

# Changing the Game: Sustaining the Profession

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## SUMMARY

Sustaining the surveying and mapping profession and prospering the industry together with the need to ensure continued relevance remains key challenges facing the profession in Malaysia. The Profession embarked on an inclusive and consultative strategic planning initiative comprising key representatives of the profession from both the public and the private sectors, engaging in a series of brainstorming and strategic planning sessions that were geared towards answering three key questions.

- What does the Surveying and Mapping industry stand for?
- What kind of industry should the Surveying and Mapping profession seek to be over the longer term?
- What short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives will help the Profession fulfill its role?

The outcome included drafting a comprehensive set of strategic directions based on the balance between present-day realities and future desirables, that which the Profession envisaged the Surveying and Mapping industry to become within the next the years.

The presentation will outline the public private consultative approach, the resolving of immediate impediments and the formulation of a Strategic Plan. More importantly, the Profession now realized the need to migrate up the value chain and desires to become “game-changers”.

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## PREAMBLE

The surveying and mapping profession in Malaysia, in recent years, through a series public private consultation, established its Core Purpose that stems from a number of factors including –

- the profession is facing multiple challenges, including an ever-accelerating rate of change;
- the profession having to focus on crisis management instead of planning how to strategically respond to present and future challenges;
- the emphasis on re-branding and marketing is becoming a do-or-die necessity because of increasing complexity of the global marketplace; and
- the critical need to create and maintain viable and sustainable industry.

## INTRODUCTION

The Association of Authorised Land Surveyors Malaysia was created to foster, preserve and enhance the status, prestige and integrity of the surveying profession through the promotion and encouragement of ethical practices. Formed in 1979, the membership is restricted to surveyors duly registered by the Land Surveyors Board and who possesses an annual licence to practise.

The Land Surveyors Board, enacted by an Act of Parliament in 1958, is one of the oldest professional regulatory authority in Malaysia tasked with the control and regulation of licensed land surveyors and all matters related thereto. The Board is a key stakeholder within the profession and plays an important role in ensuring that the profession is kept abreast with the latest development and advancement in the science of surveying. Its primary objective is to regulate and control the licensing of land surveyors and matters pertaining thereto; and to provide leadership in the upholding and advancement of the survey and mapping profession.

The Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia, from its humble beginning as a survey department in the state of Johore in 1885, is now the national survey and mapping agency with a mission to enhance quality in surveying and mapping services along with managing the geospatial through an excellent system with competent human resources and conducive working environment. Its core function includes advising the Government in the field of cadastral surveying and mapping and along with this, State and International boundaries; providing and managing complete and conclusive cadastral and mapping databases, providing geodetic and spatial data infrastructure to support survey and mapping and to publish maps.

## **PUBLIC PRIVATE CONSULTATION**

As part of the Government's commitment to "Malaysia Inc.", central government agencies were advised to establish Consultative Panels bringing together under a single panel all relevant stakeholders. The Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia, the national agency for surveying and mapping in Malaysia, established such a panel at the turn of the millennium comprising of representatives of the highest level from the Department, the Land Surveyors Board and the Association of Authorised Land Surveyors Malaysia. The Director General of the Department co-chairs the Panel with the President of the Association.

During the early years of the new millennium, realizing an ever challenging professional landscape and an increasingly globalize marketplace, the Consultative Panel established a select committee comprising of senior members of the Profession representing the Department, the practitioners and the regulators. This Strategic Planning Committee became engaged in a series of brainstorming sessions that were geared towards answering three (3) questions:

- What does the Surveying and Mapping industry stand for?
- What kind of industry should the Surveying and Mapping profession seek to be over the longer term?
- What short-term, mid-term and long-term objectives will help the Profession fulfill its role?

The outcome of these series of brainstorming and strategic planning sessions included a unified determination to address immediate challenges facing the Profession and to position the Profession towards sustainability and prosperity.

## **THE CORE PURPOSES**

An outcome of the series of consultation is the realization of the Profession's triple core purpose -

- Ensuring the profession's relevance in national development;
- Maintaining an invaluable presence in the marketplace;
- Advancing its influence in policy decisions and advocacy on matters that impact the Profession.

