



Indian Graduates Association
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

Newsletter

(for Members only)

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IGAUPM Management Committee 2007-08

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Editorial – The Seinfeld solution

Greetings!

During one of my Sunday morning drills, i.e. breakfast and reading the New Sunday Times at Legend's, I got a call on my mobile. The caller did the usual salutation and identified himself as a gymnasium promoter, and that he was intent on following up whether I was still interested to join their gymnasium to enjoy 'premium' exercise benefits. I then recalled: Sometime in January this year, my wife and I checked out this gymnasium on an invitation. We received a free Body Mass Index (BMI) check and diagnosis of our optimal weight count. They then gave us a long story on the benefits of becoming a member, with money back guarantee, etc, etc! We somehow were not keen and it wasn't difficult to say no.

So this guy asked me again: "Will you be interested to join us?" I said: "No." He then continued: "Why are you not interested? Don't you know how important exercise is?" I tried so hard to remain polite, but ended up asking him: "Which part of 'No' did you not understand?" He then got the message and our conversation ended.

I receive calls from telemarketers all the time. They always come at the most inopportune time, especially during meals, and the tone will go: "We have a special offer," "You've won," or "Would you like to take a survey?" Telemarketing has become so bad that they now have computers calling you and telling you to "Please hold for the next available operator," just so they can tell you about the latest, newest, best thing they have to offer. I am generally polite with telemarketers for the most part because I know their work is hard and nasty and can be completely unappreciated. However, the gymnasium one struck a nerve!

It made me realize that people, more often than not, try so hard to sell you a product or a service without much strategy.

I suspect aggressive marketing is inevitable because many businesses operate based on the red ocean strategy, which is all about competing for market space. Most times, these competitions get bloody! Prof Chan Kim, a management guru from INSEAD (one of the world's leading business schools), popularized something called the **blue ocean strategy**. Much of his work on how to create uncontested market space and make competition irrelevant was published in the Harvard Business Review.

Making competition irrelevant requires creativity and out-of-the-box thinking, something which the gymnasium guy lacked! Perhaps Jerry Seinfeld, in his hit television sitcom, showed us how best to deal with telemarketers: "I am sorry but I don't have time to talk right now, but you give me your number and I will call you back when I have time." The telemarketer responded: "Well ... we can't ... I'm not supposed to ... " And Seinfeld replied: "I guess you don't want to give your number out so people don't call and bother you at home ... now you know how I feel."

Cheers

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Editorial Committee

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Necessity never made a good bargain -- Benjamin Franklin

Activity Report

• 7th Annual General Meeting & Dinner

The AGM and Dinner was held on 24 March 2007 at Bukit Jalil Golf & Country Club. For a change, the AGM started 'on time' (ok, not far from the scheduled time!); thanks to members who came from as far as Batam and Sungai Petani. Both our Advisors were also present.



The newly elected Management Committee (see left panel on page 1) is made up of the same folks but with different strokes, i.e. some of us have swapped portfolios. We

welcome two newly elected members - Mr Saravanan Kandasamy (the guy who runs MindBB, currently an engineer with Maxis) and Mr Kaviyarasu Ellapan (a former PHUPM President, currently a research associate at UPM). We also welcome two newly co-opted members - Miss Sushmeeta Morugan (a media figure who currently hosts a talk show on Astro Channel 6) and Mr Thinagaran Perumal (a PhD candidate at UPM). We wish to record our appreciation to Mr Harris Raj Kumar, who did not seek re-election, for his significant contributions to IGAUPM.

The Dinner was indeed a memorable one; scoring several firsts! For the first time, we attached a theme (*Rangoli: The Colors of Life*) to the Dinner. For the first time (since the inaugural get-together at Mint Hotel in 1999), we had a turnout surpassing a 100 attendees. And for the first time, we featured a guest speaker, Miss Vanajah Sivasubramaniam, who gave us a captivating talk on her experiences and defining moments as a finalist in the First Malaysian Astronaut Program.

Importantly, all of us enjoyed an interesting evening of good fellowship and many left looking forward to the next get-together! We thank all of you who took time to attend the AGM and Dinner.

Up, Close & Personal

Miss Vanajah Sivasubramaniam will go down in Malaysian history as the gutsy woman who nearly became Malaysia's first ever astronaut. We recently caught up with Vanajah for a chat and here below are some excerpts from the dialogue:



IGAUPM: How did you become interested in the Astronaut Program?

