

Be curious and never fear learning new things

THE THOUGHTS and views from Sun Life Malaysia CEO & president /country head Raymond Lew (*pic*).

How has your life experience made you the leader you are today?

I'm always looking for opportunities to stretch myself. I started off as a trainer and over the years, I realised that I can do much more by challenging myself to venture into unfamiliar areas.

This isn't just about moving into different professions or industries such as sales, marketing and as a CEO, but also by adopting an inquisitive mind.

For example, read something different from what you normally read, hang out with people with different way of thinking, or attempt something you've never done before.

I have been in the insurance industry for the past 26 years and I've learned that it is important to spend more time on opportunities instead of problems.

Problems tend to weigh us down while opportunities challenge and encourages us to be better.

We can't avoid problems, but we can discipline ourselves to focus more on our potential for growth.

Most importantly, I believe in staying physically active and mentally positive. You tend to stretch your mind when you stretch your body, and you attract and generate more positive energy when you think positive - as theorised in the Law of Attraction where basically "What you think about is what you bring about into our life".

What traits do you look for in your talent or how do you decide who is right for a job?

I look at two main components when looking for the right candidate- talent and effort.

I believe in hiring a person with abilities, skills, and expertise which determine what he or she can do. I also look at the degree to which the person can deploy his or her talents through the efforts put in.

They need to be able to showcase a highly energised and passionate attitude with proven strong execution skills as well as the capability to do more than expected.

They should be a driver in their own area of expertise and a team player who rings forward a winning team instead of team of winners.

How do you think the industry you're in will evolve in the future?

As with any other industry, the insurance business is having its fair share of challenges like the ongoing challenges in technology, demography, and consumer needs and expectations coupled with regulatory requirements for greater transparency for consumers to make informed financial decisions.

Customer-centricity is becoming more important than ever- customers are expecting simpler and personalised products that suit their unique needs and situations.

To cater to these expectations, we need to collect and analyse customer data from every touchpoint. This means applying data analytics to draw value and better understand the needs of the consumers.

We need to make the most of digital push by applying the right data to respond to market challenges in the coming years. Besides the insurance industry, believe all industries are focusing and a digital transformation such as incorporating Big Data and artificial intelligence (AI) in an effort to serve the consumers better.

What advice can you offer those looking to start their career/own business?



The best piece of advice I can offer is to constantly be curious and never fear learning new things.

Failure is an important journey for learning new experiences and learning is a continuous process.

You can only get better from making mistakes and overcoming your weaknesses.

Your career is yours to mould- it is in your own hands.

Investing in yourself gives you the clarity, power and tools to create your own future.

Sometimes, investing means taking a risk, but that's the price of entry for success and happiness- never be calculative, as any investment will take time to bear fruit.

What do you want to accomplish in the next five years?

I hope I would be able to continue adding value to the life of the people around me- my family, my team, our clients and community.

I also hope I'll continue to tread into uncharted territory with the aim of growing and learning new things that would help me become a better and stronger person.

I strongly believe that one can learn to be wiser and smarter- all you need is to just tell yourself to continuously strive to be better.

Best piece of advice you ever got on your career.

The best piece of advice I was ever given is to have laser-sharp focus!

To reach your objectives, you need a certain amount of focus.

The more competition, the more intense the focus.

There is a story about how human beings only use 10pc of their brain to focus while the other 90pc is to process things such as distractions or noises. Hence, it is important to plan and strategise to achieve your goals.

How do you stay abreast of issues affecting your industry?

Some of the things I do to keep myself updated with issues affecting the industry is to constantly observe and ask questions on things I'm not sure of.

At this age and time where the internet has made everything easily accessible, I strongly believe we can get our informa-

tion from everywhere.

What has been the biggest challenge you have faced? And what did you learn from it?

One of my biggest challenges was when a business partner decided to review our relationship to explore other possibilities. Losing this partner meant a huge financial impact to the company and needless to say, created apprehension and anxiety for all.

We took the rational step to stay calm and spoke to the partner to understand their reasoning for this.

We were sincere in offering them a win-win counter-proposal and wished them well even if they decided to move on.

To cut a long story short, they ended up staying with us, and I strongly believe our sincerity and our "never give up" attitude played a huge factor here.

A must-read for every business owner/manager is ...

The Power of Now by Eckhart Tolle. This book stresses the importance of living in the present moment and avoiding thoughts of the past or future.

It tells how to move past pain, stress, and anxiety and balance your life by living it moment to moment.

If your life is full of anxiety/fear, you are living in the future.

If your life is full of regret/hatred, you are living in the past. Live now, focus on the now and action, you will be happy.

What are the top three factors you would attribute to your success?

My life experiences - Experiences shape every moment of your life.

From the moment you are born, you adjust to things based on everything you've seen and done.

Without all these experiences, I would not be where I am today; Role model - Success in my opinion is not something you can achieve alone but with the help and blessings from the people we surround ourselves with.

I am blessed that I have great people around me who double up as coach/mentor. They are the ones who have helped developed me, especially during the early stages of my career; Mindset -If you don't have the right mindset right from the start, chances are you won't be achieving what you want.