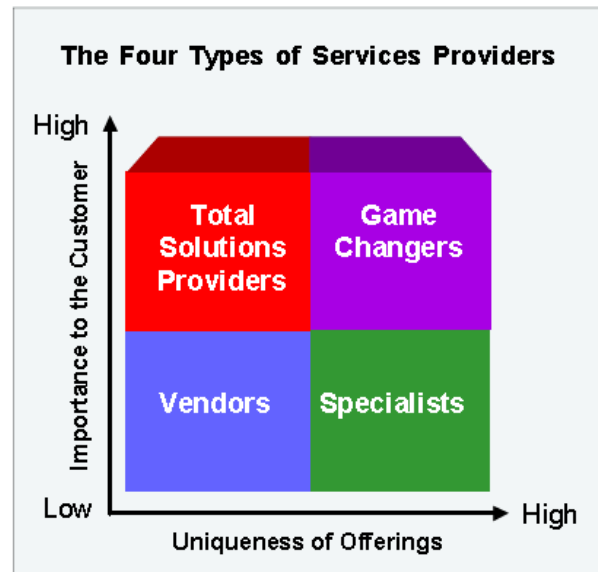
This leads to the formulation of a vision, a vision to shape a future, "*A Dynamic and Agile Community of Surveying and Mapping Professionals*" comprising:

- A cohesive community of professionals with clarity of purpose, direction and accountability, unified in its agreement on strategic initiatives and priorities, armed with an unfailing discipline to follow through;
- Professionals who demonstrate increasing ability to anticipate and adapt effectively to the future; and
- An innovation-driven infrastructure that enhances access to comprehensive information through a wide range of technology and facilities.

## THE MISSION

The underlying philosophy about the Profession's 'existence' is 'mission-based'. To enhance the relevancy of the Profession's mission, it was necessary to reference the Profession, the services providers in particular, based on various types of service strategies that underpin the multi-faceted range of Surveying and Mapping services offered. To frame Strategic Thrust in a comprehensible and workable manner, the Profession's service providers are categorized into one of four (4) types (quadrants):

- Vendors
- Specialists
- Total Solution Providers
- Game Changers



The Profession needs to identify which quadrant of service provider category it belongs to, the following characteristics related to 'buyer expectations' are most relevant:

- Vendors - Because of their low potential value, customers buying offerings from Vendors do not normally want to spend much time or energy in the purchasing process—all they want is an offering of acceptable quality, one that is easy to buy and at a low price. All things being seen as equal, the lowest price always wins;
- Specialists - Because the Specialist has unique capabilities, the customer expects best-in-class services. Since there are very few providers of these services, the customer is always wary of being taken advantage of. Customers do not mind paying a premium for these services (they have to have them), but they are always concerned about not having the services available when they need them. Hence, the customer is always looking for other options to meet their specific needs.
- Total Solutions Provider - When buying from a Total Solutions Provider, the purchase is high visibility (and high risk to the backers of the selected services provider). First on the list of expectations is reliability—the sign of assurance that the services provider followed by the fact that the client would want the solution to work. However (and although they will seldom admit it) clients are not looking for the very best answers, otherwise they would have handpicked the team of diverse specialists required to do the job.
- Customers expect only one thing from Game Changers— innovative answers that positively impact business performance. These service providers can do what they say they will do. Next, the client would want one-stop shopping, as many big, complex purchases involve many suppliers, and the customer wants one, and only one, organization to act as their agent to address the initiative.

- The understanding being that a client’s (be it the Government, the multi-national corporation or the individual) philosophy on their approach to purchasing, based on a best reference to ‘Buying Strategy’, is:
- When buying from Vendors, the buying strategy is always to shop around for the best deal. An important consideration here, though, is that not much time will be spent;
- When purchasing from Specialists, the buying strategy is to continually investigate other potential suppliers and substitute services;
- When considering purchasing from Total Solutions Providers, there are always at least two or three services businesses that clients feel can do the job adequately. Since there are only minor areas of uniqueness, once the shortlist is finalized, the buying strategy is to negotiate—offer better terms, toss in a few more services or lower the cost a bit;
- When the critical business issues of the organization are at stake, customers will aggressively try and partner with those they see as Game Changers, as they realize that organizations with these capabilities are few and in-between. They will pay just about anything (within reason) to get the job done “world class.”

The Profession’s mission then is to ensure that the Professionals are endowed with the best chances of success to evolve from ‘Vendor’-type service providers to those of ‘Game Changers’ who:

- provide the highest quality professional services;
- enjoy a high degree of confidence from the public in the Surveying and Mapping industry;
- demonstrate continuing trust and collaboration, strengthened partnerships, increased understanding;
- seek to continuously improve communication between and amongst industry players;
- demonstrate unmatched knowledge, skills, and abilities in meeting the expectations of clients and consumers.

## **THE PRESENT REALITIES**

A quick glance of the near and distant future landscape paints a picture of competitive pressures that demand both efficiency and effectiveness. The Profession will need to come to terms with the business imperative of adapting with increasing speed to market pressures and innovations.

