

Tips From The Top

LOOK FAR, BUT DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF WHAT IS NEAR



ICPAS Brand Ambassador **Lim Kexin** is a go-getting, high-flying woman of action. The World Bank Emerging Youth Leader, Rising Star Award winner in the Women in Asia Awards, Council Member of the National Youth Council and PwC senior tax consultant shares her views about work and life

Despite your relative youth, you have achieved success in your career. What has contributed to your success?

It is probably too early to consider myself a success. After all, I have only been working with PwC's Tax Financial Services team for five years. Notwithstanding, the key to success is a long-term focus while charting and pacing to achieve short-term milestones. My career goal is to become a top-tier tax advisor while maintaining a life-long involvement in the community. This clarity of direction allows me to assess and grasp appropriate opportunities and weather obstacles as I move forward, regardless of what life brings. A dose of good luck is always useful too!

What are the highlights of your career?

In 2009, I was seconded to London to join PwC's Total Tax Contribution team, a global thought leadership team studying the overall tax contributions of organisations. Together with colleagues from Ghana to the UK, Mauritius and Chile, I had the chance to work on the high-profile World Bank-PwC *Paying Taxes* publication, analysing the competitiveness of 183 economies' tax systems. In addition to the invaluable cultural exposure, the stint allowed me to witness how tax policies

interplay with business developments in the global arena, cementing my appreciation of tax as a dynamic field.

Another highlight relates to my involvement as a member of PwC's Corporate Responsibility (CR) team in Singapore and the PwC China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan's CR steering committee. As a member of the team, I initiate and drive various CR initiatives, sharing CR best practices from around our network. Hundreds of colleagues are engaged annually in activities ranging from overseas community projects in China, Cambodia and Vietnam, to fundraisers and hands-on volunteer work. Feedback has been extremely positive and it makes me proud to have played a role in shaping our corporate culture.

Given your many responsibilities, how do you manage your time?

Juggling and not allowing the numerous deliverables to overwhelm me. As my social circle expanded, I quickly discovered that while everyone has only 24 hours, some achieve much more than others. The key is to prioritise and focus. I start my day by taking a few minutes to filter the key tasks I have to achieve for the day, and list them down. This list is then pinned at my desk, and I start work on what is most time sensitive and important. I feel great satisfaction when the tasks are completed, and the list gets thrown away at the end of the day.

Did you find it challenging when you first embarked on your career? What problems did you face and how did you overcome them?

During my initial years, I had, at times, struggled to find a balance between my personal and work life. A tax advisory career is dynamic and challenging. But when added to my multiple community responsibilities, life can be overwhelming. Now, my involvements are compartmentalised to increase efficiency. For instance, I don't drive, so I use my travel time on the public transport to keep in touch with friends, and with the latest happenings via my iPhone. Non-work correspondence is diverted to my personal email address, which I access while on the move; client correspondence is sent to my work email, which I focus on when I am at work. This allows me to effectively maximise my time.

Work-related stress is an inevitable component of modern life. How do you manage stress?

I book regular "time-out" moments — affectionately termed as "me time" — in my diary. I may spend that time enjoying a cup of coffee, reading a book, shopping or watching TV with my grandmother. "Me time" allows me to take a step back to look at the big picture, engage in reflection and compose myself before moving forward again.

As a leader, how do you pick out potential leaders? What traits should they possess?

Generally, I look for people with the right motivation and attitude. A leader needs to provide direction and take responsibility for team performance, be it credit or reprimand. I think it is important for a leader to lead by example, and work alongside the team members. Thus, I strive to do the same by maintaining hands-on involvement and keeping in close touch with my teams to ensure that they are on the right track.

What advice would you give those starting out in their careers?

Life is a marathon and not a sprint. I always remember the story of the tortoise racing the hare. The hare was ahead but the tortoise was the eventual winner. Success requires hard work and does not come overnight. This is particularly so in a profession like public accounting, where technical competence and experience take time to accumulate. While working to accelerate growth, one should also have the patience to take things one step at a time.

Are there any maxims or mottos that you live by?

Treasure every day like it is your last.

Anything else you wish to add?

Always keep an open mind and be prepared to learn from everyone, regardless of rank, status or profile. From my 11 years of community involvement, I have learnt that everyone — from the top corporate honchos to taxi drivers and the coffee lady at the office — has valuable life lessons to share. If you keep an open mind, you will be the biggest winner of all.

I LOOK FOR PEOPLE WITH THE RIGHT MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE. A LEADER NEEDS TO PROVIDE DIRECTION AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR TEAM PERFORMANCE, BE IT CREDIT OR REPRIMAND