



**Gilbert W.K. Lau**  
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### Can we be “professional”? • Gilbert W.K. Lau

Throughout our lives, we would face situations where professionals are needed to help us overcome difficulties, but what can be said as “professional”? What is the difference between a “professional” and an “expert”? Do professionals still deserve our blind respect? Are we also considered professionals in our workplace? If not, what shall we do to become real professionals? I have been thinking all these questions for decades. As our company celebrates its 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I would like to take this opportunity to share my thoughts with you. Let us continue to give our best in the name of professionalism.

For the common people, a professional would be someone who knows something that others do not know. The main difference between an expert and a professional is that experts are usually professionals, and professionals are, generally speaking, those who are certified by local government units or credible organizations in specific areas based on various standards. More specifically, being professionals is like a license which gives them the required qualifications to work in regulated industries. However, the service quality from these professionals is usually not included in their code of ethics, and this ultimately leads to poor service. Among the professionals, doctors and lawyers are complained most, and the complaint types concerned are quite various. In light of this, I would give some examples below to illustrate the problems.

As mentioned in the article “Every Man Has His Strengths” last year, some people excel in academics based on numerous factors in the “early development”, and so more of them would acquire professional qualifications than those who experience “late development”. However, our society is now more advanced than before, both in terms of education and social system. It is common for people to acquire professional qualifications by attending on-job training courses, and to become professionals such as lawyers or engineers. Such professional qualifications are

also very regionally exclusive, a practitioner in the heavily regulated U.S. medical care industry is not allowed to practice in Hong Kong. Does it mean the American medical standard is inferior to Hong Kong? Not really. Besides differences in clinical treatment, the most important factor behind this restriction would be local protectionism. Hong Kong suffers from a shortage of doctors in recent years. There could be a dozen of nurses in the emergency room, but with only one doctor standing-by. After undergoing the triage, even those who are seriously ill or injured might have to wait for four to five hours. While the nurses are standing idly and chatting, the only doctor in the ER room is rushing back and forth, with a frown on his face. Since the handover of Hong Kong, the government has cancelled the effective policy of allowing Commonwealth practitioners to practice in Hong Kong without examination. Judging from this, the doctors shall not be blamed, because this is a mistake made by the policymakers without considering the welfare of the people, which leads to such foolish decision.

### **In order to gain respect, your attitude is more important than your knowledge**

#### **Medical accidents are frequent**

Medical accidents in Hong Kong have become frequent recently. A 57-year old patient in Princess Margaret Hospital suffered from muscular dystrophy, which is an advanced motor neuron disease. This disease required her to use the respirator at all times. However, when two registered nurses attempted to transfer her to another room, they made the fatal mistake of removing the respirator during the transferal. When they reached the new room and reattached the respirator, the poor patient had already passed away. Another medical accident occurred in Queen Mary Hospital, where the medical team had mistakenly transplanted a heart from a deceased donor with AB blood type to a patient with a blood type. This is the first case of transplant error in Hong Kong. The hospital explained it was a medical negligence amidst their best efforts to save the patient's life. This might be the truth, but the key problem is mere carelessness. The professional medical experts in Hong Kong have transplanted the wrong heart and cut off the patient's air supply. These are indeed very serious medical mistakes.

In addition, two major medical accidents happened 30 and 20 years ago respectively, which had taken away my grandfather and grandmother's lives, directly or indirectly. 30 years ago, it was winter in January. My aunt took my grandfather, who was in good health at that time for a tooth extraction surgery at the dentist. After the surgery, my grandfather kept coughing due to allergy to anesthetic agents, and my aunt took him to the nearby Kwong Wah Hospital. Seeing that my grandfather had a history of pneumonia, the attending physician gave him an

anti-inflammatory shot without a second thought. My grandfather became allergic to the anti-inflammatory medication and his conditions deteriorated, and that was how my poor grandfather passed away. After another 10 years, I have graduated from the university and started working. At that time, my grandmother suffered from continuous fever and heavy nose bleeding, and my mother took her to the Kwong Wah Hospital again. Despite her conditions, the doctor did not perform a complete check-up to find out the cause of the problem, and instead simply discharged her from the hospital. After several weeks, she was admitted into the hospital again, suffering from severe weakness. But it was too late to save her, and she died after another few weeks. Only later did we find out the cause was nasopharyngeal cancer.

