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# POINT

THE INFLUENCE ISSUE

**PREVIEW**

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*“Leaders need to say what they mean, and mean what they say.”*

## *Women of* **INFLUENCE**

**Tan Lee Chew** of HP, like other female leaders in Google, McDonald's and KPMG are redefining leadership through influence. Find out how they are doing it.





# Women of INFLUENCE

**Story** by Karen Leong

**Photography** by Zephyrgraphy

**N**avigating the corporate world these days demands a mastery of influence previously unseen. Business leaders find themselves handling a diversity of expectations and demands from various stakeholders like customers, shareholders, and employees.

Today, it is influence, not rank, that determines survival and success in the corporate landscape.

Understanding the *why* and *how* of influence in the 21st century is certainly important, but they are perhaps not as interesting as *who*. The answer might surprise you: women.

A study by Catalyst found that Fortune 500 companies with a higher representa-

tion of women on the board consistently outperformed companies with a lower representation of female board members (The Bottom Line, 2007). The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) revealed that organizations with a good mix of men and women on the board achieved sales revenue averaging more than 10 times higher than organizations without women in leadership (Reflections from Asia Pacific Leaders, 2010).

These studies are part of a growing body of evidence proving that influential women are rapidly changing the dynamics of higher-echelon leadership while dramatically impacting the bottom line.

In delving further to understand these women spearheading change, we spoke to

nine successful women who have earned the respect and recognition of their peers in their respective industries. Together with their stories of influential leadership, we took care to understand their influencing style, which were qualities that helped them to grow a following.

As a result we distilled nine influence styles. Applicable to both men and women, these influence styles are to effect change in their organizations and the world around them. Before we look at their stories, let's explore these influence styles that are redefining leadership:

### **1. Integrity**

Integrity is the foundation of influence. It calls for honesty and following through on your words with actions. It can be as simple as starting a meeting on time, or it can be as complicated as lobbying different stakeholder groups in order to achieve a promised outcome.

In the duplicitous world of business, where non-contractual promises are easily broken in favor of increased profit margins, integrity is paramount to building trust.

Trust is the minimum prerequisite for any buy-in or collaboration. Organizations moving at the speed of trust spend less time contemplating intentions and more time being productive.

Integrity, then, means that you choose to let your actions speak louder than words.

### **2. Candor**

A candid person is one characterized by his or her openness and sincerity in communicating with others. They go straight to the point and avoid fluff.

Candor begets candor. An open environment quickly exposes deep-seated concerns and uncovers motives. The truth may hurt, but its fruits are sweet: the organization benefits from stronger collaboration and relationships among staff.

At the negotiation table, the quality of candor influences people to divulge their personal objectives and doubts. With both parties quickly primed for a win-win situation, an effective discussion will result.

Practice candor. Shorten the process by laying down your cards early.

### **3. Faith**

Having faith in people means looking past their failures, focusing instead on their potential.

What faith translates to is an environment of positivity: in speech, body language and actions. Rather than feeling defeated by setbacks, the people around you will be able to channel their energies on improving their performance.

Knowing that you are on their side will also encourage them to put aside differences to work towards a solution together. Team members can achieve the objectives through collaborative teamwork.

Faith can unite people and have them move mountains.

### **Tan Lee Chew**

Vice President, Technology Services Sales (Asia Pacific & Japan), Hewlett-Packard





**Randy Lai**  
Managing Director,  
McDonald's Singapore



**Corinna Lim**  
Executive Director,  
AWARE Singapore

#### **4. Likeability**

People are likeable when they are able to build near-instant rapport with others, even when they have different personalities, interests and motivations.

When you are liked, others are more willing to do what they can to maintain that rapport. They will be more receptive to your opinions and decisions.

In meetings, likeability helps with convincing and garnering support more easily, especially when you are proposing significant change. Dissent from others will be more easily managed, as your supporters will gladly speak in your defense.

Be liked, if you prefer moving things forward with little resistance.

#### **5. Nurturing**

A nurturer's instinct is to nourish growth. Business leaders who nurture seek to promote the growth and development of the people around them.

With an increasing number of organizations recognizing that well-managed human resource is a strategic competitive advantage, nurturers are vital to the organization as they are able to develop and retain talent.

As a nurturer, you set the agenda by determining the value systems of the talent under their charge. Plans can then be drawn to provide opportunities in training, and career progression while considering work-life balance.

As a result, you are seen as a mentor, worthy of respect and appreciation for years to come.

It seems even in the business world, the adage holds true. Give and you shall receive.

