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# Dedicated to unlocking secret of success

*Chan was born to help those struggling to make something of themselves, getting people to take a hard look within and break the shackles holding them back from a life well lived, a life of accomplishment*

by SHIV DAS

FOR 44 years he's trained thousands...men, women and children, many of whom have gone on to be successful in their personal and working lives.

For Datuk Lawrence Chan Kum Peng, 71, it's as if he was born to help those struggling to make something of themselves, getting people to take a hard look within and break the shackles holding them back from a life well lived, a life of accomplishment.

Born the year the World War II (WWII) ended in 1945, his parents were inspired to name him Kum Peng or "golden peace" in Chinese.

Father was a home guard during the WWII and when it ended he became a clerk in the Central Electricity Board (now Tenaga Nasional Bhd or TNB).

Mother was a nurse in the war years and he sees her total dedication to attending to the sick and wounded as having rubbed off on him.

Even as a schoolboy in St Michael's Institution, Ipoh, he showed compassion, joining the St Vincent de Paul Society, raising money to buy essentials such as rice and flour for charity. "I just had this feeling of wanting to help the poor and disadvantaged," he recalled.

## TNB Scholarship

Later, a TNB scholarship helped him to enter the Technical College and get a diploma to become a technical assistant in the utility company.

In that capacity, he worked alongside some 300 lesser grade staff and came face to face with those who fell prey to bad habits such as gambling, borrowing money they couldn't repay.

"Chettians (Indian money lenders) would wait for them outside the gate on pay days to collect. Some of the staff daren't go home. I counselled them and got them to see the folly of

their ways, why it was important to repay their debts, even making them visualise where they would rather be in 10 years.

Realising he had the talent, he sought the advice of a United Nation's consultant for training as a trainer and made a career of it. He was given a lead in the US and was recruited as a trainee "instructor" and also another company dealing with home-care product distributor.

"Those days trainers were associated with dogs and horses," he said, explaining the term "instructor" rather than "trainer".

Having served his five-year bond with TNB, he resigned and off he went to the US to work for the company that hired him and get trained for roping in people to help sell its products.

It was a roller coaster ride in a foreign land and a foreign culture. He learned the hard way and Pauline, his wife, also from Ipoh he had befriended during his school days and who was working as a school teacher, joined him and they became an unbeatable team, having decided that failure was, not an option for them.

Pauline had the distinction of being the best Girl Guide selling poppies for the Red Cross and was crowned Ambassador of Malaysian Red Cross at the time. She won a two-week trip to the UK.

He had accompanied her and it was a holiday of their lives, given "royal" treatment the moment they arrived, whisked through immigration and getting to meet VIPs and all that, at a time-honoured gala event.

## PDLMC

Two years in the US was all the grounding Chan needed for him to return home in 1974 and set up his

own Personal Development and Leadership Management Corp (PDLMC).

With Pauline beside him, it was a slog to begin with, but one worth the grind they can look back on with pride whenever success is attributed to them. And there's plenty, going by testimonies of gratitude.

Rali Mohd Nor, CEO of Proton Parts Centre Sdn Bhd, had gone to the PDL programme in 1975, aged 30, and this was what he had to say: "Recently I was awarded 'The Most Outstanding CEO' within the Proton Group of Cos. The principles of PDL work, if you work them. I have sent all my managers and executives to the course to the extent of leaving only four people working in the office sometimes."

Ang Boon Tian, MD of Crocodile International Sdn Bhd (apparel company), attended the same course in 1979 and "the joy and excitement together with the dedication shown by Datuk Lawrence and his team have inspired me over the years and kept my candle burning".

The deputy Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Mohd Najib Abdul Aziz has acknowledged that what he had gained from PDL could not be fully expressed in words "but I can honestly say that I am still applying the principles (I learnt). I am able to programme meaningfully what I want to do. The principles I have acquired have served me well and I see no reason why they cannot work for others".

For Chan, he had made a personal commitment early on that he would start two new courses every year he was in business. Today he has some 80 courses on his plate, 20 of which he considers most popular.

They include:

- A one-hour "Transform to perform with excellence" talk for mem-

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bers of the Malaysian Retail Chain Association

- A two-day "World Class Leadership Skills of this New Age"
- Advanced Leadership Skills (three days)
- Effective Managers of this New Age (two+two days)
- Effective Supervisory Skills (three days)
- Managerial effectiveness (two days)
- Be an outstanding Professional at Work (two days)
- Quality Customer Service (two days)
- Professional Selling Skills (two days)
- Effective Public Speaking (two+one day)
- Stress Management (two days).

Training programmes for students include:

- Joy of Learning workshop (two days)
- Personal Development Leadership (five days — residential)
- Adventure-based Course for Teen-agers (four days, three nights)

• Master of Communication Skills (three days).

If his courses are in demand, it's because he tailors them according to what people want, not what he thinks they want. And that means the courses are short and where necessary split in order for the trainees to digest what they have learned before moving on in their syllabus.

All he's seeking to do is to trigger that light bulb moment in self-discovery to change lives without the need for long-drawn courses. It's about change in attitude towards oneself and the world around.

It's finding and rooting oneself in the basics of success - focus and planning, avoiding procrastination, having the determination to succeed and working the plan.

### Career as a Trainer

For Chan, PDL became his flagship four-day/night course that launched his career as a trainer and bring meaning to the lives of many a student, youth and adult lost and rudderless in an increasingly challenging

world.

For his dedication and commitment, he received a "Datuk" award from the late Sultan of Perak Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah, who as Royal Patron of the Malaysian Hockey Federation, said he had personally assessed Chan's approach in motivating the national hockey team to become world-class.

It was also the approach that specifically helped Cheah Soon Kit and Soo Beng Kiang to become badminton's world doubles champions in the late '90s.

He has many industry awards including his induction into the American Hall of Fame for Distinguished Accomplishments in Human Resource Development and Training.

Books to his name: The Route to Success, Personal Daily Motivators, An Achiever's Guide for Students, The Route to Effective Public Speaking and The Joy of Humour.

He's far from calling it a day any time soon simply because the desire to be true to his calling remains undiminished.

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