Medical negligence leads to the loss of lives, and the underlying problem is not the medical skills – it’s the medical ethics. Medical accidents do occur on a regular basis, and as the regulatory system improved and the mass media began to focus more on negligence cases, such stories have begun to surface, bringing justice to the innocent patients who lost their lives. Patients who need to operate in public hospitals often have to wait for a few, sometimes even ten years on the waiting list. Medical personnel do not work with the proper attitude either, often sulking with a disdainful grimace. This really makes us worry – what if we become their patients in the future? In private hospitals, unscrupulous doctors would encourage patients to undergo unnecessary operations, in order to earn more. Such doctors cannot be considered saviors, but arrogant thugs in white gowns. In fact, since the society requires mistake-free healthcare, professionals in this field should respond by imposing strict discipline on themselves and exercise effective quality control. Life is priceless, and every accident is one too many.

### **The Good Doctor – Dr. Lo Chung Mau**



During the admission examination, professors would definitely ask the medical students whether they are willing to serve and work hard, since most doctors would need to work shifts. Most of the students would of course say, “I am willing to help other people. I don’t mind working for long hours” but behave otherwise at work after graduation. From the

popular American TV-series “ER”, we see how the doctors care about the lives of those in need. However, in reality it is quite different, with only one exception that I admire – Dr. Lo Chung Mau, a Professor in the medical school. I am not acquainted with this surgeon but I understand from the news report how he serves the patients with the medical capabilities, attitude and ethics that a practitioner should have all these years. As a good doctor, the patients are his top priority. There are two criteria that a good doctor should have – kind-heartedness and excellent medical skills. Being kind-hearted means he always has the heart to heal the sick and the needy, and his medical skills are proven by the fact that he is one of those who established the Queen Mary Hospital Liver Transplant Centre, while being the first to carry out an Adult-to-Adult Right Lobe Live Donor Liver Transplantation successfully. Unlike many other specialist doctors, he did not leave the Queen Mary hospital to seek fortunes in the private hospitals. This really shows he is willing to serve the public and not just looking for good money. Besides, his schedule is fully packed with medical consultations and surgeries, and saving the patients always comes first for him. He recalls, “Those are families, with sons and daughters. I might only sacrifice the time I spend with my family for the Mid-Autumn Festival, but in exchange I could keep those families whole. After the operation, they could spend many more years together, celebrating many more festivals, and this is already the biggest reward for a doctor.” His words show how much he cares for his patients. His love for them is immense. His life motto: “Life is a process. It doesn’t matter what you have; it matters what you have done!” Living by his motto, he also requires the same from his son and daughter, who are currently studying as medical students at the University of Hong Kong. He once said, a doctor must work hard and help the patients. If you are afraid of tough work, then it’s better not to be a doctor. As a good doctor, Dr. Lo has my utmost respect. I think he can even be called a reincarnation of *Hua Tuo*.<sup>1</sup>

### **Unprofessional Legal Service**

There are also quite many problems with the quality of legal service, such as overcharging, delaying response and creating misleading work hours to increase charges. These are common problems that have existed for a long time. The following are some examples:

Case 1.) Few years ago, our company is planning to participate in a joint venture with a Singapore-based shipping company for projects in Eastern China. Our German General Manager at that time, Mr. Udo Willhoft and our Financial Manager appointed a well-established British law firm located in the Prince’s Building at Central, Hong Kong to facilitate the operation. After signing the agreements and receiving 50% deposit from us,

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<sup>1</sup> A famous doctor in Ancient China

they made the excuse about consulting other specialized solicitors and required us to pay 60% extra. We had already clearly listed the background and requirements of the agreement, and there was no reason for them to ask for so much more. After repeated negotiations, we managed to settle this issue, but since then I do not trust this dishonest law firm anymore.

Case 2.) We appointed another law firm for a dispute case in court, and their work attitude was disappointing. They did not send us the copy of the documents immediately and delayed the submission of court-related material. I had to personally ask from them every time. However, when there were chances to create more working hours, he would misguide us to attend the court proceedings and make things complicated to increase his charges. He had once charged 300% more than the ordinary fee, and we had to forward this issue to the Small Claims Tribunal. At last, he dropped his unfair claims (Note: Before appointing an attorney, an agreement about the per hour charge has to be reached. If you are doubtful about the invoice, request the attorney to list all work details immediately. The law states that questions regarding the invoice have to be raised within one month after the invoice are issued, or to appoint a lawyer to initiate court proceedings and taxation, which does not cost much).

