

Getting Ready for Future Employment

Written by Sandra D'AMICO

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Talk by Sandra D'Amico, Managing Director, HRINC (Cambodia) Co., Ltd

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. It is indeed a pleasure and an honor to share my ideas and experience. Before I start, I want to thank the organisers of the conference for your efforts in organizing this forum. I will say at the start that the commitment of Alumni groups to creating and hosting such forums are so important for the future generations – especially because they can learn from your experience! It is the leadership and dedication of the all of you individually and together that will impact and influence the choices tomorrow's generations make. I encourage the next generation to learn from you and for each of you to mentor and guide the younger generations in taking over this effort in the future!!

Getting ready for Future Employment – Why is this important! ...

First, getting ready for future employment is not something you do only after university – it is something you do throughout your working life! You get your first job and you are happy and excited. You commit yourself to your roles and responsibilities! Then what? There will come a time when you think about “What's Next?” The next step is again a new job, a new opportunity, a new endeavor – which will be driven and shaped by the experiences you gain along the way! So remember this – *getting ready for future employment – is not only about getting a job, it is about developing yourself in your job, and pursuing your long term dreams.* You will get ready for future employment, throughout your working career.

I will share with you my experience. I studied clothing production and design for four years – not because I wanted to, because my father thought that it was suitable for me. In fact, I really wanted to study law and solve the problems of the world – but this was not to be, then! Nevertheless, I pursued my studies with passion and worked hard at them, I enjoyed them, I learnt a lot. I graduated top of my class, I got my first through the head of academics in

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purchasing and designing in the garment sector. I enjoyed what I did initially, but very quickly became frustrated and bored – I wanted more from my employer. I continued to work in the garment sector but this time I took over a production management job, again referred through my academic contacts. I learnt a lot, I worked really hard but I had to move cities and at some point I felt like I was going nowhere, management wouldn't let me pursue new ideas and initiatives, they wanted to do things the same old way, they didn't like change. I was disillusioned. I was confused. At 22, I was wondering what I was going to do for the rest of my life!!!! I knew in my heart that I wanted to do something where I could learn, and be involved with people. My next job came through a recruitment agency and it was in the consulting industry. Here is where I discovered my strengths. I was excellent at organizing, influencing, communicating across borders, making things happen, analyzing – I was learning so much about myself and what I could do. With the consulting firm I stayed for many years. I was never bored, I was continuously learning. My years in the consulting firm were one of the best learning experiences. But the time came, where I wanted to do something that had more meaning. And so again, I had to reflect on what I was doing and get ready for my future employment – only this time, without knowing it, my employment was in Cambodia!

So again remember this – *getting ready for future employment* is not only about getting your first great job, it is about developing yourself in your job, and pursuing your long term dreams. You will get ready for future employment, throughout your working career.

I will have to get ready for employment myself, sometime in the future again! What is interesting (and I realized this as I was writing this speech) – I have never once in my life applied for a job through a newspaper. Incredible! I found all my jobs, through my academic and personal networks and through key recruitment agencies. We all start building our networks very early on in life – at primary school, even before that. *Manage your networks and keep in touch with your networks – they are extremely useful, and you never know when you will use them!*

So, how do you get ready for employment? I think there are several things that you can do. First though, you need to understand **what employers want and what companies are looking for.**

So many graduates complain that all the jobs require experience so its super difficult to get a first job. What must we do! My simple answer is – if you know that, take initiative to show how you are different. Just 2 months ago I was at a skills workshop with the government and employers. An employer mentioned that for one job, they got over 200 CVs! Imagine having to screen all those CVs and find the right person? You need to differentiate yourself from all those people in how you represent yourself.

Understanding what employers want: Here are some tips

1. Employers want:

1. **a. People who can express themselves and who know what they want to achieve.** You need to demonstrate this in your CV and make sure that your cover letter and CV addresses the position that you are applying for and why you are good for the job

2. **People who actually apply for THEIR job,** not send a CV that is addressed to 10 other employers and you were too lazy to apply for a specific job. You need to study the company and the position before you apply.

3. Employers want:

1. **a. People who will take initiative, and can demonstrate this in their CV.** Show clearly what you have done, what the results are what you have done, and your leadership and extra curricula activities.

