

## Welcome

Welcome to the hundred and first (101st) edition of the regular column "The Catalyst".

## Networking

I thought of discussing a bit about professional networking today.

What is Networking? It is really the creation of a collection of resources to be used when a requirement arises. From a perspective of a professional, it means having a pool of human resources ready to be tapped on to when required. It's as simple as that. The important question is, how do you build it?

## 'It's not what you know — it's who you know'

In certain environments including business, people say that 'It's not what you know — it's who you know'. So how should we go about building the 'who you know' network?

Professionals need support in various ways. Younger ones need guidance on the switch from the university/studies to the work place, you will need some support in preparing your resume, finding the right role or the right employer. Even senior professionals might be wondering about job options and business opportunities and expert guidance would be very helpful. Yes, most of us would have a network of friends but in most instances most of our friends would be in the same stage in their careers, so would they be in a position to advice on some of the more complicated career matters? More often, the answer is not, even if they do, guidance from someone with solid experiences, knowledge and insight can make a difference.

Another side of it is that most jobs in the market do get filled up without even being advertised. Tapping into this "hidden" job market is helped by a strong network.

## Six Degrees of Separation

There is this interesting phenomenon of "Six Degrees of Separation" where it's argued that each person on this planet is separated by another by just six people or less. A friend once jokingly suggested that when you are dealing with Sri Lankans, the six degrees reduces to about three. Whether the exact number is precise or not is out of the

# It's not what you know — it's who you know

scope of this discussion, but the bottom line is that if you need to get to know a certain person, may it be the owner of a local company or the CEO of a leading global enterprise, it is possible, but

Computer Society of Sri Lanka (CSSL) is building up two chapters for Young Professionals and Students. If you are interested, please drop me a line and I will connect you with the right per-

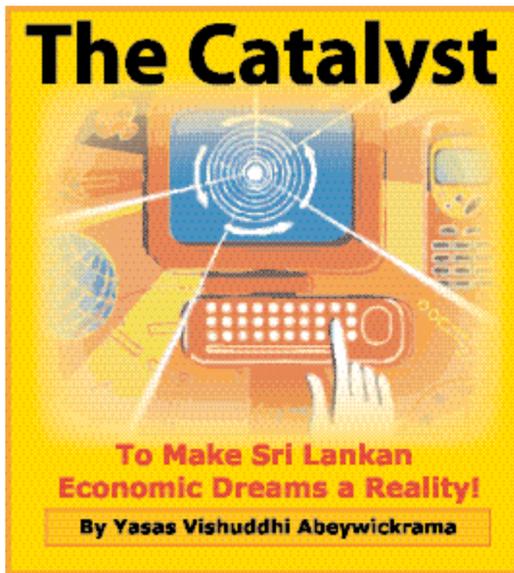
long way and people hardly forget these small gestures. It's not only in networking, but also in all activities it's important to be honest and authentic, it attracts people towards you. It's also important to learn how to connect with others. This takes some experience and practice, but we all need to master it, some people are gifted with it to some extent, but it doesn't stop others from improving. Looking directly into people's eyes, smiling with your heart, listening well, being well mannered in conversations, avoiding conflicts, and also cultural empathy are some things to keep in mind when networking.

Professionals need to consider themselves as products available in the market to be sold for professional industry purposes, therefore it is very important to maintain professional standards and demonstrate such conduct in your networking activities. Professionals that resemble strong skills through planning and organising appeal to other professionals (in other words, future potential employers), so through these efforts you are setting a strong foundation for a successful career. On the other hand, you accumulate valuable skills on your way which will add value to your resume.

physical meetings and activities really make them stronger and intimate. My advice would be to use web 2.0 to consolidate existing relationships but do not rely on it as the sole relationship creator, the world is still more traditional when it comes to effective useful relationships. After all we are still human and we all appreciate a bit of 'human touch'.

## Volunteering

I often meet people who say that with their university or job commitments they cannot make time for industry related and networking activities. I personally believe in the inverse of the principle 'work expands to fill the time available', which creates enough time if you really want to do something seriously! On the other hand, it gives you an opportunity to serve the society as a volunteer. Volunteering to make lives of others better is one of the best ways to make yourself happy and be satisfied with your own. I have spent many hours volunteering for the benefit of the industry I am involved in. It has allowed me to give something back, and it has also helped me to grow my network. Most other types of volunteering such as Rotary club, old boys associations, drama clubs etc. also help the same way



you've just got to get to know the right people whom in turn would lead you to that person.

