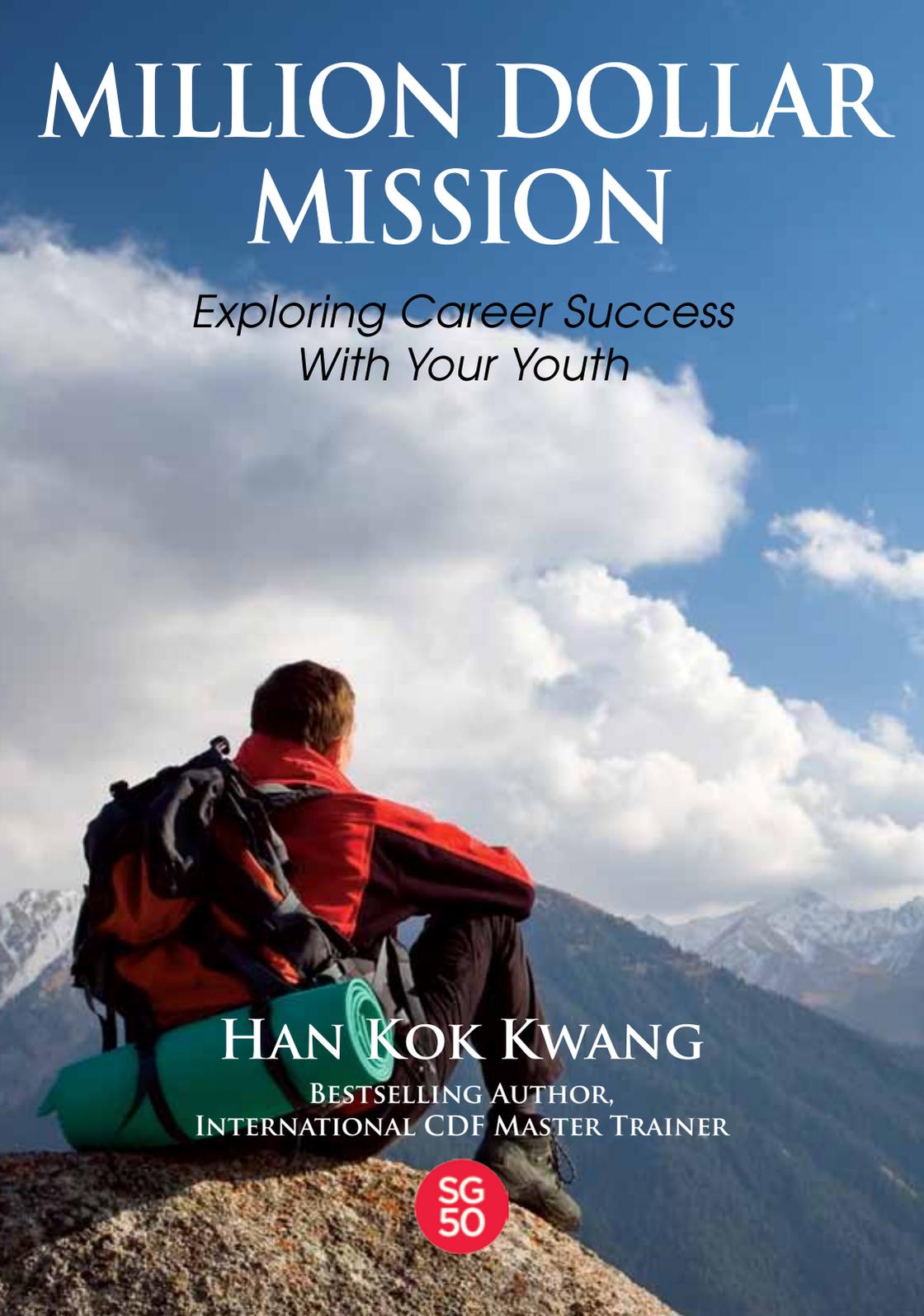


MILLION DOLLAR MISSION

*Exploring Career Success
With Your Youth*



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Preface

Is your Career Model obsolete?

Joseph Chong, former CEO of a financial advisory firm, estimated that it costs about \$600,000 to bring up a child in a one-child middle- to upper-income family in Singapore. In a *The Straits Times* article on 15 February 2013, he wrote how, in the uniquely Singapore parallel education system, a huge chunk of the family funds is taken up by private tuition and enrichment classes. Add another \$400,000 funds from the state and the costs easily make up \$1,000,000 to raise a university-educated child here in Singapore.

Let's put that money into another perspective. A retirement fund of \$600,000 with a 4% draw-down every year provides an annual income stream of \$20,000 for 30 years. Seriously, is your youth worth a retirement income for 30 years? Given how the booming private tuition industry is worth more than \$1 billion annually, the answer is clear!

If your investment is so substantial in your youth, you must also be savvy enough to help them unlock their value and maximise their potential. This helps your youth navigate a career path that bridges the structured education system and a dynamic new world of work. This is critical. The market place is ruthless. No one is too big to fail, not even established global players like Lehman Brothers, Bear Sterns, Motorola, and Kodak; no individual can ignore market tides without expecting to escape unscathed.

In this complex environment, the old game is irrelevant. The only constant appears to be your salaries. It is time to review the traditional “career model” that we have been so used to. This is the model that most of us grew up with; it worked back then in the early years of nationhood when the economy was growing fast and few people had the opportunity to go to university. Then, so long as you were a graduate, you were the *crème de la crème* and spoiled for choice when it came to good jobs. Fast forward to today. It is a different picture.

Today, at least 30% of each cohort in Singapore are graduates. In addition, globalisation and technological advances have revamped the game. There are many, many more from around the world competing for the same jobs. Yet, with technological advances, such as big data analysis and integration and co-robotics, many new jobs are created. However, as tertiary curriculums are not able to keep pace with economy changes, a degree alone is no longer enough to ensure employability. Graduates today are under-equipped to handle the new game. But old habits die hard and without an awareness of alternative models, we seem to only keep running harder and faster on the treadmill. We continue to study hard, strive for “A”s and hope for the best. Sadly, hope is not a solution.

Step	The Model	Reality
1	Study hard (beginning from pre-school).	Produces high pressure home and/or school environment.
2	Attend extra tuition and enrichment classes, especially “branded” ones.	Brings high pressure and high expenses in buying hope.
3	Score As and distinctions.	“Gaming” the system.
4	Get into a good school (i.e., Junior College, Polytechnic or University).	Excessive focus on grades misses the forest for the trees.
5	Be involved in Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) to boost your resume.	CCA becomes a commodity when everyone is involved and competing in this area.

6	Graduate with honours.	School smart; but without street smarts?
7	Get a good job.	Fewer good jobs due to flatter organisations and technological advances.
8	Get hitched.	Inadequate knowledge (this is not taught in schools).
9	Buy a dream home.	Unable to afford due to sky high prices and property cooling measures.
10	Have great kids.	Unlikely, due to high levels of stress and low fertility rate.
11	Live happily ever after.	Unlikely, as some are required to work long hours to stay afloat, covering high cost of living.

I invite you to study the Traditional Career Model in the table above. Basically, this is the “study hard, graduate well, get a good job and live happily ever after” model that we have been taught to emulate. On average, it takes about 16 years to complete Steps 1 to 6. The standard product is a well-trained rule-abiding student who has survived multiple exams, but with little clue about the real world, career management, or job hunting.

Fortunately, landing a first job after graduation is not a big problem for your youth. Fresh graduates cost less, have supposedly high energy levels, and do not question their bosses as much (at least not yet). They get snapped up. But nothing has changed. They remain the same well-trained rule-abiding student who has little clue about the real world.

Fast forward 20 years.

