Lessons from an ex-EDB chief

Description

Was reading The Peak's article on former EDB's chairman Philip Yeo's biography and I really loved these portions:

How Woodlands got an MRT

"Let me tell you a story. When Lee Kuan Yew was in charge, he called me to Istana one day. He was still Prime Minister and I was EDB chairman. I sat down. It was just the two of us.

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â??Can you bring investments to Woodlands?â?• he asked me.

â??Can you put an MRT station there?â?• I replied.

Finished. I walked out. Our conversation lasted less than a minute. I knew he called the Minister of Communications right away and said Woodlands must get an MRT.

I quickly got TECH (Texas Instruments, EDB, Canon and Hewlett-Packard â?? Semiconductors) to get set up in Woodlands, way before the MRT station was even up. I pushed for projects to go to Woodlands. I didnâ??t write a memo. I didnâ??t have to answer him on how we were going to do it. He took my word and I took his word. He wanted something and I delivered."

Clarity of thought

Dr Goh used to demand that a paper be no longer than one page and it must be written in simple English. He always said: short and sharp. If you cannot tell me in one page or in five minutes, it means you have no clarity of thought. I have no patience because a damn idiot wants to write his grandmotherâ??s story.

Loving the weather today! Skies are bright and sunny but yet there's a breeze in my air as I walk towards my tuition appointments ð???

Corporate responsibility vs ministers' cover ups

Today, ministers overwork â?? doing everything and appearing everywhere. When there were issues with CPF, the minister answered. Where was the CPF chairman? When the trains broke down, the minister answered. Where was the SMRT chairman? In the past, the civil servants would take charge.

I think good leaders need to also learn how to take responsibility for their actions as well as that of their team. If someone under your wing has done wrong, yes it is their fault but a leader should also take part of the blame for not having guided the staff properly.

Unfortunately in Singapore that isn't always the case. I applaud great companies and leaders who do so, but as we've seen, there are plenty more who don't, and who resort to denial, cover-ups, or simply sacking the person.

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Ladyboss.asia



Just had a photoshoot for LadyBoss.asia and I'm glad I finally got to meet Melissa, its founder, in person after all the email exchanges!

Melissa is so passionate about her business and entrepreneurial at heart. She believes in female empowerment and tells the stories of all these #girlbosses on her platform to inspire her fellow women. Love what her team is doing!

Leadership lessons from LKY

Who better to learn from than our founding Prime Minister?

Charlie Munger, aka Warren Buffett's right hand man and also another investor I highly respect due to his focus on qualitative analysis (the style I use), even named LKY as perhaps one of the best leaders to learn from.

Mr Lee essentially went against traditional Asian culture by not marrying a younger woman with better looks and figure, but choosing the smarter one instead. How many remember the lovely rivalry between Mr and Mrs Lee during their Raffles schooling days, and how she almost always beat him? Lol ð??? #girlpower! Mrs Lee was his collaborator and advisor throughout his life and even famously edited his speeches. She was his equal and kept him challenged ð??•

Don't give up even when you fail.

Thomas Edison only successfully invented the light bulb after failing thousands of times over. But instead of being daunted, he chose to see each failure as a lesson on how NOT to do it.

Failures are scary. The more public a failure, the more our confidence drops. But instead of giving up, just focus on proving the naysayers wrong.

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I remember when I first started out writing on finance as perhaps the only female among all the male bloggers. I had more critics than supporters.

Many guys were quick to accuse me that I probably lived off my boyfriend(s) and sucked their money, don't give my parents allowance and just basically be a selfish and stingy bitch with no friends or social life. Those words really affected me.



In the end I told myself, these people don't matter. I'll just prove them wrong at the end of the day.

When Singapore was kicked out of Malaysia in 1965, LKY's defeat was highly publicised in front of the whole nation and perhaps even the world (later on). The image of him breaking down after separation played over and over again on national TV. Anyone would have been mortified, but not him. He continued charging on, using the failed merger as a lesson on what NOT to do instead and eventually proved the naysayers wrong.

Prize values and abilities above mere grades

Goh Chok Tong once shared about that moment when Mr Lee asked him to take over. LKY had chosen character, fortitude and ability over academic qualifications, said Mr Goh. Some people were upset they werenâ??t chosen, perhaps they felt they were smarter or better qualified.

Book smarts don't always matter. Anyway, grades can be easily faked or Photoshopped today too. Remember that NUS fraud of a professor? Many Singapore companies don't check anyway..

There's so much gold we can learn from the lives of these great leaders. Anyone else got other stories to share?

Category

1. Family

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