

SP 2019 Graduation *(address by guest speaker Amos Leong)*

Good morning Mr. Soh Wai Wah, Principal & CEO of Singapore Polytechnic, Distinguished Guests, Parents and Graduands, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it an honor to be part of this graduation ceremony, and hope to pass along an exhortation that you will remember for a while. First, let me offer my heartiest congratulations to all graduands! Today, you celebrate an academic achievement and accomplish a personal milestone in your lifelong learning journey.

Most of you began this learning journey at home by your parents' nurturing, to acquiring fundamentals in schools and institutes of high learning like Singapore Polytechnic, and now to this juncture of being ready as a confident and lifelong learner.

When I graduated from NUS in 1987, I thought it marked the end of learning as an undergraduate and being ready as an engineer to start actual work. But I was wrong. I was quickly immersed into another learning journey at Hewlett-Packard Singapore with a constant stream of training. Besides learning more in-depth technical knowledge and application, there were also soft-skills training like communication and project management. That changed my attitude to embrace lifelong learning as a means of ensuring progress along my career.

So, enter the workforce with an inquisitive mind, that is eager to learn more and curious to explore new sources of knowledge. You will soon realize all the knowledge and project skills you acquired in school or industry internship experience may not directly match the demands of your job. These are not wasted, but rather, see the years of school and internships as a good investment, which forms a firm foundation for your lifelong learning journey.

But some of you may continue with further studies to pursue a Degree, and possibly further on. Then I shall encourage you along this lifelong learning journey, not to amass more qualifications for qualifications sake, but rather, to build deeper foundations for subject matter expertise, or to broaden your capacity for multi-disciplinary knowledge.

At this point, some of you may not know what your next steps are, and that is fine. Give yourself sometime to develop your natural giftings and passion, even if it means trying something else altogether. Always keep taking steps forward and always remember that you are more than your grades, qualifications and achievements.

So, what will be an appropriate exhortation for all of you this morning? To borrow the tagline from Singapore's new branding – Passion Made Possible – I want to urge you to move forward with a passionate attitude and spirit of determination that pursues possibilities and reinvention without settling.

According to the late Steve Jobs – “The only way to do great work is to love what you do.” But will this Passion Made Possible eventually fulfill Ambition Made Possible?

Say, your ambition is to be an Applications Software Engineer in a smart phone company. But there’s another higher paying job as an investment banker analyst. So, here are the two job options: passion or money? That is a decision you have to make yourself – to find that balance that works for you and your circumstances.

For me, I didn’t begin the early years of my engineering career with such a positive attitude, as I was more concerned with opportunities for a bigger pay package. My first role was in technical procurement in electronics manufacturing, and after being passed for a couple of managerial roles, I decided to flip from buying to selling. Several years later, when I missed another sales management opportunity, I went on into a regional marketing role for advanced manufacturing. Without knowing, I had by then gained exposure across the manufacturing value-chain to build depth. Along the way, I also discovered an increasing passion for the manufacturing ecosystem. Soon after, I was recognized for doing good and rose up the corporate ranks of a US-MNC, and it was finally Ambition Made Possible during my late thirties.

Then, a sense of nationalism stirred me towards doing good for the local industry, and the opportunity came in 2004 to assume my current leadership role for the Univac Group. And I must say for the last 14 years, it was a rewarding time of learning with a diverse team at Univac, mostly with humble beginnings. We have since made significant progress in the globalization of our business, growth in higher value-add services and digital transformation towards advanced manufacturing.

So, begin with your next steps with something that will ignite and fuel your passion. You will be motivated to begin every day with positive energy – to be more satisfied and less stressed, even glad to put in the hard work. Passion for work also stirs a desire to pursue excellence – it drives creativity and innovation, which then leads to greater contribution (whether to your employer, your business or society at large). Eventually, you will realize passion and success are correlated, for there is a saying in Biblical Scriptures: “Do not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.”

I hope all of you will eventually enter the workforce with a view to make a positive impact to Singapore. Doing well is not just about acquiring knowledge or even wealth – it is also your ability to apply what you learn continually. Doing good is not just about your own success – it is also your ability to help others succeed.

Finally, I wish all graduands today – may your Passion be Made Possible, and eventually, may your Ambition be Made Possible.

Thank you.