

Good morning! Are we all awake on this early

Saturday morning?

Great. Well, just to be sure and to get us all thinking about today's theme of taking the next step, let me begin by describing a scene from the future:

*A young man, about your age, slips on his "smart clothing", an automatic-drying jacket and powerlacing shoes, and jumps on his hoverboard. Whizzing along a busy intersection,*

*he narrowly dodges flying cars, heading at break neck speed along skyways to cities on faraway continents. The year is 2015, and the young man's name is Marty McFly.*

You may recognize this as a scene from *Back to the Future II*, a movie released in 1985, before many of you were even born. While this played in the background at my house over the holidays, it occurred to me that Steven Spielberg and his team got some things right when they envisioned our world today. But,

understandably, they also had some misses.

Our world is changing so rapidly that it's difficult to foresee where we will be in five years, let alone in 30.

The same is true of the workplace. In a study called *The Future of Work*<sup>1</sup>, professional services network PwC reported that a massive generational change is underway and, by 2020, Millennials will form 50 per cent of the global workforce. As this unfolds, they predict

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<sup>1</sup> The Future of Work: A Journey to 2022, PwC, 2014. Retrieved December 2014 from: [http://www.pwc.com/en\\_GX/gx/managing-tomorrows-people/future-of-work/assets/pdf/future-of-work-report-v23.pdf](http://www.pwc.com/en_GX/gx/managing-tomorrows-people/future-of-work/assets/pdf/future-of-work-report-v23.pdf)

traditional career models may soon be a thing of the past and many of the roles and job titles of tomorrow will be ones we've not even thought of yet.

I would argue that this points to the opportunities that lie ahead for aspiring leaders who are open to new ways of doing things, are inherently inquisitive and willing to take calculated risks in pursuit of their ambitions.

Although I am not convinced that I have yet earned the credentials to offer extensive advice

on leadership, I would like to briefly focus on three traits that I believe will help you in taking your next step, no matter how ambiguous the future may be.

The first trait is flexibility. The jobs of tomorrow are unknown and even unknowable from our current perspective, but the ability to consider information critically, to assimilate facts into bigger narratives, and to generate new ideas never goes out of style. Aspiring leaders must

have the ability to think systematically, to welcome change, to disrupt and to innovate.

This is the gift of a great education – one that goes beyond knowledge in a particular field, or training in a specific skill.

And this is precisely the new breed that will be in high demand as organizations face the task of perpetually reinventing their products and services in the wake of increasingly rapid innovation, changing business models and the escalation of social networking.

This brings me to the second trait that will be required of tomorrow's leaders: passion. You may have a clear path in mind for your education and your career, but I urge you nevertheless to make your next step to explore what you are passionate about. For example, I hope, whatever you have signed up to study, that you will cast around and try new things.

At some point, you will want to settle on something meaningful – perhaps something that will prepare you directly for your first job.

But remember: the voyage is important. Try some things outside your comfort zone and don't worry that you might fail. That is as much a part of learning as is success. So it is crucial that you stretch yourself.

The third trait is guts. In other words, your ability to defy convention to contribute positively to the world. Take UBC alumnus Brian Wong, founder of Kiip (pronounced keep), a mobile app rewards network. Brian noticed that the old school principals of



advertising were not working for mobile technology users and created a new philosophy of real world rewards for virtual achievements.

Kiip has become an incredible success story with brands like Sony, Disney and Amazon on board. Brian credits his education at UBC and immersing himself in the high tech environment of the Silicon Valley with helping him develop this bold new way of thinking.

So, flexibility, passion and guts. Work on

building these traits through your education  
and a broad variety of life experiences and you  
will be ready for that next step no matter what  
the future holds.

Thank you.