#### **6. Champion**

A champion galvanizes the people around her to bring about change. Her untiring devotion to a cause draws like-minded people who are prepared to make a difference.

Having a cause endows you with a charm that makes you irresistible to those who identify with your cause. As you grow and sustain your followers, you help your cause gain the momentum it needs to create real change.

On the other hand, you must realize that you will also draw opposition from those who don't appreciate your beliefs. Don't let that deter you: focus instead on helping the people who are uniting behind the cause.

Champion a cause and sustain your following; as a collective, there's nothing you can't achieve.

#### **7. Meaning**

People thrive when they see value in what they do. Some may find meaning from helping the community around them. Others may find it by creating a brand that makes people smile, and others may find their worth from a satisfy-

ing paycheck that gives their loved ones a comfortable life.

When you seek meaning in what you do, you develop a keen sense of what motivates you. This also enhances your ability to uncover other people's inclinations. Your sense of conviction will inspire others to connect with their own beliefs, creating alignment and buy-in to your proposition.

Find significance in what you do. Then, what you do will bear significance too.

#### **8. Service**

The concept of "servant as leaders" or servant leadership as initially propagated by Robert K. Greenleaf, is a transformational approach where the business leaders would give priority to the needs of others, serving them instead of leading them in the classical sense.

Servant leaders see themselves as humble stewards of the organization's resources. If you want to inspire gratitude in people and create a culture of humble service in your organization, consider the model of servant leadership. You will see people going to great lengths to aid you rather than hamper your objectives.

Choose to serve rather than ignore the needs of your stakeholders. Grateful supporters will follow.

#### **9. Individualization**

Individualization is the fascination and genuine interest in the personalities, interests and desires of other people, no matter



**Dr Dawn Dekle**

Dean, Global BBA Program, S P Jain  
Center of Management



where they come from. It is a powerful influence style that sets the stage for deep interpersonal engagement.

Seeing people as individuals gives you an acute sense of their motivations. Rather than wait for the annual performance review, you'll be able to sense a person's inclinations toward assignments and work. This means you are always helping your team be at their productive and personal best.

Hence, by understanding the individuals, you can influence the entire organization.

**About our writer**

Karen is an influential communications expert who helps corporate executives advance into positions of leadership and influence. Highly regarded for her transformational programs across Asia, she has coached CEOs, managers and professionals on connecting effectively and building strategic relationships. Karen is the director of The Leadership Company, and is a much sought-after speaker for women's conferences and fortune 500 corporate women's initiatives.

For more information on keynote topics or training programs, visit [www.karenleong.com](http://www.karenleong.com) or email [karen@karenleong.com](mailto:karen@karenleong.com)

**Aliza Knox**

Managing Director, Online  
Sales and Operations, JAPAC,  
Google Asia Pacific



**A final word**

The female leaders are known to be exemplary of the influence styles that they have built their careers on. They have made their mark because of their willingness to give themselves to drawing and sustaining a following of people who find personal fulfillment in their leadership.

The archaic model of secretive, patriarchal and hierarchical leadership, which was a common sight in boardrooms and executive committees in Asia, is dead. Chauvinistic authority alone no longer serves the interests of the organization or the people in it. Arguably, it never has. As you read the following nine stories of how women are reshaping the leadership space, it will make you wonder what took us so long to realize it.

# Tan Lee Chew

Vice President, Technology Services Sales  
(Asia Pacific & Japan), Hewlett-Packard

**L**ee Chew is never one to compromise. On her values, that is.

"Throughout my sales career, one of the things that I feel has been very important in shaping how I do business is staying true to a core set of values," Lee Chew explains. "That is something I would not compromise on."

In her opinion, you must have moral integrity as a leader. After all, without credibility and trust, you cannot command respect. Lee Chew recalls the time when she was caught in a conflicting situation where she was asked to hide the truth from a client. The incident would have been kept under wraps but to Lee Chew, it was an inexcusable compromise of her values. She then decided to leave her job. "For me, it was to have a clear conscience and take that step of respecting my customer and that business relationship," she explains.

To Lee Chew, a person "governed by integrity" will have a positive belief and attitude towards people and the clients that they work with, which will in turn give them a lot of strength to work around the system. Highly influenced by an informal mentor who had taught her the values of being upfront without the fluff and to stand up for things that are right, Lee Chew lives by the mantra 'say what you mean and mean what you say' for all things big and small.

