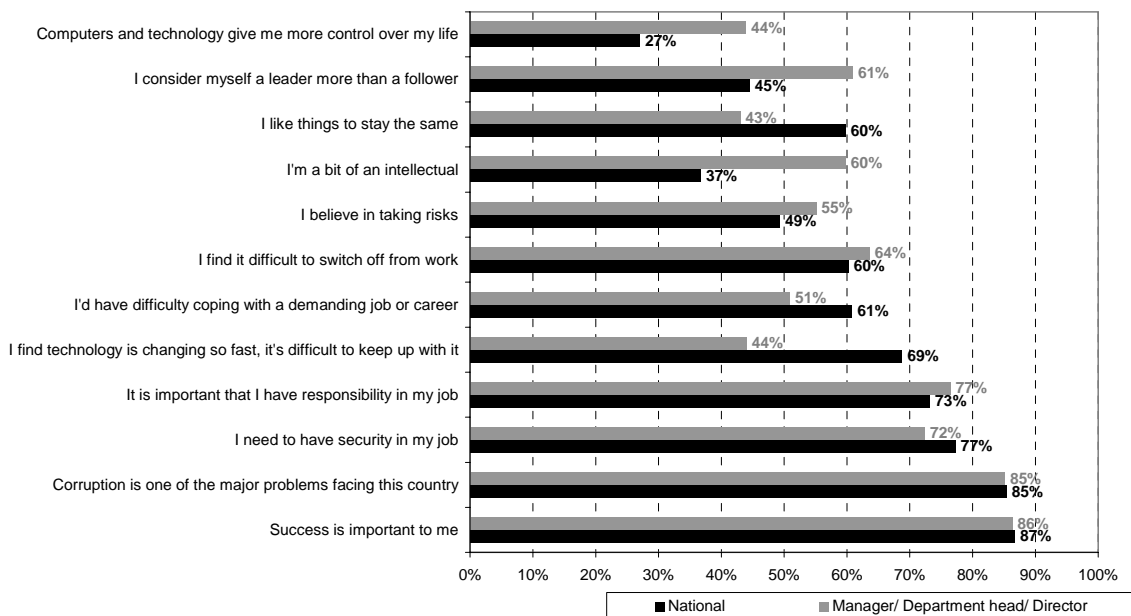


Happy to toe the line, too many managers want more of the same.

Contrary to the generalisations and sweeping statements about Indonesia's work culture, 87 per cent believe "success is important to me". That's a view shared not just by the population at large, but also by managers, heads of departments and directors of the nation's commercial sector. They represent not just the white-collar workforce, but the business sector's leaders both young and old. Nor are they willing to achieve success at any cost, strong in their rejection of foulplay, with almost nine out of ten people agreeing that "corruption is one of the major problems facing this country". Of 12 work-related attitudes and opinions continuously measured by Roy Morgan Research around the country, the similarity in these two views shared by both managers and the general population come as no surprise.

Where we begin to raise our eyebrows in disbelief, follows. While 77 per cent of the people "need to have security in my job", 72 per cent of the managers too feel the same way about their future. 73 per cent of the public feel "it is important to have responsibility in my job", but only 77 per cent of managers feel the same way about theirs. And while 7 out of ten people find "technology is changing so fast it is difficult to keep up with", a disappointing 44 per cent of managers also agree. Continuing in that vein, six out of ten people confess that they would have "difficulty coping with a demanding job or career" but a more disappointing 51 per cent of managers make the same confession. Six out of ten people "find it difficult to switch off from work", including housewives and students as well. Surprisingly, almost the same number of managers feel the same way. This far, it would seem that the leaders of the country's business sector are not too different from the general population living across this large and still predominantly rural archipelago.

ATTITUDES TO LIFE AND WORK



If some of those similarities aren't worrying enough, more disappointments loom ahead. While 49 per cent of the average man or woman on the street "believe in taking risks", only 55 per cent of our managers are spirited enough to push the envelope. The rest are content to keep on doing things the way it has always been done. Yet, in contrast to 37 per cent of the populace thinking "I'm a bit of an intellectual", 60 per cent of our managers lay claim to that very same view of their mental capabilities. Perhaps the most worrisome of all views, 43 per cent of them also agree with the statement "I like things to stay the same."

A promise of things to come perhaps, 45 per cent of all Indonesians consider themselves "a leader more than a follower". Disappointing yet again, only six out ten managers share the same conviction of themselves. The biggest difference in views between the average Latif and the professional Lutfi is perhaps the least surprising of all: While 27 per cent of the population agree that "technology gives me more control of my life", 44 per cent of the country's managers, department heads and directors agree. But that's just one in four, in this the 21st century.

These conclusions are based on Roy Morgan Single Source, the country's largest syndicated survey with over 27,000 Indonesian respondents annually, projected to reflect almost 90% of the population over the age of 14. That is a universe of 140 million people. The results are updated every 90 days. The opinions expressed are my own.

Those contrasts or the lack of them, are both disappointing and reassuring, surprising yet obvious on second thought. Seen from a 20-year perspective, I can only assume that these measurements of managerial instincts would have been even more disappointing in the Soeharto years, than they are today. Generations of people told to toe the line are only now giving way to a breed of new managers growing up in an environment of democracy. The ability to speak freely will also impact the workplace, auguring more positive change in attitudes in the years to come.

Put simply, the old are even now hindering the progress of the young. Thanks to modern medicine, age is merely a number today and I am not discriminating against senior citizens. But my continuing experience with diverse businesses in Indonesia confirms the polarisation between 'young' and 'old', mentally. Consider these contrasting facts to arrive at your own conclusions. Roy Morgan Single Source is not only the nation's most robust syndicated survey, it is used by more marketers and advertising agencies than any other survey. And while every telecommunications company worthy of note uses this resource as the only tool that gives them an understanding of what's going on in their marketplace on a national level, they are also the industry that is demanding the conversion from quarterly updates to monthly reports of the data. A young and highly competitive industry, it is anxious to know the truth.

In contrast, the country's banks appear to be uninterested in getting any reliable insights of their customers, regardless of periodicity. As long as more profits keep rolling in, understanding the marketplace is unimportant for this old industry, yet to come of age.

The writer can be contacted at Debnath.Guharoy@roymorgan.com