Two outcomes are possible. They could become a high achiever—even getting on the fast track—because they have kept their eye on the ball, their mind tuned to the environment, and developed a strong sense of business acumen. Or, they become too expensive and uncompetitive. They then lose their job, which is ironic after they have spent all their time on the job without realising that the world outside has changed.

Reality then kicks in. They do not know how to get back into the game. They are now older, more expensive, and have more obligations. They are less obedient but still the same “career ignorant students” they used to be.

I was at an industry event recently. It looked like a list of who’s who in the industry and they all looked confident, sharp, and successful—all 80 of them senior executives and managers. The profile of a typical attendee was aged 40-odd years with a professional experience of over two decades. All of them have at least one degree. Many had Masters. They chatted and networked happily underneath the grand chandelier in the high-ceilinged ballroom of a five-star hotel.

The following week, I was at another event. It was a seminar for a similar number of participants with a similar profile. But there was no happy chatting or networking.

This was a group of unemployed mature professionals, managers, and executives (PMEs). The seminar was to help them get back on their feet and to get a job. In their glory days, they, too, hung out and networked at expensive seminars at five-star hotels, such as the previous crowd. They, too, had held titles like Controllers, Vice Presidents, Senior Managers, and Regional Managers.

But the tide has turned. Those days are gone. They realised too late that high-sounding titles mean little. They are now on the other side of the fence, as the unemployed. And their greatest fear? A one-way ticket with no return. Their jobs of old are gone. Whether

they have lost them to technological advances, company relocation, outsourcing or tougher competition, it does not really matter. The fact remains that they are jobless.

Before you assumed that they must have been “choosy”, that they should—if I can reel off common accusations—change their mind-sets, be willing to accept lower pay, go for upgrading, and be adaptable enough to change industries, please note that many have tried it all. Mature PMEs usually work harder than anyone else to get back into the employment game. At their age, they have the heaviest cost burden, especially those with university-going kids. Unfortunately, the market is a ruthlessly “young” place. Many mature PMEs don’t stand a chance in this environment, despite what positive employment statistics in the media say.

If they could turn back the clock by 20 years, they would not have spent all their time working so hard at only one job or in only one company. If they knew then what they know now, they would have developed a plan B to be prepared when plan A becomes obsolete, like now.

This is why I wrote this book: to debunk the myth that a good degree and relevant professional experience are “enough”. They are not. For those who are younger, thank your lucky stars you found this book early. It will be your blueprint to a wildly rewarding career if you understand its essence.

Welcome to the globalised workplace, where keeping a job is determined by what you deliver on a daily basis and how likeable you are. Less relevant are your job title, your qualifications, your experience, or your years of loyal service. You are only as good as your last performance. These and the notion of “job security” are concepts of the past. What can you do? Forget the traditional career model. Develop your business acumen and do better than the market norm!

In the last eight years, I have worked with more than 3,000 mature PMEs. Despite their advanced degrees, vast experience, and impressive titles, they are, or have become, unemployed. Many of them remain unemployed or underemployed today. They play the old game, refusing to move on, despite evidence that it is obsolete.

The **new game** is driven by two game changers: globalisation and technological advances. In essence, globalisation is life without borders. Combined with technological advances, a competent professional can survive and thrive anywhere in the world. You do not need excessive resources when you are powered by brain power! Armed with a notebook or tablet with Wi-Fi connectivity, you can work anywhere in the world and make a decent living. For the “how to”, check out entrepreneur Tim Ferriss’ book *The 4-Hour Workweek*.

Help your youth become number one in their world

Help your youth become the best in what they do best and enjoy most. Note this is “in their world”. This is how you help your youth play smart: choose the right playground or game that your youth can win; choose the right bell curve where they have an advantage. If they are not “A” students, do not insist on pitting them against “A” students in the scholarship game. Choose a game where they have an edge in. Share your experience with them. In his book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell said it takes roughly 10 thousand hours of practice to achieve mastery in your niche. Have you clocked your dues to develop the expertise to compete at your chosen level? If not, you won’t even gain entry to the arena, let alone play.

Like life, a competitive advantage is transient. It is not sustainable, unless you work at it – 24/7. You are only as good as your last performance.

You have often heard that change is constant. Yet most people resist change, because they love the path of least resistance, which is the status quo. This spells opportunity for you, if you are willing to embrace change and make a difference, fast. Think of companies like Smith Corona, Kodak, Polaroid, and Tower Records. They are either gone or a pale shadow of their glory

days. Perhaps they did not adapt in time. Maybe they were simply a victim of the common “resistant to change” syndrome. Learn the lesson or suffer the consequences. Change is uncomfortable, but change is necessary if you wish to grow. To survive, you have to grow or stagnate – organisations are no different.

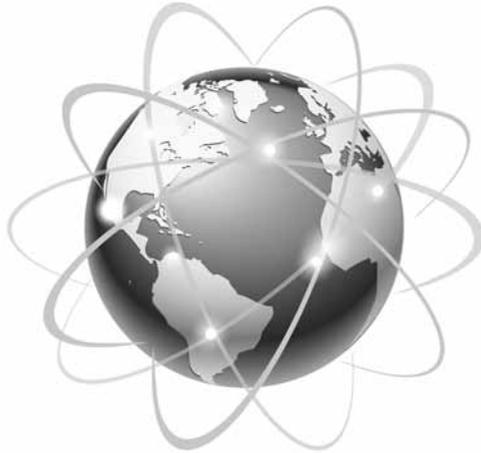
I was told that two thirds of Fortune 500 companies disappear from the list every 15 years! **Moore’s law** observed that over the history of computing hardware, the number of transistors on integrated circuits doubles approximately every 18 months. As gadgets become more powerful, they also become more affordable due to technological advances. Did you know that if you have a smart phone with access to Google, you have access to more information than the President of the USA did in 1997!

But change alone is no guarantee for success. Despite the progressive evolution of Microsoft Windows operating system from Windows 1.0 in 1985 to the upcoming release of Windows 10, the company is struggling to repeat the performance of their glory days.

The lesson is clear: update your game to master your environment. If you stick to the old game, you will not survive. Look around you. Those who are still playing the old game are like frogs in slow boiling water. They risk being cooked without even knowing! Competitive advantages are only sustainable if they are reinvented constantly.

For your youth’s sake, learn the new game and update your career model. The time is now. Innovate or perish!

The World Today



“Modern economic life seems to me to be characterised pretty simply: new opportunity for many, new uncertainty for most. That the economy has moved beyond our control creates anxiety—globalisation is something done to us rather than for us. Far from celebrating globalisation, many plead for protection.

To this, the financial crisis adds complexity. Unregulated finance capital grew ahead of our ability to manage it, ultimately causing the crash, and for many this exemplified the unaccountable, volatile power of global markets. Jobs and pensions became collateral damage.”

— Peter Mandelson, British politician and President of the international think tank Policy Network, in an article for YaleGlobal

How the workplace has changed since you started work?

As the smarter Guide to your youth, it is your duty to be aware of your global environment. You can then determine the best strategy to help your youth succeed.

David Houle has been called the “CEO’s futurist”. He has worked with more than 2,000 CEOs and business owners in six continents, and is the Futurist-in-Residence at the Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida. In his book, *Entering the Shift Age*, David argued that we are on the verge of a new era (Table 1-1).

Ages of Humanity	How is it Defined?
Tools	Agricultural Age, where humans work the land
Machines	Industrial Age, where humans work in factories and offices
Technology	Information Age, where humans can work at home without going to the office
Consciousness	Shift Age, where almost everything is in a state of shift and change is accelerating and all around us. Humans can work anywhere

Table 1-1. David Houle’s different ages of humanity

This does not mean that the advancements of previous ages go away. Each age adds to what has gone before, expanding and accelerating the human experience. Since the information age began in the mid-seventies, the world has been divided not by “those who have and those who have not”, but rather “those who know and those who know not”.

