

media hot news

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SupplementMay 05, 2008 Naomi Susan: Getting the most out of scholarships

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Getting the most out of scholarships

The energetic Naomi Susan has received various citations as a successful entrepreneur. And she continues to move forward. After her Ovis Dining Club discount card and other businesses proved successful, Naomi, born in 1975, entered the education sector to provide scholarships.

In September, Naomi teamed up with the Institute Optopreneur (IO) of Malaysia, which is sponsored by England Optic Group (EOG), a group of companies managing 150 optic outlets in Malaysia. The owner of the group, Dr. Chin See Keat, enjoys the full support of the Malaysian government, namely from Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, his ministers and other high-ranking officials. IO offers scholarships to senior school leavers in a number of countries like Cambodia, the Philippines, China, Malaysia, India and Indonesia.

"IO was looking for a representative in Indonesia and a friend, without my knowledge, nominated Naomi said. Requirements set by IO is that a candidate must have a good reputation and a wide network.

Naomi, the only woman out of 16 candidates, met these requirements and was eventually selected as IO's representative in Indonesia. Naomi, who loves the color red, said she had been chosen because of the 4 Ks, which in Indonesian stand for willingness, ability, opportunity and luck. "I'm always ready to grab an opportunity," she said modestly.

"Also, I have the ability in the sense that I can delegate all the networking under my control. Then I also have willingness. If I'm missing one of the 4 Ks, then it's luck because always lucky."

IO is very serious in choosing representatives because the scholarship program involves a lot of financing plus funds from sponsors such as Byon (laptops) and air tickets.

In fact, the scholarship does not cover all the costs of a recipient. Cost per student amounts to Rp 70 million. A student that gets an A grade is entitled to a scholarship of Rp 45 million, with the remaining Rp 25 million to be covered by Naomi. These costs include air fare, dormitory accommodation, insurance, a language course, pocket money for 30 days, a laptop, etc.

"If there are 100 students, then it means Rp 250 million in funding. What would happen if I ran away? That's why IO pays great attention to the reputation of its representatives," said Naomi, a graduate of the University of Portland, Oregon, the U.S.

Naomi approached this project as a businessperson, not as a donor. "I have to get something out of this. I will get an income from the sponsors, but the biggest investment return will be obtained after the students return to their homeland," she said frankly.

Eventually, the graduates will be ready to do the job they were trained for. Indonesia has many optician shops that have grown big over the years after much trial and error.

Naomi, however, intends to find investors in optician stores where her graduates can work, and in this way avoid the many years of trial and error.

"I envision a future harvest and a future promise as I will no longer need to provide schooling for training as the human resources will be ready, as will be the brand (EOG)," said Naomi, who in 2005 was named an Extraordinary Woman by SWA magazine.

She insists that it is not kindheartedness that leads her to send school leavers to Malaysia to study. "If any of them feel they have been helped through this scheme, I honestly say that is not my intention. If they feel they have been helped, well, I thank God. And they should use me as best as they can.

However, I consider it business. It is not a case of wishing to help and then turning this help into a business prospect."

Naomi's path through life has become easier to traverse than before. She said that she can now better control time, unlike in the past when it was time that controlled her.

After her success with her discount card and other businesses, Naomi, who loves sports, set up PT Natural Semesta, which runs a beauty parlor and reflexology center, a photo studio (Nice Shots), cafe (Nice Soup Cafe) and consultancy (Creative SolutioNS, CoNSultancy and Marcomm Agency). In the names of the businesses there is an emphasis on the letters NS, her initials.

"Actually I only want to sell solutions that the public need. I do not have any technical ability and I am good only at talking. So I believe I'm a good salesperson," said Naomi, a marketing communications/ PR graduate.

Naomi has had her ups and downs in business. She was once an account executive at an advertising firm but found it was not her forte. She also lost everything when she invested in the stock market. Later she set up klikduit.com and tried to earn money from the short message service business.

"I am skilled in marketing and communications, so I should be able to put my hand to anything and do well as I believe I can sell anything that anyone else can," she stressed.

Now she has written a book. It is not an autobiography as such because Naomi believes she lacks experience and wants to learn from her more experienced seniors. Every time she is invited to speak at a seminar, she presents herself as a businesswoman sharing her experience with the audience. After much persuasion, Naomi eventually agreed to write a book, *Be Negative*.

"If you sell something like a Leader', 'Be Positive' or a Winner', people may not be able to follow you," she said. "I only want to tell people that these are sure failures. But it is OK to fail. We may get angry or feel offended, but what matters is how we manage our failure."

From a marketing viewpoint, it is easier to sell something negative. So *Be Negative* is more like a collection of notes containing unique, unusual but effective ideas.

Naomi's first book, which is small, has "Session" written on the front cover. This, she said, is a strategy that many people may have encountered but are not really aware of. Everyone who buys this book is expected to look for "Session 1" but Naomi will instead launch "Session 3" before producing "Session 1". This is like the ploy employed by the producer of *Star Wars* or *Silence of the Lambs*, where the story is not released in sequence. "As I'm now in Session 2, these are the negative things that have happened to me. In Session 3, I may be enjoying a harvest and will talk about the negative things during this harvest and how to manage them," said Naomi, who, in 2002, was named one of the 50th Most Influential Woman in Indonesia by *SWA* magazine. In terms of marketing, if someone buys Part 2, they will surely buy Part 3.

So, when Part 1 comes out Naomi suspects it may sell like hot cakes. She may be right. Part 2 has been reprinted in 5,000 copies. Once again Naomi has proven to be an astute businessperson. She carefully considered the marketing strategy of her book before launching it.

Books and scholarships aside, Naomi, who in 2005 was named a Top Young Entrepreneur Below Thirty-Five Years Old by *Warta Ekonomi* magazine, is still in pursuit of knowledge. In October this year, Naomi flew to Hawaii to take part in a short course on recruitment and international policy on recruitment.

"As I get scholarships from the Malaysian government, I may as well get scholarships from Taiwan, Germany or the U.S.," she said, giving her reason for joining this short course. "Many of our students study in these countries, so why shouldn't we provide scholarships?" said Naomi. She expects that these students, after studying and undertaking job training in these countries, will have enough experience when they return to Indonesia.

"And the most important thing is the networking," she said again. "I can survive thanks to a network involving acquaintances in various countries," noted Naomi, who said she wanted to get married as soon as possible. "I want a balanced life, that's my nearest goal." And the prospective husband?

"Surely not many people will be able to guess who he is. Just wait and see," she said, keeping the secret to herself.

From : Be Negative-Naomi Susan

“If life give us rocks, it’s our choice whether to build a brigde or a wall.”

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is miracle.”

“What is the meaning of life? “Taking pain,” said the nail. “Keeping cool,”said the ice. “Driving hard,” said the hammer. “Being up to date,” said the calendar. “Being sharp,” said the knife. “Making light around you,” said the fire. “Sticking into it,” said the glue. “Being bright,” said the lamp. “Being on time,” said the clock. “Saving a drop,” said the faucet. And the best of all, “Learning from it,” said the mistake.”

“Life is an opportunity, benefit from it. Life is a beauty, admire it. Life is a dream, realize it. Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a duty, complete it. Life is a game, play it. Life is a promise, fulfill it. Life is sorrow, overcome it. Life is a song, sing it. Life is a struggle, accept it. Life is a tragedy, confront it. Life is an adventure, dare it. Life is luck, make it. Life is life, make for it!” -Mother Teresa-