

**Occasional address**

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Pro-Chancellor , Faculty Dean, staff, distinguished guests, graduates, friends and relieved family members.

I would like to sincerely congratulate all the graduates here today.

You have completed an important next step in life's long journey of education and self-development and you have reached the first stage of what will become your professional career.

You are coming into a world full of opportunities and full of problems.

On balance, however, I think you are coming into a great time and I am envious at the opportunities that lie ahead for you.

I thought that I could provide the most value to the graduates here today by providing some observations with regard to where your careers may take you and the world within which you will work.

I have spent the last 40 years working in the technology industry with the last 20 in venture Capital.

This has provided me with a wonderful opportunity to see the impact of technology (both bad and good) on all aspects of society.

Having seen things go from nascent ideas to global companies in a matter of years I would suggest that things are about to get very interesting.

The capability of technology to impact every aspect of our lives is getting more significant and coming faster than ever before.

Within a few years we will not only have fully autonomous cars and trucks on our roads but we will have semi, if not full, autonomous surgical robots, nearly all pathology and related diagnoses done by software and many of our legal contracts developed by software bots.

I could go on but suffice to say that technology will impact every role in every organisation in every country. Further whether we like to accept it or not we are already at a time when software is better at doing certain tasks than humans and this trend is only going one way.

Humans, however, are not about to become irrelevant. At least not for a while.

Humans will, however, have to learn to adapt much faster than in the past and let go of long held beliefs of superiority in all things.

As a function of the change occurring graduates today will have at least 5 major career changes, not just changing employers but complete changes in their corporate careers during their working lives.

Further, more than half the jobs that you will undertake during your career do not exist today.

So trying to set a concrete path of clear career steps between now and your eventual retirement in perhaps 60 years is simply not possible.

From this point on you will be presented with a range of opportunities and choices and sadly your success in life will not just be a function of how smart you are or how hard you work but also the choices you make.

While your parents and other old people like me can be useful people on which to bounce ideas off in reality we do not exist in your world nor have your perspective on the world.

Therefore while I encourage you to seek input from those close to you I would encourage you to also search broadly for advice.

The more informed you are the better your choices will be.

I have had a very lucky career.

It would be very easy to say that my successes have been the result of my intelligence, hard work or personal attributes...

In reality all these helped but making good, informed choices and luck also played their part.

You can't guarantee an outcome but you can give yourself the best chance.

Giving yourself the best chance includes working hard, working smart, never being complacent and always looking to improve.

On reflection I think that my constant discomfort with the status quo has helped keep me open to new ideas and new opportunities.

Throughout my life I have looked at products, services, businesses, organisations , my performance and my skills through a prism that focused attention on how to improve.

The world you will spend your time working in demands this focus of you.

A few years ago Thomas Friedman (the author of the World is Flat) wrote a brilliant piece in the NYT that I will now shamelessly quote from only because I agree with him).

*“Over the last few years we have gone from a connected world to a hyperconnected world. Even 10 years ago Facebook, Twitter, 4G or 5G, iPhones, iPads, high-speed broadband, ubiquitous access, the cloud, Big Data, VOIP did not exist or were just in their infancy.*

*The combination of these tools of connectivity and creativity has created a global education, commercial, communication and innovation platform on which more people can start stuff, collaborate on stuff, learn stuff, make stuff (and destroy stuff) with more people than ever before.*

*What’s exciting is that this platform empowers individuals to access learning, retrain, engage in commerce, seek or advertise a job, invent, invest and crowd source — all online.*

*However this huge expansion in an individual’s ability to do all these things comes with one big difference: more now rests on you.*

*If you are self-motivated this world is tailored for you. The boundaries are all gone.*

*However if you’re not self-motivated, this world will be a challenge because the walls, ceilings and floors that protected people are also disappearing.*

*There will be fewer limits, but also fewer guarantees. Your specific contribution will define your specific benefits much more. Just showing up will not cut it.*

*Your output and productivity measured on a global scale will be clearly identified for all to see. This sounds scary but is actually good.*

*It motivates hard work, innovation and clarity of purpose and it casts aside those who want to just hang off the hard work of others.*

*We’re entering a world that increasingly rewards individual aspiration and persistence and can measure precisely who is contributing and who is not. This is not going away, so we need to think how we work within this new paradigm.*

*Jobs will change much faster, requiring more skill with each iteration.”*

In the light of this massive change to how work will be measured and monitored and how work environments will change my overarching piece of career advice is to always look to improve your skills and to make sure your skills can be monetised.

Make sure that the company you work for needs you more than you need them.

If you get this around the wrong way then your opportunities for development will dissipate.

