

An open letter to all executives

To become a distinguished worker, you have to understand that excellence starts with you and it begins from within.

To become an excellent manager, you have to think outside the box and lead the team to charge forward towards a goal.

Datuk Stella Chin
Founder of Stellavingze International



the art of
POSITION

Datuk Stella Chin

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PUBLICATIONS

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PREFACE

A masterpiece that will benefit every reader

Tan Sri Datuk Sri Dr Ng Yen Yen

It is my utmost pleasure and honour to write the preface of another bestseller and masterpiece from Dr Stella Chin.

I have known Stella since 2000. Through the years, I have witnessed her remarkable transformation – from a young wife and mother helping her husband, Datuk Prof. Dr Alan Wong, to achieve extraordinary career success to striking out on her own amazing entrepreneurship journey and becoming a charismatic leader with numerous international awards. She is an ambitious woman who hopes to mentor and coach all women, and empower them with the knowledge and skill to improve their lives in all aspects.

In order to encourage and empower women, especially the younger ones, she has written books, given speeches and appeared on TV shows to share how to achieve success and happiness by living a balanced life through some essential management skills.

This book is a must-read for junior and mid-level administrative and managerial staff, and I must stress that I definitely agree with her ideas and principles. I have served in different government departments, including holding government positions such as minister and deputy minister, and I have worked for many domestic and foreign NGOs, so I can tell you why this book is crucial for you. Whether you are from a business or non-business background, as long as your work involves organisational operations, you will benefit and improve greatly from the knowledge shared by Stella.

Chapter 01

The road to success begins with the first step

The best time to learn and grow is when
you're in leadership.

Take advantage of that position to
nurture your skills and learn all you can
in preparation for the next level. Aim for
progress – be better today than you were
yesterday, and better tomorrow than you
are today.

PART 1
The Visionary

Do you remember what your life was like when you were 23 years old? I do.

At 23, I left my comfortable, secure nest in Malaysia to settle down in a foreign land. Fearful as I was, I wanted to support my husband, who had boldly decided to start a business in Thailand. The future was uncertain but I managed to overcome my jittery nerves. How I did it, I still do not know. With two one-way tickets to Bangkok, we struck out on the journey that became the turning point of my life.

The best parts of our life will emerge when we continuously change

November 13, 2015. I was attending the 12th Annual Stevie Awards ceremony at the New York Marriott Marquis. Then I heard my name announced. With my head held high and a big smile across my face, I walked to the stage to receive the Stevie Awards for Women in Business. Witnessing my win were successful entrepreneurs from over 26 countries all over the world. It felt surreal. As I stood on the stage with the award in my hands, memories of the nervous, anxious 23-year-old housewife flying off to Thailand flashed across my mind.

Back then, it never occurred to me that 20-something years later, I would be standing on that stage receiving an award. Neither did I imagine I would become the executive president of a multinational enterprise, leading thousands of employees, and travelling to branch offices in Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and mainland China every week to help people build a balanced life of satisfaction, beauty and success.

Indeed, life is full of miraculous surprises.

THE ART OF POSITION

Sometimes, the events in our lives will lead to a different path, and I can't imagine what my life will be like now if I had not taken that first step to leave Malaysia.

If I had not left my comfort zone, I might not have discovered my potentials, or gained those precious experiences and lessons that have shaped me as a leader, or understood the value and significance of positively influencing people and helping them grow.

Challenges are platforms to spring to new heights

We live in a rapidly changing world that demands we change too. Today, many once-successful industries are facing grave challenges because they failed or were slow to move with the times.

As a leader and the one leading your peers, you will have to confront the changing markets and constantly tackle new issues. With rising targets and diminishing resources, the life of a leader is definitely not a bed of roses.

Each generation has its challenges. The older generation tend to resist change while the new generation are all about finding significance and meaning in life – their driving force is no longer “money” and “power”. For them to complete a task, they'll want to lead from the heart.

If leadership is tough – encompassing hardship, anxiety and even loneliness – why would anyone want to become a leader?

The answer is simple – because he gets to witness and experience the best things life can offer.

NOW is the best time

Although the road of leadership is riddled with many pits patches, and the journey will be rough at times, I can promise that this will be the part of your life journey where your learning and growth will be at their optimum.

Only by sailing through storms will you be greeted by the amazing vistas in life.

Don't wait for the right time to finally get going because "now" is always the right time. The world is huge; don't give up your opportunities to explore it. Find something that you truly believe in and go for it.

Looking back now, I really cherish the time I spent on the road of leadership. True, there were times when I felt the journey was too tough, that I was so exhausted I wanted to throw in the towel. Thankfully, just when the road seemed to be caving in, there was always a light ahead that beckoned me to get up and go on.

If being a leader is your career goal, congratulations. Join us to make the world a better place.

If, like me, you have never planned to be a leader but you are somehow "forced" to take this journey, I have to salute you all the more! You are about to embark on an exciting and fulfilling journey where you will be empowering yourself and others to become better people.

Now, embrace this once-in-a-lifetime journey. Remain inquisitive, almost noseey. Throw yourself to learning and growing. Be ready to meet the new, transformed YOU.



