

The Trend of the 21st Century Workplace

Good Morning Teachers and Students,

November and October are busy months. We've had the Gospel Week, the Open Day, the Speech Festival, the Inter-House Ball Games and the Athletic Meet Many of you are busy practising your speech for the Speech Festival and the Houses are working very hard to prepare for the Athletic Meet. Yet, there are many other school events coming, to name a few - the Fellowship and PTA BBQ, Class Music Competition, etc. They are all scheduled to be held before Christmas. What an exciting and busy life! I hope you find the meaningful part in these events - we want all of you to learn something through participating in these activities, not just for fun. You'll experience and learn a lot of life skills and social skills, which are very important to your future careers.

Do you still remember the school Vision Statement? *"We strive to create an enjoyable teaching and learning environment in which students can be equipped to meet the challenges of the 21st Century."* Besides the classroom teaching, your teachers are doing their best, through various kinds of activities, to equip you to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. We want our students to become a better and well prepared person when they leave the school. Some students may ask, "Why should I work so hard to learn all these skills and knowledge? Are they really so important?" My answer is a definite "Yes". The 21st Century workplace will be very tough and demanding. To assist you in understanding the workplace where you will face when you leave school, I've done a miniature research on the Internet. The following are some main points suggested by the experts of the field of Human Resources Management. Their suggestions can be summarised into 5 major trends.

1. **Aging Baby Boomers** (the largest population group who were born after WWII). This largest population group in Hong Kong and Western Countries are heading for retirement. People live longer these days and therefore the population is aging. An aging population means an increase in services needed. These services include: health services, social services, business services, engineering, management and other related services. Service sectors will provide a lot of jobs.
2. **Better Medicine**
Better medicine, combined with advancements in technology in the medical field, helps us not just live longer, but has a more productive live. New treatments for previously deadly diseases require new methods for rehabilitation. Likewise,

many adults expect to work far beyond the traditional retirement age. Therefore, people rely on new generation of medical care agents (e.g. the physical therapists) and other specialists to enhance their quality of life.

3. **Better food to feed the World**

Organic food producers and retailers change the way agriculture works. High technology growing systems and growing numbers of organic food production methods need huge number of work forces to work together. Advanced fertilization, hydration and pesticide control specialists are among the job areas that will be most heavily recruited. To keep agricultural systems in balance and work for us effectively, new careers have been created. These specialists will advise growers on how to get the most amount of food from the least amount of soil using minimal fertilizers and little water.

4. **Rapid Technology Growth**

Businesses of all kinds have entered into a never ending competition to upgrade their computers and Internet technology. Companies must provide their staff with the best equipment and resources, or face defeat. So, continual innovation assures technology workers that new machines, cables, and other equipment will have to be upgraded and re-installed every few years. Therefore, IT professionals who specialize in networking, installation, and support will remain in demand as more businesses rely on new technology to help them compete.

5. **Distributed Work**

The giant factories and smokestacks of a hundred years ago can only be found in history books. Many of today's workers report for duty at smaller offices or manufacturing plants connected by information networks and sophisticated shipping infrastructure. A growing number of employees, especially specialized consultants and leaders, divide their time among multiple locations at companies or client organizations. With the rapid development of telecommute equipments, people may work away from their colleagues, or even at homes. As a side effect, more workers are relocating to larger homes, farther away from city centres. Whether they want to enjoy more peaceful surroundings or they simply want to reconnect with family or friends, these shifting workers create demand for home construction, renovation, and infrastructure development.

(Adapted from CJ Kuselias, The 21st Century Workplace: 10 Trends.)

Although these trends are drawn with reference to the American and European Counties, I know similar situations in Hong Kong. It is a matter of fact that the Hong Kong government is worrying about the government's burden on medical care expenditures as the aging group of people of Hong Kong are becoming bigger and

bigger. And there are increasing numbers of local IT professionals who are working at their homes.

Before I end this talk, I want to share with you a little story, a true case. A human resources management expert told me this true case:

This expert was conducting a recruitment interview for a MBA course in a university in Mainland China and a young lady applicant caught his attention. This young lady spoke very fluent English, and no doubt, her Putonghua was also marvellous. The expert found in her resume that this young lady had spent a year in Indonesia before she applied for the MBA. He was curious. It is **common** for university graduates to go to the USA, Australia or Western Europe. Why this smart young lady spent a whole year in Indonesia? The young lady gave him the following answer. “It is not because I have relatives in Indonesia. I want to learn Indonesia language, so I went there for a year.” She further explained that she believed that Indonesia would become an economic powerful nation, and the country was the third largest nation in Asia, following China and India. If she equipped herself with good knowledge on Indonesia language and Muslim culture, together with her Chinese background and her education, she would have a very bright career future in the business world. Since there were only limited experts in Indonesia-China business field, she wanted to start early to get ahead of other competitors.

My dear students, you’re the citizen of the 21st Century and you must find your workplace in the society some day after you leave school. We, your teachers, are doing our best to equip you with the necessary skills and knowledge. However, the most important thing is that you must get yourself ready for the future and the first step is to gather more information about the future job environment. If you know more, you can start as earlier as possible, just like the young lady in the story. Remember, *the early bird gets the worm*.

Thank you for your attention and wish you a nice day of study.
