



An Amazing Saturday at the Monte Jade Executive Mentorship Program by Samuel Ngai

Another fun, energetic and inspiring Monte Jade Executive Mentorship event took place on Saturday January 19, 2008. The thirty-plus mentees, and the eight mentors and speakers packed the conference rooms at Vitria Technology in Sunnyvale, CA. For six straight hours, they chatted, networked, shared career / life lessons, laughed, exchanged phone numbers and planned their next outings. But that was not enough; many of them went to a nearby pub afterward and hung out until sunset. Judging from their smiley faces, I am confident to say that everyone felt worthwhile to have gotten up early and spent a whole Saturday together as a family.

As with previous years, the backgrounds and profiles of this year's mentees are extremely impressive. They come from a very diverse mix of background: from MBA's to PhD's, from fundamental R&D to advertising, from biopharma to enterprise software, and from individual contributors to CEO's. Two distinctive trends surfaced this year. First, the number of applicants with Director, VP and CEO titles increased sharply this year. Second, the number of female participants went up significantly as well, making the split quite evenly at 50/50.

And of course, we also had an equally – if not more – impressive pool of mentors. This year, we were fortunate enough to have Milton Chang (Founder, Incubic Venture), Bobby Chao (Founding Managing Director, DFJ DragonFund), George Koo (Director, Deloitte & Touche), Paul Lo (SVP, Synopsys), Elizabeth Xu (SVP, Vitria) and Ed Yang (former VP/CTO, HP) as our mentors. Due to time conflicts, Bobby and George were not able to join us at the second Mentorship event on 1/19. Instead, they arranged separate meetings with their mentees prior to the second event. To fill in their positions on the 19th, we the Organizing Committee invited Mr. C.K. Cheng from Harbinger Ventures and Dr. Patrick Yang from Genentech to be the new mentors for these two groups. C.K. is the General Partner for Harbinger's US operations. Patrick is the Executive Vice President of Product Operations at Genentech.

Instead of starting with the mentors, the 1/19 Mentorship event opened with a series of invited speakers. First on the list was Mr. Soon-Chart Yu. Soon is the General Manager for Chiquita North America, a \$2B division. He had over eighteen years of general management experience and started and exited several successful companies. The companies he worked for or built included AMD, Bain & Company, Clorox, Gazoontite and Chiquita. Soon shared with us how he made the decisions of switching career between these companies and what he learned along the way. The key lesson he instilled on us was that there is no optimal career path; what matters the most is to be passionate about what one does.

After Soon, Dr. Chi-Foon Chan from Synopsys went to the podium and delivered a talk on leadership skills. Chi-Foon is the President and COO of Synopsys. In an interactive dialog, he emphasized the importance of “demonstration and communication”: we need



to let other people know what we want to do and enhance it by asking questions. Chi-Fan also reiterated Soon's point that passion is the number one driver for success.

Following Chi-Foon, Dr. Patrick Yang from Genentech gave a presentation on the development of essential strengths for career success. True to his sense of humor, Patrick opened his talk by asking how many MITer's there were among the mentees. After many in the audience raised their hands, Patrick clarified that MIT stood for "made in Taiwan". Many of those hands then lowered sheepishly, with laughter. The fun did not stop as Patrick intertwined his lessons with many interesting and witty remarks. Yet, his lessons were no joking matters. Patrick shared with the group the importance of interpersonal productivity in achieving success and his definition of a true leader as one who has followers. After his presentation, Patrick opened up for questions. During the twenty-minute Q&A session, he addressed questions ranging from paradox management to mentor selection to time optimization.

After three speakers in the morning, it was lunch time. Salad, lasagna, chicken and spaghetti were served in buffet-style. Every mentor sat at a different table, which then allowed the mentees to go to their table / mentor of choice to ask questions.

I ended up at Ed Yang's table. During the following hour, the group around the table touched upon a wide variety of topics: role of innovation in today's market, finding passion in career, managing professional relationships in Asia, extracurricular activities and online social networking. Ed even revealed that he had created a profile on Facebook but yet to upload a picture of his own there. We were enjoying our conversation so much that we were surprised when told it was time for the next activity.

After lunch, the mentees and mentors went to separate conference rooms for breakouts. I went to the room where C.K. from Harbinger was talking to a group of mentees. After an around-the-table introduction, C.K. shared with the group his views on VC investing and leadership skills. He was also curious about our opinions, asking us why we wanted to become leaders and what types of leaders we wanted to become. I found these questions helpful in terms of understanding and discovering myself.

Before we knew it, it was 3pm and it was time to wrap up. Everyone – mentees, mentors and organizers – gathered in the lobby of Vitria. As tokens of appreciation, the organizers arranged a series of prizes for the mentors. Of course, an event such as this could not conclude without a big group picture. As you scan the happy faces in the picture printed on this page, you can easily sense the fun we had on that Saturday.

After the group picture, the second session of the 2007 MJ Executive Mentorship program officially adjourned. But with this group of young and high-energy Asian Americans, spending six hours networking was not enough. Many of us went to a nearby pub to continue the fun. What happened there? Well, let's just say the fun did not stop until the sun set. As I was driving home (under the legal alcohol limit), I reflected on the day and wondered how anyone could pass on such a great opportunity to learn, have fun and get to know so many great friends.



2007 MJAA Mentorship Program
A reflection on the 2nd mentorship session

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If you are interested in learning more, or joining us for a future program, please visit us at <http://www.mjaa.net/mentorship>, or send us an email at mentorship@mjaa.net.