

## **OCCASIONAL ADDRESS**

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Delivered at the graduation ceremony for graduates from  
The Faculty of Information Technology

Great Hall, City Campus, Wednesday 11 May 2005, 2.30pm

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, faculty deans, staff, distinguished guests, graduates, family and friends. Good afternoon.

I would also like to acknowledge that we are on land traditionally owned by the Eora and Guring-gai people.

Well firstly congratulations, congratulations to you the graduates on the achievements you have been recognised for today. I know the sort of compromises you have made over the last few years to be sitting here in the Great Hall today. I am currently studying for my Masters in Business Administration so I have some level of understanding about what sporting, social and hobbies you have had to let fall by the wayside to make it here today.

Secondly to parents and friends, congratulations on supporting your son, daughter or friend through their foibles and "out of character" behaviour as they pushed the relationship with you to the very limits as they strove to accomplish their goal. Perhaps now you can return to some level of normality again.

I am particularly delighted that I stand here in front of graduates of IT and IT related disciplines. The IT industry is a wonderfully dynamic and challenging industry to be a part of and the next ten years will see huge advancements in terms of how we interact with computers. They will become much more intelligent and be able to talk with us, recognise our personal habits and traits and will in turn make us more productive in the process.

Technology will become even more pervasive and be part of everything we do. Developments in the area of digital pens with cameras inserted in the tip of the pen will allow people to capture text on blank or written documents. Semi conductors will find their way into more and more consumer devices and that will mean that you as consumers will be able to program and customise interfaces and programs so that they do what you want, not what the manufacturer insists on. Wouldn't that be nice - a piece of software that does what you want it to do?

So the future of the industry is looking bright and you are going to be joining it at a great time. I wish you the best in your endeavours to find the right opportunity for you to join it.

However I wanted to spend the next couple of minutes giving you an insight into how you can improve your chances of finding that career start in the IT industry.

I interview around 50 people per year or 1 every week for potential careers at Microsoft. The vast majority of these have under graduate IT degrees and many have Masters in related fields. I would say that over 2/3's of these people do not end up joining Microsoft. There are a number of reasons for this obviously, there may have been a better candidate or the candidate may choose another company to work for.

But quite often it comes down to how candidates demonstrate the following three attributes during their interviews:

- Do they have a good Attitude?
- What makes this person different?
- Presentation?

Let me highlight an example of each of these.

Firstly attitude; most large organisations are going to have a values system that they try to instil in their employees – some of ours centre around areas like **“passion for customers, partners and technology”**, **“willingness to take on big challenges”** and **“being open and respectful to others”**.

Organisations are going to look for the right attitude in prospective employees in line with these values so do your homework and find out what the key values are for the company you are interviewing with.

If you come across in the interview as ambivalent towards your career or the company you are hoping to join, or are disrespectful to previous business colleagues you will be projecting a poor attitude and may rule yourself out for consideration due to a poor attitude.

Whilst you may have all the required technical capability, many others do too and so it may be your attitude that creates a lasting impression and therefore a differentiation of you in the interviewer's mind.

I recently interviewed a potential candidate and asked them where they would like to see themselves in three years time. Her answer was perfect - she said she would like to be in a position whereby, through the work she did, she would be able to help other people accomplish their career goals. In contrast I asked another candidate the same question and she said she would like to be earning more money in a few years time. Her response was certainly honest but a sole focus on money is not an image you want to leave with a prospective employer.

The second attribute I mentioned before was - What makes a person different?

What have you done within your academic life or extra curricular activities that again demonstrate your key attributes? Did you take on a big challenge by leading the debating team at your faculty? Have you demonstrated your passion for life by conquering a personal goal?

Digressing for a second, My "Big Challenge" incidentally was riding through the soft sand in the desert around Alice Springs for 500kilometres on a mountain bike to help raise money to fight youth suicide in Australia.

The ride was gruelling of course but the biggest challenge was standing in my birthday suit shivering with cold every night after a long day's ride in an inch of water trying to remove red dust from every nook and cranny with a sponge the size of a 50 cent coin – that was challenging and it almost killed me I can tell you but the sense of achievement I got from finishing was worth the effort and the \$1 million we raised for that worthwhile cause was somewhat useful too.

Another attribute that differentiates people is owning up to and learning from your mistakes. What big mistakes have you made and how have you dealt with them? Being open about where you went wrong and what you learnt from your mistakes is a big indicator to employers that you are willing to take on big challenges, that you recognise your learning isn't complete yet and that you have enough character to admit you got it wrong.

My managerial career at Microsoft didn't start with too much aplomb. Inadvertently I sent a particularly sensitive email to the whole organisation that should have only been received by a few people. I had made a massive mistake and it was a very real problem. I managed to salvage the situation by owning up to the issue, admitting my mistake and facing the frank feedback I surely deserved. I learnt a lot from that episode and it has made me somewhat vigilant about email based communication to this date.

That brings me to the last point, comb your hair and polish your shoes before the interview!!

Seriously it's true - what your mum and dad have always said about this is absolutely true, also a couple of other tips, make sure you maintain eye contact, be confident but not arrogant and ensure you are polite and never ever under any circumstances use profanity. Believe me it happens as does inappropriate dress. I love the mini skirt believe me it's not the place for the interview room, dress professionally and err on the side of being too formal rather than casual.

I wanted to close by saying that many IT organisations have internships that may provide you with an entrée into the industry. We are no different and currently have a number of technically oriented IT roles available. If you would like to consider Microsoft as a potential employer I would be more than happy to talk with you later.

With that said continue to develop a good attitude, think big and always be professional in your business dealings and I wish each and every one of you success and hope that you get as much enjoyment from computers, gadgets and software as I have.

Thank you.