In times like these, advance knowledge is power. You become like a person from the future! Imagine going back in time to the 1980s with today’s knowledge. Can you even fathom the amazing opportunity? Those who “know” have a distinctive advantage. When you sit on the shoulders of

giants, you can see what is coming. You can prepare and maximise your advantage when “it” happens.

This is pertinent in the current world where we live in two realities: physical reality and screen reality. In the screen reality, it is truly a vast connected global consciousness, where you can connect with anyone around the world almost instantly with technology. Think about that. No lag time. Instant connectivity. It takes you as fast to phone your neighbour as it does someone in China, Europe or the USA. The opportunities you can grab are only limited by your imagination.

How much time do you spend in the physical world? How about in the screen world on your smart phones, tablets, and touch screens? Now, take a look at your children. If you see what I see, the screen world is – to them – the real world. That should wake you up to this new reality!

William Gibson is the novelist who popularised the term “cyberspace”, and the idea that “the future is already here”. It is just not evenly distributed. To maximise your advantage, get in now. Look at WhatsApp, whose founders got a cool US\$22 billion when they sold to Facebook what is a quintessential product of the screen reality.

But wouldn't the market be saturated if everybody does the same thing?

Relax.

There are two types of readers: what we consider “smart” ones and those smarter. Smarter ones “get” it because they are hungrier for more ideas. Do not worry about the former because they *think* they know it all. Most are resistant to change.

Legacy thinking holds most back. (I believe you are not one of them since you are reading this book.) According to Houle, such a perspective views the present and future through thoughts from the past. It is like rowing a

boat with your eyes to the past and your back to the future. You are backing into the future, looking at the past.

Yet this is how most of us behave.

To borrow a phrase: many know, many talk, but few do. Guess who gets the best returns? The do-ers. Straight 'A's never made anyone rich. While school smart is no match for street smarts, street smarts alone, without talent and effort, only makes a wannabe dreaming.

In a globalised world, everything is up for grabs if you are "good". You can travel the world as a talent and be on the list of many headhunters, because talent is one of the few sustainable competitive advantages. Money can buy you the latest technology, hardware, and software, but the one thing that makes all these work is the right talent. This is why top organisations directly recruit on campus at top universities, attracting the best talent with generous scholarships and sign-on bonuses; they want to deprive competition of them.

To maximise profits, transnationals have mastered the art of minimising costs. One way is by going flexible by getting rid of fixed costs such as permanent employees in favour of temporary contract talent.

Read these quotes by recruitment agencies across the globe. They confirm these trends in the new world.

"Over the past few years, we have also seen the emergence of 'executive leasing' where a company hires a senior executive on a fixed term basis, like six months, to come into the organisation to perform a specific task. To attract top quality talent, many companies in Singapore are now offering temporary and contract staff the same benefits as they offer their full-time staff—as they know this is the only way to attract and retain the best talent."

— Lynne Ng, Regional Director at Adecco South East Asia

“The last economic crisis changed the employment landscape forever. Now employers are relying more and more on external talent or contingent workers—whether they are temporary employees, contractors, outsourced workers or consultants—to achieve business goals in a more strategic, flexible way. In a Manpower recent survey of 41,000 employers in 35 countries and territories, more than a third of respondents said they view contingent labour as a key element of their work force strategy.

Today’s workplace strategists engage or hire as when and as needed... If you’re not needed full time, you won’t be hired full time. Some see this as a threat but for many mature workers, this is a golden opportunity.”

— Carleen MacKay, American Society on Ageing Conference 2011

Globalisation is a borderless game. Minimising cost and maximising returns (MCMR) is the goal, especially for transnational companies, who are concerned little by which governments are in charge so long as it meets their objectives. Of course, this is more than just money. It is also about power and control.

Faith is taking the first step even when you do not see the whole staircase.

— Martin Luther King

This is the real secret: thinking and executing your way to massive profits. What can you do as “the little guy”? Learn to think like a transnational company. Study what they do. Then do what they do.

When you have developed your own MCMR business model, you do not have to worry about getting a job anymore.

The market is flush with cash from venture funds, angels, and government grants, looking for the next big idea that can impact massive populations. For inspiration, look no further than Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. As a Guide, position your child where the capital flows, so that you could maximise the returns on his or her talent.

You may ask: how do you do it when you do not have the resources of a transnational company? The simple answer: look for those who have “been there, done that”. The “tuition fee” will not be cheap, but compared to academic business courses, it is great value for money. In such courses, the goal is to pass examinations; theories and grades are key. In courses run by seasoned practitioners, your own result is key. Every time you say, “It cannot be done,” someone else is busy doing it. Of course not all such courses are created equal. Some are 100% junk. Please do your due diligence before you part with your hard-earned money. When unsure, let it go. A dollar in hand is always worth more than the many promised in the advertisements.

But imagine this: how much is it worth to you if you did not have to worry about having a job for the rest of your life? How much is it worth to you if you knew how to turn your know-how into cash flow at will? That is the key difference between price and value.

However, remember *caveat emptor* (let the buyer beware). While there is no free lunch, there is a fair price for every lunch. Some lunches are just too overpriced. Less greed and more due diligence will ensure you get the better deals most of the time. Like “scammers”, there are “suckers” being born every minute. If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Walk away if you are doubtful. Never believe that opportunity only knocks once. It knocks all the time. You only have to learn to turn on your antenna for business acumen and opportunity.

Now that you know this, do something with your new knowledge *fast*. Fortune favours the bold!

The fourth Age of humanity (Shift Age) is our backdrop. Foreign talent is here to stay, and they will compete with you to be the better, faster, and cheaper alternative.

There is no escape. This is what happens with globalisation. The same scenario is playing out in almost all the developed countries. In their

provocative book, *The Global Auction*, Phillip Brown, Hugh Lauder, and David Ashton wrote, "The competition of jobs has shifted from one largely restricted within clearly defined national boundaries to a global auction open to competition from across borders."

According to the authors, there are four trends driving this "global auction" (Table 1-2). Let's zoom in on the four trends affecting the globalised employment market.

Trend 1: Education Explosion

"In 2009, over 179 million students had access to the same technological, business and scientific developments previously reserved for those studying in western universities. This global supply of educated labour continues to expand. While some European countries are cutting university numbers, China has introduced a new talent initiative that will see an additional 95 million university graduates enter the global job market in this decade."

According to the Statistics Singapore Newsletter published in March 2012, there were 634,098 university graduates in 2010, compared to only 266,631 in 2000. This is a 238% increase in a decade, when, previously, only 10% of Singapore residents were university graduates. In 2014, the number rose to 30%, a 300% increase in only 14 years!

Assuming 50,000 students per cohort, there would be about 15,000 graduates today (30%) and 20,000 graduates (40%) in 2020. Hence, for every local graduate, there would be 475 Chinese graduates competing. (This makes 9.5 million Chinese graduates compared to 20,000 Singaporean graduates, if you want to do the math.) All of them strive to be better, faster, and cheaper.

Who will win the game? Obviously, the hungrier ones. So when your youth can have everything they ask for, will they be hungry enough?

Trend 2: Quality Cost Revolution

"The Quality Cost Revolution has resulted in a rapid increase in productivity levels and quality standards, and at lower costs than in the West, following the application of "best practice" in emerging economies. The new competition is no longer based on quality or cost but quality and cost, offering companies more strategic choices as skills are less of a barrier to moving operations to low-cost locations. The Quality Cost Revolution has opened the door for Chinese and Indian companies to compete higher up the value chain for goods and services, by using their cost advantage to undercut high cost competitors. The bad news to the high cost competitors is that they are not only cheaper, but also sometimes better!"

