

## OCCASIONAL ADDRESS

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Delivered at the UTS graduation ceremony  
for graduates from the Faculty of Business  
Great Hall, City campus, Monday 5 May 2008, 2.30pm

Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, Principal Officers, Academic Staff, graduates, ladies and gentlemen and guests; good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to share this very, very important day with you, when we acknowledge academic achievement.

Chancellor, I have had the honour and pleasure of participating in a number of graduation ceremonies in this Great Hall, including my own graduation many years ago — and more recently that of my son's graduation ceremony. At all those ceremonies, there was an atmosphere of pride and achievement. Today is no exception.

Chancellor, I would also like to offer my congratulations to everybody here this afternoon, both to the graduates in official recognition for all your hard work, and to those friends and family members who provided the necessary support to help you accomplish such. I also congratulate the academic staff who have helped you the graduates reach this stage of your careers.

It's my belief that in Western society today, we do not, as a rule, place enough importance on traditional rites of passage that celebrate our achievements and mark off certain periods or events in our lives. For many of us, achieving a tertiary education is the *first* tangible rite of passage that takes us from the optimism of young adulthood through to the sometimes shocking realisation that we *do* eventually become fully-contributing members of society, and I believe this is one of the many reasons that we must pause when it is done, and celebrate the pilgrimages we've taken to get here — and to reflect on the hard work you have put in to achieve today's recognition.

One important thing that occurs during this rite of passage, is that we begin to develop a true sense of self-awareness. We begin to realise that in order to make great achievements we must not only preserve our independence, but we must also establish and maintain successful relationships with people around us as well. As graduates you've had the support of peers and family and

undoubtedly also given your support to fellow students; you've passed the challenge of trying not only to 'have a life' but to fit your study in around that as well. This ceremony marks the moment of stepping out from the halls of academia (literally as well as symbolically) and applying that knowledge, those skills, and that independence in the corporate and business world.

In delivering this occasional address this afternoon, I would like to focus on three principle issues — Balance of life, Leadership, and last but certainly not least, the concept of Ethics.

Notwithstanding the pressures of today's commercial environment, the key to both surviving and succeeding in this world of corporate and business life, in my opinion, is *balance* — achieving a successful balance between all the different areas in our lives. Too often these days people say there isn't enough time to do the things they want to do — this is a symptom of *imbalance* — not necessarily poor time management, and once things get to that point, it takes a great deal of courage and application to change it. What I'd like to do is talk to you about how important balance is as a goal in day-to-day life... And I hope that this will help you to maintain a successful equilibrium in your own lives in the years to come.

As graduates today, you are about to enter a business world characterised by intense competition, by constantly evolving technology, and by the increasing demands of globalisation. The forever increasing advances in business technology have had the effect of greatly increasing the competitiveness of industry, and increasing the push to deliver faster, better, and more cost-effective services. This constant evolution of operative processes in business and corporations worldwide has forced us to become far more fluid, adaptable and flexible in our jobs and in our thinking. It requires us to continually change and adapt throughout our lives in order to continue to deliver our services in a professional manner, but it also pressures us to deliver ever more, and this is where we must be vigilant about the balance in our lives.

Remember, just because you are employed by a company doesn't mean you are beholden to them — responsible and accountable, yes, but employment is not an indenture any more! This is where you will be confronted with the challenge of finding the correct balance. I suggest, that you should work to live — not live to work. Be productive — don't just work because it's there. There will always be work to do, which will always create *more* work — it's a self-perpetuating cycle. There will always be people who are happy to spend 14 hours or more a day at the office, and you might well be one of them. But if you're not — don't let the pressure of the corporate culture indoctrinate you. It's our home lives and family and the *quality* of life which suffer because of the

demands of work, rather than the opposite. And it is pleasing that many employers are now introducing more family friendly policies.

However, in today's global market place and entrepreneurial world more than ever, as you take up the challenges and go forward in your chosen careers and life you need to be professional, passionate and committed but you must also ensure you are not a captive of those business pressures. There is a saying that "no man on his death bed has ever wished he had spent more time at the office".

The second principle issue is "Leadership" — However being aware of the quality and professionalism of the lecturers you have had the opportunity to listen to and learn from during your studies here at UTS, I am certainly not about to try and compete with their academic knowledge on the subject of leadership — but to express to you some of my thoughts on the subject matter that you might find useful in your professional life.

So in respect of leadership, if someone was to ask me of my views or definitions of leadership I would most probably describe it as not only having the long term vision, commitment and strength to take hard decisions, an effective communicator etc and all the other attributes prescribed by the management theorists but importantly to also embrace the ability to influence the way other people behave and hence the ability to bring people with you.

I would also suggest that leadership today can no longer be a single focus within an organisation. No longer can major organisations expect to survive simply by implementing the ideas of the company's CEO or MD. Companies and organisations need leaders at all levels throughout the organisation. We all have a role to play, irrespective of what level we are at in our organisations.

This simply does not necessarily mean however that organisations should be made up of many individual leaders. This simply means that if an organisation is to succeed it needs leadership right through the organisation — but obviously pulling in the same direction. And hence as you now leave the halls of academia — and move into the corporate world — you will be called upon to display not only your financial management and/or accounting skills — but also your leadership skills.

And as you progress further in your professional careers and move into senior leadership roles, you must also consider the longer term viability and sustainability of your Corporation or entity — you will have to look to the future not just the present. You will have to manage both the day to day imperatives as well as the longer term strategic issues.

The third principle issue is of ethics. Throughout your careers you may be called upon to choose between a directive and your own ethical standards. Under such circumstances you will be faced with situations where you have a choice — to deliver professional, ethical services, or not to. It might be as simple as making your corporation look better than it actually is by disclosing some details but not others, or as complicated as having one of your superiors ask you to manipulate the financial (or other) records in order to hide certain information. Regardless of how it may occur, the vital thing to remember is that if it does occur, you must be true to yourself, and to your profession. Every decision that you choose to make will have an impact on you and your family. It's very easy to say "I'm just one person, I can't make a difference" — but of course you can make a difference. You just have to make the correct choice. They say that life is half-chance, half-choice, and I'm a firm believer in that — we DO have the power to create our own destinies.

Every person is, by necessity, the guardian of their own integrity, and we each have a responsibility not only to our profession, but to ourselves, to act in a professional, ethical and effective manner — and you can do this regardless of the position you hold in a company, because the beauty of professionalism is that it works at every level. So I urge you to be professional, be pro-active, but most importantly, be yourself. If you maintain your ethics you will be regarded as a true professional and you will prosper in life.

Graduating from university today is a defining point in your lives. It's a closing of one phase of your lives and the beginning of another. The challenge in this lies in making the world work for *you* — not being rigid and inflexible and demanding to have things your own way, but by being assertive, confident, and self-aware. Success and happiness both spring from self-awareness and the realisation that we do have the power to control the way we live our lives. Self-awareness is the secret mechanism that will deliver you from insecurity and uncertainty, and it's the mechanism that will ensure you keep things balanced and in perspective throughout your lives. From this moment on, you have the opportunity to create wonderful, inspiring, *fulfilling* lives for yourselves — so make the most of it. Go into the world from here with a new breath, and make it work for *you*.

Finally, be proud of what you have achieved and enjoy your moment, it is a moment in time and an achievement that no one can take from you as you now go forward in your chosen careers and professional life. Again, thank you for the opportunity to share this very special moment with you and I wish you well as you proceed on that journey.

Thank you.