STELLA'S
MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

Live life positively every day

- In everything that we encounter in life, there is no way it could have happened differently, not even in the insignificant details.
- It doesn't matter when it will happen, because when it happens, that is the right time.
- Whatever situations we are facing, whether expected or unexpected, , they are the perfect situations for our learning.
- No matter what is going to happen, it will happen and it will happen for a reason – so that we can learn and gain experience, and move on.

Chapter
17

Capitalise on your strength

An incompetent commander will ruin the whole army.

When you get an assignment from your boss, you are accepting the responsibility for the delivery.

Sort out the priority of the tasks given so that you can focus on the important areas. Consider each team member's competence when delegating tasks.

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The Communicator

The main responsibility of a manager is to quickly relay the boss's decision and policy to his staff, and lead the team to execute the decision.

When a job is given, most companies will evaluate the manager's performance based on how fast and effective the manager completes the job. The faster the manager completes the job, the more favourably he will be assessed.

But how can you complete the tasks given by your company quickly and effectively? The answer lies in your ability to understand the job and make quick, wise judgements.

Listen carefully to deliver

The most common communication problem plaguing a manager is staff who do not listen. Maybe you won't notice this initially but after a while, you will gradually realise that some of your staff will choose to listen to what they want to hear and thus, the outcome of their execution is far from the company's goal.

To avoid delivering something that is way off the mark, careful listening is the key.

To inculcate listening staff, you yourself have first got to be a good listener. Here are some ways I trained myself to be a keen listener.

Make good use of notepads

Make use of the humble notepads.

Our human brain has limited memory capacity and yet, most people tend to overestimate their memory databank. It is common to forget things, especially when we have a thousand things swarming our head.

THE ART OF POSITION

When I was a mid-level manager, I always reminded my staff to carry their notepad with them at all times. Unlike casual chit-chats with your colleagues, when you talk with your boss, you have to grasp the essence of the conversation.

I have dozens of digital notepads in my tablet, which I categorise and name “Do”, “Think” and “Manage”.

In the “Do” notepad are the to-do-lists, where I will further group them into people, subject and object. In the “Think” notepad are things that I need to invest time to think about and sort out. In the “Manage” notepad are ideas and experiences I have regarding company management and staff training.

Having a notepad with you at all times will allow you to record the time, summary and highlights of the discussion you've had with your staff and boss at any time. It is also handy to trace back your previous discussions, thereby helping to increase productivity and efficiency. In doing so, you will win the trust of both your staff and boss.

Ask questions

What is your first response when you get a new task from your boss? Do you ask your boss, “When do you need this completed?” Every task has its timeline and I believe you have more than just one job on hand. Hence, when your boss hands you a new task, the most important thing to do is to readjust the priority of all your tasks. If you don't know when your boss expects the task to be completed, how are you going to adjust the work pace for your team?

Sometimes your boss might suddenly think of something that has yet to be completed and tells you to do it when you have the time. Now, let's say you really put this task at the end of

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your to-do list. Days later when your boss asks you about the progress of that particular task, are you going to tell him, “I still haven’t got the time. Didn’t you say to do it only when I have the time?” I believe your boss’s response to your reply is to wish he has assigned the task to another manager since you are too occupied with other work. Eventually, your boss may think that you are not productive and efficient.

If you have questions for the task assigned to you, all you need to do is to ask your boss about the desired result and objective. Most bosses will be happy to give you more information. When you are clear about the objective of the task, you’ll be able to understand the big picture and produce good results.

Always remember to maintain a humble, respectful and trusting attitude when you ask about the task given to you. If your boss is the “Just do as I say” type of person, you have to use a softer approach. Always let your boss understand that your intention (of asking for more information) is to produce the best results.

As for your subordinates, help them to understand the reason for doing the task given so that they will see how the company operates. It will also boost their morale and give them a sense of ownership of the task.

Provide solutions for work overload

Work never ends. If your team is already juggling too many jobs and spreading thin, you must have the courage to discuss this unhealthy situation with your boss.

I suggest that as a mid-level manager, first, express your agreement on the new task. At the same time, make good use of the art of talking – tell your boss that you need to readjust the

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work you have at hand and after that, discuss with him about the new job.

Do not use words like “but” or “however”, and never show your displeasure at being given new jobs. Instead, calm down, focus and analyse in order to provide solutions to your boss.

For example, you may reconfirm the completion time of every task – check if there is any work that can be delayed. Or inform your boss about the progress of every project and see if there is any work that has actually been completed. Or inform him about the extra resources (manpower, funds, etc.) that you will need to complete the new job.

Of course, it is always good to strive for the best performance. However, if you are over-enthusiastic about taking on new tasks or are obsessed with perfection, your team will burn out and nothing is accomplished in the end.

In fact, if we really look at all the different projects, we will discover that only a few of them will have a huge impact on the company’s business. These are the projects that require all-out effort and must not fail, while the majority of projects just need to achieve the approval standard. In saying this, I’m not suggesting that you do non-critical projects half-heartedly, but I hope you understand the importance of knowing your boss’s expectations so that you will not focus on the wrong areas.

STELLA'S
MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY

Take a deep breath and make small progress
every day

- It's not always rainbows and butterflies, but filling your life with negativity will lower the quality of your life.
- It's not the length of life but the depth of life that matters.