

## **Slice of Life** - By Mark Phooi

### **Managing Agency Success**

While I admit my harsh ways and blunt comments might be misconstrued to be offensive at times, people around me know that I mean only for them to improve. This treatment is very applicable especially for those in this industry who are prideful and egotistic. I was brought up in an intense, fast-paced, highly demanding and cutthroat business, where creativity, service, cost and speed always count. To build First Media into the largest, most established local design group starting from ground zero is something few has achieved. Managing successfully in this developed market requires lots of passion, drive, energy, wisdom, courage, resourcefulness, perseverance and foresight. Under my charge, *Lancer Design Pte Ltd* was regarded in the market as a teaching institution — a place where people come to be trained and taught by me. I pitched my personal strength based on my diverse background, knowledge and business wisdom to win confident and respect. For more than a decade, my job title was only a consultant followed by Creative Director as I matured into my job. To assume the role of a CEO was a default. It was only in July 2002 when First Media (FM) was restructured (formerly known as Lancer Corporate Design Group) and needed a representative face. Reluctantly, I stepped up, driven by my vision to be an educator. During my leadership as FM CEO, FM went on to win two prestigious business awards which no design agency in Singapore has ever done. I am also a friend to my colleagues. I always treat my staff with respect and trust. They know my management style and professional demands well enough to co-exist effortlessly with me. As part of learning and growing, we have fun and pains too. As an educator now, my temperament has mellowed tremendously but this has not compromised my professional demands. I have learnt to be more understanding, caring, forgiving and generous (with time and money). I don't micromanage now and am always willing to listen, share and mentor. The good habit of treating everyone well earned me the admiration and respect of my competitors. In the industry, I am known to be a competitive and aggressive player and this has been a following trait

since my childhood. Harsh but not mean. Generous but not wasteful. Tough but not overbearing. Open but not vulnerable. Over time, I have developed this 'Push and Pull' management style, which uses the 'head and heart' approach and this has worked well for us in such a competitive field. Lastly, agency business is the business of personality and nothing less. To start one is easy, to maintain one is hard. To grow one into a regional player seems inconceivable to others but I have made it look easy.

*“Success, however you define it, is not an accident. It is not a result of good luck versus bad luck. Even if you have not taken the time to clearly identify how you got from where you were to where you are today, there have been a series of specific steps that you have taken that have brought you to where you are at this minute. And the fact is, they could have brought you to no other place. You are where you are, and what you are because of yourself. It has been your choices and your decisions over the months and years that have inevitably determined the condition of your life at this moment.”*

## **Slice of Life 2** - By Mark Phooi

### **Death and Poverty**

There are two things in life that are certain in life — **Death and Poverty**. Regardless of background or heritage, Singaporeans always consider themselves poor. Even with riches, we are never content with what we have. We like to compare our wealth with the riches of others. To me, poverty is a relative term. Compared to the destitute, we are more than just lucky to be considered rich. Many Singaporeans are poor by nature. By definition of poor, I make reference to a poverty that is spiritual in nature. Do we all have to live poor, just because of our financial situations? The answer is no. We can always compensate this 'financial' poor with 'spiritual' riches. Everyone is armed with a unique personality that God has graciously bestowed upon us. Used wisely, this can provide us with a spirit of optimism and pro-activity — which are crucial in creating a life of happiness and satisfaction. These 'good' qualities can replace our needs for financial wealth. Armed with these attitudes, it helps us to see things from different perspectives and shape us to think, act and

behave in a positive ways. Our optimism and pro-activeness will automatically be manifested throughout our daily actions and assigned tasks. These attitudes will bring out the joy, fun and professionalism as a person. We will win trust and respect easily. With such a mindset, it is only a matter of time before our colleagues, superiors, clients, family members and friends will begin to take notice of us and favour us over many others. One's influence is highly instrumental in the achievement of success. Consistent practises of good habits will eventually turn them into second nature reactions. It is through this establishment that these positive personality traits and characteristics of ours will become a source of influence for others to respect. In other words, this is how we become natural leaders of sorts. On the topic of death, we grow old each day. In another words, we have been dying since the day we were brought into this world. No one is immortal and we must regard ourselves as sojourners on this earth. Although we are faced with this certainty of death, why don't we live happily and fulfill our earthly time to do things we truly love and enjoy? For many of us, work takes up a huge chunk of our lives. I have known many friends who pursue careers not of their choice but that of their parents'. Sadly, many of us are living out our parents' dreams. Life will becomes a drag when our career is regarded as a chore. For these people, they work to live. How wonderful if one is living out his/her dream pursuing a career of their choice. It is this group of people that is able to continuously add new twists and dimensions to their personal happiness. If we enjoy what we are doing in our chosen field, we are bound to shine a cut above the rest. Being spiritually poor is no longer a choice in our current environment, which is filled with lots of uncertainty. We really need to take stock of ourselves, revisit our life's purpose and approach life with a stroke of courage to chase our dreams. Optimism, boldness and a dose of 'right' attitudes will give us a good head start in living well. Otherwise, we will only find ourselves heading for the gates of heaven (or hell) sooner than expected, filled with nothing but pain and regret. *"The deepest secret is that life is not a process of discovery, but a process of creation. You are not discovering yourself, but creating yourself anew. Seek, therefore not to find out who you are, seek to determine who you want to be."*

