership roles?

Dive into the challenge with gusto, and boldly aim for the stars! Who knows what awesome surprises you'll uncover until you take that leap? It's like a thrilling adventure where you uncover your hidden superpowers along the way.