

**What does it feel like to be working for one of the world's most recognisable brands? Azmir Jaafar weighs in his verdict – it's one big Happy Meal!**

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**A**ZMIR Jaafar is only 41 this year, but he is already McDonald's Malaysia managing director, responsible for all the McDonald restaurants in the country.

Not bad for someone who started at nearly the bottom rung—as trainee manager—16 years ago.

"I always had the aspiration to work with big brands," says Azmir. "McDonald's was always on my mind because I frequented their restaurants when I lived in the United States before!"

But if you think working at the big M is just about burgers, fries and a man with red hair, think again.

Graduates start off as trainee managers, eventually working their way up a structured hierarchy of positions like assistant manager, store manager, operations consultant, market manager and director of operations.

Of course, Azmir reveals, a trainee manager needs to understand the basics — cooking burgers and maintaining the highest levels of hygiene and cleanliness in the kitchen at all times. But as one climbs up the ladder, it is finance, business and human resource management all rolled into one.

"As a store manager, you're responsible for millions of ringgit in turnover a year for the restaurant you're in charge of and you have to think about sales, profits, losses and you look after about 60 employees," says Azmir.

It's like handling your own company within four years, he explains, and as you get promoted, you're responsible for more restaurants (and more millions of ringgit).

**My job involves ...**

...being responsible for all 185 restaurants and 17 franchisees in Malaysia.

I have to formulate business plans, come up with the right strategy, and think about the capital, expenditure and supply chain.

But graduates usually start off as trainee managers.

For them, 80% of their duties consist of "running shifts" or "handling the floor", which means running the restaurant for that shift.

There are an average of seven to eight managers in a restaurant, each with their own area to be responsible for.

These areas include scheduling, development of employees, ordering stock and products, managing restaurant equipment and facilities, training the crew, customer service and kitchen operation.

**My morning starts with ...**

...checking e-mails from around the world when I get into office at 7.30am.

I check the company's business report from the day before and when people start coming in, I have a

# He's lovin' it



Azmir started off as a trainee manager and slowly moved his way up to his present position as managing director.



Azmir's job is to identify 'potential talents' at every level like assistant manager Nur Alia Zainal Arifin (above), and offer them specific development programmes.

meeting with the department heads.

I sometimes attend training classes if we are rolling out new systems, or I will speak to a group of trainees before they "graduate" from their training classes that our company conducts to find out the issues they face.

In my free time, I visit McDonald's restaurants unannounced, and I travel a lot within Malaysia to speak with

the crew and managers.

Occasionally I would visit our 'new sites' to get a feel of the retail business.

**To qualify you need ...**

For trainee managers, we look out for those with any diploma or degree and we interview them to see if they understand what the job is about.

**»It's like handling your own company ... and as you get promoted, you're responsible for more restaurants «**

AZMIR JAAFAR

We ask ourselves, are they good team players? Are they flexible with their working hours? Can they cope with the demands of the job?

Then they need to undergo a five-day on-the-job evaluation before we hire them.

**The best person for the job is ...**

... someone who is a fast learner and can work flexible hours, because this is a restaurant that is open for 24 hours!

You also need to have the ability to communicate as there will be all sorts of crew members in a restaurant.

Managers need to be good in numbers. They also need to be able to inspire the crew and protect the company's brand.

**Prospects for the future ...**

At McDonald's, we emphasise talent development. We have specific development programmes at every level.

We identify potential talents to train, for example, we offer our high potential store managers a fully paid diploma called Operation Leadership Development

Programme together with Help University College to fast-track their career.

We believe in promoting within the company and also hiring new blood.

And since McDonald's exist in 132 countries around the world, there's nothing to stop you from working in other countries too.

The opportunities are there for anyone to grab. You don't need to be a stakeholder to be a general manager—even McDonald's current CEO started off as a crew member!

**I love my job because ...**

...I like the customer-centric focus and values.

And now that McDonald's has been rated one of the 10 best employers, I feel very satisfied to hear employees say they enjoy working in this company.

I was part of that process, and I hope more Malaysians would be too.

**What I dislike most is ...**

The biggest challenge for me is making sure our employees will stay here for the rest of their career, especially with the misperception of parents and graduates that working in McDonald's is a part-time job.

We also need to work on our brand trust, rather than have people associate McDonald's with obesity—which is to do with lifestyle, not McDonald's.

**A millionaire by 30?**

The starting pay for a degree holder is about RM1,600. Of course, when you get promoted, your salary will be higher and there are other benefits like insurance, annual leave and medical benefits.