The traditional approach to the business equation in terms of maintaining individual enterprises whilst performing only those capabilities for which the enterprise can demonstrate, has paved the way for new initiatives involving the establishment of dynamic networks of multi-disciplined capabilities. In this arena, joint efforts are focused on marketing-related distinctive competence in collective branding, niche service offerings, solidifying strong technical know-how, developing new channels and pooling of funds to finance rapid expansion and pursue business opportunities.

Globalization and technological change, coupled with deregulation and changing consumer demographics have created another new competitive reality. Technological innovations are

also transferring from one industry to another and across international borders at increasing speed as well.

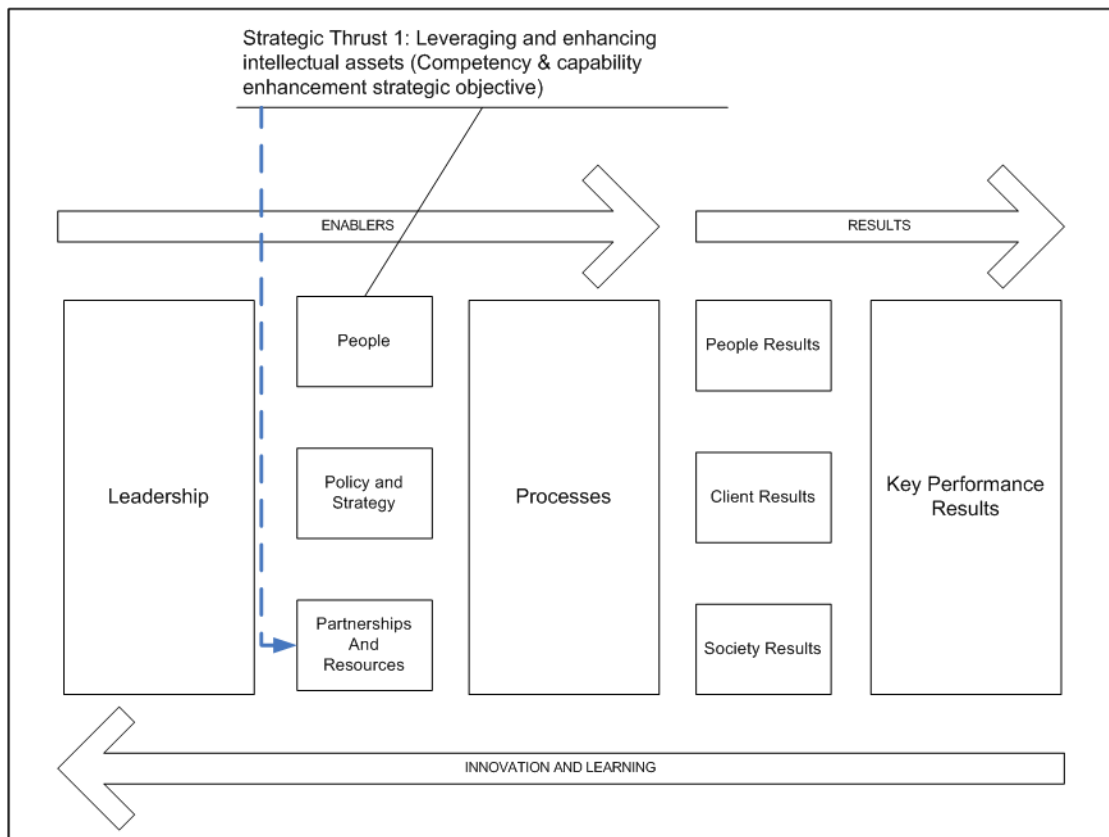
The global economy is witnessing the increasing trend of adaptive and agile enterprises placing high value on alternative strategies like outsourcing, partnering relationships to enhance their competitive advantage, and leveraging communication technology to communicate with international network organizations.

The impending ASEAN Community calling for the free flow of services within ASEAN including the soon to be ratified ASEAN Framework Arrangement for the Mutual Recognition of Surveying Qualifications are current realities that the Profession must not only recognize but embraced.

