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# WHEN LOCAL MEETS GLOBAL



How to Work Well  
with Foreigners

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**A COMPLIMENTARY E-BOOK FOR THE  
YOUTH OF MYANMAR**



**HANA BUI**

# **WHEN LOCAL MEETS GLOBAL**

How to work well with foreigners

**A complimentary e-book  
for the youth of Myanmar**

**By Hana Bui**

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For inquiries about this book, please email the author at [hanabui.mm@gmail.com](mailto:hanabui.mm@gmail.com)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finishing this book has been a journey, and I am deeply grateful to those who have supported me along the way. The book was completed three years ago, but circumstances delayed its publication. Let me explain more about that later.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Werner Eggert of Interlink Academy. Werner's unwavering support has been instrumental, both for my first book "*When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates can Succeed in Myanmar*" and this one, "*When Local Meets Global – How to Work Well with Foreigners.*" His advice on the book's flow and his meticulous reading of the nearly-final draft have been invaluable.

I am indebted to the many expatriates who answered my survey questions and participated in face-to-face interviews. Likewise, I am thankful to the numerous Myanmar professionals and youths who generously shared their insights through surveys and interviews. I deeply appreciate the help of my Beta readers—many of whom are professionals and youths from Myanmar. Given the current situation, I choose not to mention their names to avoid any potential troubles they might face.

To my family, relatives, and friends, your constant support in my life means the world to me. Thank you for being my pillars of strength.

After the political changes in Myanmar, I hesitated to publish the book. My initial reaction was to stop its publication. However, after some time, I had a change of heart. I realized that this book could still be a valuable resource for the youth in Myanmar. In today's globalized era, interacting with foreigners is essential for success, regardless of where you are.

Reflecting on the people who helped me write this book fills me with immense gratitude. It would be a disservice to them if I did not publish it. The opportunity to reconnect with my readers brings me

great joy. It is my pleasure, privilege, and honor to share this work with you.

Above all, I believe this book will be of help to the youth in Myanmar. My conviction is reinforced by the positive responses I received to my question, *“Do you think the book will help the youth of Myanmar?”* from my Myanmar friends and students - youth themselves, those working with youth, and those who understand the young generation in the Golden Land.

Thank you all for your unwavering support and belief in this book.



## PART 1

# **WE ARE IN THE GLOBALIZED WORLD**

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## CHAPTER 1

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# WHEN LOCAL CONNECTS WITH GLOBAL

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### 1.1 When Local Connects with Global

In 2011, Myanmar opened its doors to the world, marking a significant shift. Unlike the bustling, congested roads of Yangon today, the streets were then empty, and delays due to traffic were unheard of. Back then, shopping centers were scarce, offering limited international products. Internet access was a luxury due to high costs, similar to mobile phones. In 2012, I bought a SIM card for \$250, while some others paid up to \$5,000 for a coveted number. Today, SIM cards cost just less than \$1, and internet access is both common and affordable.

Foreigners from around the globe flocked to Myanmar for business opportunities. *“Myanmar has been changing so fast”* is a common remark about the country, especially regarding the bustling cities of Yangon and Mandalay. Those familiar with Myanmar before it opened would scarcely recognize it now. New airports, roads, and buildings sprung up in Yangon, Mandalay, and beyond. In Yangon, a surge of shopping centers, hotels, office buildings, condos, restaurants, bars, fast-food outlets, and beauty stores emerged. The once-quiet roads were now crowded, with traffic jams becoming a regular occurrence.

It's common to spot young Myanmar people in “*Western-style*” clothing, even as they continue to embrace the traditional longyi and htamein. This dual fashion choice clearly reflects the influence of globalization, a phenomenon observed in various other countries.

Some years ago, more international tourists could visit Myanmar. Myanmar citizens also travelled more to Southeast Asian countries like Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Singapore. Many young professionals also undertook business trips abroad. The flow across national borders become increasingly common.

Despite political upheavals slowing progress, travel remains more frequent than in 2010, before the country opened up.

I've encountered numerous “*new stories*” in Myanmar.

These narratives feature Myanmar people seizing job opportunities from foreign or local companies engaging with foreigners in the Golden Land. They are dynamic and eager learners, willing to step out of their comfort zones to sharpen their English and other professional skills, gain valuable experience working with foreigners, and capitalize on the unique opportunities in a newly-opened country. These stories span all career specializations, including administration, human resources, finance, marketing, sales, engineering, healthcare, and more. As a result, they earn promotions, higher salaries, and improve their living conditions. Many now receive monthly salaries exceeding a thousand USD, enabling them to live comfortably, support their families without difficulty, and occasionally extend help to their communities and other less fortunate individuals.