Case 3.) Few years ago, we have appointed a foreign Senior Consult (Barrister) for an infringement (Passing-off) case in the High Court. I thought he was Senior Consult and an English man, so we might gain an upper hand. On the contrary, this Senior Consult did not perform like an experienced Barrister at all. He made no attempts to debate during the proceedings or raised questions about the defendant's infringements. This might be his personal style and it is unfair to make personal comments, but there was only one preparation meeting before we attended the court, and that lasted for only one hour. Ironically, the moment before I testified in court, he asked me who the "counterpart" of my company was? Such question really surprised me and I did not know where my testimony should start from, and it ended up in a mess. Worse still was that the solicitor supporting this case was late the next morning for more than an hour. Indeed, their 'professionalism' did not match expectation of a customer, and finally, we were informed that we lost the case after another four months.

It is relatively easy for us to obtain information from the Internet today, and this also lowers the absolute status of those professionals. It is no longer probable that some professionals know something that you do not know. Only if you could spend some time to look for relevant names of the medication or the illness, relevant cases or legal regulations on the Internet, you will acquire the same knowledge those professionals have, and you can challenge them when you are

in doubt. Even though knowledge becomes more and more common, some of those arrogant doctors or lawyers are still in the opinion that patients and clients are begging for help. Even the nurses are impolite to the patients. Completely forgotten how to address the patients properly, they call the patients' names directly just like back in the school or when social welfare organizations are giving out free food. They have forgotten the fact that we are the customers who pay them. They have also forgotten that they could earn respect only by being kind-hearted and skillful as a doctor, or to uphold justice as a lawyer, but not by dressing in a white or black gown and pretend to be professional with much vanity. Those practitioners will only gradually lose respect from those who want to be treated politely and in a humane way. Professionals should make the welfare of the people a top priority. Besides earning their income, they should also be fair, just and righteous. The value of professionalism overrides fame and fortune, and it is attitude which wins applaud and respect from the people, not the professional knowledge. In fact, professionals are unique for their stronger self-recognition. If one respects his own profession and gives his utmost, even a street cleaner can be a professional. This is how the Japanese and Germans work. As for the government, it controls vast public resources and is indeed professional in public administration. Therefore, it shall serve the people and uphold the public interests, while putting aside political differences for the sake of public welfare, in order to gain respect from its citizens.

### **A Potentially Fatal Mistake in Logistics**

Another real case (reported by BBC News) involves Niels Morch, the owner of IES which is an agent of our company in the UK. During a meeting last month, he told me they have found some old wooden crates while cleaning the Bristol warehouse. Those crates were retrieved from the airport years ago. Upon opening them, they were surprised to see a pile of canvas rolled up. Niels then sent some of these canvases to an antique identification center in London. Afterwards, he received a call from a British solicitor, urging him to return these canvases immediately. According to that solicitor, the canvases in those eight wooden crates belong to the famous Dutch painter Karel Appel, which were lost during delivery after the end of an exhibition. After several months of negotiation, his widow agreed to give away three of the paintings as reward for finding them. The main cause of this incident is



that the airfreight company sent the wrong delivery, while the recipient also did not check the delivery carefully. It is a pity that Karel Appel passed away before he could get to know the whereabouts of his missing canvases. Although logistics is not “professional” like those license-regulated fields, it is still very unprofessional to bring others lifelong regrets due to our carelessness. Dear colleagues, let us bear this in mind.

There is obviously a clear line between right and wrong, good and bad, as well as professional and unprofessional. The law and the professional institutions cannot regulate the ethics, characters or intentions of those professionals, and the world has also become ever more complicated and difficult to understand. There is a huge diversity in human behavior, and this makes us no longer possible to judge correctly by merely looking at the surface of the situations. Our eyes and ears are getting confused by the massive amount of information, values are constantly crossing position. Our pain and illness could be the path towards fortune for some other people. It could be a hard time for those who are troubled by court cases, but the lawyers will be happy, just because it means more money for them. Of course, it is understandable that we live in a business world where everyone looks for profit, but those professionals are also closely related to our daily lives. I hope the doctors would sometimes be kind to help those in need, while lawyers could uphold justice for the society, just as described in Micah 6:8 “...To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”, so that we can live in a fair and better world.

