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# Ten Questions - Lisa Chin-A-Young



Lisa Chin-A-Young: "Broaden and value your network"

Lisa Chin-a-Young is an MBA alumnus from Insead in France and Singapore. Since graduating, she has co-founded a training company called The Marriage Development Company that reapplies business strategy and frameworks to home life. She calls it “smart thinking” for couples to communicate, plan and work together better. She is also an associate lecturer at the Open University Business School, teaching marketing and finance part time.

Born in Trinidad, Ms Chin-A-Young spent her early years in Quito, Ecuador and São Paulo, Brazil. She has an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering from Queen’s University in Kingston, Canada and worked for seven years at Procter & Gamble in brand management, before doing her MBA.

*Ms Chin-A-Young will be available for a live web chat on **Thursday, 26th April 2012**, between **12.00-13.00 GMT**. Post your questions now to [ask@ft.com](mailto:ask@ft.com) and they will be answered on the day.*

## 1. Why did you choose to do an MBA?

I thought it would be a great broadening experience. I had worked for P&G for seven years – five years in Canada and two in Latin America and, despite a successful career track, was none too excited about eventually ending up in Cincinnati (at the time I was single and had other, more “exciting” cities in mind!)

## 2. What academic achievement are you most proud of?

Completing my MBA, as I could have easily carried along my career track at P&G. It took some resolve to decide to take a career break – as I was on a very comfortable expat package with a great track record of accomplishments. However, I have the philosophy that I much prefer to sit on my rocking chair on retirement and regret things that I did do, rather than things I did not do. I also had advice from a mentor that I would never regret

an investment in education. This has proved to be true.

### **3. What would you do if you were dean of a business school for the day?**

Ensure that there is enough focus on the soft skills as well as the hard skills within the curriculum and overall programme experience. As someone once told me: “The soft skills are the hard skills” - so much of being a leader is dependent on your ability to communicate, build rapport and trust and set a culture and climate where your team can deliver their best results. The soft skills are also so important in managing and making the most of your personal relationships in life.

### **4. What is your biggest lesson learnt?**

Playing to your strengths helps you to deliver great results and to enjoy doing so. I found my MBA to be a great place to recognise what strengths I had by understanding where I stood relative to others. Knowing your values helps to guide your behaviour as you spend time in different industries and corporate cultures. Being different with unique skills can help to make you a scarce resource. I have found that being an analytical engineer in business, a multi-lingual expat abroad, an ex-strategy consultant within the energy sector and a business woman involved in healthcare have all been beneficial.

### **5. Have you ever been to any workshops/seminars that have helped you in your career?**

Early on in my career at P&G, I had a leadership training course that used the ‘3E’s’ model: Envision, Energise and Enable. I’ve always liked this model of leadership and have found it to be particularly relevant but not always followed in the business world. Too often ‘leaders’ forget that it is their responsibility to enable their teams to deliver results, rather than just expecting that things will happen on their own.

### **6. What advice would you give to women in business education?**

Broaden your skill set. Build and value your network. Recognise that you may choose to have a circular career path, rather than a linear one. Take a long view on your career and recognise that a steady climb up the corporate ladder may not be what makes you happy through all stages of your life. Live a full and happy life with no regrets.

### **7. How do you deal with male-dominated environments?**

I have found that being genuine, smart, delivering results and building rapport with colleagues are all important. I think women are often better at the soft skills and in working the “how” we get things done as well as the “what” we get done. These are skills that many

progressive companies appreciate. If you feel that you aren't in an environment where you can thrive, then stop wasting your time there and move on to somewhere where you can play to your strengths.

### **8. What is your favourite business book?**

*Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher, William L. Ury and Bruce Patton – a book on negotiation that I really enjoyed in my MBA. I found it insightful and practical in dealing with business as well as many other aspects of life's negotiations. I've seen too many poor decisions made or conflicts escalated because people can't see things from the perspective of the other party.

### **9. What inspires you?**

Meeting or hearing stories of people who have made a real difference, Dim sum, a bowl of laksa and sushi, Latin music, a nice cup of tea.

### **10. What is your plan B?**

I am living my plan B now – starting up The Marriage Development Company and being involved in education. My alternative career (what has been my Plan A to date) would be to go back into the corporate world in a leadership role for a multi-national company.

**Compiled by Charlotte Clarke**

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