With such a firm stand on her values, it's no wonder that Lee Chew thrived for almost two decades in the HP culture known to have a stringent sense of business conduct. Lee Chew's long career with HP could only mean one thing: being able to find her place in a company that supports her value system has helped her tremendously in gaining trust from the ground and enhancing her influence at the same time.

Known to be a kind and just leader, Lee Chew is not afraid to speak up for her people and act upon what is right. That not only earns the trust and respect of her

subordinates but also that of her fellow business peers. Positive reviews from those who know her have contributed significantly to Lee Chew's stellar reputation.

"I realized, first of all as a business person and as a manager, you need to establish your credibility," she says, "and once you've established your credibility, it's not so much your gender."

Trust Lee Chew to do the right thing.

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## Advice Box

**Say what you  
mean, mean  
what you say.**



# Dato' Dr Jannie Chan Siew Lee

Co-Founder/Executive Vice Chairman, The Hour Glass



**“Don’t allow any ego, politics, power play or greed in your organization. Set up your systems to ensure that no one gets caught up in that.”**

you are willing to work with me on a win-win basis. Why not win for you, win for me, and win for the customers?”

Ultimately, Jannie believes in the empowerment of her people. Her candid style helps her in opening communication channels with her employees. She propagates the philosophy of mentoring, coaching and training her employees in order to empower them.

She explains her philosophy, “I’m only a foundation builder – the base.”

“Train your staff. Give them self-respect, self-esteem and a positive self-image so that they can grow within the organization.”

However, even though she relies on open communication, she has learnt

to discern personal motivations from bare facts. Flushing out personal agendas has become her special forte. “Don’t allow any ego, politics, power play or greed in your organization; set up your systems to ensure that no one gets caught up in that,” Jannie advises from her experience.

Back when she was starting out in The Hour Glass, Jannie had two sales teams with contrasting sales techniques.

One was a team of mostly women professionals while the other was mostly made up of street-smart men. Because of their differences, each side inevitably had their share of complaints about the other.

Instead of dealing with people privately and risk misunderstandings born from fabricated stories or half-truths, Jannie sat her team members down to speak their minds openly in front of all parties. “I think the greatest challenge to me today is getting people to confront the truth and not be personal, but I believe confrontation is the only way you can have resolution,” Jannie’s says, sharing her candid opinion on such messy office politics.

Hate office politics? Then start your day at work by creating a positive environment built on trust and open communication, not hidden agendas.

**H**aving risen through the ranks from humble salesgirl in her in-laws’ family watch business to co-founding the renowned boutique watch retailer The Hour Glass with her husband, Jannie is the quintessence of a lifetime of straight-speaking and objectivity. “If I make a decision,” Jannie explains, “it’s based on right and wrong because it is based on facts and figures. All you know are your assumptions. I’m a scientist and that is where I work from.”

Her frank and straightforward communication style might not suit all. Yet for whom it does (like her top tier managers), they remain loyal to her for as long as 20 to 30 years.

Jannie does not take to beating around the bush. “I will always ask – what is your wish list? If you tell me your wish list, I can give you what you want if

Influence  
Style  
*Candor*

## Advice Box

**Hidden agendas will only breed mistrust. Build an environment based on trust and open communication instead.**



# Dr Dawn Dekle

Dean, Global BBA Program, S P Jain Center of Management



Influence  
Style

*Faith*

**"I start out every single meeting with the mindset that at the end of this meeting, I'm going to have a good relationship with these people."**

**N**ot many people would call overcoming cancer as being the best part of their lives but for Dawn, the glass is always half full. Battling cancer has not only brought her closer to her husband, it has also helped her to appreciate life. After all she already has a happy family and successful career. There really is little for Dawn to regret.

Such buoyant optimism could only come from a woman who sees the best in everyone and everything. Dawn likens it to a kitten looking into a mirror and seeing a lion instead. "It's about seeing your potential," she explains her analogy. "When you look in the mirror, do you see who you are now or who you're going to become?"

While it is vital to see the potential in yourself in order to reach it, Dawn points

out that it is just as important to see other people's capabilities: this is because it is easy to dismiss them if we merely judge them based on their current performance. "We don't see the best in them, so if they've disappointed us, we think of them as disappointing people," Dawn says.

"I start out every single meeting with the mindset that at the end of this meeting, I'm going to have a good relationship with these people," she went on to say. "If anything happens or somebody says something to offend you, you already know the long term goal is to have a good relationship, so you tend to discount the offense."

Dawn's advice is to allow other people to fulfill their potential by looking past their mistakes. And that actually works, according to Dawn. "People do stand up

straighter and they're more themselves, they're more confident."

