



Publication: The Business Times
Date: 19 February 2009
Headline: Make friends and influence people: Hyflux CEO

Make friends and influence people: Hyflux CEO

Joyce Hooi

359 words

19 February 2009

Business Times Singapore

STBT

English

(c) 2009 Singapore Press Holdings Limited

OLIVIA Lum's gregarious nature and penchant for canteen breaks with friends during her university days helped her to raise \$1 million in cash almost a decade later to expand her company.

The group CEO and president of water treatment company Hyflux credited her networking abilities for her business success during a dialogue session with female undergraduates from the National University of Singapore (NUS) last night.

Speaking at the Young Women's Leadership connection, organised by UBS in collaboration with NUS, Ms Lum impressed upon her audience the importance of reaching out to social networks in the course of business.

'If you are good to people, you will be able to overcome all kinds of problems,' she said.

In its fifth year of business, Hyflux needed \$1 million to expand into membrane manufacturing, research and consulting.

'I had tea with three of my chemistry professors and told them about my plans for the company,' Ms Lum said.

Within a few days, all three of them had given her a cheque for \$100,000 each. 'So I called my former classmates and former boss and raised the remaining \$700,000,' she said.

Ms Lum also has something in common with her undergraduate audience last night. Like them, she was due to join the work force during an economic downturn in 1986.

Even then, the power of networking was clear to her. 'My lecturer called up his former students and personally recommended me for jobs,' she said.

As a result, she landed a job as a chemist at Glaxo Pharmaceuticals after several rounds of interviews.

Lim Hwee Hua, Senior Minister of State for Finance and Transport, also acknowledged the importance of networking during her keynote address at the forum.

'Mutual support and references have become crucial in times like these,' Mrs Lim said.

She believes that women find maintaining a network a bigger challenge than men do.

'Keeping up a network requires effort, and women tend to place other people's needs above theirs, so the key is to not feel guilty about spending time on themselves and on networking,' she said.

Document STBT000020090218e52j0000n