2. **b. People who are committed and loyal:** Employers generally don't like CVs where you have jumped from one new job to another every year or every other year. You need to interview and employer as much as an employer interviews you. Make sure you find a company where you can learn and grow. Moving from job-to-job shows an employer that you are not committed, chasing money or simply not serious about a career. Employers investment in their staff and so want to know that a decision to hire you, is going to be a good one and not a risky decision.

3. Employers want:

1. **a. Real experience and want you to show how your experience in life and studies relates to their job, their business, their industry.** You need to prepare yourself for any interview. You need to study the company, it's philosophies, it's challenges, it's opportunities and think about how YOU WILL CONTRIBUTE to making a company better.

2. **b. Unlike many developed nations, I believe that every Cambodian person has experience!** Almost every family has a family business, whether it is a home based business, in the market or a huge enterprise. **This is work-experience.** Try to demonstrate real skills and jobs you did in the family business not just say – I worked in our family business.

3. I want to mention these small but important points:

1. **a. Don't send a CV and Certificates that are 10MB to employers.** In fact, don't even send your certificates if they don't ask for your certificates. These are normally verified in the last stage of the recruitment process. Your CV and cover letter should be LESS THAN 500kb

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which is idea. The biggest size a CV can be is LESS THAN 1MB – NOT MORE!

2. **b. Send your CV and cover letter as ONE FILE**, not 2 unless specifically requested for 2. That way, the employer only needs to open one file.

3. **Lastly, start your job search sooner rather than later.** Imagine that 250,000 students are looking for jobs at the same time. Don't wait for the rush, be proactive.

What can YOU do to prepare for future employment?

1. **1. Read the newspapers:** Look at the job descriptions and see what skills are needed. Look at emerging industries and find out about them. Speak to people in the different industries about them and what they have to offer.

2. **2. Explore recruitment websites:** Similar to newspapers, recruitment websites in Cambodia are flourishing and can give you a very good idea of emerging industries, what skills are needed, what jobs are available in the market.

3. **3. Manage your network and keep in touch:** We meet many people throughout life and work. Keep in touch with good people you look up too – and who come from different backgrounds in life! One day, you might need their inputs.

4. **4. Continue to develop your skills and knowledge:** Take practical and specialized courses that can help you gain skills and knowledge.

5. **5. Join associations or pursue community activities:** Associations help with networking and knowledge and give you inputs into industrial and economic developments. Community activities demonstrate leadership and ability to manage time, and contribute more broadly than only work.

6. **6. Build a relationship with a recruitment agency:** Recruitment agencies can be very helpful in mentoring you, giving you advice, and helping you explore opportunities and industries.

I want to give you my 5 top-tips for the work place when you start a new job.

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1. **Find out the lines of communication and who to ask for what.** Firstly your direct supervisor naturally, but also get an HR contact for any HR related issues, and an accounting contact for expenses or other questions
2. **Never compromise on professional ethics** – if you are not comfortable, ask someone to assist you. If you still think it's not right – speak to finance, speak to HR.
3. **Learn how people communicate and want to receive communication** so that you know how to work most effectively. Make sure you update your manager or supervisor regularly on what you are doing and what challenges you are facing.
4. **Take notes** – it amazes me how very few people to take notes. Of those who take notes, not many are very accurate regarding a meeting. I normally hear, “It's because I can remember”. I'm not doubting that people can remember, given the cultural environment we work in, it's about *what we understand, what is important from a conversation, and yes, we are human, we do forget!* My experience shows that most people, do not remember everything, and secondly, what people remember is not what is important!
Learn to take notes of every meeting and summarize the meeting minutes so that it is clear what you understood during a meeting.
5. **Manage your manager** – a lot of your success in the workplace, will depend on your ability to meet the expectations of your manager or supervisor. You need to learn to manage your manager and meet the expectations of your manager. Ask questions and ask again so that you are extremely clear what is expected of you to deliver.

Thank you for listening and thank you again to the organisers for this important conference! I hope these ideas have been helpful. We will upload this talk on the HRINC website if you would like to download it. Please visit www.hrinc.com.kh for more information.

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