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LESSONS OF SUCCESS FROM JK ROWLING

By Dr Victor S.L. Tan

WE have often heard many inspiring stories from business tycoons from the likes of Warren Buffet, Bill Gates, Richard Branson and Jack Ma. But seldom do we capture the success principles from writers. In particular in this article, I would like to focus on the lessons of success from the billionaire writer JK Rowling – the Harry Potter famed extraordinary writer.

JK Rowling is a British novelist, screenwriter and producer who became famous due to her book on the *Harry Potter* series. *Forbes* ranked her wealth at US\$1.2billion making her possibly the first billionaire writer in the world.

To have a real feel where this success story started, recently I took a trip to the very place where JK Rowling used to write her famed *Harry Potter* series of books – The Elephant House in Edinburgh, Scotland. And it is inside this very café that JK Rowling wrote her series of *Harry Potter* books.

Here are the lessons of success we can learn from JK Rowling.

TAKE RISK AND DO NOT BE AFRAID TO FAIL

Go all out and pursue whatever you think you can and want to do. Do not let fear or let the opinions of others stop you from the things you want to do. Take risks, experiment, fail if need be but then persevere until you succeed. In fact, JK Rowling by her admission that by seven years after her graduation, she had actually failed on an epic scale –

with a broken marriage, jobless, penniless and being a single parent raising her daughter in cramped apartment.

The value of failure stripped one of all pretense and reality hits one real hard - that one cannot be anything else better unless one does something to overcome the challenge and move on to better things. In the case of JK Rowling she put all her talent, effort, commitment in her work that matters – her writing of novels.

JK Rowling said it more precisely, "It is impossible to live without failing at something unless you live so cautiously that you might not have lived at all, in which case you fail by default."

PURSUE YOUR PASSION

Passion indeed is a powerful motivator. It gives one the energy, the power and perseverance to continue doing what one loves and prevail over challenges. JK Rowling has the passion to write children fantasy novels. Her seven series books have been translated into 79 languages, won multiple awards, and sold more than 450 million copies worldwide, becoming the best-selling book series in history.

In the beginning she faced resistance and doubts. Even her parents wondered for a long time how she would pay her bills and survive just by writing novels. Her first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stones* was rejected 12 times and JK Rowling was told, "not to quit her day job". Her passion in writing helps her to persevere until her book was eventually published by Bloomsbury in 1997. Her passion has given her the will and discipline to prevail over great



The writer at the front of The Elephant House - the café JK Rowling used to write *Harry Potter* books.

obstacles and succeed.

ROMANTICISE WEALTH INSTEAD OF POVERTY

In her speech, JK Rowling delivered to a Harvard graduation class of 2008, she cautioned, "Poverty itself is romanticised only by fools. It means a thousand petty humiliations and hardships. It entails fear, and stress, and sometimes depression" JK Rowling knew what it was like to be poor. She felt the agony of not being able to provide adequately and to depend on welfare when she was struggling as single parent raising her daughter. She knew about the desperation and despair that poverty can bring one often to a point of being suicidal.

None of us need to believe that we have to be poor to be good. There is nothing wrong in pursuing wealth. We owe it to ourselves and family to be financially strong to provide them the comforts of life. It is certainly more meaningful to live the good abundant life than to suffer an impoverished life.

THE MAGIC OF CHANGE LIES WITHIN US

"We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better".

JK Rowling advocates the use of our imagination and to put ourselves in the shoes of those who do not have the advantages that we have. We can use our knowledge, skills, talent, ability or resources to help address the causes that are plaguing our world today. JK Rowling practices what she preaches. It was noted that in 2011 itself she gave away US\$160million in charity, about 16 per cent of her net worth to various charities and causes which include multiple sclerosis and AIDS foundation.

She believes that one has a moral responsibility to give to others when one has been provided more than one needs. Her charitable donations have transformed the lives of the many disadvantaged folk. JK Rowling was awarded the 2016 PEN/Allen award. This award is bestowed to an author whose work embodies its mission to oppose repression in any form, and to champion the best of humanity.

JK Rowling is indeed not only a successful writer but one with a caring heart who is doing much to inspire, touch and help thousands of the disadvantaged out there. She indeed plays a significant part to help make their world a better place.



Dr Victor S.L. Tan is the chief executive office of KL Strategic Change Consulting Group. His passion is to inspire others to bring out the best in themselves and hence, contribute to make this world a better place. For more information, contact him at victorsiltan@klsc.com or WhatsApp him at 012 3903168.

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