

Great Eastern Life Assurance (Malaysia) Bhd has reaffirmed its position with a second consecutive special recognition for "Commitment to Leadership" at the Aon Best Employers — Malaysia 2017 awards.

Senior vice-president and head of human capital Dennis Tan Koh Tiong was on hand to comment on this new milestone.

"We are very happy to have received this recognition for the second time running, as it is a marker of our leadership, and something we can be proud of.

"I would attribute this award to all the supervisors in the company, as well as the senior management team and, in particular, our CEO Datuk Koh Yaw Hui. He has been an icon of the company and has inspired great leadership within the organisation's ranks."

Tan adds that the company's core values — integrity, initiative and involvement — are drilled into both the leadership as well as rank and file, and for good reason.

Great Eastern Life Assurance's excellence in leadership is no flash in the pan, as the company has also been recognised previously as having some of the best onboarding practices in corporate Malaysia.

Through its Corporate Orientation Programme, the company provides a highly structured, two-week orientation programme for new staff. Here, new staff are integrated into the day-to-day operations, where the importance of integrity in their career with Great Eastern Life Assurance is impressed upon them.

"Integrity is something we do not compromise on, and we instill this lesson in

GOOD LEADERSHIP A POWERFUL ENABLER AT GREAT EASTERN LIFE

BY OLIVER CHRISTOPHER GOMEZ



Tan: Good leaders are survivors, and good employees follow good leaders.

everyone, right down to our clerical staff" says Tan. This is only the beginning of a very impressive ladder to success.

The company prevents any kind of revolving door scenario within the workforce, thanks to intelligent programmes designed to spot and nurture keen minds.

"We call these people exceptional talent, or 'ETs' for short," Ong adds. According to him, the ET programme is a group-wide effort to identify top performers in each of their business units, with a view to grooming them for greater responsibilities within the company.

The senior management team then carefully crafts unique development programmes for their respective ETs. This programme is taken so seriously that the managers are required to report the progress of their ETs to the group's top leadership.

Tending to the top prospects is just good sense, but the company goes well beyond the call of duty. Great Eastern Life Assurance has a robust continuing education programme, replete with scholarships, sponsorships for professional certificates, as well as management trainee programmes.

"Recently, we completed the first round of interviews for our scholarship applicants. The selection process is very rigid, and we also conduct multiple interviews in addition to an assessment before we make a decision."

According to Tan, the company gives out between RM700,000 and RM800,000 a year in scholarships to its bright young stars. He estimates that RM12 million have been disbursed to successful scholarship applicants since the inception of the schol-

arship programme in 1998.

The management trainee (MT) programme is another initiative Tan is proud of. "Here, the company interviews and hires fresh graduates, albeit on far more stringent selection criteria." Tan says that at the very least, they must have hit very high minimum grade point averages in their graduate studies.

Once selected, these MTs will first be sent to Bank Negara Malaysia to sit through the central bank's Financial Sector Talent Enrichment Programme (FSTEP). The programme comprises a series of intensive training sessions covering almost all aspects of the financial sector. This includes conventional banking, Islamic banking, investment banking, as well as insurance and takaful. According to Tan, the FSTEP is held periodically over the course of three months.

He adds: "When they return after three months, our new MTs are put on attachment in three-month rotations. Over the course of 18 to 24 months, the MTs are piloted into various departments to maximise their exposure.

"At the end of each three-month cycle, management then engages with the MTs to gauge their levels of interest and satisfaction with that particular department.

"This has been a very useful programme and, in fact, we have former MTs who have been with the company for more than 12 years now."

Ultimately, Tan believes that strong leadership begets more of the same. "Good leaders are survivors, and good employees follow good leaders," he says. ■