Having faith in people, however, doesn't mean that Dawn will suffer fools gladly, especially people who inflate their backgrounds, accomplishments or contributions. "I cannot stand it if you exaggerate because it means you don't think you can stand on your own merits," Dawn says with stern disapproval. "To me that is a red flag. I've got a good bullshit detector so I can pick up on it and that disappoints me. Don't say things that aren't true because that's a very short term strategy."

In other words, don't pretend to be someone you're not. Have faith in your inner lion.

## Advice Box

**See the best in others and they will often rise to the occasion.**



# Randy Lai

Managing Director, McDonald's Singapore

**"I care for my people and I show my support to them. I expect my department heads to do the same thing for their subordinates."**

**Influence Style**  
*Likeability*



**I**f you ever go to McDonald's on a Saturday, you might run

into Randy Lai, the first female Managing Director ever appointed to McDonald's Singapore.

"I'm not going to check their service," Randy explains. "I sincerely want to go to every restaurant to say hi to the restaurant managers and every employee. The first few times nobody knew who I am but at least they gave me a big smile. That is the most rewarding part."

Being the unassuming lady that she is, you may never guess that she holds the title of Managing Director when you first meet her. When Randy went for her fast track training in 2009 to work as a crew member in one of McDonald's

Hong Kong branches, the main crew didn't even realize her true identity until a month later.

Even so, Randy didn't

## Advice Box

**The key to being liked is to genuinely like people first.**

let her title get in the way. She interacted with her subordinates as a person first and boss second. She managed to build such a strong rapport with her fellow crew members that they gave her a teary farewell when her stint was over. They also asked her to visit them whenever she could - a promise which Randy has kept to date.

"I see myself as a very optimistic person and very open," Randy describes herself. "I would appreciate feedback rather than you saying nice words and not telling me the truth."

"Therefore, in this company, I bring in a new leadership style which is fun, firm and fair," she says. "I care for my people and I show my support to them. I expect my department heads to do the same thing for their subordinates."

In Randy's opinion, an influential leader must learn to "channel their ego away from themselves and put it into the larger goal of building a better company." Hence in order to do that, one must get to know others with empathy and respect; even those on the bottom rung.

Randy recalls how a cleaning lady from her office went up to her to share some insights about the company after only two months. Honest feedback is only possible because Randy cares about her people, enough to open channels with the ground rather than depend only on reports from her managers. Asking people out for lunch dates at their favorite restaurant is also Randy's way of reaching out to her subordinates in less formal settings. She finds that they tend to open up more as opposed to being in a boardroom.

So have you asked your co-workers out for lunch yet?

# Ang Fung Fung

Partner, KPMG

**I** think I'd probably drive them mad," says Ang Fung Fung.

She is imagining herself as a stay-at-home mother to her two children ages 12 and 9. "I was starting to analyze my personality: do I add more value if I stay at home?"

As you probably can tell, Fung Fung is not exactly your archetype of a woman struggling to fulfill traditional societal expectations. "I believe in adding value whereby I need to give my children the best support but the best support may not be me or my husband," Fung Fung explains her unique mindset. "We just have different strengths, that's how we work things out." In her case, it is to provide for the mental aspect of her children's upbringing.

By constantly drawing on her strengths and that of her family members Fung Fung has effectively created a team that keeps the fire at home burning. Much as what she has done for professional services firm KPMG as well. After all, you can only give the best value if you know what your strengths are.

At KPMG, Fung Fung always believes that individuals generally want to do well in their jobs; a person who truly has the desire to succeed will "tend to do things better." In order to motivate such people to reach greater heights, Fung Fung has to understand the motivations that drive her people as well as their strengths. And that's where she comes into the picture: add value and hopefully bring her people to the destination that they desire. "The other thing that I find motivates a lot of people is the desire to learn and develop themselves," Fung Fung adds, "so I try to share my experience to coach them and help them progress along the way." In Fung Fung's opinion, it doesn't matter if a particular employee is going to be staying long-term with the company. As long as they prove to be capable, Fung Fung will gladly push for value-adding opportunities for her employees,



Influence  
Style  
*Nurturing*

**"The other thing that I find motivates a lot of people is the desire to learn and develop themselves, so I try to share my experience to coach them and help them progress along the way."**

like an overseas posting. The same goes for employees whose motivations may not be as career-driven. Fung Fung recalls one of her longtime female managers who wanted to focus more on her family. It was a decision that Fung Fung respects so she arranged for the manager to come in on a part-time basis instead. When Fung Fung's team later needed resources urgently, this very manager came up to her and offered additional help.

