

### **Ascott CEO debunks notion of 'glass ceilings'**

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WOMEN should not make the notion of a 'glass ceiling' an excuse when they face obstacles in their career, Ascott Group president and CEO Jennie Chua told 25 female undergraduates from Singapore Management University.

It is far more likely that a person who got a promotion or position in your place was more deserving, she said.

Ms Chua, previously CEO of Raffles Holdings, was sharing her insight into leading and managing global organisations, at a Young Women's Leadership Connection session.

Based on her 40 years of working experience, she said that the keys to managing a global organisation are diversity, branding, operational readiness, managing customer expectations and leadership.

On leadership, Ms Chua, who chairs several boards including that of Community Chest, advised her audience to surround themselves with people better than them and to 'remember that leaving a legacy is not about you, it's about leaving behind a business culture that's sustainable'.

It is also important to 'constantly re-invent yourself to stay relevant without compromising on core values' and to have intuition - the ability to 'smell out a good business deal' and 'to read people', she said.

Kicking off the dialogue session, Ms Chua said that she does not think there is a glass ceiling for women at work. Indeed, she reckons women have many choices not open to men.

'A woman can be equally admired for being a good CEO or a good housewife, so she has the choice,' Ms Chua said. 'But men are seldom admired for more than their careers and have less choice, at least in Asia and in my experience.'

Ms Chua named her two sons and three grandsons as her greatest achievements in life. 'Whatever you choose to work at, you have to commit to give your best, but at the same time, always know that at the end of the day, your family and loved ones - these are who matter most,' she said.

Also speaking at the session was Penny Low, Member of Parliament for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC, who founded Singapore's Social Innovation Park, an incubator for start-up social enterprises. Ms Low discussed the emerging tide of social entrepreneurship worldwide and locally and how 'doing good and doing well need not be at odds with each other'.

The Young Women's Leadership Connection was launched by Senior Minister of State for Finance and Transport Lim Hwee Hua and UBS in August last year to groom young women leaders.

Of the 25 students present at the session, 15 will be chosen to be mentored by corporate and political female leaders.

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