### **The nature of being “professional”**

I have mentioned the doctors and lawyers in previous paragraphs, and you might ask, whether there is also a difference between “professional” or “unprofessional” for ordinary work. The answer is yes. One can be professional in any field of work. Perhaps you will then ask: what is the meaning of being professional? This includes three elements:(1), the capability to work in a specific professional field. (2), the attitude towards work. (3), the work ethics. The capability can be learned or acquired by accumulating experience, which is then certified by professional institutions. Work attitude means one must work seriously and finish the given tasks by overcoming various difficulties. Ethics means fulfilling common social standards and meeting public expectations in work. For example, one of our colleagues has been working for Oriental Logistics for a long time. After his resignation, he still obliges to the non-disclosure agreement and refuses to disclose any company information to third parties, even though it means his career has to start from scratch in his new company. This is indeed sincere commitment to our valuable work ethics. It must be understood that it is always easy to acquire knowledge, but difficult to develop good work attitude and ethics.

## **Attitude is a decisive factor between success and failure**

When we talk about professionalism, there are two countries which must come up in your mind – Germany and Japan. How did these two countries recover so rapidly after the destruction in World War Two and eventually became member countries of the G7 and one of the developed countries. Regarding that, I would like to share with you two of my personal stories. I was on a business trip with Udo in Belgium and Germany last year. As we drove from Hamburg in Germany and across the border into Belgium, I saw stark differences between the two places – the German infrastructure and cityscape were more orderly than in Belgium. I asked Udo about the reason, and he answered precisely “It is the difference in attitude”. Another story was that while I was in Tokyo and Osaka to visit the logistics companies, upon entering a famous cosmetics brand factory, I realized there was not a single surveillance camera or security guard around the automated conveyor system in the warehouses. With the help of an interpreter, I asked a factory lady worker about this. She calmly put her hand over the right side of her chest, meaning that with “heart”, there is no need for surveillance. “Heart” is the attitude. I was deeply moved by her answer and I still remember that moment vividly.

Germany is an interesting country. People there are more relaxed and like to enjoy life, which is typical European lifestyle. Holiday means holiday, and there shall be no emails or calls during holiday. Christmas holiday could last for one month. It is quite different from Hong Kong’s impatient working style, and I have experienced this many times when working with Udo. They place great emphasis on etiquette, and even emails are formally written, explaining simple meanings tactfully with a lot of words. They think emails should be written like this, but this is sometimes too much for me. No matter what, they are very professional at work and always strive for perfection. This is the reason Germany could lead the European economy for so many years. In comparison, although China became the second largest economy in terms of GDP, right behind the U.S. in 2011, the Chinese income per capita is 1/12 of Japan, 1/13 of Germany and 1/14 of the U.S. To become the 8<sup>th</sup> developed country in Asia, China still has a long way to go.

Comparing with China, Germany is more advanced in technology. There is no more labor-intensive work instead they focus on highly-effective industries with investment in technology. This has something to do with their education level. Thanks to their excellent vocational training, the workers can guarantee the quality of the products. Though the percentage of higher-level education in Germany is comparatively lower, their universities are strict when it comes to requirements for graduation, which means their education focuses on quality instead of quantity, and this is exactly the opposite of what we have in Hong Kong, China, Taiwan and the UK. For example, students would compete with one another to get a place in one of the



universities, but then would spend the next four years doing nothing. People might think German scientific research is inferior to the U.S., but if one takes a closer look, just the Hamburg University itself has produced 29 Nobel Prize winners. This shows their key to success is a combination of scientific research, application and industrial production. Of course, we must also mention Albert Einstein (1879-1955), the famous German scientist. Born in Germany, he is one of the greatest scientists in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, known as the father of modern physics. He discovered the theory of relativity, quantum mechanics (one of the two major pillars of modern physics) as well as photoelectric effect, which the latter won him the Nobel Prize in Physics. To avoid serving in the military, he moved to Italy, Switzerland and finally settling down at Princeton University in America. Nevertheless, in terms of management, German companies focus on innovation and self-improvement from the employees. With a complete social welfare system, even their income is not high, the people are not worried about retirement or losing their lifelong savings due to illness. Most importantly, they do not need to worry about exorbitant property prices. Germany has a mature society with a high percentage of middle-class. Even its economic development is saturated while China is experiencing growth on an enormous scale, “a starving horse is still bigger than a mule”, and there is still great distance between these two countries in many aspects. Therefore, China is an economic power, but not a strong power in the world. Besides renowned international brands, the SMEs are also important to the German economy, thanks to the highly-skilled workers and engineers. Their work is the foundation for the German industry to thrive. They have accumulated decades of experience in technology and market development, and many of their products are technology-based, bringing the German companies greater profit than labor-intensive competitors.

