

GRADUATION CEREMONY- NOVEMBER 2020

FACULTY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION & DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES (FoICDT)

Guest Speaker Speech- Mr. Neecharl Ramprosand

- *Chancellor, Dr. Louis Jean Claude Autrey*
- *Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dhanjay Jhurry, CSK, GOSK*
- *Pro-Vice Chancellor*
- *Members of the Congregation*
- *Distinguished academics*
- *Distinguished guests*
- *Graduands*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen*

Thank you for bestowing this honour as guest speaker to be part of this ceremony for the Faculty of Information, Communication and Digital Technologies at the University Of Mauritius. This is my first time as guest speaker at a graduation ceremony.

I am Neecharl Ramprosand, currently working as Head of ICT and DPO for Radisson Hotels Mauritius. I am also serving as Chairman of the IEEE Mauritius Section (which is part of the world's largest technological association dedicated for the advancement of technology for benefit of humanity). I am also the co-founder of the Rotary club of Saint-Pierre.

Graduands, you are among the few lucky people on Earth right now who are attending a physical graduation ceremony while most universities are forced to hold virtual graduation events due to COVID19. Let me emphasize that graduation is about more than just walking across this stage to collect your degree. It marks the end of an era of your life and the beginning of the next phase, which is something worth celebrating.

Today is a day of thanks. A day to thank those who helped you get here ...nurtured you...taught you....cheered on you on, and dried your tears.

Let me congratulate the proud parents, grandparents, friends, relatives and lecturers who toiled hard to see you finally gathered here to receive the fruits of your labour in this magnificent auditorium.

Many of you aspire to become Dev-Ops engineers, Microsoft specialists, Oracle DBAs, Cloud Architects, Mobile App developers, Network & Support engineers, IT Auditors, IT Security experts, Blockchain implementors, Lecturers, Teachers or Professors. The opportunities in the ICT sector are vast and expertises varies according to the industry you will join be it: Software companies, government, banking, hospitality, aviations, etc. It is a wise path which you have chosen.

ICT is of paramount importance to every single organisation. It has never been so relevant in this Covid19 stricken world. ICT tools and departments are allowing those institutions who invested in the ICT tools to continue operations. It is a well-known fact that its it is not the CEO or CIO who leapfrogged digitalisation in organisations but it is COVID19 which created a lot of momentum to embrace ICT tools. Students are allowed to learn from home on their mobile phones when last year they were being told to keep their phones away. Many organisation, including my own, now allow staffs to work from home when it was never allowed last year.

Every single new ICT tool be it a new SaaS or idea that I now introduce is being accepted by my organisation as we aim to minimise human contact. The QR code introduced on the famous WAP helped my organisation to digitalise all restaurant menus via a QRCode. Partners who once feared from sharing email addresses of customers are now willing to share those email addresses which in turn allows guests to fill-up and sign the registration cards on their own mobile devices. We also forced our banks to install touch & pay credit card terminals. We are now working on a decade-old constraint which is to interface our PMS with the bank's payment gateway.

Today I want to share some tips with you along with few stories about myself, Paul and my little son.

- ***Tip 1: Discipline.*** *Discipline is the key to success. You cannot achieve your goals without discipline. At my first job as a projects executive, one of my goals was to be more visible to my customers. I did not mind working late or at home because I had to satisfy my customers and provide worthy technical and financially viable solutions to each of their problems. It was eventually my own customer who hired me for my second job. I worked day and night at my second employer in order collect the experience and to earn my place as ICT Manager by the age of 25. It happens that my third employer was also my previous customer who entrusted me to open their 5-star hotel from ground till operation.*

I had to use a daily to-do-list, had to create different habits and moreover had to stop making excuses in order to succeed and open the hotel within a short timeframe.

Mind you, without discipline even a well-trained person can fail.

Tip 2: Earn the respect: *At first, your workplace won't care about your self-esteem or what you have learned at the university. Your seniors or bosses will expect you to accomplish something BEFORE they feel that you can be trusted and can be delegated with more responsibilities.*

There is often a gap between what you have learned and what organisations require. You have to work hard but really smart in order to bring that gap. You graduands are loaded with the latest technical know-how.

You are the generation who are have worked and lived with latest technologies such as 3g/4G, WIFI, Fiber Optics to the Home, Cloud Computing, millions of mobile apps such as Instagram, Juice, MyTMoney or even tiktok.....and IOT devices such as CCTV, smartwatches, smart air conditioners, etc...which my class did not have back then. My advice to you is to Bring that knowledge to the organisation you are joining and teach your senior colleagues on how to be more productive with the latest ICT tools. This will earn you the respect you crave for.

