



Based on your experience, what are the most important attributes of a successful mentorship?

DATUK SERI MICHAEL YAM (DSMY):

Integrity, hard work, trust, discipline and leading by example. The latter is especially true in my industry, and you are only considered a leader if you can fill in for the person in charge when they are not around.

JAMES YAM (JY): The most important thing to establish is to decide what you need from a mentor. This helps make your mentorship a reciprocal one. Thereafter, attributes such as sharing common values, goals and admiration will also play a key role in the relationship; after all, what is a role model without a little admiration?

SHAUN MOK (SM): I've had many mentors throughout my working career: five when I was working in Sydney and one in Malaysia. All of them have left me with a lasting impression on various aspects of my career, but the one common thread that binds them together is

trust. Without this, a mentee cannot flourish. Other aspects such as skill, knowledge, experience and hard work can be developed over time, but trust is the first thing that must be established to ensure a fruitful and long-lasting mentorship.

What is it about your mentor/mentees that you admire most?

DSMY: In Asia, people tend to be more critical towards each other even when someone is performing well. However, the work that James has accomplished at Triterra in terms of PR, marketing and branding is as good, if not better than the services provided by third parties, especially once you take into consideration the size of his team and the resources they have to work with. For James, his strength lies in EQ, creativity and networking, which are critical in achieving success in any business. As for Shaun, he fills in the gap where technical competence and attention to details come in. He's also very methodical, good in dealing with people and knows how to find

opportunities through networking.
JY: While I've known my mentor my entire life, the structure and formality of our mentorship has evolved over the years. The one thing that constantly stands out is his integrity and humility - he is always approachable and willing to share his knowledge and experiences. He continually practices what he preaches, which is something that I deeply admire. When he was CEO of a public-listed company, his favourite signing pen was a simple Pilot ink pen. Whenever the ink ran out, he would personally go to the office administration department to replace it. He told me the reason he did this was because it is important for one to be accountable and responsible for everything, no matter how seemingly insignificant it may seem.

SM: Datuk Seri Michael (who is also my father-in-law) is one of the hardest working people that I've ever met; he finds joy in hard work, which is incredible since most people tend to view this as just something

you do to earn money. Once you witness how he does this, you feel compelled to find ways to adapt this into your own life. He's an extremely positive person when it comes to life, work or opportunities, and possesses this infectious energy that motivates everyone around him to put in their best at all times; he also enjoys learning new things, particularly when it involves the world of business. He is also someone who gives his time freely to hear you out, regardless of your status or social standing. More importantly, he's willing to share the knowledge he has gained from his experiences, particularly with the younger generation because he knows that the future lies in their hands.

Why did you choose Datuk Seri Michael to be your mentor, and what has been the greatest lesson that you have learned from him?

JY: There are many contributing factors. My dad came from humble beginnings as my grandparents were initially not very well off. They started with a small riverside dwelling in Kluang, Johor, and he remembers having to take refuge on the roof when it flooded. Despite these hardships, he worked hard and diligently to get to where he is today. So, whenever I reflect on the life he has provided for our family, there's no denying that this is who I aspire to be for my family one day. As for the greatest lesson, it would be to always leave something on the table for your stakeholders and investors; and no matter how small the gesture, to always give back to your customers as they will remember and support you in return. This has been ingrained in Triterra's DNA and we strive to feature it in every facet of our developments... and also, to always check your car's engine oil.

SM: When I was working in Sydney, I developed a very strong sense of western business acumens. Upon my return to Malaysia, I realised that it would be impossible to implement all of these practices here. It was Datuk Seri Michael that has guided me these past five years, which is something I never take for granted,

and I intend to impart the lessons he has thought me onto others which includes not rushing into things because patience is a virtue and opportunities will always come by; to always trust those that you entrust; and, finally, to always put in the hard work because nothing can replace it.

Any advice for our readers who might also be looking for a mentor's guidance?

DSMY: I'm also the chairman of an investment promotion agency that brings in huge MNCs to set up their regional headquarters in the greater Kuala Lumpur area, and the number one topic that constantly gets brought up is our local talent: there's not enough to go around and, more importantly, these talents are not prepared for Industry 4.0. To ensure that these graduates are industry-ready, corporations can start assigning these new talents to someone within the company that will make their work experience more substantive. Companies who wish to take this to the next level can also ensure that the final outcome is more objective by setting up KPIs or other measurable goals, while enabling these talents to give and receive proper feedback. If enough corporations start implementing this strategy, perhaps it will become more pervasive in Malaysia.

JY: For me, it would be to seek a mentor that enables and inspires you. However, one must also endeavour to nurture the relationship in a way that is beneficial to both parties. This will help you get the best out of your mentor and, subsequently, yourself.

SM: First and foremost is to have a clear goal in place; otherwise, how can you possibly know what it is you are looking for? Your values and those of your prospective mentor's must also be aligned. Finally, it is imperative to fully understand the current phase of your life or career, and to know that there are various types of mentors that can help guide you in these different aspects that will make you feel complete as a person. Therefore, don't be fixated on looking for that all-in-one solution because it simply doesn't exist.

What do you think are the major qualities to have in achieving success in both business and life?

DSMY: This can all be tied into Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG), which are the three central factors of doing business. To become a responsible businessman, you must consider ethics and governance. As for environmental, this relates to ensuring that the needs of the community residing in your place of business is well taken care of. In terms of corporate governance, this boils down to just doing the right thing and being consistent. Developing integrity and trust is also significant, which not only relates within one's organisation but also outwardly towards the people that you serve, such as clients and customers. Instead of taking all the profits and leaving them with nothing, it must always be a win-win situation.

JY: The prevailing practices that have benefited my life thus far would be to listen to counsel from those closest to you – especially your family's. It is also important to put your heart in the right place in all that you do, and to manage your emotions at all times so as to achieve that 'beautiful state' as defined by life-coach extraordinaire, Tony Robbins.

SM: For me, business is a part of life. This brings to mind a saying that I hold dear: 'Money is infinite but time is finite.' The amount of money we wish to acquire is always relative to the things that we treasure or value; but since time is finite, there will come a time when everything will end, which is why it is equally important to ensure that one lives life to its fullest. As for succeeding in business, the biggest challenge is striking that fine balance between confidence and humility, which is why staying grounded and remembering one's roots remain paramount towards achieving success. In summary, it's all about knowing where your priorities lie, and being clear about what you want to achieve while keeping in mind the ideals of hope, faith and love as you navigate through this journey we call life. ④

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