# **Slice of Life 3** - By Mark Phooi

## **My 7 Laws of Personal Success**

“My business has given me a lifestyle, that’s all”. A lifestyle by no means considered average in the Singaporean living context.

Over the years, it has become a common question for people to ask me how I have built FM into a successful operation with a mere \$2,000 as starting capital. All these were achieved without me having had any design experience and business networks in the beginning. In a nutshell, FM was built literally from ground zero. There are of course many secrets (open and hidden) that have contributed to my success. Until today, I am still practicing these 7 Laws of Success without fail. They are simple, yet powerful concepts.

### **Law Number One - GOALS**

Aim as high as you can. Even if you cannot achieve your goals, you will get a lot further than if you have not aimed at all.

1.1 Identify your career/business interest and chart your goals. A big goal can be daunting when you see it looming before you. If you break this up into smaller, more attainable goals, then you will be much less apt to procrastinate towards achieving it.

1.2 Plan with an end in mind.

- Visualise these goals through forward/reverse planning
- Change your course of action to suit the external environment but never change the goal post

1.3 Every achievement starts with a dream and follows through by action. Nothing begins nothing ends.

### **Law Number Two - EDUCATION**

Acquiring knowledge is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Knowledge is a collection of facts. Wisdom is knowing how to apply knowledge and developing the ability to see beyond the challenges and to discover the opportunity within.

2.1 Pursue academic and related work experience to enhance learning.

- Learn from the experts
- Read as widely as possible
- Learn from others by trading opinion/view points, etc.

2.2 Develop an exploratory & experimental mindset.

Before you discover, you must explore.

- Have a strong quest for knowledge
- Develop an inquiring mind

### **Law Number Three – HEALTH**

Your health affects all you do. The key to good health is to eat right, sleep right, and exercise right. How to be fit, not for a life of leisure nor for any sort of culture, but fit for the struggle ahead.

3.1 Health is wealth.

Sustain a strong body. It is the most important vehicle that will carry us through hardship, troubled times and withstand a longer period of struggle. Move beyond the basic struggle and strive for higher levels of struggle. It is more stimulating and yields better returns.

3.2 Healthy body, healthy mind.

- Positive mental attitude is crucial. Profits are made by tackling and mastering difficulties
- A person's main causes of trouble are often in his own mind. Your mind is like a garden, tend it well by filling it with positive, encouraging thoughts throughout the day

### **Law Number Four - DRIVE**

Anything you've ever wanted, dreamed of, or hoped for can be yours if you put passion, zeal, and enthusiasm into everything you do.

Passion, zeal, and enthusiasm are the fuel of drive; it helps you get to where you're going. Without, life will be a struggle. Always dare to be strong and different. Dare to take a stand for what your inner drive tells you.

4.1 Remove all safety nets.

- No 'U' turn nor contingency plan when starting out
- Adopt a do-or-die attitude

4.2 Develop a strong burning desire and be passionate in your pursuits.

- With passion, work becomes play
- Create benchmarks for self-evaluation and achievements

4.3 Heed your calling.

- Do not be distracted by others' financial gains or successes
- Stay focussed and committed to your goals. Put in your best in every endeavour.

### **Law Number Five - PERSERVANCE**

Even if everyone says you don't stand a chance, don't give up on your dreams. Life is a combination of successes and failures. Both are needed.

Challenges come in three broad categories: easy, difficult, and impossible. Those who take on only the easy have a safe and boring life. Those who take on the difficult have a tough but satisfying life. Those who take on the impossible are remembered.