How do we compete when foreign labour is already better and cheaper? By becoming better *differently*. Maximise your personal strengths and overwhelm the weaknesses of your international competitors, which include fragmented governance, lack of infrastructure, and an uneven support ecosystem. Stop doing just one job. Instead, be a total ecosystem in your domain to the organisation's needs.

Trend 3: Digital Taylorism

"Companies and cash strapped public sector organisations are attempting to reduce costs and increase control through a process of knowledge capture (what Brown and Lauder called) 'Digital Taylorism'. The same processes that enabled cars, computers and televisions to be broken down into their component parts, manufactured by companies around the world and then configured according to customer specifications, are being applied to impersonal jobs in the service sector—jobs that do not depend on face time with a customer. New technologies have increased the potential to translate knowledge work into working knowledge, leading to standardisation of an increasing proportion of technical, managerial and professional jobs. According to Suresh Gupta from Capco Consulting, if these trends continue, tomorrow's banks would look and behave no differently to a factory."

According to leading global management consulting firm, AT Kearney, banks in the past started out like typical manufacturing plants, such as Siemens, with vertical integration. This means the company owns their supply chain.

Now, they act like Apple with in-house design and marketing, but outsourced operations. Though banks come from different starting points, almost all are arriving at the same endpoint: a multi-vendor solution. Once PME (professionals, managers, and executives) jobs are codified, these can be outsourced easily. Google “banks are like factory” and you will be amazed how similar they have become. You may not even need banks to do your banking in the near future!

What can you do? Avoid the ACO (easily automated, codified or outsourced) jobs and know the market place better than the competition and play to your strengths. With more and more back office work being outsourced and offshored, it is time to activate your Plan B if you are in affected industries.

Trend 4: The War for Talent

The global war for talent may be a cliché but it is true. Global companies gravitate towards global elite universities because they presumably attract the best and brightest. In today’s world, brainpower remains the only sustainable competitive. These crème de la crème of students are treated like superstars. But the prospect of many graduates becoming part of a high-skill, low-wage workforce is real. Think hard about how you can become a real talent.

What can you do if you are not the best of the best? Choose a different game to play. Choose a game that you can win at. This means a game that is aligned with a strong ecosystem and who you are, what you enjoy most, and do best. In this new world, you cannot survive on DIY (Do It Yourself) and OMO (One Man Operation). You need to develop your own career ecosystem. For example, is foreign talent replacing you at work? Instead of worrying and complaining, do something about it. Utilise your strengths and your ecosystem, and beat them at their game. Make sure you teach your youth to do the same because competition is only going to get tougher in the future.

Trend	Implication
Education Explosion	Mass produced graduates looking for work
Quality Cost Revolution	High quality low cost employees
Digital Taylorism	Codified knowledge work (smart software)
War for Talent	Best students in best schools

Table 1-2. Trends driving global auction and their implications

BOTTOM LINE

- The workplace is globalised and enabled by technology.
- To survive, companies must do more with less.
- Forget job security, think profit partnerships.
- Forget jobs; think paid work (e.g., project, contract, anything but a permanent job).
- To stay employable, master a market relevant domain.
- To make age irrelevant, master technology.
- To be in demand, be visible.
- To prosper in the new game, learn the rules and work them!

You are smack in the middle of the Shift Age. Technology and globalisation will drive the world but for every job that technology destroys, it creates new jobs. According to the McKinsey Global Institute Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) report, the Internet creates 2.6 jobs for every job it destroys. But these are new jobs that need new skillsets and mind sets, which would be painful for those who cannot or do not want to adapt and relearn.

To survive and thrive in a globalised world, careers have to be globalised too. The key question to ask then is: How big is your youth's playground? Is it the size of the job, the organisation, the industry, the country, the region or the World?

Make sure you help your youth stay connected to the world and stay ahead of the curve slightly, by keeping their eyes and ears to the ground through relevant news feeds.

To play on a bigger stage, make sure your youth have what it takes. If not, they will not stand a chance! Once they have decided on a path, go all out and make it happen. Your youth will succeed if they want it bad enough. All they need is one job to showcase their talent.

Your response can help determine how your youth would fare in the next age. Play to your youth's strengths and help them dominate their niche. Be their best self. When they do that well, there is little fear of competition.

What does the world of work tomorrow look like?

VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) is often used to describe the new world. It is the result of accelerated speed and magnitude of change driven by technological advances and global competition.

Some of the famous brands that have fallen include Blackberry, Kodak, and Motorola. Nokia is another classic example. They lost the smartphone battle despite dominating half of the global market share in 2007. When Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo, former CEO of Nokia, was asked to describe what it was like to face the competitive market of the mobile telecommunications industry during his tenure from 2006 to 2010, he said this:

"Nowhere in business history has a competitive environment changed so much as it did with the converging of several industries—to the point that no one knows what to call the industry anymore. Mobile telephony converged with the mobile computer, the internet industry, the media industry and the applications industry—to mention a few...and today they're all rolled into one."

- Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo, former CEO of Nokia

What skills do you think an average job seeker will need in the near future? Take a look at the predictions in the Institute for the Future (IFTF) Future Work Skills 2020 Report.

The Six Drivers of Change

1. **Extreme Longevity.** Lifespans change the nature of careers and learning. Age 100 will be the new normal and will work longer. When you are aged 75-84, you will be considered the young old. Retiring at 65 may be a little premature!
2. **The Rise of Smart Machines and Systems.** Workplace automation nudges human workers out of repetitive tasks.
3. **Computational World.** Massive increases in sensors and processing power make the world a programmable system, with robotics and analytics becoming the norm as data doubles annually.
4. **New Media Ecology.** New communication tools require new media literacy beyond text.
5. **Super-structured Organisations.** Social technologies drive new forms of production and value creation, with self-directed virtual teams (not necessary organisations) collaborating around the world.
6. **Globally Connected World.** Increased global interconnectivity puts diversity and adaptability at the centre of organisational operations. Forget geographical borders; start thinking connected global and diverse communities.

The IFTF report analyses key drivers that are predicted to reshape the work landscape over the next few years. It aims to look at what skills, proficiencies, and abilities, rather than jobs, will be required across different work settings. Global connectivity, smart machines, and new media are just some of the drivers reshaping how you think about work, what constitutes work, and the skills you will need to be productive contributors in the future.

With the rise of smart machines and systems, it is a matter of time before technology and robots take over many of the jobs today. According to Michael Belfiore, a journalist reporting on the innovations shaping

our world and author of *The Department of Mad Scientists*, advances in robotics and artificial intelligence are bringing robots into more and more workplaces. He shares some of these in his popular blog:

- Autonomous vehicles in development by just about every major automaker threaten the jobs of truckers and cabbies.
- The Baxter robot from Rethink Robotics designed to work side by side with human factory supervisors, learning new tasks on the go—something only human workers could do previously.
- Robotic surgeons such as those made by Intuitive Surgical and the open-source Raven project currently require human surgeons in the loop, but inroads have already been made into giving these machines autonomy.
- Unmanned aerial vehicles (also known as drones) are getting set for integration into the US national airspace next year, potentially replacing many human pilots.
- The Quill robotic journalist digests facts from raw data, and spits out fully formed sports and business stories, putting the job of journalists at risk.
- Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook) and Elon Musk (Tesla) are backing “a computer that thinks like a person except it doesn’t need to eat or sleep”.
- Momentum Machines, a San Francisco-based company, boasts that its slicing, grinding, frying robot will “democratise access to high-quality food, making it available to the masses”. Their alpha machine frees up all of the hamburger line cooks in a restaurant. It does everything employees can do, except better.

