

## OCCASIONAL ADDRESS

**Mr Brian Fine**

Chairman, amrinteractive Australia

Delivered at the graduation ceremony for graduates from  
the Faculty of Business

Great Hall, City Campus, Friday 6 May 2005, 10.30am

Deputy Chancellor, Members of Council, distinguished guests, graduates,  
your families and friends.

I would like to acknowledge the Eora and Guring-gai peoples, the traditional  
owners of the various pieces of land on which the University stands.

Congratulations to all of you who have graduated today. It is a great honour to  
be with you at this ceremony. I am also fully aware that all that stands  
between you and your well-deserved celebration drinks, is my occasional  
address. I will, necessarily, try to keep it brief.

So, graduation speeches; what are they remembered for? Wit, erudition,  
relevance, brevity? Or, are they remembered at all?

Some speeches are memorable for their mistakes, some even for their  
profanities, such as a certain Mayor uttering a certain 4-letter word. My aim is  
to make sure that this one, at least, is not remembered for the wrong reasons.

Those of you who perhaps have made mistakes, and have not achieved your  
highest potential in this University – never fear, you too could one day be  
called upon to present the graduation address in these very halls! There is no  
doubt that graduating is a wonderful achievement, but bear in mind that  
billionaires Bill Gates, Michael Dell and Paul Allen were all college drop-outs.

I am sure you have all learnt a lot about the subject matter of your various  
courses, but the most important learnings will relate to the discipline of  
collecting, managing and digesting information.

University may teach you to think; it may give you a springboard from which to  
jump into the world of harsh reality. However, the one thing it should have  
taught you is to know yourself. Not your limitations, but your potentials, which  
are limitless.

What have you been taught here, and what have you learned? Throughout history, there are several great teachers that have stood the test of time — Socrates and Jesus, to name a couple. Socrates, the greatest philosopher of his time, walked around the streets asking people irritating questions.

Jesus' longest lecture, the Sermon on the Mount, would not have lasted an hour of classroom time. The most effective teacher it seems, is one that guides you to discover yourself.

There is a Chinese saying – “May you live in interesting times” – and we do live in interesting times, where life is precarious, nothing is guaranteed and the world is constantly in flux – and no more so than in the world of business.

We only have to look at some of the big changes, that have taken place over the past decade .

### **5 years ago...**

...there was no *Australian Idol*,

...there was , thankfully, no Big Brother,

...and *Bec Cartwright* was **not** the sexiest woman in Australia.

The Wallabies had just won the Rugby World Cup at Twickenham and the world was shocked by the killings at Columbine High School.

Sydney had not yet hosted an Olympic Games and Australian voters had rejected a Republic.

Just 40% of us had a mobile phone (half today's number) and under half of us had access to a PC.

20% of households had an internet connection and 90% of us still visited branches or used the telephone to do our banking, and....

Pauline Hanson had just won 11 seats in the Queensland State Elections.

Some of the trends we have seen over the last ten years are:

60% of Australian households now have internet access... .it took the telephone 50 years and television 30 years to reach these penetration levels.

We have also seen:

- **The ageing of the population**
- **Increasing affluence**
- **Greater social and ethnic diversity**
- **The rise of individualism ‘**
- **Urbanisation**
- **The information society gathering steam**
- **Globalisation**
- **Fantasies of longevity**

Several of these trends have enough momentum to continue exerting an influence for the next ten years but our questions concern how these (and other movements) will impact key drivers of behaviour.

Some of the questions we want to ask include:

- *What behaviours and attitudes will drive trends in the Australian market to 2010 and ...*
- *Will there be a 'digital home' by 2010 and what will it look like?*

And some of the more far reaching issues will centre around things like:

- *What will be the impact of molecular science and 'nanotechnology' on manufacturing?*
- *How will biotechnology influence the way we treat diseases?...*
- *... and when will ageing start to be classified as a disease?*
- *What impact will the emergence of Artificial Intelligence have on human decision-making structures? and....*
- *How will we cope with the sheer mass of data in a world where everything (and everyone) is connected all of the time*

Observing these changes allows us to make some possible predictions for the future.

We have been watching trends in the Australian and global markets for the last fifteen years.

Our experience in constructing future market scenarios for our clients has allowed us to develop several key learnings.

## **1. Future visions need to be grounded in consumer behaviour.**

Despite repeated predictions (since 1975) of the paperless office, photocopiers and printers are using more paper than ever before. What keeps paper alive today is its abilities to help people work, communicate and think together.

## **2. Social and behavioural trends determine the flow of tech-innovation.**

Several successful technologies, such as SMS and the iPod, have emerged into the mainstream with little fanfare from press or pundits.

## **3. Beware of 'endism' and other dogmas.**

Technology forecasters often dramatise their claims by declaring a paradigm shift or announcing a 'revolutionary' new age. New technologies are widely predicted to bring about:

- the end of television
- the end of mass-market advertising
- the end of the nation-state
- the end of telco fixed-line revenue.

## **4. Don't treat the newspapers as primary sources.**

Newspapers phone Analysts for advice and comment, not the other way around.

## **5. Know your history.**

It is impossible to develop a view of the future without first investigating the historical context.

In my own field of Market Research, over the past 30 years ...

We have seen door – to – door interviewing with clipboards give way to telephone interviewers, which are now starting to give way to online interviews.

The 'drivers' of this are obvious, and include greater efficiencies, brought to us through technology. We can now, using on-line access panels, obtain results within days, even from 'hard to find' groups such as those with specific chronic illnesses.

The fact that we no longer need paid interviewers for on-line surveys removes a major cost from research, allowing more people to collect more information, from larger samples of the population, more often.

The rapid growth of Broadband is allowing us to show television commercials and visual materials to our interviewees, and even manage complex choice-models online.

Market Research is advancing to become more useful and relevant in predicting the 'drivers' of greater brand value, sales levels, loyalty and customer satisfaction.

In summary, while you are to be applauded for coming this far with your education, no degree can teach you all you need to know during a lifetime – learning is a dynamic process and we continue to keep on learning, throughout our professional careers.

Your most important skills in today's world will be your ability to be sensitive to your working environment, to changing paradigms, processes and opportunities. You need to be able to adapt, to be 'chameleon-like', to be alert to change and excited by the challenges. You **MUST** be fired with enthusiasm, or you **WILL** be fired with enthusiasm.

It is difficult to stand still and be successful.

The maxim of the University of Technology, "Think, Change, Do" values both strategic thought and action.

So always bear in mind the "Noah Principle" – Predicting rain doesn't count. Building arks does!!

And without doubt, one of the most important qualities you must have in today's business world is persistence.

Did you know that:

1. Coca-Cola sold only 400 cokes in its first year of business?
2. John Grisham's first book was rejected by more than 30 publishers?
3. Henry Ford went bankrupt twice before making it in the car industry?
4. And Donald Trump, who, lost his fortune more than once, has bounced back even more strongly ... or so he keeps telling us!

And finally, a word of advice to all you graduating students and probably the only part of my speech you will choose to remember:

Your families are extremely proud of you. You can't imagine the sense of relief they are feeling today. Now is the perfect time to ask for money for that great business idea you have!

Congratulations again to you and your families, and the very best of luck to you all.

Thank you !