Some of the basics can be seen here. Besides the qualities of the German people, their social culture and education system have helped shaping their national norms, which also means working conscientiously to fulfill the standards of various tasks at all times, as well as the urge to seek improvements. After years, this has become a well-established social consensus. To work in the German society would require the expression of a conscientious attitude, otherwise one might not be accepted by the society and become an outcast. This invisible peer pressure also explains the unique work culture in a German organization or company. After working with them for some time, I find that the Germans seem to be slow when it comes to the details, but the final product would be of high quality. This saves a lot of social costs. Some people might produce inferior goods at a rush, and the Germans would produce premium goods at leisure. For example, you might want to save some effort and time by building the house on the sand, but the house would not be able to stand against wind and waves, and requires a major renovation every three to five years. If the foundation is not stable, the entire house might even have to be demolished and built anew. On the other hand, you could put enough effort into finding a solid foundation

slowly, which the house would be able to stand for hundreds of years. The difference here lies in attitude.

Let me quote two real-life examples, which can also be testified by my senior colleagues. Three years ago, some senior managers of PCCW approached us. After several meetings, they have also invited the top brass of Taobao – *Xiaoyaozi*, *Zhenglun* and *Buhua*\* to visit Oriental Logistics. During the meeting, the CIO of Taobao.com admitted that they did not have a complete system to handle their rapidly expanding business. They were also surprised by the detailed construction of our ERP system. Although we made it clear that no photographs were allowed during the demonstration of our systems, they still managed to take some shots with their mobile phones. In the last few days, the president of Taobao.com Mr. Ma Yun has announced that they plan to invest in Cainiao Network Technology Co., Ltd and develop a “Smart Logistic Network”. Could their concept come from Oriental Logistics?

Another example is the Eslite Bookstore in Taiwan. My Taiwanese friend introduced its director, Mr. Lee Chieh-hsiu to me. He is very interested in our Oracle ERP program for our supply chain system. After multiple meetings and visits, he explained that the development of the Eslite system was met with numerous obstacles, including limitation on the budget for initial development. Even though they are equipped with advanced hardware like automatic classification of books, their software is made up of several old, independent systems. Eslite has opened its flagship store in Causeway Bay last year, and this director claimed on the Hong Kong newspaper that one of their key elements of success is a perfect computer system. I think this is propaganda instead of the truth.

These two examples show some of the famous brands from China and Taiwan indeed built their houses on sand. This is typical Chinese-style tofu-dreg project for computer systems. Let us see how far they can get.

### **The Inspiration behind success**

#### **APPLE – Tim Cook**

Let’s talk about the founder of Apple Inc. – Steve Jobs and his successor Tim Cook. I decided to talk about Cook not only because I am an Apple fan and use Apple products extensively, but Cook is also specialized in the supply chain. He managed to optimize Apple’s supply chain and reduced unnecessary



costs, which greatly helped improving Apple's tight finances. Cook was born and raised in a farmer's family in Alabama, and got his Master's degree at Duke University. He spent the next decade working at IBM and Compaq, focusing on North American supply chains and distribution management. Referred by a headhunter, he met with Steve Jobs for just five minutes and made his decision to join Apple. Just like other CEOs, such as Howard Schultz of Starbucks Coffee, Jeffrey Immelt of GE and Li Ka Shing in Hong Kong, Cook is totally committed to his job, working for more than ten hours every day. Highly motivated, he took over Apple's management authority since Steve Jobs became gravely ill. He places great emphasis on details, raising numerous questions on each single point until all questions are solved. Cook starts working at 4:30a.m. West Coast Time, sorting out e-mails and planning his daily schedule, which is also 7:30a.m. East Cost Time, 4:30p.m. in Europe and 7:30p.m. in Asia. He acts decisively, but he also kept a low profile when cooperating with Jobs in the past.