## **GAME CHANGERS**

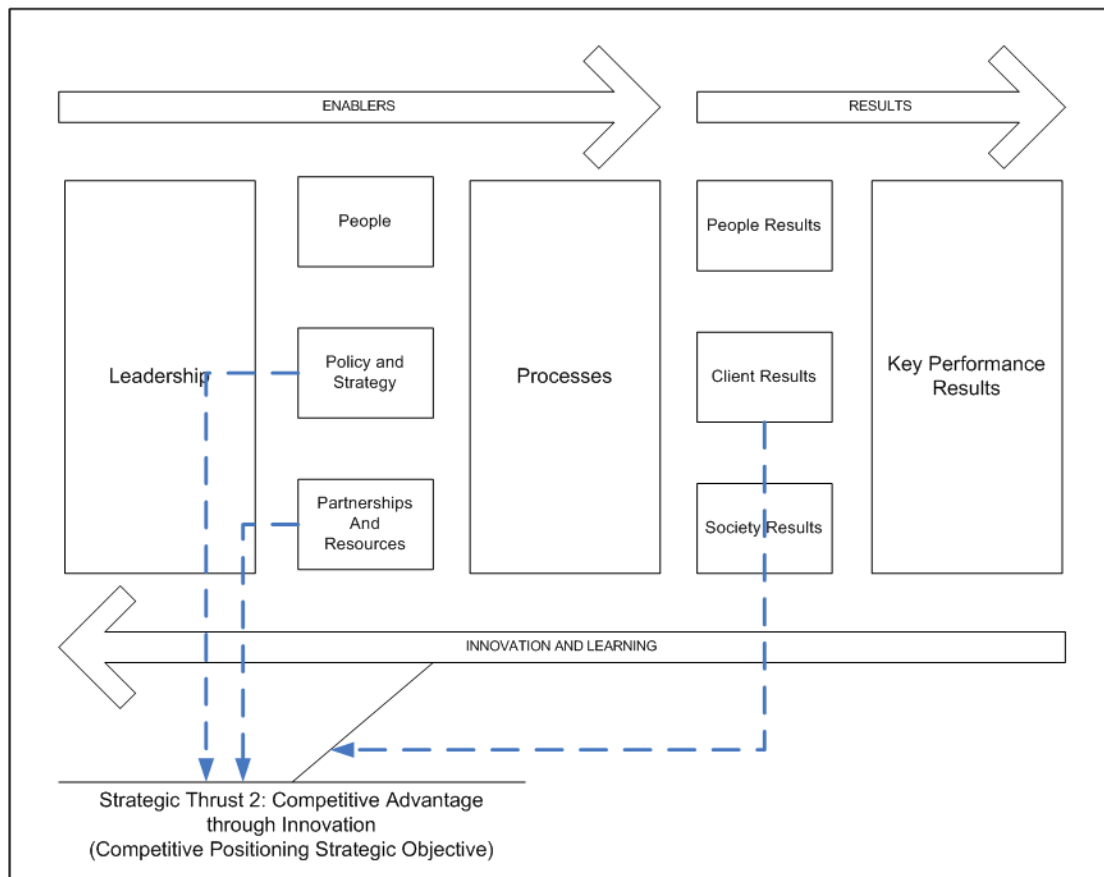
A number of strategic thrusts were formulated. The outcomes from Strategic Thrust-1 will spearhead the attainment of the desired future by helping:

- Vendor-type professionals change the way they do business and gear themselves towards the Specialists market space with enhanced business and management competencies;
- Specialists-type professionals advancing their core competencies and expanding their capabilities in order to offer Total Solution Provider-type of services via synergistic networks;
- Both categories of professionals to aimed for excellence in the ‘People Development & Involvement’ perspective of the EFQM Business Excellence Model while the Specialist-type to imbued with the capabilities towards Partnership Development.



Strategic Thrust-2 will manifest its function and form via a Product Development emphasis for Total Solution Providers to enhance their marketplace acumen and expand their unique professional capabilities especially in the area of utilizing technology innovation, to compete effectively in the Game Changer playing field, on par with international industry players.

Total Solution Providers will be encouraged to gear themselves towards the Continuous Learning, Innovation & Improvement, Customer Focus and Partnership Development emphasis of the EFQM model, thus moving towards achieving the long-term objectives of competitive positioning and technological leadership. Additionally, two (2) categories of issues will be addressed – human capital development and impetus for innovation.