"I think you need to take care of people and hopefully they will reciprocate," Fung Fung says of this story. "Anyway just believe that they want to do good."

Looks like what goes around does come around.

## Advice Box

**Groom your performers to their fullest potential, whether they stay or leave, they will become your biggest ally.**

# Corinna Lim

Executive Director, AWARE Singapore  
(Association of Women for Action and Research)

**"I'm pro-paternity because I think it will help men to get more involved in the family."**

**"W**omen are not always women's best friends." Corinna is commenting on the issue of how female leaders are normally viewed by their female subordinates. Even so, one need only look at what Corinna has accomplished so far for women in dire need to know that she is not only a woman's best friend, but also a woman's champion.

They say a champion begets a champion. In Corinna's case, the seeds of championship were sown when she helped Dr Kanwaljit Soin draft the Family Violence Bill during a domestic violence campaign in 1995. Back then, the bill was shot down by the male-dominated Parliament because it was deemed to be anti-family. Fortunately it generated strong attention and publicity, which eventually led to the amendment of the Women's Charter to provide protection against domestic violence.

Today, Corinna is the executive director of AWARE, Singapore's gender equality advocacy group. She has fully blossomed into a full-fledged champion and catalyst behind women's empowerment in Singapore. Aside from providing free legal counseling to those in need, Corinna also calls attention to important issues such as paternity leave in order to help men play a bigger part in their families.

"I'm fighting for paternity leave rights," she reveals, "So am I pro man?



No, I'm not. I'm pro-paternity because I think it will help men to get more involved in the family. Actually men live in a man-box. That man-box is even more restrictive than the woman-box. It's very tight and stressful. You cannot cry. You must be strong and the one who must earn the money. If you earn less money than your wife, you're a failure."

"I don't like to see these boxes," Corinna goes on to explain, "Our organization's work is to open up these boxes, whether you're a man or a woman. When fathers go back into the house, the most gains can be made for women."

To illustrate the viability of such a scheme, Corinna oversaw a survey that was commissioned by AWARE to interview more than 1,000 parents with children aged seven and below. Respon-

dents were found to be mostly in favor of making paternity leave compulsory. While the public verdict is still divided over the issue of paternity leave, it's safe to say that Corinna has already started the ball rolling towards family balance judging by the huge interest she has generated in the media and people.

Corinna may not be Joan of Arc in shining armor, but she is a champion all the same.

## Advice Box

**Champion  
for what you  
believe in.**



# Cheok Mei-Ing

Head, Corporate Consulting Services, ipac  
Financial Planning Singapore Private Limited

## Advice Box

**There is no greater motivation than finding meaning in what you do and helping others discover theirs.**



**E**veryone is a salesperson. And, according to Mei-Ing, the key to successfully 'sell' something – be it a product to your customers, your company to your clients or an idea to your bosses – is to show people what's in it for them. She believes that it is vital to communicate this well in order to make something happen.

"When I can show that something benefits you, you may be more inclined to actually do what I suggest to you," explains Mei-Ing. "For example, I need to get an advisor to do a talk at a company. If I say to them 'I need a speaker', they will look like 'Why should I waste my time?' If they can see that they're representing ipac and they gain some clients from this, they will be more inclined to do it."

As the co-founder of Women Mean Business (WMB), a network specially created for female empowerment, Mei-Ing is all about showing women 'what's in it' for them. "Financial education for us is very important and even more important we educate women in it," Mei-Ing asserts.

"Women are quite involved in household expenses but when it comes to major decisions, it is often the males in the family who make complex decisions. And when the husband passes on, the wife has no idea where the documents are, where the investments are. Sometimes the husband doesn't have insurance so they are left in the lurch."

Helping companies to realize the benefits of practising gender balance is also an extension of Mei-Ing's WMB work, but what's in it for organizations? Mei-Ing explains, "there's a slew of evidence and studies that show how gender balance at leadership levels have a positive impact on organizations. It's also quite taxing on men to shoulder all the responsibilities of looking after the family and being the breadwinner. When you can encourage the society to accept that women can not only work but rise through the ranks, you share the load with the men."

Convincing companies to adopt gender balance and helping women to step out of traditional stereotypes is not

easy but Mei-Ing sincerely believes that she is making a difference to people's lives. When all is said and done, Mei-Ing asserts that "you need to believe in what you're selling" in order to make a real impact and influence people.


