

Morningside College
CUHK / High table
April 6, 2011

Sir James, Dr. Leung, fellow students and all,
Good evening.

Thank you very much for inviting me to share with you my [personal experience today](#)

I have chosen a topic which is, "[Connector, Networking and Social Capital](#)". This is my secret formula for success.

I am not sure if any of you have read the book "Tipping Point" by Malcolm Gladwell. He came to Hong Kong 2 years ago and gave a lecture charging HK\$6,000 per admission. There is a chapter on "[Connector](#)". He said [there is a special breed of people who have a natural flair to connect with others](#). They cut across a wide spectrum of races, cultures, professions, business and societies to bring people together. I drew up a check list and interestingly enough, it fits my personal profile!

I have never heard of the word "networking" when I was at school. I worked as a creative professional when I graduated from university and later started my own advertising agency when I was 30 years old. In the advertising business, you need an inquisitive mind and curiosity. You also have to be gregarious and energetic. My world has been intertwined with media and communication; business and industries; corporate and government, products and brands; art and cultures, movie and entertainment, academics and researchers etc. A long list! I have partnered with Grey, the largest international advertising agency in New York in the 1980s, and in the early 90s, I brought them into China. By 1993, we have 4 offices: in Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, with 300 staffs and 90 clients. Internationally, Grey advertising has 250 agencies, so I have many friends and associates all over the world.

I am a "people" person, and I love bringing different groups of people together. I believed in education and I have dedicated myself to teaching and mentoring. I have not just befriended with my peer group but also the younger generation. I have lectured extensively at universities in Greater China. I have built strong ties and I kept the weak ties at arms' length.

Some people said "[networking is not just who you know, it is who knows you](#)". I was in actual fact building my social capital without knowing it.

I am both an author and a columnist. I have published 9 books in Hong Kong, Taiwan and China. I have written the first advertising book in Chinese in the world and it was voted one of the top ten most popular books in 1990 in Taiwan. In this way, I have many readers and fans!

I sold my advertising agency in 1995 and became the first Chief Executive of the Better Hong Kong Foundation as I wanted to contribute back to Hong Kong for all that it has given me. I embarked on an apolitical journey that brought me in touch with international leaders, dignitaries, politicians, scholars, journalists and reporters. I then joined New World Group in 1997 after Hong Kong's return of sovereignty to China. I started my 2nd life of career in Investment Banking, managing a private equity fund, and collaborated with i-bankers, lawyers and accountants. Also at New World Development, I helped started a New World /Harvard Kennedy School Fellows Program by sending 20 senior PRC cadets to Harvard to study every year. This is our 13th years now, and we have so far built an important power base of 200 plus alumni of influential Chinese government officials.

Dale Carnegie once said 15 p/c of a person's career success is determined by his skill or professional knowledge, and the balance of 85 p/c relies on his networking and personal attitude to life.

But Networking is not Public Relation nor superficial friendship. It is what connects people and it requires dedication and cultivation. You don't do it because you want to get something in return from this person tomorrow. Or with an ulterior motive. I was the first to organise a group of Hong Kong business leaders including Dr. Victor Fong, Mr. Raymond Kwok, Mr. Anthony Leung etc. to study at the Central Party School (中央黨校) in Beijing in 2004. It was an ice breaking tour. I can do it, because I have the trust of the Chinese authority for all the efforts I have been doing to help bring Chinese Officials onto the World arena.

Senator Diane Feinstein of US Government used to say, " In America, you do business first and then become friends. Whereas in China, one has to know you before he will do business with you."

Therefore Networking requires a good balance of "give and take", with total sincerity and integrity.

People thought doing business in China you need guanxi or through the back door. But this is not necessary the case, [guanxi](#), same as [networking needs to built upon mutual trust, mutual support and mutual respect](#). As a 'connector', one has to be considerate and always thoughtful of your friends. Caring and sympathetic, you sometimes have to go out of your way to help them. Only this kind of genuine efforts will touch people and result in lasting friendship. Prof. Nan Huai Jin (南懷謹), a philosopher once said, "[the selfless will always win the hearts of the world!](#)" (無私者反得天下心) And so, when you're in need, without anticipation or expectation, you will find so many people out there ready to repay your kindness.

Doing business in this virtual world of internet and globalization, you may find an individual needs to reach out, to brainstorm and work with others for idea exchange, for innovation, for collaboration, and for future growth and development. "Facebook" is a perfect tool for it.

In short, We Need Each Other.

Networking has become my social capital. It is my most valuable personal assets. I become a facilitator for different sectors of the society. I have initiated a campaign and mobilised all of Hong Kong to Dress in Red to welcome the Olympic Torch on May 2, 2008 all in just 5 days, including fundraising. Last week, I met a philanthropist for 30 minutes and he agreed to donate \$2 million for Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) Charitable Foundation. All these heart-warming gestures and achievement were the results of the credibility I have established in the past for people know that I'm doing things not for myself, but for the general good and betterment of the society.

Honestly speaking, not everyone possesses the personality and the quality to become a connector, but I wanted to assure you, [if you reach out to people with sincerity and integrity, you will slowly cast the net to connect people and build your asset of social capital.](#)

Thank you very much!

April 6, 2011