Imagine a day in the near future when you can have a simple day surgery done by a robot, after which you hop into a cab without a driver, and go to your favourite fast food joint, select and buy a hamburger of your choice without any human waiter. Whether you are a surgeon, a driver, a factory supervisor, a pilot, a journalist or a hamburger joint cook, there is no escaping the “robotisation” of jobs.

What can you do? Learn to work with technology and robots, which is what “cobotisation” (or collaborative robots) is all about. As seen in the

Baxter example, the integrated workforce is the new model for flexible production – with robots working side by side, doing what each does best. It's a proven strategy to maximise resources, gain efficiencies, and provide a competitive advantage for businesses. It is the future of manufacturing and is up and running today. What do all these mean to you and your youth?

The future has indeed already arrived. The ones who get in early would reap the benefits when the rest of the crowd arrives and the market stabilises. The challenge is to choose the right area. One clue is your youth's strengths and interests. Also, understand the thinking and skills that drive successful organisations, so that your youth can stay slightly ahead of the curve. Of course, your youth should master some of the work skills of the future (Table 1-3) to be employable.

Future Work Skills	Drivers of Change
1 Sense-Making. As machine automation takes hold, the ability to make intelligent interpretations and provide true insight will be in demand.	Smart Machines and Systems
2 Social Intelligence. To be able to connect with others in a deep and direct way, to sense and stimulate reactions and desired interactions.	Smart Machines and Systems and a Globally Connected World
3 Novel and Adaptive Thinking. The ability to problem solve, think outside the box, and come up with tailored solutions beyond rote or rules. You will be effectively competing with smart machines.	Smart Machines and Systems and a Globally Connected World
4 Cross-Cultural Competency. In a globally connected world, the ability to operate in different cultural settings will help candidates stand out.	Super-Structured Organisations and a Globally Connected World

5	Computational Thinking. Good analytical skills will help to translate vast amounts of data into abstract concepts and will come in handy for data-based reasoning.	New Media Ecology and Computational World
6	New Media Literacy. Everyday life will be a buzz with varying new media types and platforms. The ability to make connections and engage audiences across vast, differing networks will be paramount.	Extreme Longevity, New Media Ecology, and Super Structured Organisations
7	Transdisciplinary. The need to understand multifaceted problems and relay them to the wider community to solve will mean complex problems require the facilitation of large scale collaboration.	Extreme Longevity and a Globally Connected World
8	Design Mind-set. As future workspaces and environments become individually tailored, there will be a need to represent and develop tasks and work processes for desired personable outcomes.	Super-Structured Organisations and a Globally Connected World
9	Cognitive Load Management. With a world rich in information, being able to use data tools and techniques to disseminate and filter for importance will help gain true insight.	Super-Structured Organisations, a Globally Connected World and New Media Ecology
10	Virtual Collaboration. The need to communicate with and lead remote teams will create a new management style, not necessarily difficult to learn, however team work may need to be relearnt here.	Super-Structured Organisations and a Globally Connected World

Table 1-3. Top 10 future work skills and their drivers of change

How do I maximise the conveyor belt education system?

“Even when you are in secondary school, it is good to have a vague idea of what your aptitudes are, and what you might be interested in. Not choosing a course just because you qualified based on your A Level score or GPA (grade point average), but because it appeals to you, you feel you will be interested enough in the field to keep learning, to keep progressing and applying yourself with passion.”

– Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam at the opening of the Lifelong Learning Institute, 17 September 2014

Now that you have a sneak preview of the future of work, you must be excited to share what you know with your youth, and to guide them in their career exploration.

Your youth counters, “But my job in school is to study, not worry about my career.”

Many of their peers will say the same thing. 20 years from now, they will lead similar lives holding a J.O.B. (Just Over Broke), in which they start spending after every payday. Just before they go broke, it is payday again. Repeat monthly. For a well-used analogy, this is the proverbial hamster running on the wheel, full of sound and fury but when all is said and done, still at the same spot.

While our youths are supposed to study fulltime, in reality, many are daydreaming fulltime because they find school too boring or slow for them. They are unable to connect what they study with what they could be doing in the future.

According to bestselling author Thomas J. Stanley, most millionaire-next-door types are contrarians. They think and act differently. They are savers and investors in a population of hyper consumers. They chose industries and businesses with little competition and the highest chance of success. Most have high creative intelligence.

If you aspire to be a contrarian, start early. The odds will swing in your favour to get you far ahead of the crowd. Your career is your personal quest, and any quest needs a map.



The MOE website actually has such a “quest map”. It is called the “Singapore Education Journey”. At last count, there are 369 schools in the system: 185 primary schools, 154 secondary schools, 14 Junior Colleges and Central Institutes, and 16 mixed-level schools.

You can see the Singapore Education Journey at:
www.moe.gov.sg/education/landscape

There are five stages in this landscape: Pre-School and Kindergarten, Primary, Secondary, Post-Secondary, and University (Table 1-4). Your goal is to complete all five stages to the best of your ability.

If you are reading this book, you are likely becoming aware of your million-dollar mission and your youth is likely already at Stage 3. Motivate them to work hard, stay the course and clear Stage 5, so that they can rock the world! As you help build their foundation, their powers will increase with every completed stage. They will then see further and have more options.

Stage	Level	Age	Qualifications	Next stage
1	Pre-School/ Kindergarten	4-6	–	Primary
2	Primary	7-12	PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination)	Secondary
3	Secondary	13-17	N /O Levels	Post-Secondary/ Work

4	Post-Secondary	17-19	National ITE Certificate (NITEC) and above, A Levels (or high school diploma), International Baccalaureate (IB), Polytechnic diploma	Diploma/University/Work
5	University	20-24+	Bachelor's degree	Work/Post-graduate/Continuing Education and Training

Table 1-4. The five stages of the conveyor belt education system

However, note three caveats to this system:

1. The full course is a plan for smart disciplined children with strong family support. They are expected to clear every stage and finish the journey with a degree.

You need to be smart because our system is challenging and rigorous, also a multi-award winning education system worldwide. You need to be disciplined because the exit examinations at each stage are tough. If you are not disciplined enough to put in the hours and focus, you will not pass. For instance, if you trade your study hours to train for your CCA instead, it will be hard to survive. Your medals, whatever their colours, will not help you pass your terminal examinations.

In such a setting, strong family support becomes critical. Youths are not equipped to take such extreme artificial stress especially at such a tender age. This is where the haves have an advantage over the have-nots, as enrichment, laboratory, and prep classes for examinations cost lots of money, in addition to the strong support system of domestic help, "chauffeur services" and positive role models. This reality is harsh but real.

2. The official conveyor belt stops around age 24, after which, YAOYO (you are on your own). Agencies such as the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) have the ILP (Individual Learning Portfolio) and CET (Continuing Education and Training) to help you along after you start work. However, unless you are a lifelong learner by choice, it is tough to navigate the new world of work on your own.

Most Singaporeans were never taught to enjoy learning when they were young. The primary goal has typically been to pass examinations in “pressure cooker style learning” all the way. Most of us gladly “gave up” learning because the memories were too unpleasant.

In 2012, 27% of each cohort graduated with public university degrees. By 2020, the number is projected to be 40%, including government subsidised private universities, such as the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM). This excludes the graduates with non-subsidised private degrees, which could add another 10% to the number. In short, at least 50% of each cohort would be graduates in 2020.

Do the math. Half in your youth’s cohort will be graduates. When everyone has a degree, it is no longer a competitive advantage. Your youth will have to compete on something else. Finding their competitive advantage becomes their quest.

3. The timeline and age limit for the journey is fixed. If you do not graduate from each stage at the planned exit age, you are off the “straight jacket conveyor belt” system. It is back to YAOYO again. You may have graduated with results that cannot get you into your preferred course. You may have not been able to further your studies at that time due to personal reasons. What do you do? Check out the options later in the book.