They are not as shy when meeting foreigners as they were some years ago, though they still wear their longyi and htamein. They exude maturity, professionalism, and confidence. Unlike their parents, who lived through a closed-off period in history, they possess a much deeper understanding of the world, particularly beyond Myanmar's borders. Many pursue master's degrees and

have traveled extensively throughout Southeast Asia and beyond. They have built networks of colleagues and friends worldwide, yet they still happily gather with family, friends, and colleagues on weekends.

They agree with me that in today's globalized world, "*Working well with foreigners is an essential skill.*"

## **1.2 A Must-Have Skill: How to Deal with Foreigners**

In a globalized world, interacting with foreigners is essential for everyone! This holds true for individuals in other countries who aspire to excel in life.

Isn't it crucial for you, the young people, to understand how to effectively interact with foreigners?. The challenge in global-local (foreigners-Myanmar people) working relationships persists. There exists a considerable "**cultural gap**" between foreigners and Myanmar people, considering the country has only been open for 13 years after nearly 60 years of isolation. 13 years may seem long to an individual, but it is a brief period in history.

I've heard local's comment on how "*strange*" it is to work with expats. Similarly, I've heard from many expats working here about how "*strange*" it is to work with their Myanmar colleagues. It's akin to "*Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus.*" (a book title by John Gray.)

When expats first arrived, many experienced cultural shocks in Myanmar. Often, they had to adjust their expectations regarding the local workforce's performance.

Similarly, local individuals are often taken aback when working with expats. They're frequently unsure of how to meet expats' expectations, particularly when they're their managers. Sometimes, local colleagues quit their jobs if they feel too pressured or stressed. In fact, many Myanmar people choose not to directly confront or

discuss conflicts with expats. Instead, they internalize their feelings, quit their jobs, and report different reasons for doing so.

Cultural shocks are not uncommon for both Myanmar people and expats in Myanmar. Are you interested in reading a book that helps you understand the misunderstandings between both sides and learn how to effectively work with foreigners to succeed in the new Myanmar? **This book is for you.**

Mingalabar,

Dear friends,

Allow me to introduce myself as Ma Lwin Lwin Tun, also known as Hana Bui. I was born and raised in Vietnam, and for over ten years, I lived and worked in Myanmar. According to my astrologer, I was a Myanmar person in my previous life. I speak conversational Burmese, enjoy wearing htamein, and savor Burmese cuisine. When I return to Ho Chi Minh City, many of my friends jokingly say I've become Burmese. I feel warmly welcomed and assisted whenever I'm here, and I don't feel "*out of place*."

The intricate interplay between global and local factors has always fascinated me. Over fifteen years ago, I pursued a master's degree in globalization and communication in England. Presently, I'm an intercultural trainer, educating foreigners on Myanmar's culture and how to effectively work with Burmese people (as well as the cultures of Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and more). I've spent over two decades interacting with foreigners throughout my career, encountering individuals from over fifty different nationalities. Alongside my accomplishments, I've also had my share of setbacks, failures, and fumbles, all of which have taught me invaluable lessons.

I'm deeply grateful to the people of Myanmar and am committed to contributing to the country's social development, particularly for

young individuals who will shape its future. I come from a humble background and understand the immense effort required to progress in life.

I'm the author of the bestselling book, *When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates Can Succeed in Myanmar*. It's a pioneering guidebook for expats on how to navigate cultural conflicts by respecting Myanmar's culture, launched in 2019. Many expats have deemed it a must-read!

However, what intrigues me most is the warm reception my book has received from Myanmar people, even though it was originally intended for foreigners. I was pleasantly surprised. When I asked why they liked my book, the response was, "*We feel you understand Myanmar, represent Myanmar people, and articulate Myanmar to the world.*" Some even said, "*Thank you for showcasing Myanmar to the world.*"

Such heartfelt appreciation!

I'm immensely delighted. It underscores Myanmar people's curiosity about themselves, how foreigners perceive them, and the cultural differences between Myanmar and other nations.

They've also inquired about another book – one for Myanmar people on how to interact with foreigners. This sparked the creation of my latest endeavor, the first-of-its-kind guidebook, *How to Work Well with Foreigners*, tailored specifically for Myanmar people. I consider it both an honor and a responsibility to pen a book for Myanmar's youth on effectively collaborating with foreigners.

Myanmar has only recently opened up, and most Myanmar people have limited international exposure. Just as it's challenging for foreigners to work with Myanmar people, the reverse is equally true. Cultural disparities often hinder mutual understanding and effective collaboration.

