



Dear Fellow Future of Us member,

Welcome to this month's newsletter. We hope the last month has been productive for you in different ways. Remember, ours is a community that watches out for its members. You can get all the support and encouragement you need by tapping into our rich network.

### **Another Personal Experience**

We are starting by sharing the story of one of our members, who has exemplified resilience in going through career switches. [Ms. Von Leong](#), a strategic advisor to start-ups, family offices, and companies, shares her story of how she navigated through multiple career switches. It reads:

"Dear friends,

As part of the support on addressing the issue of ageism, I thought it would be useful if we all started to share our career and life stories and how we are navigating to the purpose we want in our lives. Grateful to be part of the Future of Us Community, and I am counting on the support I can get! And this is my story:

I am 49 years old this year. I figure I have maybe 30 to 40 more years, so it's not too late to establish who I really am. As I look back, I realized I have in fact made five different career transitions in my life:

## **Years of Discovery**

I started working at the age of 13 as my family was in a dire financial situation. I did all kinds of odd jobs from data entry to playing the electronic organ as a performer, being an emcee at a community event, packing fish balls, and telemarketing.

Discovering that I like to be of service to others, wanting the opportunity to travel, and mostly to have a credit card, I joined the airlines as a flight attendant as a teenager. The first flight I took was for work!

## **Found love! Focused on life, not Career**

As a young woman, I was looking for love and uninterested in any form of career development. Once engaged, my fiancé requested that I quit my job at Cathay Pacific. I was based in Hong Kong then, so I returned to Singapore to find a job without any clear idea of what I really want. I was given some amazing opportunities like being part of the supporting cast in an English TV sitcom *My Grandson, the Doctor*, launching the radio station Power 98FM and doing PR at Tang Dynasty City, amongst others.

None lasted more than four months. And once married, my husband chose for me not to work, and I was happy staying at home becoming a full-time wife and mother to my two daughters when they were born. It was a comfortable time in my life until the marriage ended.

## **From No Job to a New Challenge**

To raise my children, I had to start to find a job at age 29 after not working for several years. I received zero replies from my written applications, so I just took on a commission-based training job hoping for the best. I had many good clients, and one of them gave me an opportunity of a lifetime. She was the MD for Hudson Singapore, and she challenged me to start a regional talent management and outplacement consulting business.

Soon, I was clocking the revenue dollars for the firm and traveling to Europe, Japan, and China to execute client projects in assessment and development. I was then headhunted

by a client to relocate, first to Shanghai and then Hong Kong, to start the HR consulting business for AON China.

During this time, I participated in the acquisition exercise of Hewitt Associates, which then formed the largest HR consulting business in the world then. I then moved to Kelly Services to manage the global account relationships in Asia Pacific, for which I had to travel around the world for 70% of my time.

### **A Pivotal Move**

After working in the corporate world away from Singapore for 10 years, I returned to my hometown to be with my family. I contacted a competitor who had often asked me to join his company. Instead, he asked me to join him in his new gig at the National Council of Social Service as a director of sector manpower and development.

I took a 55% pay cut as I thought it would be meaningful to give back to my country as a government officer. It was a good move as I discovered my calling - to drive a positive impact on society. My last government role was at IHiS, being the Chief, Digital Health Marketplace.

I then did an interim management job, leading and driving change at IBM based in Hong Kong for their largest AI Digital Transformation project in Asia Pacific. I learned that even though I was not a tech person, I was able to overcome barriers, bringing people and resources together to get the digital transformation projects started.

### **Thriving and Focusing on Social Impact**

I don't know what the future holds for me, but I have faith it is positive. Unlike the previous years, though life remains challenging as I am no longer enjoying a regular income and in a different state of health, I found myself energized each day, knowing every task I do has a purpose – I am driving (human, technological and financial) capital to social impact.

Throughout my journey, I know it takes a village to do almost anything. Therefore, I am encouraged by my tribe – like-minded people who want to create a better world. I now advise a family office on philanthropy and impact investments, investing in tech ventures, and volunteering at non-profits such as the UNEP for Digital Sustainability. I am still searching for a full-time role while dabbling in my passion projects.

What I know is this: as long as I have faith, I can be fearless. I can inspire others as I am inspired by the world. Life is great!”

***It is the hope that her powerful story inspires you and gives you the courage to go after your dreams, regardless of how daunting they may seem.***



*Picture of Ms Von Leong*

### **On Ageism...**

With so many disruptions of different forms in the nature of work today, it is becoming more commonplace to be engaged in a mid-career switch. Although this could be a tenuous process, it is possible to navigate those waters successfully – this was discussed in last month’s newsletter.

A common barrier that comes to the fore in many of these efforts is AGEISM. Ageism refers to discrimination against someone based on their age. While it is possible to treat

someone unfairly because of how young they are, ageism is often used to refer to prejudice against older people.

Ageism is a common enough feature when discussing mid-career switches, and it forms one of the major barriers to a successful switch. Employers tend to have negative attitudes towards older workers and discriminate against them even though there is no data to suggest that they are less skillful, less productive, or even generally less healthy than the younger employees.

When this idea is examined in the context of an industry or sector change, employers feel they have even more cause to be wary of the older workers. Again, there is no data to suggest that older workers are less adaptive to the changes. Many are, and eventually, go on to thrive in their new careers.

### **Recent Activity**

- Ageism is a global challenge, and the Future of Us stands firmly against the practice and recently made a public notice by [tweeting](#) against it.
- A group of members also met in April to discuss the topic and provide community support to anyone in need of it. At the end of the meeting, Future of Us was more determined to continue the advocacy on Ageism. Reports and relevant information will be continuously shared amongst members to create awareness on the topic of ageism. Most importantly, the community is committed to encourage the upskilling of members towards being ready for the requirements of the workplace.

You can read more about ageism [here](#) and our previous newsletter [here](#).



*Picture of the group that met to discuss Ageism*

- The community sent love to members on the [Facebook group](#) to stay fine and safe during this Covid-19 surge. You are precious to this community so please, remain safe and take good care.



*Sending love to you. Stay fine and safe!*

## **Social Media Platforms**

To join the discussion on Ageism, or share your experience on career switches, please connect with us on:

Twitter: @FutureOfUs1

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/10466158>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/FutureOfUsGlobal>

Website: [www.futureofus.org](http://www.futureofus.org)

We'd love to hear from you!

**Happy new Month! May the month of May usher amazing opportunities to you.**