When helping your youth decide on their educational pathway, consider these:

1. Interests

Whether it be sports, performing arts, music, technology or a specific subject matter, find out if the school offers activities or programmes that can help them develop these interests. Consider:

- Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs)
- Special programmes that the schools runs (e.g., Language Programmes, Art and Music Programmes)
- School's Niche Areas

2. Institution Environment

Find an institution with an environment that will both motivate and provide opportunities to broaden their horizons. Consider:

- Ethos of the institution
- Culture of the institution
- Resources to cater for students with special needs (physical and sensory)

3. Career Aspirations and Abilities

Different occupations require different sets of skills that can be acquired through various educational pathways. Explore the options to help them prepare for that career. Consider:

- Your youth's learning preferences
- The strengths and foci of different schools and types of institutions
- Progression opportunities to be obtained along the way



Go along with your youth in educational planning for a parent-child bonding. To get yourself ready, check out these websites, which help you understand the local education landscape and offer career FAQs:

www.moe.gov.sg/education, www.ecareers.sg

To better understand the education landscape, let's look at Alexis, Yvonne, Eileen, Vanessa, Mark, Mohamed, and Bill. These are real life cases of seven youths who turn 21 in 2015 but names have been changed.

Alexis

Alexis is from a neighbourhood primary school. An active triathlete, she represented her school in swimming and athletics. She also enjoys enrichment classes from music and dance to art and calligraphy. She was a diligent student who was often in the top 25% of her class and even went to Japan for a student exchange programme in Primary 5. Given her track record, she had high hopes. Unfortunately, she did not do well in her PSLE.

She entered the express stream in a neighbourhood secondary school. She continued her active lifestyle and represented her school in netball, athletics, and soccer. She even flew to Australia for a netball training camp! Her studies suffered because she was too busy with her CCA and other distractions. In Secondary 4, she scored over 20 points in the school preliminary examinations, which put Junior Colleges (JC) and the in-demand polytechnic courses out of reach for her. Such courses required at least low 10s in the L1R5. Her mediocre result was a jolt to her. She knew it was "make or break" for the O Levels.

With barely one month left before the final O examinations, she studied like there was no tomorrow. For her O Levels, she scored 8 points, or 6 points after deducting CCA credit. Now she has many choices in both Junior College and the polytechnics. She chose the polytechnic path, joining the course with the lowest cut-off point of 7, International Business in Ngee Ann Polytechnic. She finally realised her potential after 10 years of under-performing at crucial examinations in primary and secondary school. Her polytechnic

path was enjoyable. It took her around the region to countries such as Vietnam, Laos, and wrapped up with a five-month internship in Shanghai, China in her final year, which taught her to be independent, resourceful and resilient.

The future looks bright as she ponders her next move after her polytechnic studies and she has learnt her lesson well from her younger distracted days. Good results bring many options; poor results bring few options. Alexis had the capacity and the drive, but not the focus. She was fortunate to wake up in time to do well enough to get back on track, after 10 years of under-performance. If all goes well, she will most likely also be a high-performing PME. However, given her international exposure, she may also take the path less travelled and be an entrepreneur when she has gained enough experience. Alexis is now a first year business undergraduate in a leading local university in town.

Yvonne

Yvonne is a quiet girl from a popular primary school. A studious girl whose CCA was the girls' brigade, she did well enough in her PSLE to get into another popular girls' school. However, she was disappointed, as she had expected better results. She did well in her school preliminaries and the O Levels. She scored 6 points. After CCA and higher language deductions, her score was as low as 3 points! She chose the JC (Junior College) route, going to National JC, because she said her mom "would kill her" if she went to a polytechnic. She kept up her consistent academic performance, doing well enough in her A Levels to qualify for university, though not for the course she wanted. She is now in a leading local university in the west, doing a business related course that was never on her radar in JC. **Lesson learnt: Setting high goals are great but when push comes to shove, be flexible.** There are many paths to success. Yvonne is the archetypal hardworking and driven student with the

requisite capacity. Her academic career was relatively smooth from primary school all the way to university. If all goes well, she will be a high-performing PME in an organisation after graduation.

Eileen

Like Alexis, Eileen is an active girl. She went to the same primary school as her older sisters. She did not do as well as she expected in the PSLE and went to a neighbourhood secondary school. The same thing happened at O Levels but she managed to get into a business course at Nanyang Polytechnic. She had a blast in there and was active in many CCAs. She even went to Paris, France for an attachment in her final year. **Lesson learnt: There is more to life than just academic success.**

Eileen may not have the academic capacity but she has the drive and focus for non-academic stuff, like CCAs. She was the vice president of her CCA in polytechnic and that has definitely boosted her confidence in running events. She may not end up as a PME initially but with the right guidance and opportunities, she could become an entrepreneur who hires PMEs! Eileen is now a first year business undergraduate in a government supported private university in the west.

Vanessa

Vanessa is another active girl who is not academically inclined. She went to a popular primary school but did not do well in her PSLE. She managed to get into a popular secondary school, albeit in its Normal stream. Distracted by family circumstances and keeping undesirable company, she did not do well in school and failed her N Levels. Officially, she is off the “conveyor belt of education” as she could not qualify for the next phase of JC, polytechnic or the Institute of Technical Education (ITE). Her future is now in her own hands. Last heard, she was exploring a psychology course because

she wanted to help others. **Lesson learnt: Beware the company you keep, because birds of a feather flock together.**

Vanessa is an unfortunate, misguided case of environment and circumstance. Her academic capacity may be limited but she also lacks drive and focus. This combination of distraction and bad company is lethal, and landed her in a most precarious position. Of course, she can bounce back but it will take a village. The biggest challenge is herself. Is she able to overcome the baggage of a “cannot make it” label at such a tender age? Will she be able to prove to herself that she has what it takes? It will be a tough road but when she does, she will be inducted into the hall of fame! The good news is Vanessa has finally left the school of hard knocks. She realised her passion lies in helping others. She now aspires to be a psychologist and is studying for a diploma in psychology in a Private Education Institute. Her future certainly looks bright.

Mark

Mark was an active boy from a neighbourhood Primary School who did not do too well in his PSLE. He entered the Normal (Technical) stream in Secondary School, supposedly for those more hands-on instead of academically inclined. It may well be a self-fulfilling prophecy as he went to ITE after his N Levels. However, he discovered his passion for study in ITE and he did well enough to qualify for polytechnic studies, which is an amazing turn around for what had been an unfocused young man. He would be serving his National Service (NS) and then continuing with his polytechnic studies. His future looks good.

Mohamed

Mohamed is a smart and diligent guy who played hard and studied hard. He came through both his primary and secondary studies in Bukit Timah and studied Chemical Engineering in Ngee Ann

Polytechnic. He was an active camp leader in the polytechnic and is now serving his NS. He already has a place reserved for him in the Engineering Faculty in a renowned local university in the west and would be embarking on his university studies.

Bill

Bill is a quiet guy in school who had joined the Boy Scouts. Like Alexis, his PSLE result was satisfactory and he got into an express class in a neighbourhood secondary school in the town area. Again as with Alexis, he scored over 20 points in his school's preliminary examinations. The unfortunate part was that his O Levels result was not much better. Between polytechnic and JC, he chose the latter path because he wasn't sure what he wanted to do. (Few at 17 years old know what they want to do in life. Many at 27, or even 37, still do not know!) He got into a JC in the north. However, he wasn't academically inclined and did not enjoy himself. His A Levels results were not fantastic and he enlisted for National Service. After completing his NS, he will face a challenging task of deciding what next in a harsh result-driven society. **Lesson learnt: Every decision has consequences!**

When in doubt, always ask, not just your peers but also those who've "been there, done that". Bill had the capacity, but neither the drive nor the focus. Character is destiny. His lack of guidance led him to where he is today. He would be completing his national service soon and hopefully, NS has made him a smarter guy, so that he will know how to seek help when in doubt. [Update: Bill will most likely join a private university after his NS.]

