

TKU ALUMNA BECOMES THE YOUNGEST MANAGER FOR AN AMERICAN FAST FOOD CHAIN

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When you walk in the Kentucky Fried Chicken, Taiwan Office, you' ll see a wall of pictures of an attractive lady with a big smile welcoming you. These pictures show this lady, Wu Mei-jun, the Managing Director (MD) of KFC Taiwan, taken together with KFC managers throughout the world. And she graduated from the English Department of TKU in 1987.

When she was a student at TKU, she had never dreamt about entering the sales and marketing sector, let alone working for KFC, as the usual career path of English majors of her days was either to become an English teacher or secretary in a trading company. With no exception, she worked a language teacher upon graduation, yet such a job did not stimulate her at all. Therefore, after a brief stint at a cram school, she went to an advertising agency to work as a junior account manager, where she learned first-hand about the day-to-day running of businesses and the skills in sales and marketing. Some years later, with her skills and professionalism, she became the MD of Mattel, Taiwan, the manufacturer of Barbie dolls and the rest is history.

Mei-jun turned 40 this year, which makes her the youngest and the only female MD at KFC franchises worldwide. In the business world, she is known as Olga Wu, her English name, which depicts a woman of fierce independent spirit and a shrewd business sense. These qualities aside, her passion to serve others and creativity that have got her where she is today were already detectable in her college days when she was active in the departmental drama club. She directed and acted in a play, which won her the top prize in a drama contest in one of her years as a student here. She recalls how she loved the thrill of working creatively on the play and the joy of working with other people on or behind the stage intimately as a

team. At the time, she knew already that she would like to do something that could fulfill both of these drives in her. Hence, jobs in the service industry have become her apparent choices throughout her later life.

As she discovered her personal qualities quite early in life and was thus able to develop her potential fully in a business that suits her very well, she has acquired a keen sense of detecting the potentials in today's young people. She would, for example, place great emphasis on young applicants' consistent working experience to determine their leadership quality. Those who show dedication to professionalism, insistence in doing things right, physical and psychological stamina, as well as high emotional intelligence, have the materials to be a good manager. Furthermore, she believes that young people who have no fear of admitting one's weaknesses and find positive way of overcoming them are sought after, too. Presently, KFC has employed graduates mainly from some national universities, but Olga Wu sees no difference in the university and fields of study graduates come from as long as they are willing to learn, and work hard. For people like these, there is always a place for them at KFC, she maintains.

With her long professional experience and studies she is doing momentarily at the EMBA program at the NTU, She also provides some valuable advice to people who have graduated recently that they should not just aim at working for big corporations. Instead, they should consider jobs that are compatible to their abilities and interests. For example, she points out that young graduates with limited experience have a slim chance of being taken on by big corporations, yet exactly the same people are unwilling to start with smaller companies, such as those in catering business as they do not see working for the latter a proper career path. As a result of this mentality, she has seen many young people just drift from one unsuitable job to the next until it is all too late. She stresses that young graduates should work on a job of their interest regardless of size and prestige of the company/job, for at least five years so they can learn all the fundamental things they need for this business. Only through such a solid

work and dedication, she contends, can one flourish and be successful at work and in life.

She reminds TKU students that KFC recruit staff and train new managers every year. She would love to see young people who take delight in serving other people and are a good team players to join her company. She is particularly looking forward to attracting new blood with leadership qualities and creativity, as KFC lives on creative promotional activities to lure and retain customers all over the world. For instance, KFC is carrying on a “Customer Mania” promotional event in all of its franchises worldwide, encouraging excellent service from the staff. Just imagine, customers will have to vote for the best staff among its 72,500 global employees, and the one elected will have his or her photo displayed in all franchises! Just think about the joy and pride that can bring to the staff, who will in turn do tremendous good to the work morale and of course, quality.

Finally, Olga Wu urges TKU students to spend time understanding their own interests and follow the trend of the market place. Understanding the trend does not mean they have to blindly listen to other people’ s drums doing what is “in” for the moment. A full grasp of the market trend should, she says, help them be more flexible in planning a suitable career path without compromising one’ s own interest. And there is more enjoyable than doing a job that is also one’ s passion.