You always need to be in the position that you could leave your current employ for a range of roles with similar compensation and career opportunities.

If you become beholden to the only potential employer around who will pay you for your specific skill set then you have lost control of your life.

As you work through the early part of your career stay focused on working in an area that you truly enjoy.

Do not take on a job just because it pays better than another role.

Life is long and it is much more enjoyable if you are doing something you love and which you find fulfilling.

I have many friends who started in jobs they never really enjoyed and now some 40 years later they find themselves locked into careers that are well paying but fundamentally soul destroying.

Choose a job that you feel matters. Do not take on a specific role or job just to make your parents happy or to provide some strange social status.

Early in your career you need to learn as much as you can and in reality if you work hard and are focused you can learn more in a large company than a small one. So early on bias to working for larger, high growth globally best in class organisations. Not just large – but large and GREAT.

Further I would suggest working for an organisation that has some form of international presence. This will make it easier to get a job overseas.

As mentioned earlier our world is getting more connected and in reality the majority of innovation occurring in most market segments is occurring overseas.

So at some point in the first 10 years of your professional career make sure you work in an overseas location.

Specifically try to get a role in a country (or area) that is seen as the location for the globally best practices in your specific area of interest.

Then come home and apply these global skills into making Australia a better place.

As you start to build skills my strong suggestion is to read broadly in your career area as well as outside of it.

Make sure you know which companies globally are delivering the best products and services. Understand at a deep level the dynamics impacting your industry and what future challenges lie ahead for this industry.

Never stop this constant updating of your market analysis. It is only through this work that you will see when to look to change jobs or change careers.

By the time the AFR reports industry issues you will become one of an army of people looking to change direction and it is never fun running with the pack. The air is much more refreshing when you are out ahead.

Sometimes you will reach conclusions or opinions at odds with that of your employers.

Often this is because, particularly in Australia, companies do not like change and often work very hard to pretend things will not change.

For some of you this is your first degree and for others this is your second.

To the newbies let me say that I would be devastated if you did not return to University in 3-5 years to undertake further studies in some form.

Furthering your education of course takes into account expanding your analytical skills but it also includes other areas where you need to develop core skills.

Taking just one aspect.

Increasingly the management of people will become a critical employment skill. Being an effective and motivational manager is not just about holding office parties at the IVY or being a hard arse that can deliver the numbers.

It is more about understanding what motivates people, how to get people to want to support you in working towards a common goal and how to create a work environment that respects the role of work as part of a whole life experience.

My suggestion is that you need to do two things;

Spend time understanding yourself and what motivates you. What do you care about? How much do you care about the needs of others? How important are relationships to you?

This process of self-discovery is critical in terms of giving you a strong understanding of where you are coming from and therefore how your motivations can conflict or be in concert with the motivations of others.

Secondly you should undertake some courses in Psychology.

Some of the most important career enhancing education I have undertaken was not my initial Computer Science and Stats degrees nor the finance focused MBA but rather my rather low-rent graduate diploma in counselling.

It is through this latter course that I have started to understand better how to create really effective teams.

And as I add on to my set of recommendations I would also remind you to have a life.

It is wonderful to work hard at developing a successful business career as through this work you will gain improvements in your self-esteem, financial security and community respect.

However this work will not provide you with deep relationships with your wife or husband and children. Nor will work, of itself, provide deep lasting friendships nor well developed soulful hobbies and interests.

If you want to have deep, loving relationships then you need to spend time on them.

If you want to develop hobbies and skills outside of work you need to spend time on them.

Which leads me to the concept of being effective and efficient.

It is sadly true that in your early roles you may come into contact with employers who tend to see long hours as a measure of commitment.

Hopefully, however, not too far into your career you will meet employers who measure output and not just hours. What matters is achieving the required goals and not necessarily working 70 hours a week.

Put more simply if you end up working consistently more than 45-50 hours a week then I can pretty much guarantee that you will have some level of dysfunctional relationships with your family and friends AND you will not have achieved anything more in your career.

I have found that if you are focused on being effective and efficient you can meet business goals, work a hard but reasonable work week and have time to be a good parent, spouse and friend.

In closing I would like to leave you with two of my favourite quotes.

We all want to be successful in life and too often in business this is measured in financial terms. Yet even a simplistic review would show that money alone is a pretty useless measure of success in life.

The first from Ralph Waldo Emerson a definition of success.

**Success**

To laugh often and much

To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children

To earn the appreciation of honest critics and to endure the betrayal of false friends

To appreciate beauty

To find the best in others

To leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition

To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived

This is to have succeeded

Finally then part of a traditional gaelic blessing

May the road rise up to meet you.

May the wind be always at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face;

Thank You.