5.1 It's better to slow down and get there than never to arrive at all. Life is never a bed of roses. Things will never turn out the way we wanted them to be however much we plan.

5.2 There are no problems, only challenges.

- Attempt continuously until you get it right
- Do not give up, take a break if necessary

5.3 If you want to be a winner, you have to be willing to give it your all. Go ahead make mistakes. Only if you know how to resolve it and don't repeat it would you have learned.

### **Law Number Six - RESOURCEFULNESS**

If you can't get through the mountain, go around it. If you

can't go around it, go over it. If you can't go over it, sit down and ask yourself if getting to the other side is all that important. If it is, set about digging a tunnel.

6.1 Tap into the information power.

- Have in depth knowledge of local market intelligence
- Stay tune to common market practice irregardless of its relevancy
- Know who has what and where to find it
- Know how to do apply these information with suitable action for maximum impact
- Increase zealously your appetite for information

6.2 Stay connected to the market players.

- Develop a diverse network of friends and associates irregardless of relevancy. You will never know when you need them
- Know your contact as human being. Have no division between ranks and power

6.3 Continuous self-improvement.

- Cultivate a reading habit (read as widely as possible)
- Develop a keen sense of competitive spirit
- Develop hobbies related to your business
- Know your personal strength n weakness and learn to exploit your strength and strengthening your weakness

6.4 Develop strong work competency.

- Build up a strong presence so that people will respect you to the extreme of fearing (deep respect) you
- Be the extremist. Stay clear from the conventional thinking and practices
- Develop a keener sense for business trends and management practices
- Build up a war chest of business strategies for future implementation

## **Law Number Seven – GOD**

Faith in God is the best insurance when you're faced with a personal setback or tragedy. An insurance company can reimburse your financial loss, repair your home or car, and help you start again in business, but only God can mend your

broken heart.

7.1 Supreme being who has given us all the blessings.

- Do good as a person (peace loving, righteousness, goodness, mercy, considerate, etc.).

7.2 A strong foundation to build an upright and righteous character

- Your character and personality will endure relationships better than your craftsmanship

7.3 Life is a journey; Heaven is the destination.

- Almost every one when struck by age, disease, or sorrow develops a strong inclination to belief in God, or an equivalent to Him. Develop a strong faith and give thanks for every small blessing.

These are my open secrets to success. As for my hidden secrets, you need to buy me a cup of coffee and meet me at 7am sharp (not a second late) on 5 consecutively mornings to learn that. Hmmm.....that's a tall order.

## **Slice of Life 4** - By Mark Phooi

### **I Have Nightmares... Of Being an Employee**

It's not everyday that one has such nightmares, especially for myself, a practicing entrepreneur of 20 years. To this day, I remember my experiences as an employee as if they happened yesterday.

I recall the minute details of my first official employment after graduating from NAFA. It was a typesetting cum communications agency located in an industrial building. Of the many details I so vividly remember, the most prominent would be my old desk, the 'tired' office furniture, my colleague, seated next to me and worst of all, my senior colleague, my boss and his wife. As an employee, I always strove to be the best — putting in more than what was required of me. It wasn't so much the work, but the unfair treatment that bothered me the most. I often wondered how simply being 'the new guy' could attract so much negative attention. However, I knew that, just because I was inexperienced, I would not let others make me feel invalid.

With that thought in mind, I worked hard to prove my worth and I strengthened my resolve to succeed. This is a resolve that has continued to help me shape a better management approach, especially when I deal with my staff.

I learnt that underestimation is a common mistake and that burning bridges with others is a course of action that should be considered extreme. In my style of personal management, I would rather err on the side of trust and generosity. Albeit a successful entrepreneur, I have always upheld a fair and professional approach to staff, and now, to all of my students. I accord them with respect and a friendly and accommodating attitude, regardless of position. To me, every one is regarded as a valuable organisational asset — which is why in my organisation, communication should be free flow and management transparency remains the key to fostering cohesiveness in the workplace.

To make each and every deserving employee my future partner is still my organisation's fundamental philosophy. Each interviewee I meet is accorded with respect, as I see them as potential brand ambassadors, should they perhaps, fail to get the job. Likewise in the school, all my students are regarded as my customers and potential partners in the communication business.

Ultimately, it is the individual worth of each and every person that I have come to value, and I am glad to see that it has brought about continued success to my organisation.

## **Slice of Life 5** - By Mark Phooi

### **The True Fact of Life**

When we are young, we want to be seen as intelligent, smart and popular. We always enjoy flattery and praise. When we start working, we want to get ahead in our career, be respected for our professional opinions and be recognised for our valued contributions to the company.