For younger professionals, it's not easy to do effective networking, it takes courage and practice. One of the most important things to do is to get involved with the accredited industry association very early in your career, preferably while you are still a student. If you are a student, be sure to be a part of the university club for your area of interest and most importantly be actively involved in their activities. Through these associations, make sure to be a part of organising events and participating in those events, so that you get to know many people in the industry. If you are an active organiser, the chances of building a closer and stronger relationship are far greater than just being a participant.

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## 'give and take' principle

An important aspect to keep in mind is that the world is based on the 'give and take' principle. If someone only expects to get help from others and has that as the sole objective of networking, it's impossible for that person to sustain fruitful results. As much as you seek help from others, you need to be open to help others as well. You don't necessarily have to be in a high position to help out others. For instance, as a student, you may not be able to advise someone on their dilemma on which postgraduate course to study, but you are well placed to help by linking them with your university lecturer who teaches the relevant subjects or by offering simple assistance such as finding the course details for them. These small things go a

friends again, keep in touch, network and importantly do some social service to the society at large.

I make this an opportunity to mention a great activity that this group carried out recently.

This group has participated in supporting the Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation with a financial donation in July. Brigadier Dharshana Hettiarachchi (Commissioner General of Rehabilitation), Colonel Dharshana Liyanage (Deputy General of Rehabilitation), Colonel Pradeep Perera (general staff) and Captain Niroshan Rathnaweera (rehabilitation, release and monitoring) were there to accept the donation and the 99 Group was represented by the president Minidu Abesekera, Secretary D K D A Deshapriya and committee member Manoj Lanka.

The group has recognised how challenging it is to rehabilitate the country especially in directly war affected areas and the difficulties faced by authorities and rehabilitation personnel involved with the operation. Hats off to Ananda 99 Group!

The next event of this group is the Annual Cricket Carnival to help bring school mates and their families together for a day full of cricket, fun activities and entertainment. This event will be held on the 4th of August from 8AM onwards at Shalika Grounds, Narahenpita. For more details, please visit <http://www.ananda99.org>.

See you next week!

## The Columnist

Yasas Vishuddhi Abeywickrama is a professional with significant experiences. In 2011 he was recognised as one of the Ten Outstanding Young Persons (TOYP) in Sri Lanka. Yasas has a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from University of Colombo and a Masters degree in Entrepreneurship & Innovation from Swinburne University in Australia. He has worked in the USA, UK, Sri Lanka & Australia and being trained in the USA & Malaysia. He is currently the CEO of Lanka BPO Academy ([www.lankabpoacademy.lk](http://www.lankabpoacademy.lk)). Yasas is also an Executive Council Member of the Computer Society of Sri Lanka (CSSL - [www.cssl.lk](http://www.cssl.lk)). Apart from this column, he is a regular resource person for 'Ape Gama' program of FM Derana (Sunday 3-5pm). Yasas is happy to answer your relevant questions - email him at [yva@lankabpoacademy.lk](mailto:yva@lankabpoacademy.lk).



## Web 2.0 and Social Media

With web 2.0 and social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn coming into our lives, there has never been an easier time to grow your network faster. Whilst Internet provides effective means of maintaining networks, actual



Ananda 99 Group Donating to the Bureau of the Commissioner General of Rehabilitation

## Ananda 99 Group

When I talk about volunteering, I cannot not mention 99 Group of Ananda College, which is a volunteer body of old Anandians who left the school in 1999. I am a member of it, and the group allows us to meet old

# Migrant workers are essential to hotel industry

A recent ILO study on 'Migrant workers in the international hotel industry' shows how migrant workers and the hotel industry depend on each other. It also looks at the general working conditions these workers face. The ILO's hotel, catering and tourism expert Wolfgang Weinz discusses the main findings of the report.

**Q: What do we know about the number of migrant workers employed in the hotel industry worldwide?**

**Weinz:** It is impossible to say how many migrant workers are among the 235 million people employed in the sector, as the situation keeps changing and varies widely from one country to another. Also, informal employment in hotels does exist in some countries. What we know for sure is that the ageing population in many developed economies means that more and more migrant workers will be hired in hotels, especially women and youth.

**Q: Why does the hotel industry rely so much on migrants?**

**Weinz:** Hotels are among the largest and most rapidly expanding industries worldwide. They require a lot of staff. However, they also need flexibility based on

seasonal work. As a result, workers are usually hired on temporary contracts. Salaries tend to be low since positions do not necessarily require high skills. Working conditions are often difficult, including night-shifts and working during



weekends. This is why jobs in hotels are not very attractive for the local population, especially in developed countries.