Foreigners must learn about Myanmar's culture, respect it, and adapt accordingly to foster productive relationships. These insights are detailed in my first book, *When Global Meets Local*.

Conversely, Myanmar individuals lacking experience interacting with foreigners must learn, adapt, and understand how to collaborate effectively with them. These insights form the basis of my latest book, *When Local Meets Global – How to Work Well with Foreigners*.

This book is exclusively for you, based on the unique context of Myanmar and my surveys conducted with both local and international individuals in Myanmar. It's designed to be easy to understand and even easier to apply – qualities my trainees and MBA students appreciate about my training sessions.

Now, I can confidently say, "Yes, *this is your book. Here you go!*"

### **1.3 What Is This Book About?**

This book delves into how to effectively interact with foreigners and adhere to international standards.

During the development of my first book, I conducted surveys with over a hundred expats and fifty Myanmar professionals. For this book, I expanded my outreach, integrating insights from previous surveys. In total, I've engaged with two hundred individuals – both Myanmar citizens and foreigners – through questionnaires and interviews.

***While my primary aim is to aid Myanmar people in collaborating with foreigners, I recognize that my approach may occasionally unsettle some individuals. If you feel this way, please understand my intentions are supportive. Additionally, note that the names used in this book are fictitious.***

Now, let's explore what you'll find in this book:

- The advantages of working with foreigners in a globalized world
- Perceptions: What foreigners think of Myanmar people and vice versa
- Effective communication strategies and expat management: The six fundamental skills required to interact with foreigners. Explain 7 benefits of saying No.
- Simple exercises to build up these skills step by step.
- Techniques for cultivating emotional resilience and improve mental health
- Many “*how to*” such as: How to polish your English skills? How to start conversations with foreigners? How to manage your time with a daily to-do list? How to use 5W & 1H? How to cheat yourself for good? How to start doing things in 2 minutes? How to make friends with Google and Youtube?
- Fundamental international professionalism standards
- Strategies to secure the good job opportunities in Myanmar and overseas
- Free online resources for learning English and essential skills for success
- Methods for successful self-study
- Free online resources for obtaining scholarships to study abroad
- Free online resources for global travel, exploring diverse cultures, and enjoying global arts



## 1.4 How to Make Use of the Book

### Who Benefits from This Book?

This book is designed for:

- Individuals currently working with or aspiring to work with foreigners
- Young Myanmar professionals aiming to advance in their careers
- Organizations seeking to enhance interactions between Myanmar employees and expatriates
- Expats looking to provide insights to their Myanmar colleagues and friends
- Young Myanmar individuals aspiring to enter the professional world
- Myanmar students preparing to secure good employment opportunities

I particularly encourage young people under 35 years old to read this book. Youth facilitates faster learning and adaptability, and I firmly believe they are the future leaders!

### How to Utilize This Book

Are you seeking a book that genuinely helps you succeed in Myanmar and overseas? Look no further – this book is tailored exclusively for young Myanmar people. It shares authentic stories, many of which unfold right here in Myanmar, making them relatable and real! Written in an easy-to-understand style, it empowers you to take actionable steps toward realizing your dreams. This book is **straightforward and easy to apply**.

Begin by reading it once for a broad overview, then revisit it for deeper insights.

The simplest way to leverage this book is to keep a notebook handy. Write down actionable ideas and strategies as you read,

then implement them. Every day or two, review what you've accomplished and identify areas for improvement. Remember, learning happens through action. As Confucius wisely said, *"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."* Taking action propels you toward success.

You can also discuss the book with friends, colleagues, managers, bosses, teachers, and others.

Personally, I continue to maintain daily notebooks to excel in my own work. Surprisingly, this simple practice has proven highly effective. **Self-reflection**, a form of deep learning, is the most powerful tool for self-improvement. No one else can do it for you. Step by step, you'll make steady progress toward your goals.

The most critical step is to **apply the lessons from this book**. After several months, look back and observe how much progress you've made on your path to success.

Believe it or not, adopting this easy method of daily journaling and frequent reflection can be transformational – requiring just **five minutes a day!**

I welcome your feedback on the book and inquiries about organizational training. Feel free to reach out via email at [hanabui.mm@gmail.com](mailto:hanabui.mm@gmail.com) or connect with me on the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/IntercultureMyanmar/>

Enjoy your journey to success, and best of luck!

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## CHAPTER 2

# THE MISUNDERSTANDINGS IN GLOBAL-LOCAL RELATIONSHIP IN MYANMAR

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### 2.1 Top 10 Things Foreigners Like Most About Myanmar People

I asked 50 working expats this question: *“What do you like most about Myanmar people?”* Are you curious to know the outcomes? It might be useful to learn what others think about you.