Fund managers and journalists like to compare between them. In fact, they have different strengths. Steve Jobs is well-known for his excellent insight, innovation and passion for the market, which Cook might not have, but Cook's knowledge in supply chain management, cost control and brand image is also indispensable. We might all look at Steve Job's good side because he is the deceased founder of Apple Inc., while his shortcomings and mistakes are well forgotten. Some of his products did end up in failure, such as Apple III, Cube PC and the antenna issue for Apple IV. He also did not make active donations to the religious organizations or the charities, and neglected social responsibility for the community.

Without Cook, Apple would not prosper like today. Cook has shortened the days of inventory from 30 days to six days. This frees up a lot of cash for Apple to turn the tide on the balance sheet. While Jobs and the design team were going to launch new products, Cook would provide solid support by optimizing the supply chains, performing stringent quality control and combining it with supply chain management, so that products such as iPhone5 can be launched with the best cost effectiveness. Cook also started to participate in social charity events, placing emphasis on workers' welfare while hoping to create a humane image for Apple. He was also the first to apologize for Apple map flaws. The stock price for Apple dropped sharply due to rumors about the resignation of Cook, but the current price is still higher than last year when Cook took over. In fact, there is also no direct relationship between company prices and the performance of the company. Even the growth of Apple's revenue and profit slows down, the figures are still very high. Steve Jobs did shine with brilliance, but Cook is indeed a suitable successor with his steady performance, and the brand continues to excel in the market.

“To grow becoming an adult is that difficult, when one grew up and takes over business, one

understands how difficult everything was at the beginning”. This somehow shows how people understand and experience things differently at different times and in different positions. During Apple’s start-up period, Steve Jobs would need absolute power to create an innovative brand, and Cook would fill up the deficiencies of the management team, creating vitality for the brand with increasing number of staff. This is how Apple managed to survive the fierce market competition and upholds its leading position. Besides the qualities of Steve Jobs and Cook, the board of directors also made a brilliant decision in appointing Cook as the CEO. They are aware of the situation that the company faces and display courage and decisiveness in making such a decision.

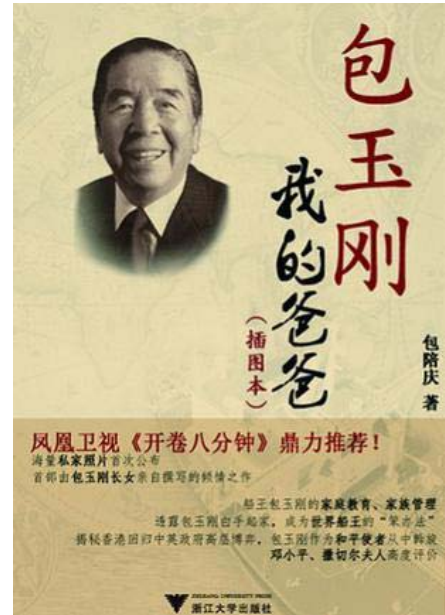
### **World Shipping Tycoon – Sir Pao Yue-Kong**

Recently, a Hong Kong magazine has interviewed Pao’s grandson, So Man Chun. The son of Pao’s son-in-law, So Man Hoi, this young entrepreneur has hung his grandfather’s motto “Continue to upkeep oneself; Strive to develop success” in his office. However, the article in the magazine criticized him for honoring this motto only superficially. Pao was one of the most influential in the shipping industry decades ago, and it was just not enough to adhere to the main points of this motto. One has to utilize all kinds of resources to turn opportunities into results. This article reminds me of Pao’s accomplishment in the industry, and his work attitude would serve as our example.