- **Tip 3: Start Humble:** *my young friends, you will NOT make 50,000 rupees a month right after walking out of this auditorium. You won't be given a management position with lots of priviledges in a big organisation, until you have worked for it.*

15 years ago when I came back to Mauritius, I thought at that time that I learned so many things at the university that I deserved a salary of at least Rs 45,000. Well, I had to face the reality and started in 2006 at a humble Rs 4500 per month as a network trainee. No one in my family ever worked in ICT positions and it was difficult to convince my parents whether my path was correct or not. Thank god I got a major salary break two years later after which they never ever doubted my decision.

So dear Parents present here, please do not be disappointed with your son's or daughter's first salary. There is a famous diction "Les routes difficiles mènent souvent à de belles destinations". Rest assured that salaries in ICT positions increase exponentially over the years.

- **Tip 4: Find a Work Buddy-***I have a cute little son who is nearly 11 months old. I have been observing his various attempts at walking. At the beginning in August, he wanted to be held with both hands so that he could walk. Nowadays, he wants to be held strictly by a single hand only, strictly because he will complain if held by both hands. So what I am trying to say is that he already knows the concept of a buddy. So should you at your workplaces: find the experienced buddy or guru who can guide you through the company's culture, policies and procedures as well as support you through your most difficult phases.*

Tip 5: Be prepared to work 24x7- *In whatever ICT positions you find yourselves into, I advise you to read the fine line: be ready to work 24x7. Let it be known that ICT positions carry the weight of providing support to the staffs and especially the management at any time. By the way, always remember to prioritse management requests.*

Sometimes the systems secretly know that the ICT staffs are on their day-off or it's a Sunday and decide to fall apart. I will never forget my honeymoon trip when I had to intervene remotely from Kuala Lumpur from midnight till 4am. There are known cases of software developers who work hard in their dreams in order to find that single bug in their software codes!

Please also expect to receive that weird complaint at 4pm from a non-ICT colleague that he could not work whole day due to IT fault when in fact he or she didn't plug in the network cable on the laptop since morning

Or the call from a relative stating that her neighbour stole her facebook password.

- **Tip 6: Always learn something new every night-** This simple mantra was given to me by my late mentor Mr. Paul Larue. Paul worked on the development of Cisco's Next Generation firewall. He was in-charge of 3 teams globally dispersed in USA, UK and India. Paul had a great command over network systems architectures, protocols, technology standards, etc. His mantra kept me on my toes and is a reminder that ICT is a fast-evolving sector. Either you upgrade yourselves or perish. You need to learn new skillsets every months at the beginning. In 1999, probably the year that many of you were born, a group of friends ordered our first online book on Amazon which was a new thing for us. Little did we know that Amazon will one day sell services whereby you as a student can afford such as renting a server for some rupees. You can become an AWS certified devops engineer or cloud practitioner or even a Machine Learning specialist with some days of intense studies and practice. So my advice to you is to spend that 30-minutes daily on that new field of interest.

- **Tip 7: Vacation is over-**A student's life is amazingly divided into semesters and 3 yearly beautiful long-vacations. And not to forget the foam parties. I used to enjoy my university vacations. Well, am afraid that now you won't get those 3 yearly vacations, and [pause] very few employers are interested in helping you find a work-life balance, or take Monday off because you have hangover. Most of you will have 21 local leaves annually once you join the workforce. Organisations expect you to work in teams in order to solve a problem.

Tip 8: Don't let complexity stop you-Graduands, you will never have more enthusiasm, creativity, hair, or brain cells than you have today. Take this opportunity to take on big challenges right now. It is a perfect time to achieve something big and meaningful. I am sure that it will be one of the greatest experiences of your lives.

To quote Dale Carnegie: "The person who gets the farthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare. The sure-thing boat never gets far from shore."

As a closing note, a group of students, friends and myself at IEEE have conducted many activities this year 2020 namely the Maurivent opensource ventilator project during the national lockdown, we co-sponsored the UOM mobile app challenge and UOM Science fair days, we are working on a UV Disinfection project, we collaborated with USA's NOAA team and their super computer on an Oil spill simulation, we held 3 webinars with two distinguished international speakers, and we are the technical co-sponsor of the UOM FOE's Elecom2020 international conference.

AWS didn't exist 20 years ago, Whatsapp didn't exist 15 years ago, Zoom didn't exist 10 years ago, Tiktok didn't exist 5 years ago.

So my challenge to you graduands is: Who can make the next killer-app worldwide and bring fame to Mauritius?

Good luck, congratulations to all graduands and thank you for your attention!