

By **PREMA JAYABALAN**
prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com

I recently had the opportunity to chat with an occupational safety, health and environmental consultant at a social gathering. What began as a casual conversation turned out to be an insightful discussion on industries and the environment.

Sure, I have heard the term "occupational safety and health" before, but until I spoke to Kaliswaran Palanisamy, founder of Safety & Environmental Engineering Services, I didn't know the depth of its meaning.

SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

"In my field, what we do is we create awareness to industries on the importance of safety, health and the environment. Our clientele comprises companies from the manufacturing industry. We also have clients from the construction, oil and gas, healthcare and hotel industries.

"We're here to assist industries in complying with the regulations set by The Occupational Safety and Health Act and the Environmental Quality Act.

"We test the air quality, water quality, soil, chemical exposure and noise exposure level to see if the level adheres to the standard measures set."

According to Kaliswaran, when it comes to the environment, test parameters are carried out to gauge the level of releases being made into the air. For example, isokinetic air emission testing is conducted at the chimneys of companies where air is being released. The emission has to be within the specification set by the Government. If it exceeds, then measures have to be taken to keep it at bay.

As for occupational safety and health, that comprises looking into the hazardous environment at work due to handling of chemicals, machineries and other workplace activities.

Kaliswaran monitors the employees of a company and tests them for noise and chemical exposure. If the results are

A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

THE IMPORTANCE OF PROTECTING THE EMPLOYEES' WELL-BEING



not satisfactory, they are sent for medical checkups and recommended safety equipment is installed in the company to protect these workers.

Trainings are also conducted for employees to create awareness on the measures that need to be taken prior to chemicals handling and extreme noise or construction sites exposure.

EARLY DAYS

Born in a small town called Changkat Kruing in Ayer Tawar, Perak, Kaliswaran is the youngest of three children. Life was not always a bed of roses for him.

"Since childhood, I used to help my mother at the rubber estate before going to school. Once I'm back, I will help her tend to the chicken that she rears at home. Even during the school holidays, I would work at the chicken farm to earn pocket money. From rubber tapping, to rearing chickens to being a waiter at hotels, I have done it all," he reminisces.

Though it got difficult at times, Kaliswaran will never trade his growing up years for anything in the world as it equipped him with valuable lessons and experiences that have shaped him to be the man he is today.

"Upon completing my STPM examinations, I was selected to pursue a degree in Environmental Science at Universiti Malaysia Sabah. At that point I didn't know anything about this course as I had not applied for it.

"However, the curiosity in me told me to accept the course given. That took me all the way to Sabah where I spent three years learning about

safety, health and the environment," says Kaliswaran who also holds a masters of Engineering in Occupational, Safety & Health from Universiti Malaya.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Kaliswaran's interest in this field sparked when he was doing his internship with an environmental, health and safety consulting company in Peninsular Malaysia. Upon completing his internship, he joined the same company as a full-time staff. He was attached with this company for four years.

Throughout his tenure here, he visited many sites, collected samples and learnt to study the results and advise clients based on his findings.

TAKING THE LEAP

"After four years, I felt that I had to move on, having gained the knowledge and experience I needed. Moreover, I had always wanted to have my own business. Of course, at that time, when I decided to make the jump, it seemed pretty daunting.

"Nevertheless, with the support of my family and friends, I went ahead and started my own consulting firm," reveals this proud father of a two-year-old son.

A TYPICAL DAY

Kaliswaran's day is definitely not on a nine-to-five cycle. Usually, the day starts with meeting clients or heading to the sites to supervise his executives who are at work.

"I am at the site supervising my staff who start off by monitoring the air, water and waste in companies. Samples are taken to my laboratory for testing, to confirm if the level is below, within or over a safe scale set by OSHA or EQA."

He set up his own laboratory in 2014. Prior to that, he used the services of other laboratories.

"If the samples tested are over the safe limit, then



Supervising his executives who are testing the air quality in a factory.

action needs to be taken. For example, if it's the air emitted by the chimneys of the factories that are in the danger zone, we install an air pollution control system or the CEMS (continuous emission monitoring system) that will help keep the air released, within a controlled level.

"For water and liquid waste, if the level is within the safe zone, then it can be disposed as per other wastage. However, if the level is higher than usual or is toxic, then different methods need to be used to dispose them, as to not pollute the environment.

"Once the problem for the client has been rectified, we prepare a full-fledged report and present it to the client. This is to create awareness on the issues faced by the company and the solution that needs to be taken to avoid mishaps or diseases that can cause a downfall to the business," he further elaborates.

"Another copy of the report is sent to the relevant authority that keeps track on how well the environmental, safety and health regulations are being adhered to by companies in the country."

With a staff of 10, comprising engineers, chemist, lab managers and site staff, Kaliswaran certainly has his hands full.

"It's a challenging yet fulfilling career for me. The challenge is to keep myself constantly updated with the latest technology evolving around the safety and health field in all industries."

MOVING FURTHER

"Occupational safety and health is of utmost importance, as a small accident can bring down not just the business but the reputation of a company. Knowledge on safety and precautions that need to be taken is something that everyone of us needs to know. This knowledge can also be applied at home."

"My future plan is to write a book that will create the awareness for people on the importance of safety and health towards creating a healthy environment for us and our generations to come," says this enterprising consultant who dreams of making a change in his own way.

■ *Prema is intrigued by people who have interesting careers that will bring much betterment to the world. If you have an interesting story to share, write to her at prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com. For more interesting A Day In The Life articles, log on to www.leaderonomics.com*



Kaliswaran in a discussion with a client.