Pao Yue-Kong (1918-1911) hails from Ningbo, Zhejiang. His shipping empire was at its peak in 1978, at the time when he was the leader of the top 10 shipping tycoons, as well as one of the ten biggest conglomerates in Hong Kong. He established the “Universal Shipping Group” and became the first Chinese director of British-owned HSBC. He was born in a small merchant’s family in Ningbo, 1918. His father was very strict to his children. In 1938, Pao was appointed the bank manager of the Bank of Hengyang and the vice president of the Bank of Shanghai. Then in 1946, he and his friends participated in a joint venture and opened the Guofeng Paper Mill in Shanghai. He moved to Hong Kong in 1949 and established business in trading and shipping. There was a lack of funds at the beginning, and after raising over 700,000 USD among his friends, Pao bought a 28-year old steamship from the UK. He cherished this ship a lot and renovated it, giving it a new name – *King On*. This was the start of Pao’s shipping business. He went ahead and set up the “Universal Shipping Group” in 1955, and the number of ships that the group owned had reached 200 in 1980, with total tonnage of 20,000,000 tons. During the oil crisis, Pao realized that the future for shipping industry was becoming dim, and oversupply had also become a problem. He made the decision to extend his business on land, and bought 30% of the shares of Li Ka Shing’s “Wharf Holding” between 1977 and 1978. He also won control of “Jardine Matheson’s” and “Hongkong Land”. In 1985, Pao spent 50 billion SGD to acquire

“Wheelock”, and thus became the second person to acquire one of the “Four Major British Conglomerates” after Li Ka Shing’s acquisitions of “Hutchison Whampoa”. This transformation is seen as a miracle, as the other two shipping tycoons – “OOCL’s” C.Y.Tung and “Wah Kwong Shipping’s” Chao Tsong-Yea suffered from setbacks due to their slower pace of transformation, which was eventually caught up by market deterioration. From his experience, we can see that the key to success is to develop compatible strategies to grasp the opportunities in the market.

The eldest daughter of Pao Yue-Kong, Anna Pao, wrote a book “YK Pao: My Father” about his father. It is written that her father was very disciplined and traditional when it came to running his business. His ships were equipped with reliable facilities and efficient maintenance system, and his company always had good cash flow and complete accounting system. With a practical mindset, he emphasized on cost control and realized that the development of a sound system could not rely solely on anybody, and this could decide whether the ship owner’s business would become a success or failure. These basic requirements are also applicable to us – Oriental Logistics (The so-called ship owners are like landlords, who rent their premises for profit).



He demanded all of his executives to lead a disciplined life, that means no nightclubs, no alcohol, no gambling while promoting regular exercise to keep the body fit. Only with discipline can one handle the pressure of work in the shipping industry effectively. Except Christmas, Pao worked every single day throughout the year. Daily and weekly meetings were held to improve communication between managers and employees. He was very serious during the meetings. Colder than ice, he would talk sternly without room for negotiation. Even so, he was a practical and thrifty person, and would not allow himself or his relatives to lead a luxurious life. After his death, his son also lived by his motto as the company’s successor — Be down-to-earth and treat people nicely.

Even after achieving success, he still maintained his discipline and attitude towards work, this is something we should learn from. Besides that, his business concept also has merits. The war between Israel and Egypt in 1956 had closed the Suez Canal, and shipping business at that time thrived. Pao was not moved by that and concentrated his business on South East Asia as usual, serving his old-time clients with the same prices. After some years, the war ended and the Canal re-opened, which left a lot of ships stranded in ports due to the decrease of demand, while Pao’s business concept allowed him to establish himself in South East Asia. This is indeed a lesson

about the risk of taking shortcuts. Recently, I have heard about a story about finding a tennis ball in the grass. A coach asked his students: “How do you find the tennis ball if it dropped into a pile of grass?” A student said: “Look from the center”. Another answered: “Look from the top of the grass”. The third said: “Look from the tallest grass”. The coach calmly concluded: “You are all wrong. You should look from one side of the grass to the other side. Do it step-by-step”. This story shows us that there are no shortcuts in our work, and the best method is to do it step-by-step.

### **It is easy to get professional qualifications, but difficult to have professional attitude**

Professional qualifications can be learned and acquired, but to change the attitude would require long period of time. Corporations are gradually putting their focus on the personal attributes of their talents, which can be checked by a “Projective Test”, such as whether one is enthusiastic, positive, having high demands on himself, or if he could work in groups, express his opinions clearly and active. This is no longer just about academic qualifications or abilities. As such, how can a person or a company develop professional attitude for himself or the staff? This is something that is worthy for our contemplation. First, let us see what “attitude” is. Besides academic qualifications and experience, attitude is the general expression of one’s characters. This is more important than your education, financial status, family background or appearance. Many journals have found out that most of the CEOs do not attain their positions by their unique abilities, but are handpicked to serve in the board based on their attitude.