As we progress in our profession, we enjoy the authority of vested power. We begin to enjoy decision-making alongside our newfound status. Our lives start taking a new turn for the better, we think. The additional money increases our array of choices that comes with life's pleasures. Upon the taste of success, we begin to yearn for finer things in life.

At some point, we begin to compare our newfound successes and achievements with our peers and friends only to realise how little and slow we have progressed and attained. We begin to envy their success

and measure their wealth with physical possessions. Suddenly something strikes us, we have become miserable and are in a hurry to get rich quick.

At the back of our minds, we aspire to be in their position and wonder why our lucky stars are not shining on us, but on them. We secretly want to have their success and silently hope we could pick up some of their ingredients for success by following similar pathways. We try very hard to copy and adapt but never really measure up to the same level of success as them. We wonder why it is so, and nevertheless put in more time and resources. But success still seems elusive. We start to grow impatient and disillusioned with our struggles and sacrifices. Our daily struggle seems to become more and more meaningless and soon we become discontented with ourselves as well as with our working partners. Saddled with these burdens, we start to question our share of commitments and involvements.

Soon, the thought of quitting starts creeping in and we begin to reflect upon the matter. "Why am I chasing someone else's dream of success instead of my own?" we ask. During the process of reflection, we realise that we have only recognised the successes of our peers but have conveniently forgotten about the backgrounds, struggles and sacrifices that have built and developed them to be what they are today in the first place. Then we begin to realise that their objectives in life lie not in the accumulation of material wealth, but in the building of legacies first and foremost. As a result of this vision of legacy, their daily struggles have become more meaningful and their work processes and culture more interesting and entertaining. Their workplaces have turned into playgrounds and tension has given way to pleasure instead. These have inevitably increased their charisma and influence as leaders. Little did we realise that their work culture cannot be duplicated since their ultimate business goal is not to build financial success but to leave a legacy instead. As a result, financial success has become a by-product, which is what earns the envy of many others.

This is a slice of my life that manifests part of my struggles and many of my thirty-over ex-staff who have tried to emulate my success in design trades.

### **Morale of the story**

Ability only brings you limited success. It takes character and vision to take you to the very top. Neither should you envy or covet your neighbour's wealth and success but instead focus on building your own legacy.

May people define their dreams with the goals and aspirations of others. That's a sad fact of life.

Achieving our own ideas of success is key to personal satisfaction and happiness.

That's a true fact of life.

## **Slice of Life 6** - By Mark Phooi

### **Too Many Conventional Leaders in our Midst**

There is always confusion between a leader and a manager in our design field. A leader can be a good manager while a manager might not necessarily be a good leader. Above all task orientated managerial duties of a manager, leaders are visionary and goal oriented. They chase after their dreams and are willing to make heavy sacrifices (special effort, time and money) to fulfill their vision. Dynamic leaders are natural risk takers who dare to challenge unconventional wisdom to discover uncharted trails. True leaders in our design industry whom we can regard are far too few in between. Many are just mere managers and followers.

True leaders are self motivators and can think and work independently with or without the support of others. They are highly independent, dynamic and resourceful individuals who can perform well under any given circumstances with or without talent or resources. They are passionate dreamers (with eyes open), hungry and driven to pursuit their vision and have the foresight to move ahead of others. They possess strong personality traits which are hard to ignore. They are also action packed and, possess unlimited energy prowess to take on great challenges without fear. Their life and actions revolved around their dreams. To others, they might appear to be loners and behave impulsively but it is through these quiet moments of self reflection that they chart their next strategic move. They are firm, impatient and highly charged when they begin to act. Once they have made up their mind, they are decisive and are not easily swayed by others' opinion. These are the trademarks of a successful leader.

### **My Personal View**

The success of a leader is not based on wealth alone but by the number of lives you have successfully inspired and transformed. It is through this imparting process of my acquired skills and knowledge to those who have made good in their career or business that is the most rewarding. The indelible experiences that I have left in others' career lives are more fulfilling and satisfying than anything else in my

leadership experience.