If you look at the stories of these youths, they all started at the same point on the conveyor belt: Primary School. As they progressed through different stages of the system, their true colours started to show, like tea in hot water!

Which path would you like your youth to take? Which path would they take? Your role is to guide them, and to help them understand that their past is not their future. Help them understand the consequences of their choices and hopefully, they will make an informed choice! Whatever their decision, it is their choice. That is how they learn to take responsibility for their life.

The system covers a comprehensive curriculum for students but for progression, it is primarily based on **examination results** (Table 1-5). If your youth is not examination smart, they will not do well in the system. How your youth did in their PSLE laid the foundation for them in Secondary School. How they perform today will lay their foundation for tomorrow. Their O Levels results will determine the choices they have. Good results invite many options while poor results invite few options.

Name	Level 3 (Secondary)	Level 4 (Post-Secondary/ Work)	Level 5 (University/ Work)
1 Alexis	Passed O Levels	Polytechnic Diploma	University Year 1
2 Yvonne	Passed O Levels	Passed A Levels	University Year 2
3 Eileen	Passed O Levels	Polytechnic Diploma	Private University Year 1
4 Vanessa	Did not pass N Levels	Work	Private education path
5 Mark	Passed N Levels	ITE	Polytechnic after NS
6 Mohamed	Passed O Levels	Polytechnic Diploma	University after NS
7 Bill	Passed O Levels	Passed A Levels	Private University after NS

Table 1-5. Summary of the seven youths' academic journeys in the system

How did the seven youths decide on their education and career choices? Candidly speaking, it was their results instead that had largely determined their paths. Top performers usually cruise on a well-trodden path till they complete Level 5, because they have many choices. However, such choices based on academic results may not be the best fit for them.

For academically-challenged youths, their results limit their choices. They are labelled (unfairly) as low achievers. They may become resigned, giving up the fight or even turning “anti-system”. It takes a strong support ecosystem to keep them on a productive track.

The biggest challenge is the middle majority. They meet the minimum standards but may not get into their courses of choice. Without appropriate guidance, the herd instinct takes over. This group fuels the demand for degrees, because that is the only career model they know. With little awareness of alternatives, we tend to stick to what we think we know best. Unfortunately, yesterday’s solutions may not work for tomorrow’s problems.

In essence, progress is smooth when you get good results at terminal points of each stage. This is the basic rule of life, whether in school or at work. This is also why the supplementary education and private tuition industry is booming.

It is also a testament to the conveyor belt system, as 85% of the cohort progress in the system. Even when Vanessa left it prematurely, she was able to find her way outside the conveyor belt, which is proof that the larger eco-system also works. But we can always improve the system to allow for greater flexibility without compromising standards, by focusing on the strengths of our youths, not just their academic results.

BOTTOM LINE

Academic results should not be the sole criteria for education and career choices. It should also include other criteria such as their self-discovery summary, aspirations, and support ecosystem.

Where there is a will, there is a way. For more views on the system, check out the various forums online by Googling keywords such as “Singapore education system, pros and cons”.

Support your youth to complete all five stages of the conveyor belt. If they cannot or do not wish to go all the way, the minimum standard is to secure a good **Stage 4** qualification by age 20: a polytechnic diploma (or equivalent) with a strong Grade Point Average (GPA). It is not the paper chase per se but the training of the mind in higher education. In a world of global auction and increased complexity, you cannot compete if your mind has not been rigorously stretched.

The minimum GPA to get into a popular course in a local university is 3.7. That gives you an indication of the competition. Besides being proof of academic excellence, a strong GPA also demonstrates your youth’s qualities like focus, drive, and discipline. The best part is it allows them better quality options, whether they choose to work or pursue further studies.

What if your youth cannot make it to Stage 4? What if their results are less than stellar? They are off the conveyor belt and are on their own.

The good news? Consulting an experienced and Nationally Certified Career Development Facilitator (CDF) will help your youth strategise and get back on track to an exciting future based on their strengths. However, your youth must be motivated to strive for a bright future. There is little anyone can do without that motivation.

Another important lesson is **to catch the tide so that you can ride the wave**. As articulated by William Shakespeare, timing is a critical consideration in life.

*“There is a tide in the affairs of men.
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.”*

— Julius Caesar Act 4, scene 3, 218–224

In the good old days, the rule of thumb was to study smart hard in your “First Age” (0-25 years) and work smart hard in your Second (26-50), so that you will have little worries in the Third (51-75), and Fourth Age (76-100).

In today’s world, your only security is to stay hungry and keep learning throughout all the quarters, in order to stay relevant, useful, and engaged with society. Without engagement, your personal system deteriorates. Before long, you will be returned to your “manufacturer”.

But as life goes, most youths are not wired to understand the harsh realities of life. Many of them think they are “freehold properties” and cruised through the First Age of their lives with little worry. The consequence? It is an uphill climb in the Second Age. Sadly, many will be doomed to a life of quiet desperation when they cannot recover.

Carpe diem!

How does the education system career guide your youth?

“Our education system must nurture Singapore citizens of good character, so that everyone has the moral resolve to withstand an uncertain future, and a strong sense of responsibility to contribute to the success of Singapore and the well-being of fellow Singaporeans.”

— Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Education

Your youth faces a future that will be different from you and their teachers experienced. New career opportunities are created rapidly with technological advances and globalisation. Many jobs today did not exist 10 years ago. Many more will be created tomorrow.

Through the **Education and Career Guidance (ECG)** process in school, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has done a lot of good work to help your youth. Leverage on their good work and build from there.



Check out the many useful resources on the MOE website (www.moe.gov.sg), including white papers and videos. At the time of writing, they are still largely under the radar and thus under-utilised. Use them before it becomes common knowledge.

The ECG process has different emphasis at different levels (Table 1-6). While all student levels require awareness, exploration, and planning, they have different emphases to meet their varying developmental needs.

Level	Emphasis	Goal
1 Primary	Awareness	To introduce students to the wide array of occupations, including new jobs created in the ever-changing world of work. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of interests, abilities, and career aspirations • Relation of self to others and work • Initial preferences in occupational roles assumed in play
2 Secondary	Career Exploration	To deepen students' understanding of self and relate schooling to the different education and career pathways. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring the world of work • Awareness of relevant courses of study • Awareness of skills, interests, and values
3 Upper/Post-Secondary	Career Planning	To enable students to synthesise information gathered from relevant sources to make sound educational and career decisions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of career self-concept • Developing skills in gathering information • Development of decision-making skills

Source: Adapted from the MOE Website on Education and Career Guidance.

Table 1-6. Different Emphases at Varying Education Levels

The ECG process is about equipping students with the necessary knowledge, skills, and values to make decisions at each key education stage from school to further education or to the world of work. It is about engaging, inspiring, and challenging our children to develop aspirations and plan proactively for their future. Hope and positive thinking could motivate them to learn continuously and work for a better life.

In summary, the ECG process has four themes: self-awareness and personal management, awareness of relational support and decision influencers, exploring the education landscape and planning pathways, and exploring occupational clusters. Through these themes, they will help your youth address the three ECG process questions:

1. Who am I? (Identity)
2. Where do I want to go? (Future education/career)
3. How do I get there? (Plan/support)

In strategising how to help your youth, you may wish to do a quick assessment of where your youth is, in terms of the competencies and outcomes they are supposed to achieve after completing school (Table 1-7).

