

Alumni Sharing Experience - Inspiring Work Experience and Covid-19 Pandemic Challenge

29 December 2020 - The University of Technology Malaysia (UTM), School of Computing has held an online webinar on alumni sharing sessions for students taking the Technology and Information course via an application called Webex. This talk was conducted online and the talk was about inspiring work experience and the Covid-19 pandemic challenge. Dr Johanna Ahmad hosted the talk and three UTM alumni were present as the speakers during the session. Tan Yong Keong, who is currently working as a data science engineer for about a year and a half, Qistina Batisyia, who is currently working for a year as a social media data analyst, and Mohamad Zamaruk Akmal, who is currently working as a data engineer, were the three alumni who were present. Currently, each and every one of them is doing well and excellent in their own respective jobs and career. Based on the questions asked by Dr Johanna Ahmad and also by the students during the Q&A session at the end of the talk, they delivered their talk by offering their own views and sharing their experiences.

The objective of this talk is to illustrate the chances and challenges of finding a job in this pandemic since the Covid-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the economy of our country, and this has affected many people. Because of the unstable economy, a lot of people have lost their jobs and finding a job during this pandemic is getting harder and harder. So in this sharing session, this will be the chance and opportunity for the students to learn and gain a lot of tips on how to get employed with the experiences of their alumni.

From our first speaker Tan Yong Keong, As a successful alumnus of UTM, he has shared many tips and tricks of his succession in both curriculum and non-curriculum aspects. He shared that cgpa may not be important but we must maintain a certain level, either way he achieved a cgpa of 3.90 which is very high. He also stated that students must enter competition without worrying about losing or winning. Losing and winning is a part of competition there is no way to escape that. Losing in a competition also means you are winning in terms of experience. He mentioned that he, himself wins and lose many competitions During his internship period, he has been involved in a lot of freelance jobs. Upon his way on obtaining a permanent job in industry, he also went through various job interviews that test his technical and soft skills based on the respective fields. At the same time, he mentioned on the importance of mastering the basic concept of programming languages. This is because once one is able to master the concepts, they can apply them on other programming languages without any issues. Nonetheless, he also stressed that one should try to create programs instead of simple codes when learning new programming languages. He wrapped his talk by encouraging the students to learn extra miles and master other non-academic skills.

Next, Mohamad Zamarul Akmal bin Mohd Hussin is the second speaker in the session. He proudly mentioned that it was because of his proactive performances, outstanding soft skills and extra technical skills during internship that enabled him to secure his job. He keeps himself motivated by reminding himself that not everyone gets to have the chance that he is currently having, which is handling a project which is quite a big project. He also keeps himself motivated by having caffeine. To show his proactiveness, Zamarul kept on providing ideas and opinions during meetings. He also learned some extra technical skills after signing up to various online courses such as Data Stars, edX and LinkedIn Learning that made him stand out among the other interns. During internship, Zamarul also impressed his employers with his soft skills due to the experiences he had after joining many universities programs. Thus, he really encouraged us to develop our soft skills and technical skills whenever we have the chances. His source of motivation is by frequently reminding himself that he should appreciate every opportunity given. Lastly, Zamarul advised us to learn to minimize our mistakes as mistakes made at work may affect our working performance, and the most crucial is our resume especially if we plan to switch jobs in the future.

As for our third speaker, Qistina Batrisyia Binti Azman Shah. She is an alumni of UTM in Bachelor of Computer Science (Data Engineering). She is now working for TM One in the position of Social Media Data Analyst. During her internship, she mentioned that her effort and industrious work has given her the opportunity to work for the same company in her internship. She has shared her tips to increase chances of getting hired during the pandemic which is to be proactive which means to find answers and solutions rather than waiting for it. The second tip from her is to learn new things. Her way of learning new things is to voluntarily help other people and contribute to a lot of other projects. Qistina mentioned that her way of gaining confidence is to join a lot of programs that need her to expose herself to talk and present her project ideas. Then she tells us how she motivates herself doing her job. She motivates herself by loving her job and it keeps her motivated to do better. Finally, she ended the talk by telling the listeners to have fun and not stress yourself out.

In conclusion, it is evident that the current COVID-19 pandemic is affecting everyone in different ways no matter their background. During this sharing session, each speaker has shared their own personal experience from graduating leading up to them entering the work industry to have a successful career. One thing that is common from all the speakers is to be proactive by providing ideas and opinions, rather than sitting and just waiting for instruction due to fear of getting shot down. Another common thing from the speakers is to follow the advancement of the tech industry so as to not be obsolete and outdated compared to everyone else. This can be overcome by constantly learning new things in our free time by volunteering and contributing in various projects.



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Lee Jia Xian :

In this sharing session, I gained a lot of knowledge and information about the speakers' working experiences that are very insightful and help, particularly for me as a future graduate. From the talk, I realized that CGPA is not a thing that decides the future success career of a student. Before assessing success, there are a lot of factors involved that must be counted. This talk made me understand the importance of acquiring skills to secure a job. This really encourages me to take part in more programs during my undergraduate study life for me to improve my soft skills. Besides, those programs will also expand my social circle in my life. For me, I think that this talk is very informative and I really enjoyed the session.

Adam Wafii Bin Azuar :

This sharing session has taught me to not be afraid and to not doubt myself. My confidence in my potential is strengthened because I now know that we lose every chance that we do not take. I will try to take every chance I have to push myself out of my comfort zone by contributing the resources I have such as my ideas and energy. I used to be afraid of giving out my opinion or idea when needed no matter how good I think it was because I was not confident enough in myself, but not anymore. I am also determined to keep learning new things so that I won't get left out in this competitive environment and stay up to date with any current trend or development.

Adrina Asyiqin Binti Md Adha :

The talk helps me see how the working industry works. Having a high cgpa does not mean we will succeed in life, but it also determines our chance in a certain company. Basically I need to maintain a certain level of cgpa to be confident in getting accepted. I also learnt that we must push ourselves into entering competitions. Losing or winning is another matter, the skills are what is important. Being in a competition forces us to think creatively, to create great teamwork and to solve problems. Companies are looking for employees that are both intellectual but also skillful. The speakers told us to appreciate every single task given to us, because in one way or another these assignments might help us in the future. In every company, each team will be given a task or project. Even if our group is given the least important project, we need to achieve the given goals and do the project as perfect as we could because every project determines and reflects the quality of the company. There will always be challenges but we will have to face it.

Luqman Ariff Bin Noor Azhar :

I have learnt a thing or two from this session and it was very valuable information that I am sure will help me in my career. I now know that making a mistake in the corporate world is not as tolerable as it would be if I am still studying. Any decision made would cost me my job or even my future in the field. Therefore I must be confident with my skills first which should be improved right now while I still could be guided.

Kong Jia Rou :

This talk has given me an overall view of work experience which I will face in the future. It also makes me realize that working in real life and studying are two different chapters of one's life. The skills needed in both working and studying are totally different. Working is more about applying soft skills like communication and team working which mostly we cannot learn from books. We must involve ourselves in different kinds of activities, such as participating in a competition, volunteering in a project etc, to gain these skills. In order to be successful in the future or present, sometime these experiences play a more important role than our academic result.