

## UNISA Graduation Speech

Raymond Spencer

His Excellency Rear Admirable Kevin Scarce, Governor of South Australia; Dr Ian Gould Chancellor of the University of South Australia; Professor Peter Høj Vice Chancellor; Distinguished Guests; Graduands; Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very honoured to be here today and humbled that I have been asked to be part of this illustrious gathering. I did not graduate from university but I do have two daughters who did which is the closest I have come to participating in a graduation ceremony.

You have come from so many different places to study at this fine University. This is an exciting time for you and your parents and friends as it marks a great milestone in your life journey.

At times like this the last thing you need is someone like me standing here and giving you free advice and telling you what to do.

I wish to share four short stories from my life that illustrate some of the life principles I have found helpful to guide my decisions and actions. You can decide if they work for you

The first story is entitled “**Be a life long enquirer**”

Life is such a wonderful mix of things I can understand and things that are a complete mystery. Both deserve rational and intuitive enquiry.

From the age of 20 to 26 I lived in India and spent a lot of time living in villages. I received countless life gifts from my time there and one I carry with me is being willing to ask the most basic questions. I am always amazed at how much people really enjoy being asked to share their thoughts.

The other day I sat with three women in this city who are each concerned about the lack of women in leadership roles in business and also in engineering and science.

I have learned to use a method of enquiry that starts by asking the most basic, factual, objective level questions to get a clear picture of the situation. I then move on to a level of reflection that seeks people’s feelings and emotions. Then to the interpretive level where we discuss what it all means and what can be done and finally to questions that provoke decision and commitment for further action or involvement.

This very simple natural methodology of moving from the objective level to the reflective to interpretive to decision elicited not only a wonderful and spirited

conversation that went on for twice as long as we had planned, but also numerous ideas and paths forward that we are now keen to implement.

We live in a time of life long learning. You have learned how to learn.

**You can be a life long enquirer.**

My second story is titled **“There is a solution to every problem”**

There is nothing that can happen in life that cannot be worked through. I talk about this as having a mindset that all is possible.

If you view circumstances or events in your life as problems then you can start to take on a victim mentality. View these only as challenges. Each challenge brings with it an opportunity to reflect, to grow, and to push your limits. This requires determination, persistence, creativity, and being proactive.

No matter what you do in life you will have highs and lows. It's the work you do and the persistence you have in the lows that determines how high you can go.

When we started our business Kanbay in 1989, we were short of funds so we learned to manage our cash flow very carefully. When the .com crisis hit in the year 2000, we had four clients go out of business, leaving us with over \$8million of uncollectable receivables. We did not see how we could survive for more than a month or so. Our leadership team sat around and wondered if we were finished and started to feel sorry for ourselves when some one reminded us that rather than focusing on the problem we needed to search out the opportunities that were before us.

We eventually came to the conclusion that the best place we could go to get funding was our most important and trusting customers so we created a pitch as to why it was better for them if they were investors in Kanbay. Thirty days later we had raised \$15 million from our two largest clients, they put two great people our board and as a result of the partnership we created with them their business with Kanbay increased from \$25 million a year to over \$150 million a year three years hence.

Successful people purge “it's impossible” from their vocabulary.

No “if onlys” or regrets. Nothing sucks the life out of a situation more quickly than an “if only.” For success, IQ is not as important as “I Will” –

**There is a solution to every problem**

The third story is **“Treasure your integrity”**

Take the time to decide what is really important in your life. If you do not decide what you value other people will decide for you.

Integrity is deciding the values out of which you will live your life and living your life out of those values.

Understanding that you are free to decide what to do and then accepting the consequences for our actions.

Early in the life of Kanbay I was faced with the dilemma of integrity! I discovered one of our key associates violated our company values. He was seen by all of our people as indispensable. He was definitely our most valuable employees and many thought if he left we would not survive. As the leader I had to decide whether I covered this up or let him go from the company. In leadership there are few situations where decisions are simply between right and wrong, in fact these are not really decisions at all. Complex decisions are mostly between right and right or wrong and wrong.

I decided to let him go. In the end the company survived with its culture intact.

### **Treasure your integrity**

Lastly, **“Listen to your Heart”**

Use enthusiasm as a personal benchmark for deciding the worthiness of an action, a role, a job or a quest. Does it have meaning for me? Is it worth it?

If you are not having fun in what you are doing don't do it. Life is too short. I am going to be dead for a real long time so enjoying my life while I am here is really important to me.

We did an IPO to sell our shares to the public in 2004. You launch the IPO process by meeting with potential buyers of your stock on what is called a road show. IPO road shows are grinding. You do 8 to 10 one hour meetings a day for two weeks where you go over the same slides each time.

We decided to have fun. We created games where for example we were each given a word we had to use in the presentation. One time I got “Lamp Post” another time the word didgeridoo; we had fun telling the Kanbay story and injecting these nonsense words into the pitch in a way that the listener did not notice, and we got great results with 46 orders for our shares from 96 visits.

Having fun doesn't mean there are not times when you want to give up and it all seems too hard; it doesn't mean that there are not times you need to take a break.

But at the end of the day if you are not driven to get back up – if you are not excited by what you are doing, go get another vision and do something else

Take time to celebrate victories; affirm people when they are doing what's right; Call out positive behaviours; Have fun.

### **Listen to your heart**

These are four of the principles that have been a guidepost for me in my life and career.

As you ponder the choices that are before you may I ask you to reflect on the following words that [Marianne Williamson](#) wrote in *Return to Love*:

***Our Deepest Fear***

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.

Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.

It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us.

We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?

Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.

Your playing small doesn't serve the world.

There is nothing enlightened about shrinking

so that other people will not feel insecure around you.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It is not in just some of us; it is in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,

we unconsciously give people permission to do the same.

As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

[Marianne Williamson](#) , in *Return to Love*

Graduates go forth, and have the time of your life, everyday of your life.