A true leader is like a beacon of hope to others. You inspire and motivate them to want to be part of your success. You become someone whom they can learn from and look up to for help when in dire straits. In my 17 years of business history, I have often met up with long lost friends, acquaintances, clients and employees whom when in their career disparity, wanted to learn from me and be part of my success. In most cases, they confided in me as a friend and I am of course appreciative of their 'trust' and empathised with their pain. I hardly rejected them. Instead I reciprocated their 'trust' with job opportunities within my organisation. Many of them have made good their careers and became my business partners. Some have left me after finding this design industry too intense and demanding to handle. Amongst this group of people, there are a small group who have decided to leave me for selfish reason i.e. to start competing agencies. To this latter group of people whom I consider my 'student competitors', almost all still engage actively in this similar business. Their continuous success and sustenance in this business has directly increased my confidence and faith in my unique business principles and teaching methodologies. These experiences have been pivotal and instrumental in me setting up First International Design School (FiDS) that focuses on teaching and grooming future design entrepreneurs and managers.

"It is not what you have but what you give that counts."

## **Slice of Life 7** - By Mark Phooi

### **Building Friendship & Reputation**

Stay clear from building friendships with unethical and unprincipled people whom during rainy days will come knocking on your door hoping to gain benefits from your friendship.

Remember the last phone call you received from an old long lost acquaint asking for a lunch meet. Beware because they might seem to bring you good news of opportunities and benefits but have other motives. You will be tempted to hear

them out but be very cautious of their true intentions because in 99% of such calls, it benefits them first. In today's world, there are very few 'all weather friends'.

Let others pursue "unethical and unprincipled" actions to win instant gratification. Let tawdry fads come and go. In the long run, the person who has avoided all such unethical action will be the one who stands out in a crowd.

**"To measure the worth of a person's friendship, assess the friends surrounding him".**

### **Building a Lasting Reputation**

Lasting, talk about building reputation. Avoid unscrupulous actions that bring out less than a good reputation for yourself.

As you gain popularity and become well liked in your industry, remember to avoid disreputable pursuits or opportunities at the expense of others – no matter how tempting they seem to appeal.

The day may come when someone looks to you for leadership. Others, of course, will oppose you. Why make it easy for your opponents to pull out photos of your previous actions? Wouldn't that be quite embarrassing in light of the mature qualities you are trying to display? How much better to let them look in vain for anything you might be ashamed of.

It's not hard to build a reputation for yourself. All you have to do is be willing to be upright, principled and honest. In no time, you will be surrounded with likeminded friends.

## **Slice of Life 8** - By Mark Phooi

### **Creative Award – Who's the Winner?**

Winning awards is always a motivation to many designers. Almost all designers and aspiring design companies place high priority in winning creative awards. Understandably, for practical reason, this is considered to be the quicker route to getting themselves noticed and to be recognised as a force to

be reckoned with in the industry. Creative companies that are run by 'right brain extremist' would take pride in such wins and proudly display these award certificates on the company walls or a nice customised cabinet. They formed the key strategy in building their credentials around this fame.

Participating in local and foreign design competitions is an expensive affair and considering the fee and the time spent investing, each design submission can easily cost as much as \$300 to a high of more than \$1,000 per submission. Many designers will go to great lengths to interest their employers to participate and in my opinion get to enjoy the free ride to personal fame, which they will otherwise not have done if it was through their own pockets. In their attempt to win awards, designers often spent countless hours and effort conceptualising innovative concepts and ideas to charm and 'awe' their bosses and customers, hoping for a complete buy-in. Many resort to pro-bono work where there are no clients and therefore a free play in creativity. In my experience, these creativities are aesthetically over-indulged; pleasing to the design senses but commonly missing the crucial communication objectives. The not so sophisticated customers are often taken in by these creative appeals and end up having to pay more so as to fulfil designers' award winning aspirations.

### **My Personal View**

Winning awards is exciting and it motivates the designers to work more passionately. Winning awards does not necessary equate to a better bottom line. In this competitive marketplace, award winning design agencies are not privy to charge much higher fees than average. Customers are smart not to fall into that trap. It does not necessarily increase a client's loyal patronage of the agency too.

What determines an award winning design? Many local and overseas design award judging criteria are too broad and ambiguous. Unlike a business award, many winning designs were won purely based on the design indulgence rather than tangible results. In my view, our customers are our best judge and a good design is one that answers to their communication beliefs and helps bring in quantitative and qualitative results. As in any design project, the real winner should be our customer and not the project designers nor the contest

organisers who charged an arm and a leg for each entry.