Competency/outcome	Did your youth achieve the outcome?
1 Self-awareness, e.g., self-perception and self-efficacy	
2 Self-management, e.g., self-motivation and discipline	
3 Social awareness, e.g., appreciating diversity and respect for others	
4 Relationship management, e.g., seeking and providing help, and working cooperatively	
5 Responsible decision making, e.g., problem solving and making decisions that are moral/ethical	
6 Civic literacy, global awareness, and cross cultural skills	
7 Critical and inventive thinking	
8 Information and communication skills	

9	A self-directed learner
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10	An active contributor
----	-----------------------

11	A concerned citizen
----	---------------------

12	A confident person
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Source: moe.gov.sg/education/files/desired-outcomes-of-education.pdf

Table 1-7. Competencies/Outcomes Assessment

Exploring and facilitating career experiences

Introduce a variety of occupations to your youth and help them discover more about the different occupations, and the corresponding educational pathways that lead to these occupations. Provide opportunities and resources that can support their aspirations and broaden their horizons. These could include workplace visits, volunteer work, resources, books, and enrichment programmes.

Discuss your youth's education and career aspirations with their teachers. Teachers are in a good position to offer perspectives on your youth's strengths and passion and to assist the educational planning process. In the following box, you will find some constructive questions that you can use to engage your youth's teacher.

- 1 What academic standards do you use, and what do I need to know about them?
- 2 How will you respond if or when my youth struggles in class?
- 3 What are the most important and complex (content-related) ideas my youth needs to understand by the end of the year?
- 4 Do you focus on strengths or weaknesses?
- 5 How are creativity and innovative thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
- 6 How is critical thinking used on a daily basis in your classroom?
- 7 How are assessments designed to promote learning rather than simple measurement?
- 8 What can I do to support literacy in my home?
- 9 What kinds of questions do you suggest that I ask my youth on a daily basis about your class?
- 10 How exactly is learning personalised in your classroom? In the school?
- 11 How do you measure academic progress?
- 12 What are the most common instructional or literacy strategies you will use this year?
- 13 What learning models do you use (e.g., project-based learning, mobile learning, game-based learning), and what do you see as the primary benefits of that approach?
- 14 What are the best school or district resources for students and/or families that no one uses?
- 15 Is there technology you'd recommend that can help support my youth in self-directed learning?
- 16 What are the most common barriers you see to academic progress in your classroom?
- 17 How is education changing?
- 18 How do you see the role of the teacher in the learning process?
- 19 What am I not asking but should be?

Source: www.edutopia.org

A valuable resource to kick start your journey is the **MOE ECG web-based portal**, currently known as **www.ecareers.sg**. Launched in 2009, it caters to teachers and students from Primary 5 to Junior College. You can navigate the portal together with your youth. This experience will provide you and your child with a great opportunity for gaining a better understanding of his/her interests, abilities, future aspirations, and an appreciation of both the educational and occupational landscapes. Avoid relying only on your own past experience or knowledge as education policies may have changed and new pathways may have been created. It is important to stay updated with the current changes in the landscape.

Why use ecareers.sg?

Designed to facilitate education and career development among local students, ecareers.sg is an award winning web-portal that is comprehensive, user friendly, and best of all, accessible 24/7. It is based on the ECG Developmental Model and contains features that facilitate identity development while bringing students through the processes of awareness, exploration, and planning. Access is free to students in Primary 5 and 6, at Secondary and Pre-University levels, and for an additional six months after they have graduated from the MOE Education System.

The key features of the portal include career assessment tools that allow students to discover more about their career profile. It also has a database of information on various occupations and education institutions (local and overseas), which provide students with accurate information to make more informed education and career choices. The ecareers.sg web portal offers several career assessments. After taking one of these assessments, they receive a list of occupations that might interest them. They can then investigate the general description, salary, and education expected for each occupation.

Students can use the ecareers.sg site to investigate more than 600 occupations. They can also explore post-secondary educational institutions and courses. Furthermore, they can use the “Compare” feature to examine similarities and differences between specific occupations, post-secondary

educational institutions or programmes/courses. They can learn about job seeking skills and save information about themselves in their ePortfolios.



The following information about your child is available from ecareers.sg and you could use them as career conversation starters:

- Their Personal Information (all subcategories)
- Their Skills (all subcategories)
- Their Values
- Their Interests
- Their Achievements (only the subcategories in “Awards and Prizes” and “Recognitions”)
- Their Activities (all subcategories)
- Their Favourites (only the subcategory in “Occupations”)

To find out more about your youth’s portfolio, simply ask your youth to log in to www.ecareers.sg using their student ID. If your youth is in the ITE, Polytechnic or University, ask them to check out the Career Services Office ASAP so that they can discover their strengths and secure their future. Make sure your youth go prepared so that the Career Coach can address their concerns directly. Remember GIGO (Garbage In Garbage Out). Of course, always make sure they consult an internationally certified and caring Career Coach. Without formal career training and certification, such conversations are merely chitchat with minimal impact.

How can I enhance career awareness with three big questions?

The most effective way to unlock your youth’s million-dollar value is to help them take ownership by addressing three big questions:

1. Who am I?
2. Where do I want to go?
3. How do I get there?

Question 1 is about self-discovery.

“Know thyself” was written on the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. Self-knowledge is all-encompassing as what is learnt on one scale of experience can be applied to all scales. It enables them to discover their identity. It is the highest form of knowledge, surpassing all other knowledge, and it is also one of the most difficult things to do.

“He who knows others is wise; he who knows himself is enlightened.”

— Lao Tzu

Question 2 is about the destination.

Out of self-knowledge usually comes self-actualisation, which is the quest to become the best you can be by deciding what you want from life and then doing what is necessary to get it. Unless your youth knows where they want to go or what they want to be, they would just be cruising along, wasting time and effort.

“You must know what you want, to find what you want.”

— Lailah Gifty Akita

Question 3 is about the roadmap.

A destination does not mean much unless you have a plan to get there. With your vast work experience, you are the best Guide to help your youth get from where they are, to where they want to be, in the most efficient way.

“A good plan is like a road map: it shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there.”

— H. Stanley Judd

Ready to venture forth with your youth?

Let's go!

About The Author



HAN KOK KWANG is a National award winning professional, Bestselling author and Founder of the boutique career development training business, **Personal Mastery Resources** (www.personalmaster.com).

On hindsight, it is his “good fortune to have failed early in life”, as it empowered him to graduate with honours from the “University of Hard Knocks” into an accredited University Post-Graduate with Distinction, for real. No one stays the same after such an intense experience. The road from one university to the next was long, winding, sometimes dark and often trying but that is a story for another day.

For now, Han wants you to succeed by playing to your strengths and doing what you do best and enjoy most, because that is the only success that is sustainable. When you succeed, it is your privilege to help others do the same. This would make your world a better place, and you may just get to enjoy the elusive prize that have eluded many: joyful bliss.

Han is a firm believer in performance and results, instead of titles and letters. This is reflected in his provocative bestselling books as follows:

- *So What If You Don't Have A Degree?* (National Bestseller)
- *Beyond Buzzwords: Expanding Mind-sets, Exploding Returns*
- *No Job? No Problem!* (Bestseller)
- *So What If You Are Not The CEO?*
- *Million Dollar Mission*

Han is the youngest winner of the National Human Resource Professional of the Year Award and a pioneer recipient of the Inaugural National Lifelong Learner Awards. He is also the first Legacy Partner Lifetime Member of the Asia Pacific Career Development Association (APCDA) and the 1st International Career Development Facilitator Master Trainer in ASEAN from the National Career Development Association (NCDA, USA).

Han's mission in life is simple: to enable you to maximise your potential in life. Success is often won not by the strongest, the smartest or the fastest, but the one who wants it more. To live a purpose-inspired life, dream BIG, and act fast today!