Prof Er Meng Hwa Associate Provost NTU,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Good morning! A very warm welcome to NTU. Thank you for taking precious time off from your busy schedule to attend our NTU Career Fair 2008.

Today in Singapore, there is a shortfall in talent supply. At least 16,000 PMETs jobs are seeking professionals to fill. Companies compete fiercely for these talents. Talents deluged with job offers have to decide which type of job to accept and which company to join. In 2007, a Jobsfactory Employers of choice survey showed that the two most desired traits by graduates of NUS, NTU and SMU in an employer are:

1) Good Career Growth and opportunities;
2) Values its people;
If we reflect on these two factors, we know that they are basically talent management issues. Other issues to ponder will be what the future trends for talent management will be?

For the next few years, it will definitely be the Age of Talent. Also, I see an Age of Confusion whereby talents need to make the right choices among many choices, have to align their expectations with the real experiences encountered and concern about job performances. I believe that the Age of Branding will extend from product branding to also include personal branding. Product must compete for customers and people must compete for jobs through branding.

To take advantage of the many job opportunities that abound, we need to be able to uncover our inner set of unique talents and unleash them in our jobs.

How?

Possible using Trial & Error through job hopping or explorations which may, however, take too long;
As time is of the essence and is a limited resource, (our work life spans 40-45 years in total), this is an inefficient way to create the most successful career possible.

A better and more efficient way is to make use of career instruments and coaches to uncover your unique talents and build a Personal Brand that makes you stand out among many others in your target group as far as your work/services performance is concerned. In branding, it is just your target group that matters, not the whole world.

A great personal brand must firstly be visible to the target group. It will be difficult to promote you if you are not seen or heard. You will remain as a ‘no brand’ in the minds of your target group despite the fact that you may have quietly achieved many things.

On the other hand, being visible is great but it has to come with substance. Otherwise you will just be a “showman” or a great package offering little value inside when uncovered. Let me illustrate with this story about a company called Foxtrot which makes ladies shoes. Foxtrot spends a considerable portion of time to perfect their product. After that is done, they then took much effort to design the package to put the product in. The package is a lovely pink and white box tied with ribbons.
When unwrapped, you will find a perfect pair of ladies shoes. A personal brand starts with extracting your best talents and then packaging yourself. Not the other way around.

Secondly, your personal brand has to be credible. Your target group will find it difficult to believe you if you ‘advertise’ yourself as the greatest career coach in the world. It is better to say that you are a career coach that is one of the best in Asia.

This Persona Principle of Visibility with substance and Credibility should remain as one of many guiding principles for achieving career success in the workplace in an Age where competition for the right talent is fierce. To be competed for, you have to be visible with substance and credible.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you all for making this Career Fair the biggest our office has ever hosted. We have more than a hundred companies who have chosen us to be their partner in their talent recruitment efforts.

We plan to up this partnership to a higher level by setting up together with all of you a NTU Talent Community this year 2008. Our mission is “Seeking Appropriate Leader Talents” which as an acronym is S.A.L.T.
Salt as you know is essential for our existence. We want you all to join this community and be the S.A.L.T for talents management for industry and business.

Our first community event will be a talent seminar on 6 March 2008 at One-North NTU Alumni Club. We have invited the MD Mercer, Asean, who will speak to us on “The Age of Talent” and the MD and President of Talent Plus, who will talk about their special area, Interviewing Skills to be our guest speakers. I hope you will be able to join us.

I like to also acknowledge the contributions of our sponsors, NTU staff and students, our event contractor, and all of you who have jointly make this event a great success.

Finally, we are grateful to Prof Er Meng Hwa, for accepting our invitation to be the Guest-of-Honor and for agreeing to launch NTU’s Assessment Centre.

Thank you all!