***"Design is about communication. Not about winning awards".***

## **Slice of Life 9** - By Mark Phooi

### **My Business Success in the Design Trade**

What is the definition of success to you? It means different things to many people. In our design trade, no success is assured without hard work and passionate design indulgence. Not mentioning long hours and incessant demands from clients, a good designpreneur has to dabble in various roles ranging from creative, accountancy, human resource to errand boy while juggling multiple deadlines all at the same time.

I have learnt success is only a journey rather than a destination. Each time when I am about to attain my goals, I shifted my goals higher, drumming up another higher level of challenges. To many, these will translate into higher stress and tension. To me, it means testing my own limits and finding where my bottomless pit of stress level might lie.

As a designpreneur, I love the action of building something out from nothing. I relish the moment of tension and the joy of struggle in trying to put form into an ideal. To me, it does not matter whether I have prior experience or knowledge in what I am trying to do, once I put my mind to it, I just do it. I enjoying undergoing the creative discovery phase putting every piece together with my mind fixed on the goal. I disliked rules and rigidity and instead defined my own leaving rooms for innovation and progression. Now into my late forties (46 going on 47), this education business is my third career move and failure is no longer an option. My previous two careers as a swimming coach (1980 to 1989) and designpreneur (1989 to 2007) have been very challenging and financially rewarding. Having started with nothing, I have attained what many would envy. To cut the story short, here are my business rules which have always been the cornerstone of my successes.

**Rule No. 1**

*Commit to your business*

Believe in it more than anybody else. If you love your work, you will be out there every day trying to do it the best you possibly can, and very soon everybody around you will catch the passion from you — like the H1N1 or Sars flu.

**Rule No. 2**

*Share your profits with all your associates, and treat them as partners*

Remain a corporation and retain control, but behave as a servant leader in a partnership. Encourage staff and associates to hold a stake in the company.

**Rule No. 3**

*Motivate your partners*

Money and ownership alone aren't enough. Constantly, day by day, think of new and interesting ways to motivate and challenge your partners and staff.

**Rule No. 4**

*Communicate everything you possibly can to your partners and staff*

The more they know, the more they'll understand. The more they understand, the more they care. Once they care, there's no stopping them.

**Rule No. 5**

*Celebrate your successes and failures*

We inject humour in our failures. Don't take yourself so seriously. Loosen up, and everybody around you will loosen up.

Have fun and show enthusiasm — always.

## **Rule No. 6**

*Swim upstream*

Go the other way. Ignore the conventional wisdom. If you see the bandwagon, you are too late.

## **Slice of Life 10** - By Mark Phooi

### **Be True to yourself**

A nice house, an exotic sports car, more sumptuous meals and exotic holiday destinations? Chasing wealth is a daily activity for most of us, isn't it? This is the key means of attaining security. There is no denying that the money chase is well embedded inside our social system and almost everything we do revolves around getting ourselves richer.

To be financially rich is not a bad thing. However, to get rich and be enslaved to our job is something too much to exchange. Many of us are caught in the rat race and never seem to be able to get out of it. In the ever dynamic and competitive work environment, chasing for new sales, attending meetings, rushing for project deadlines, etc. are much part and parcel of our daily lives. Contrary to popular beliefs, attaining a balanced life and yet still achieving financial success, is a farfetched ideal. In life, we must recognise that something has to go and it boils down to what our personal aspirations and needs are.

As a DesignPreneur, I have never found myself enslaved to my work. To me it was a process of self discovery and constant improvement. As sole director of my company, I have the luxury of time and space to choose and decide whom I wanted to work with and when. It was part of my daily choice, which I made in a conscientious fashion. There was no need for corporate governance and no compliance matters to deal with, no need to prepare white papers to seek funding or approval, no need for quarterly financial reports, no media briefing or the need to chair shareholders' meeting, etc. Despite the

absence of these requirements, I still subjected myself and the company to all these mentioned tasks as part of our personal disciplines and desire to ensure that the company was ever ready to handle adversities.

I always believe in myself and act on my ideas. I give myself permission to do what I want with my life. After all, no one owes me a living and I have set many altruism goals to chase. I often took the initiative to set meaningful goals for myself and my staff and shared with them the rewards generously. Personally, a true knowledge of ourselves is knowledge of our power. It lighted our pathway especially in our interpersonal relationship with others and opens up more doors for opportunity and collaboration. In a nut shell, my honesty naturally draws influence and motivation among people who are more than willing to embark on my journey of progressive struggle.

**"Compassion, caring, teaching, loving, and sharing your gifts, talents, and abilities are the gateways to power."  
- Jamie Sams**

**"In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted."  
- C.G. Jung**