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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY DR ALINE WONG, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, FOR THE 1999
GRADUATION CEREMONY ON SATURDAY, 21 AUGUST 1999, 10.00 AM AT THE OCTAGON, Ngee ANN
POLYTECHNIC

Chairman of Ngee Ann Polytechnic Council, Mr Choo Chi au Beng

Acting Principal, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Mr Lee Tuck Seng,

Council Members, distinguished guests and graduands.

I take great pleasure to be here today for your graduation ceremony. It is
a milestone in your lives and this graduation marks your transition from a student
to a professional.

My congratulations to all of you who are graduating today. It has been a
long journey and you have every reason to be proud of this achievement. This is a
time to look back and a time to thank all who have helped you along the way, be they
your family, your teachers, your friends or anyone who has made a difference to your
life. It is also a time to look ahead.

The new millennium is only about four months away. What is the future going
to be

like?. How do we prepare ourselves for it?

You can expect Singapore to be more deeply plugged into the global network of ideas

and opportunities. Young Singaporeans as yourselves will be better travelled and better

exposed to other cultures and other ways of thinking. You will find opportunities not only in

Singapore but also outside.

The future concept of the workplace will have to expand from a Singapore context to a

global one, and into cyberspace as well. One in which meetings can be held anywhere in the

world as well as from anywhere in the world. One which requires you to be savvy of market

conditions not just in Singapore and the region but also worldwide. One that requires you all

to be multi-disciplined. To work in such an environment, you need always to have an open

mind and be ever ready to change.



Your role in the workplace will be subject to constant change. This will be so as product life cycles become shorter. If you are in manufacturing, you will have to change your skill sets frequently as you help your company move from one product to another. This also applies to the services sector where service products are likely to be revamped frequently to give the company the competitive edge. The pager has already merged with the handphone. An internet service provider like Pacific Internet today provides internet services and computers. The computer you buy today may become obsolete within a year. For those in Information Technology as yourselves, change must be a fact of life.

The competition you face will come not just from within Singapore. Be prepared for

serious and intense competition for your jobs and markets from the whole world, and particularly the Asia-Pacific countries. In this new competitive arena, just being better will

not be enough. You will have to constantly innovate in order to stay ahead of the competition.

You have to help the organisations you work for become leaders in what they do. In

April this year, the Government announced the Technopreneurship 21 Concept Plan to

encourage the emergence of technopreneurs in Singapore. The Private Sector Committee,

one of the two committees set up to recommend measures for the Concept Plan is headed by

a Ngee Ann alumnus who is also one of Singapore's foremost technopreneurs, Mr Sim

Wong Hoo. I am hopeful that one day, there will be some among you who will follow the

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footsteps of Mr Sim and take Singapore products to the world.

This push by the Government to encourage technopreneurs is one way to help us stay

ahead of the competition. Many Polytechnic graduates have become successful

technopreneurs. As Polytechnic graduates yourselves, you are well equipped with the skills

for such a role. However, skills alone are not enough for such a task.

In Singapore many of our young are pre-occupied with doing well in examinations while they are studying in the educational system. Some do very well in the examinations, others do not. When they get into the workplace many become preoccupied with how to make the most money. Some make a lot of money and others do not.

Just as not all students will do well in examinations, not all workers will become

fabulously rich. The important thing you should remember is that success is not about doing

well in examinations or about making a lot of money.

Success is about having the right frame of mind and the right attitudes. If we look at

those people who are regarded as successful, the one thing that is common to all of them is

that they are all passionate about their work. The passion gives meaning to the work they do

and they seek to do it well. This applies to the successful mega-buck entrepreneur, the

successful programmer, the successful engineer, the successful NS-man, the successful

father, the successful student and so the list goes on.

All of you can and should develop a passion for whatever work you find yourselves in.

Only then can you find meaning and derive satisfaction from the work you do and place

yourselves on the road to success.

The graduates gathered here today would find themselves in an exciting industry that is still evolving. A snapshot survey conducted by the National Computer Board (NCB) in 1998 shows that the industry demand for multimedia/internet developers and for data communications/networking professionals is projected to grow by 25% and 15% per year respectively. For the next two years, IT manpower is also forecasted to grow at a compound rate of 8% per year. All these augur well for the Government's plan to

turn Singapore into an IT hub for the region which will in turn benefit you.

I am happy to learn from your Principal that many of you have shown much enterprise and have taken that extra step to put your ideas to test during your studies in Ngee Ann. Your successes at the National Entrepreneurship Competition, the Inter-Polytechnic E-commerce Competition, the APEC-IEEE Micromouse Competition and the National Skills Competition are certainly laudable. You have certainly done your Polytechnic proud. Make sure your innovative and enterprising spirit follows you wherever you go.

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I have earlier mentioned that many of you will find yourselves helping the organisations you work for operate in a global context. As such you will probably spend much of your

time away from Singapore. In addition, you will find yourselves increasingly exposed to

other cultures and value systems.

Will all these eventually pull you away from Singapore? Or will the bonds

you have

developed with your family, friends and community keep your hearts here even though you

may be physically elsewhere? These are issues your generation will need to contend with.

These are issues that will affect you, your families and one day your own children. It is for

this reason that our government is putting so much emphasis on National Education. To take

pride in our country, to know our history and place in the world, to be prepared to do your

best for your native land and community – these are values which you should cherish

throughout your lives and pass on to the next generation.

In this regard, I would like to encourage you to continue to cultivate the bonds of friendships that you have developed here in the Polytechnic. These are bonds that will help you socially and professionally.

I understand from your Principal that the Ngee Ann Alumni is planning to develop an Alumni Clubhouse here in the Polytechnic. The clubhouse which is expected to be operational within two years will provide a venue with supporting facilities and amenities for you to come back to and to renew relationships.

As you receive your Diploma today, you will be opening a new chapter of your life. Most of you will be entering the working world though some may go for further studies.

As you start this new stage of your life, may I wish you every success and happiness in the endeavours that you will undertake in the years ahead. There are plenty of opportunities in the IT industry for you to exploit. Don't be afraid to dream. Just remember to pursue your dream with a passion.

Thank you.

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