**Q: Can you tell us a bit more about their working conditions?**  
**Weinz:** Working conditions

vary widely from one country to another. However, it is clear that migrant workers are particularly vulnerable in terms of health and safety. They are also more likely, women especially, to remain in low-skill and lower-paid positions.

Working conditions vary widely from one country to another. However, it is clear that migrant workers are particularly vulnerable in terms of health and safety. They are also more likely, women especially, to remain in low-skill and lower-paid positions. Also, migrant workers do not always benefit from supportive trade union representation.

Also, migrant workers do not always benefit from supportive trade union representation. There is a "north-south" divide in the roles and responsibilities of migrant employees. Those from poorer countries tend to work at the lower end of the workforce spectrum, while those from developed countries take senior managerial and technical positions.

**Q: What does the hotel industry offer to migrants in return?**

**Weinz:** Many migrant workers do not see the hotel industry in terms of a long-term career commitment and try to move to other sectors of the host economy or to return home as a medium- to long-term goal. However, their job often provides them with the opportunity to send money home and care

for the needs of their family. Sometimes they use their stay abroad to acquire new language skills that can be useful later on in their careers. In the best case scenario, they can go back home and start their own hotel business

based on the skills they have acquired.

**Q: What impact did the crisis have on migrant workers in the hotel industry?**

**Weinz:** Even though the study entitled "Migrant workers in the international hotel industry" does not focus specifically on the impact of the economic crisis, it is to be expected that people in the most affected countries will now tend to accept more low-paid hotel jobs than before the crisis. This affects international, as well as internal migrants. In Egypt, for example, the lack of job opportunities in rural areas has forced many people to look for jobs in hotels in tourist areas.

(Courtesy ILO)

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### Seylan...

two equity injections totaling LKR7.7bn. As at end-June 2012 the state effectively controlled 32% of Seylan's voting equity.

"Fitch estimates that Seylan's total capital adequacy ratio (total CAR) will improve to 14.90% by end-2012 if the debt issue raises LKR1bn. This is based on the agency's assumption that the bank will achieve 16% annual growth in risk-weighted assets and full-retention of annualised Q112 profits of LKR1.65bn. Total CAR stood at 14.68% at end-March 2012.

"A perceived weakening of the government's capacity to extend support to Seylan, including a downgrade of the Sovereign rating ('BB-/Stable),

### SLPA...

Expansion Project, Magam Ruhunupura Mahinda Rajapaksa Port in Hambantota, Galle Port Development, Oluvil Port Project, Trincomalee and KKS Port Development Project), which would create ample investment opportunities for both local and foreign investors, the private sector has already committed to invest approximately US\$ 3 billion in the Colombo Port City development project, South terminal, Hambantota free zone and Trincomalee industrial zone," the SLPA said.

"Accordingly, approximately 230 hectares, that is nearly 575 acres, of water front sheltered by the new breakwater will be reclaimed at an investment of approximately US\$ 900 million by a foreign investor. The plan has been given approval by the Standing Cabinet Appointed

could lead to a downgrade of Seylan's ratings. Rating upside is limited in the medium-term, given that the bank's stand-alone profile is still weaker than its support-driven rating despite considerable improvements and restructuring since 2008, and is likely to be solely driven by an upgrade of the Sovereign rating," Fitch said.

Seylan's ratings:

- National Long-Term Rating: 'A-(Ika)'; Outlook Stable
- Outstanding LKR465m rated-senior unsecured redeemable debentures: 'A-(Ika)'
- Outstanding LKR1.437bn rated-subordinated debentures: 'BBB+(Ika)'
- Proposed rated-subordinated debentures of up to LKR2bn: 'BBB+(Ika)'

Review Committee (SCARC). At the recently concluded international Seatrade Conference and Exhibition at the Hilton hotel in Colombo, Dr.Priyath B.Wickrama - Chairman of SLPA emphasized that the area will be developed as a port city with roads, water, electricity, communication facilities to set up shopping areas, water sports area, mini golf course, hotels, apartments, recreation areas, marinas and with a lot more additions that would develop the area as a modern city.

"These innovations will not only change the geography and outlook of Sri Lanka, but also extend immense strength to the government's efforts to ensure continuity and dedication towards realizing the goal of making Sri Lanka, the most competitive and preferred maritime and logistic center in the Asian region," the SLPA said.