Of course, those with stronger characters and greater confidence do have better professional capabilities as they are willing to ask when they face problems, and their curiosity for knowledge, tenacity and concentration are also more than the average person. This somehow explains part of what attitude is, but what does it specifically mean? I would say: “it means lifelong learning, the evergoing quest for improvement, attention to details, the way to face work conflict, conflict of interests, the way of life, self-requirement and others.” Let’s say if you can manage these important points at work, how can you have a breakthrough? There is no shortcut in improving work performance. Same as the above story about “finding the tennis ball in grass”, the basics of work have to be done properly, so that work performance would eventually go up. Work is usually boring, but if you can spot details which other would neglect, and work hard on them, the quality of your work must be better than others. In fact, our bi-weekly meeting focuses on methods of performance improvement without incurred costs. We hope our colleagues can learn to pay more attention to work details, only then can the business operation of Oriental Logistics undergo continuous self-improvement, giving our company greater vitality.

As for myself, I have learned how to start from scratch in my previous work. Without any on-job training, resources and internal support from the company, I myself have contributed more than 70% of the company sales. This shows difficulties do not make me go down, but instead make me stronger. The hard work is the basis of the founding of Oriental Logistics.

The various tasks, challenges and experiences in recent years made me realize that a person must be strong-willed. It is often said that one can be poor, but he must remain ambitious. However, many think that success only equals to having a lot of money, so they make use of various tricky ways to make money, such as engaging in illegal deals, speculation in stock and property, as well as becoming unethical doctors and lawyers. My meaning is no matter how much money you have, but whether you have the motivation, responsibility and most importantly, the spirit to be self-reliant. The real richness lies in the never-give-up spirit, and it is much more valuable than wealth brought by luck. I can proudly say, I have been working hard to realize my personal goals in the last 29 years, and I have never been “poor”. You might know I always ask my colleagues to do this and that. Some of them, losing their patience, have responded: “The company can still operate well even if our colleagues relax a bit, isn’t it?” I said: “I am not building up my company business. I am helping them to develop their career.”

Starting a business is a very difficult process, and it also takes tremendous effort to operate Oriental Logistics. Just like the movie “Life of Pi”, we managed to survive after overcoming numerous difficulties. I should say, you and I are the lucky ones, as most of others did not make it through. Nonetheless, I believe life will only become colorful if we experience the things ourselves, such as happiness, anger, sadness, joy, as well as the process of living, aging, being sick and dying. We all have to experience these. When it comes to work, it would be best to let you try different things personally, even if you might make mistakes here and there. This does not equal to forgoing management, instead it means providing more guidance and resources during the work process, because I believe making mistakes is the most effective way to shape one’s character and build confidence. Comparing to joy, pain teaches us more, and we always remember the experience brought by pain. The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche said: “What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger”. I totally agree with it, and your career development is a real example of his words.

## **Conclusion**

As we see how each of our colleagues grows in the company, the path to becoming a professional is clearly shown. From our rigorous recruitment procedure, training to understand our work and company to job rotation, our colleagues can learn about the various work

procedures of supply chain management. Supported by quantitative management, advanced computer system and led by experienced managers, those who see logistics management as their profession can realize their ambition here. It is my greatest honor to see you grow and become part of our core team with your own effort. Remember, the path to becoming a professional is always open, and your attitude determines whether you will succeed or fail. I would like to emphasize once again: “Your attitude decides your behavior; your behavior decides your habit; your habit decides your character; and your character decides your fate.” Our company motto: “Success is a journey, but not the destination.” One must continue to work hard and learn.

At last, I would like to conclude this article with the philosophy from British poet Cecil Day-Lewis, who is also the father of Daniel Day-Lewis, recently acted in the film *Lincoln* and also three-time recipient of the Best Actor Oscar. His philosophy is simple – to let go is the beginning of growing up.

Saying what God alone could perfectly show,  
How selfhood begins with a walking away,  
And love is proved in the letting go.

\*\* End \*\*

Afterword: An open and fair society requires its citizens to monitor the government. Under most circumstances, the unspoken rule is that the government does not persecute individuals and pressure groups which criticize the government.

\* Note: The high-ranking managers of Taobao.com reserve special rights to use character names from martial arts stories as their nicknames.