Vanajah: I first developed an interest in Astronomy when I was 10 years old. I love to watch space programs and movies. One of my favorite movies is Star Wars. I've always had this fascination of going to space! I like flying high and far ...

IGAUPM: How did you manage to make it to the final round?

Vanajah: The four finalists had endured a battery of physical and psychological examinations, and we were selected based on physical fitness, personality and preparedness, including family support.

IGAUPM: We gather that you're now involved in community-based work. Tell us more.

Vanajah: I'm happily visiting with school kids ... sharing my experience and knowledge about the astronaut training program. It's really great to be seen as a role model to these kids ... they are our leaders of tomorrow. They inspire me as much as I inspire them ... it's very gratifying.

IGAUPM: What are the happy moments throughout your participation in the program?

Vanajah: It's hard to describe them! There are moments that I'll carry with me for the rest of my life. I passed every single medical test they subjected me to, and was fit to be a cosmonaut. I've learned a lot about myself, my capabilities and my strength.

Indeed, Vanajah has done our community proud. She's a fine example of how women can succeed in a man's world!

Q&A compiled by: Miss Sushmeeta Morugan

**Culture is like
making coffee -
all the
problems come
simply from the
lack of proper
sequence --
Bobby
Matherne**

New Members

We welcome the following alumnus to IGAUPM:

1. Renuga Nagarajan (Membership # 118)
2. Saravanan Kandasamy (# 119)
3. Vijaya Kumaran Muttupillai (# 120)
4. Kaviyarasu Yellapan (# 121)
5. Jane Mary Pragasam (# 122)
6. Manimalar Munusamy (# 123)
7. Shamini Narayanasamy (# 124)
8. Geetha Thuraisamy (# 125)
9. Nirmala Devi Tailan (# 126)
10. Gerard Felix Louis (# 127)

Random Information

• Conference on Plantation Commodities

Theme: *Visionary Agriculture - Malaysian Commodity Crops in 100 Years*

Date: 3-4 July 2007

Venue: PWTC, Kuala Lumpur

Organizers: Malaysian Cocoa Board & Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities

For further information, look up: <http://www.koko.gov.my/miccos2007/index.html>

• Postgraduate opportunity in Australia

Financial support for a PhD program in the field of Information Systems is available at Swinburne University of Technology.

For further information, contact: Dr Suku Sinnappan (ssinnappan@swin.edu.au)

• Cultural performance

Title: Sivagamiyin Sabatham

Venue: Panggung Sari Istana Budaya
Jalan Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur

Date: 22-23 June 2007

Time: 8.30pm

Tickets: RM100 / RM50 / RM30

For reservation, contact 03-6257 4069 or 03-4026 5558

Note: This performance is in aid of the Malaysian AIDS Foundation



Management Lesson

Never start a project unless all resources are available Article contributed by: Ms Banumathy Devi

The Power of Negotiation

Good negotiation skill isn't about winning, and it isn't about someone else losing. Many of our interactions with others, both in professional and personal situations, involve a series of negotiations. At work, we negotiate for salary, position, facilities, equipment, staff resources, etc. At home, we negotiate with family (or friends) when deciding which movie to watch, planning how to spend (or save!) money, or choosing a vacation destination. All of these work best when one has powerful negotiation skills. Being a good negotiator enables you to stand up for yourself and get what you want more often without resorting to harming relationships with people around you.

Here are seven tips to keep in mind when negotiating:

1. Plan ahead

Take time to analyze the situation and think through your strategy. This is perhaps the most important element of a successful negotiation.

2. State your needs

Let the other person know what you need and why you need it. Often, disagreement may occur regarding the method of solving an issue.

3. Prepare options beforehand

Always be willing to consider a wide range of options in case your preferred solution is not acceptable. Be open-minded and anticipate why the other person may resist your suggestion, and be prepared to counter with an alternative solution.

4. Avoid argument

Do not waste time arguing or trying to prove the other person wrong. If you disagree with something state your disagreement in a gentle but assertive way.

5. Look for common ground

Look for common ground rather than areas of conflict. Pointing out areas where you and the other person are already in agreement conveys an attitude of cooperation and lessens any feeling of opposition.

6. Discuss key issues in order of priority

Have a clear idea of what the key issues are and which is the most important. Start with the most important issue and proceed to those that matter less. If you can reach agreement on the most important issues, the lesser ones will most likely be easier to resolve.

7. Be reasonable

Avoid behavior that the other person is likely to consider annoying. Always express an attitude of cooperation, rationality, openness, and friendliness.



**You can't solve
a problem with
the same mind
that created it --
Albert Einstein**