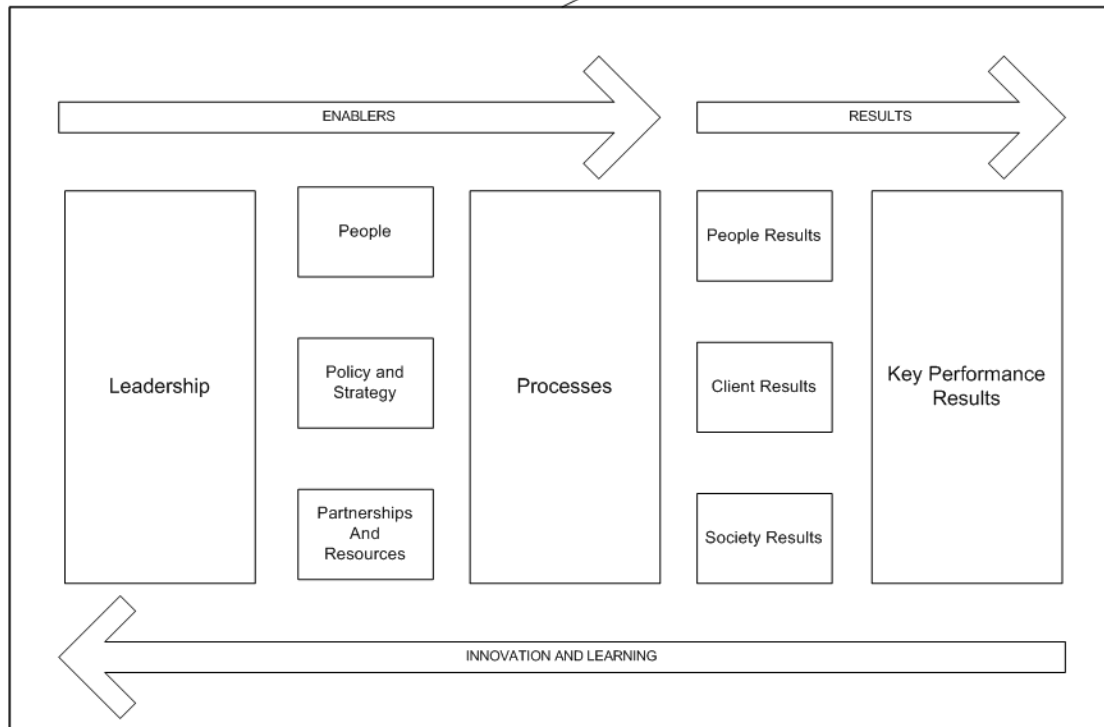
Strategic Thrust-3 paves the way for Game-Changer type professionals to look forward to a Concentrated Growth alignment where they can equip themselves with the knowledge, expertise and skills to sustain as they compete in a market space, not only nationally but also regionally and internationally.

Business excellence that promotes capabilities and opportunities in the following perspectives of the EFQM model will suit the aspirations of Game Changers:

- Partnership Development and Involvement
- People development and Involvement
- Continuous Learning, Innovation and Improvement
- Management by processes and facts
- Leadership and consistency of Purpose
- Customer Focus
- Results orientation

Two (2) categories of strategic issues are expected to be addressed alongside celebrating the success of Game Changers: (a) human capital development (b) impetus for innovation.





## CONCLUSION: FACING REALITIES

Despite the overall reputation of being one of the oldest professions, the Surveying and Mapping industry is in fact at a 'growth' stage especially when considering the increasing numbers of professionals in the marketplace as well as the increasing and extensive application of surveying and mapping technologies in business sectors such as:

- Agriculture
- Archeology
- Banking and Finance
- Construction
- Public Health
- Manufacturing
- Maritime
- Medical
- Media
- Mining
- Movie Making
- National Security
- Real Estate
- Sports and Recreation
- Telecommunications
- Transportation

This scenario not only reinforces the significant contribution of the Surveying and Mapping industry to the nation's economic growth and national development, but re-emphasizes the growing influence of factors such as brand recognition, product / service differentiation, and the financial resources to steer such ventures – all key elements of potential business success and sustainability for the Profession.

There are a myriad of issues the Profession have and will continue to grapple with, in their endeavors to seek the most feasible path towards sustainability and prosperity. However, one factor dominates all – a pervasive sense of anxiety about the future.

Facing realities called for a paradigm shift amongst all stakeholders in the Surveying and Mapping industry, the scope of which is geared towards enabling the Profession to transform themselves into sense-and-respond realm that never lose sight of the deeper, significant meanings of a strong collaborative spirit, strength in unity and a collective consciousness in pooling individual strengths and resources to face the challenges of mounting pressures brought by the winds of change.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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- Director General of Survey and Mapping, Deputy Director General of Survey and Mapping, Director of Mapping Division, Director of Cadastral Surveying Division, Director of Surveys, Department of Survey and Mapping Malaysia;
- Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Board Members, Secretary, Land Surveyors Board, Malaysia;
- President, Vice President, Secretary General, Treasurer, Executive Council Members, Members, Association of Authorised Land Surveyors Malaysia; and
- the Consultant engaged by the Association to prepare its Publication.

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