



How Corporate Foundations Could Inspire a Digital Renaissance in Malaysia

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- *Striking a balance between technology and humanities to bring about a digital renaissance for Malaysia*
- *Exploring the key component in driving a human-centred technology company*

If you Google Yayasan TM (YTM), you may be puzzled by our focus on three pillars: education, community & nation building, and culture & heritage. You may wonder why would a technology company be actively engaged in areas that seem far removed from our industry? Aren't some of these pillars polar opposites to what a typical tech company concentrates on?

To understand YTM's choices, we need to step back and recall a much earlier form of technology, and how its emergence inspired a long revolution in society: the printing press.

In 1436, Johannes Gutenberg, a German goldsmith, modified a screw-type wine press to evenly squeeze down on inked metal types, and thus created a machine known as the printing press. This invention enabled the mass-production of books on diverse topics and saw humanity embarking on the first era of the mass dissemination of information. Viewed in retrospect, we can see that it kicked off the first global news network, comprising religious texts and breaking news, being carried port to port by ships, and recopied by local printers to be distributed across the towns.

This movement went on to jumpstart the Italian Renaissance into high gear by enabling public access, and consumption of the works of Aristotle and Plato, previously only available to the rich and elite.

LEONARDO DA VINCI AND TECHNOLOGY

When Arnold Pannartz and Konrad Sweynheym introduced book printing to Italy, young Leonardo da Vinci apprenticed under Andrea del Verrocchio. Over the next 30 years, printing expanded to 150 shops, producing nearly half a million books.

During this time, da Vinci created masterpieces like the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper, reworked Vitruvius's drawings into the Vitruvian Man, and filled notebooks with innovative sketches and ideas.

Leonardo da Vinci's brilliance didn't solely arise from the printing press but was fueled by his innate curiosity, artistic eye, innovation, and thirst for knowledge, making him an enduring cultural icon of the Italian Renaissance.

Access to knowledge through the printing press laid the foundation for his remarkable intellect, and his diverse pursuits are now synonymous with his name.

Da Vinci's use of information through the printing press illustrates that the humanities and technology aren't opposing forces but mutually empowering. Technology can enhance our human traits, fostering curiosity, innovation, and culture, while opening doors to knowledge. Moreover, these human traits drive significant technological innovations, transforming our world.

Today, we wield an even mightier tool than the printing press: connectivity, granting instant access to the entirety of human knowledge at our fingertips.



HUMAN-CENTRED TECHNOLOGY AND THE THREE PILLARS

Akin to Pannartz and Sweynheym's role in Italy, TM today is broadening access to connectivity throughout Malaysia and opening up the world for every Malaysian. At the heart of TM, as [a human-centred technology company](#), is the deep drive to democratise access to the resources available through connectivity; by championing the power of technology to innovate and elevate our society.

Admittedly, the power of technology by itself has certain limits. To inspire and enable the next generation of da Vinci's, we need the humanities as much as we need to tap the power of technology. It is unlikely that da Vinci would have reached the same innovation level if he perceived no value in the technology that made books accessible to more people. Similarly, he needed the balance of being trained by his mentor Verrocchio in the knowledge and appreciation of art. Indeed, Gutenberg's printing press could not have brought value to da Vinci's life if he displayed little interest in knowledge.

Appreciation of the essential balance of education, community building, and the arts - needed to fully enrich human life through technology - is therefore what motivates YTM's focus on the three pillars.

With **education as a key pillar**, we actively acknowledge the value we see in investing in young minds and nurturing those with a passion for knowledge.

While TM focuses on broadening connectivity to include the underserved, YTM complements this initiative by providing access to educational opportunities and nurturing the right skills to better unlock the benefits of technology. To date, the foundation has helped more than 16,000 students, 80% of whom are among the B40 segment of the population, which typically has limited access to resources and educational opportunities.

YTM's **second pillar of community and nation building** encourages enabling social impact at scale. The power of community has a long history. For instance, da Vinci surmounted his humble beginnings through the tutelage of a noted painter, Andrea del Verrocchio, within the Florentine community. This pillar upskills members within underserved communities through [entrepreneurship and digital literacy](#), and by creating sustainable livelihoods through the use of technology. By empowering community members and creating initiatives aimed at spreading awareness, we have already witnessed the social effects at scale. Knowledge sharing and technology applications have uplifted the livelihoods of extended families and entire villages.

The foundation's **final pillar of culture and heritage** is committed to elevating the arts through the use of technology with a special focus on the digital arts, creative multimedia, and animation. We envisage a vigorous and visible arts community in Malaysia, made possible by tech usage. We work to encourage artists who build digital experiences by showcasing their art and developing a strong online presence. One example is YTM's sponsorship of [Traverse: Motions Through Time](#), a digital guide by Muzium Telekom, which explores art-making through new mediums of telecommunications. The foundation has also invested in museum curation, the preservation of artefacts, in addition to funding local filmmakers, artists and musicians.



Although, we may be living in a dramatically different world to the Italian Renaissance, the human aspects have endured. Human ingenuity in combination with applied technology is illuminating the way ahead. With these two elements, the promise of fresh achievements is encouraging us to move onwards and upwards. As TM strides forward as a human centred technology company, YTM is working hand in hand to ensure that we do not lose sight of what makes humanity great – our thirst for knowledge, our appreciation for arts and beauty, and our ability to empathise and help those around us.

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