

12th Session of the 5^{9th} SP Graduation Ceremony

7th May 2019

SP Convention Centre (SPCC)

Professor Pey Kin Leong, Chairman of EEE Advisory Committee

Mr. Soh Wai Wah, Principal & CEO of Singapore Polytechnic

Distinguished Guests,

Parents, Graduands,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening.

It is my pleasure and great honored to be here this evening.

My Congratulations to all Graduands, Parents, and to all lecturers and to Singapore Polytechnic on this very special day.

To all the Graduands, Today is one of the days that you and parents will remember. Today marks a new milestone in your life. I am happy for you.

I remember the days when I was studying in SP back in 1981-84, and Now when I come back to SP, so much has changed. I left SP as a young man with average results. 35 years after, I return as an old man. You will grow old one day and your time will come 😊

I wish to share with you what happened to me in the last 35 years.

First, What have I achieved?

The last 35 years, I've build up a business of 26 companies in 13 countries, in the field of IT, Engineering, Cyber Security, IoT, Digital Transformation, R&D with a Total combined revenue of about \$100million and a team of 450 people.

How did this happen?

1. What is Your Dream and Passion

I was inspired by the wise words that our late Mr. Lee Kuan Yew said in one of his speeches : “If you have a dream, don’t just dream. Make it happen.”

My dream started when I was a 15 years’ old boy.

It was a nice sunny afternoon when my best friend and I were walking home after school, and he said to me “Lau, let’s start a business when we grow up”. Since then, doing business was drilled into my mind. I read and learn anything about business. I tried to do many things. I almost become an orchid farmer, a computer magazine publisher and a construction worker. Can you imagine this? A EEE graduate trying to be a farmer, a publisher, a construction worker? It is all about the dream of doing business.

I was eagerly looking for the right business to do.

I’m from a poor but very loving family. I did the logical thing, find a job, work hard, earn a living, to help and support the family.

In 1992, after working in an Industrial Automation company for 7 years, I left the company to start my first business. I had a good job and a good boss, and when I wanted to leave the company, he asked me to stay. I politely and very gratefully rejected his offer and said to him “Life is short and it is my dream to start a business. I wish to try it for once in my life. Otherwise, I’ll regret it for the rest of my life”

2. Determination and Working Hard

For the first 3 years in business, I am a sales man in the day and engineer at night, I write programs, do engineering and research work, and weekends, I assemble products to make into a system. To help the company accumulate cash, I take no salary for 3 years, only a small allowance. I work 7 days a week and almost each day I work for 16-18 hours. It’s tough work, but I never feel that it is difficult. It is my passion and it is my Dream.

27 years have passed, I have built up a group of companies that spread over 13 countries, In ASEAN, China, India, Japan, Korea, and the Middle East. Today, I've 26 companies in 13 countries with a total combined revenue of about S\$100M with 450 full time people.

3. Positive Perspective and a Can-Do spirit

I learned about the story about "A Cup half empty and a Cup half full story".

I always see both side of the story with a positive mind set.

Whether you are a career professional or an entrepreneur, Company needs people with good positive attitude and the can-do spirit to excel in the competitive business world.

4. Be a good team player

The success of a company is not the doing of just 1 person. It is a collection of efforts, knowledge and contribution from every person in the team. It is important for you to be a team player and contribute to the success of your team.

5. Networking and Socialize

Keep in touch with your friends, and know new friends.

As important as it is to have friends and business partners, friendship takes years to build up. Start today. Get to know your friends, especially the foreign ones. Socialize with people and get to know them. The people network that you have, may one day be your greatest partner in your success.

6. Never Stop Learning

Today marks the start of another beginning. Do keep learning.

Compared to yesterday technologies, tomorrow technologies are transforming our ways of life. AI, Big Data, Cyber Security, IoT, Digital Transformation, FinTech, BlockChain, BioScience, Driverless cars, etc., are changing our way of life. You are in a very interesting and challenging time in the human technological evolution.

7. Globalization

It is a very inter-connected world today. With the same skill sets and capabilities, a company has to go regional and globalize in order to reach out to a bigger market. Companies need engineers who are keen to travel, keen to be posted to a country and to help the company setup a regional office. Present yourself well in order to Represent your country and company in the globalisation effort.

Be prepared to explore beyond Singapore. Leverage on the knowledge, the languages, the friendships that you have now and future, and reach out to the world.

8. Leaders of tomorrow

You are the leaders of tomorrow.

We need effective, strong and passionate leaders.

Leaders that make decisions, leader that take actions. Leaders that make things happen.

In addition to your studies and your knowledge, there are 2 soft skills that are important:

- a. Be a leader with Pro-Active Approach to work
- b. Be a leader with Logical Thinking and Practical Problems Solving skill

Conclusions

What is your dream?

Life is short. Follow your dream.

Time don't wait for you.

You are the Young Ones.

My daughter thought me the meaning of these 3 words, "Impossible is Nothing"

Do take that one extra step and make your dream come true, make the impossible possible.

This is My dream and what has happened to me in the last 35 years.

I wish to extend my Congratulation to all of you once again.

I wish all of you good health, good life and that someone here will one day create an company that can be an Unicorn for the society.

Thank you.