**"When I can show that something benefits you, you may be more inclined to actually do what I suggest to you."**

**Influence  
Style  
*Meaning***

# Mdm Halimah Yacob

Deputy Secretary General, NTUC and Member of Parliament for Jurong Group Representation Constituency (GRC)

Influence  
Style  
*Service*



**"W**e must be a servant first before we become a leader, and for many, that is the most difficult thing to do, because the ego gets in the way," Halimah says. For her, being a leader means service before self. "My two main portfolios in NTUC cover women and legal matters. Both are fulfilling because I am able to give workers, who are otherwise voiceless, a stronger voice," she tells us. "And I help our women to get back to work, helping to strength families."

Halimah also believes in building her influence on a bigger goal; that is service to her organization and country. She recalls the time when Mr Lim Boon Heng, who was the NTUC Secretary General then, approached her to accept the invitation to represent Singapore in the International Labor Movement, a Geneva based UN agency. At first, Halimah was filled with doubts but she eventually decided to take on the challenge.

**"We must be a servant first before we become a leader."**

"You tell yourself, you've got to succeed," she explains her decision. "You cannot fail because when you fail, it's not only a personal failure. It's the failure of the organization and your country. Everyone knows you're from NTUC Singapore so you cannot afford to fail. Then when you cannot afford to fail, you begin to look for areas to succeed."

Halimah's advice is to be aware that you

will be constantly judged by what you say. To be adequately prepared for whatever forum she represents, Halimah makes sure she does her homework. "We may be a small country," she explains. "But our impact does need not be constrained by our size." Halimah believes that the same principle applies to women in all spheres of life. "There may be fewer women leaders in business, politics or social work, but we can certainly aspire to punch above our weight," says Halimah. The defining moment in her career came when Halimah was asked by then Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong to enter politics as a Member of Parliament.

"I realized that, as an MP, you can serve more people as your net is wider," Halimah says. "You can also have more say in policy formulation, acting as the voice of even more Singaporeans. That is a lot more than if you're out of Parliament."

And Halimah is certainly making herself heard, judging from a list that ranks MPs by the number of questions they had raised in Parliament in the past four years. Topping the list at 180 questions, Halimah not only helps to highlight concerns from the ground, her questions also cut across different ministries.

With such a lifelong dedication to the greater good, it's no wonder that people are grateful to Halimah for her selfless service and see her as one of them.

## Advice Box

**True leaders are those who put other people's interests above their own.**



# Aliza Knox

Managing Director, Online Sales,  
Google Asia Pacific

**The secret to great teams is to draw out what makes each individual special and unique.**



**I** draw no mental distinction between what a secretary or what somebody above me has to offer," Aliza declares. "Everybody has something to add and that could be anybody from the security guard to the CEO."

After all in her opinion, anyone can have good ideas or have really interesting things to say. This ability to appreciate the unique qualities in other people regardless of their rank has enabled Aliza to build strong relationships with her teams, a quality that is highly valued by Google. In fact, one of the key criteria used to screen potential candidates for Google is "Googliness," a somewhat awkwardly named characteristic that embodies a variety of things including the ability to work well in a group. "You get a better answer when there's a group of people working on it," says Aliza. "Innovative solutions emerge more often in that setting."

How does Aliza reach out to her 200 staff spread over Asia Pacific? She does this using a variety of ways. She is "happy to connect on instant messenger," or over "Lunch with Aliza" where people can sign up for when she is in town. She has one-on-ones with her managers over dinners regularly. She therefore gets to know Googlers as unique individuals first; this, in turn, helps her to share information and align them with the Google strategy more effectively.

"I would say that the ability to build relationships and the interest in doing it stems from the fact that I really like other people," Aliza muses thoughtfully. "I'm always curious about them. It has probably helped me get along with colleagues and find ways to work with them. I've sought out work environments that are more collegial because I like it and I value collaboration. It plays to my strengths because I like reaching out to other people and building bridges."

When such bridges are in place, it's easier to bring diverse opinions together to reach innovative solutions. Aliza advises that the first step is to agree on a set of facts before engaging in an open discussion to find the best solution. "I need to have relationships where people are willing to listen, trust each other and be open enough to discuss their view of the facts with me," Aliza says.

When you take the initiative to connect with people regardless of background, language or position, you build a synergistic environment where magic happens.

**Influence  
Style**

*Individual  
-ization*

**"I draw no mental distinction between what a secretary or what somebody above me has to offer. Everybody has something to add and that could be anybody from the security guard to the CEO."**