

V-Khye Gideon Fan

Commencement 2004 Speech

Thank you Dean Frank.

Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests, faculty, and fellow graduates –

a wise man who spent his life searching for what is good wrote in his ancient manuscript known as Ecclesiastes that:

There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,

a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,

a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,

a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,

a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,

a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,

a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.

Today is a special day as we are caught in the doorway between our past and our future. Today is a time to reflect upon our yesterdays and a time to consider our tomorrow...

Let us reflect upon yesterday, and consider the days when it was time to sit on the magic carpet for story time because today I want to tell you a story we have all grown up with.

Specifically, a little red hen that majored in business.

There once was a farm out in the countryside where a farmer owned many animals.

Times were hard in the economy, and so the farmer told the animals he needed to leave for a long period of time to attend an egg & milk trade conference.

All the animals dearly loved this farmer, but none more than the Little Red Hen.

One day, the Little Red Hen was taking a walk when she discovered a few grains of wheat on the floor.

As a graduate from Poultry University, and the Cluck U Business School, she recognized this as an opportunity to help make a profit for the cash-strapped farmer by establishing a bread business!

Excited, she went to her coop to draft up a business proposal, which upon a Powerpoint briefing with the other animals in the farm, received a standing ovation!

Now the Little Red Hen knew that there was much work to be done – so she went to the various animal departments asking for help:

“The wheat should be planted,” she said. “Who will find the labor?”

“Not us!” said the General Business Ducks, as they typed away at their business plans on wireless-carded laptops.

“Then I will!” said the Little Red Hen, still excited.

“The wheat is ripe,” said the Little Red Hen. “Who will develop a cutting edge system that will track the harvesting process?”

"Not us!" said the Information System Rabbits, as they tangled with wires and ethernet cards.

"Then I will!" said the Little Red Hen.

"The wheat needs to be threshed," said the Little Red Hen. "Who will develop and ensure an excellent process?"

"Not us!" said the Operations and Quality Management Cows, as they tinkered with machinery and samples.

"Then I will!" said the Little Red Hen.

"The wheat needs to be taken to the mill," said the Little Red Hen. "Who will help arrange for safe and reliable transportation of this wheat?"

"Not us!" said the Logistics and Transportation Sheep, as they watched the trucks, planes, trains, and ships going by.

"Then I will!" said the Little Red Hen.

After the wheat had been ground into flour at the mill, the Little Red Hen had the flour trucked to the factory where it would be made into bread.

And then she said, "Who will keep track of how much we are spending in this project?"

"Not us!" said the Accounting Roosters, as they pecked at credits and debits, trying to balance everything.

"Then I will!" said the Little Red Hen, starting to notice a trend.

Then the Little Red Hen said, "Who will develop the marketing plan, specifically the four P's, so that customers will know about our wonderful bread?"

"Not us!" said the Marketing Bulls, as they dreamed of advertising and Superbowl commercials.

"Then I will!" said the Little Red Hen.

Realizing that the world was going global, the Little Red Hen then asked, "Who will oversee our international operations and expansion program?"

"Not us!" said the International Business Horses, as they searched the Internet for other international opportunities.

"Then I will!" said the Little Red Hen.

Thinking about global issues, Little Red Hen thought about the stock market. She asked, "Who will manage our stock portfolios?"

"Not us!" said the Finance Turkeys, as they stared at the ever-scrolling numbers... that just kept scrolling...

"Then I will!" said the Little Red Hen.

Now the bread returned back to the farm, and it was with great excitement as container upon container of the sweet-smelling bread came in.

A great chatter spread like wildfire among the animals – as they anticipated taking a bite into the fresh bread...

Then the Little Red Hen shouted above the rumble of the containers being delivered, "Who will eat the bread?"

"We will!" said all the animals

To this, the Little Red Hen replied,

"Each of you will have a small piece, but had you given more – you would have received more for because I had to do everything myself, there is barely enough to break even.

Do you not see that we live on the same farm under the same farmer?"

* * * *

Friends, this leads me to ask the question: what does it mean to major in business?

From the first time someone discovered that he could ask for help from a more skilled person to when someone discovered she was producing more than she needed, there business was born.

There, where the first exchanges of goods and services among different people occurred, was where business was born.

As these exchanges occurred – relationships were created – there was a connection among people – between villages – cultures – kingdoms – and nations.

Trade was born as was information passed on... so that people now were able to learn from each other.

The business world transcends boundaries – political and artificial – because the business world is about relationships. It's about people interacting for the common good – to exchange goods and services.

Just as one country cannot remain isolated forever in this world, how much more so can a single person remain isolated in these times?

How can the Little Red Hen's of the world run the business world by themselves?

As John Donne eloquently put it, "No man is an island"... No person is an island.

So what do we do? To major in business is to major as servants of the people. We work so that others may eat, live, and enjoy life as it should be – with each other. We specialized in our skills so that we can contribute our part – for don't we see, that we are all in the same world?

Friends, we have taken time today to reflect upon our past ... and now we must consider the future. What time is it now?

This is the time ... this is our time...

- to build organizations, to empower people
- to create jobs, to provide quality goods and services
- to use our newfound skills to serve the people of this world.

So, we are left with one final question to ponder...

What will we do with our time?