Here you go!

#### 1. Generous and Helpful

Many expats say that Myanmar people are very helpful and generous. An American expat working in an NGO reveals, *“I can rely on their help when I need something. They are always eager to help out with any questions that I may have. They help others even if it is not their own project or responsibility.”*

An expat from Australia who has lived in Myanmar for years comments, *“A sense of passion and purpose: many people in Myanmar have aspirations to contribute to their country's development through their commercial endeavors and careers.”*

Some expats from the ASEAN region echo this sentiment: *“Myanmar people are helpful, generous, and charitable. They donate a lot back to society.”*

Many of my foreigner friends have shared stories of being helped by local people they had just met. If they asked for directions, often Myanmar people would personally guide them to their destination to ensure they reached the right place, even if it took 10 or 15 minutes of their time. Myanmar people are willing to donate their time to a mere stranger. On the bus, if you don't have the right change for a ticket, people are willing to give you 200 MMK without hesitation. I have experienced this kindness myself many times. Furthermore, when I go to local markets, vendors charge me the same price they give to local customers, even though they know I am a foreigner.

I am sometimes hesitant to accept Myanmar people's help, but they are always eager to give it. For example, whenever I stop a passerby to ask the meaning of Burmese words on a signboard, most people are very enthusiastic to assist.

According to the annual research of Charities Aid Foundation, which compiles the index of the world's most generous nations, Myanmar was the most generous country for the fourth consecutive year in 2017. This survey covers over 146,000 people in 139 countries, measuring the number of people giving cash, volunteering, and helping strangers. This prideworthy fact isn't widely known, so I included it in my first book *“When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates Can Succeed in Myanmar.”* Readers find it very interesting. Recently, though faced with a lot of hardships, Myanmar still ranked as the 6<sup>th</sup> most generous country in 2023.

## **2. Kind and Hospitable**

An Australian expat who has been working and living in Myanmar for 18 years says, *“Myanmar people are among the kindest people that I know.”*

Some European expats who have been here for over five years say, *“They are good-hearted and naturally make decisions that are good for others—very considerate,”* or *“Their intentions are normally good. No bad intentions, no bad politics.”* One emphasizes, *“Myanmar colleagues were unfailingly polite and kind, and I have very fond memories of working there.”*

### **3. Polite, Humble, and Friendly**

Being friendly is certainly a characteristic of Myanmar people, and many expats enjoy it. An ASEAN expat reckons, *“They’re polite and keep smiling all the time.”* A Chinese expat adds, *“Myanmar people are very humble and less likely to show off.”* An expat from Europe notes, *“Myanmar people are incredibly polite, which is great for customer service.”*

### **4. Honest**

Many expats conclude that *“Myanmar people are authentic. They are fun, honest, and genuine. They are very sincere.”* One adds, *“No pretending, no games,”* or, *“Trustworthy.”* An East European expat who has lived in Myanmar for 17 years says, *“If you understand Myanmar culture well and know how to work within it, then it is pretty straightforward—you intuitively know how to communicate with your colleagues to achieve the best results.”*

### **5. Team Spirit**

Many expats also mention that Myanmar people are good at teamwork. A Canadian expat with nearly 20 years in Myanmar asserts, *“I have found that most people I work with are very good at working in a team, very understanding of others, and good at pitching in and doing whatever needs to be done. True teamwork. And very good at celebrating accomplishments, which brings the team together too.”*

## **6. Resilient and Hardworking**

Being resilient and hardworking are virtues that expats admire in Myanmar people. They say, *“Myanmar people are patient, tolerant, and resilient.”* *“When there is real pressure to deliver things, my experience is that people will step up, stay, work, and deliver,”* a European expat shares. Another adds, *“Myanmar people’s patience and tolerance have a worldwide reputation.”*

## **7. Resourceful**

This summarizes many expats’ opinions about Myanmar people’s resourcefulness: *“They are versatile and flexible. Many Myanmar people have experienced arbitrary and sudden changes in rules and inadequate resources. They quickly find other ways to accomplish what needs to be done, rather than trying to make things work the way they “should” rationally. They are pragmatic. Myanmar people are very good at solving problems by using relationships. They can draw on contacts in their network to get practical jobs done.”*

## **8. Eager to Learn**

Many expats are fascinated by the eagerness of Myanmar people to learn new things. They say *“Myanmar people are open to being taught, so any training you provide will be appreciated and absorbed rapidly. They are eager to learn new things, especially the young people. The learning curve is fast.”*

## **9. Content, Not Greedy, Positive, and Cheerful**

Many expats recognize that *“Myanmar people are peaceful and content. Their minds are simple and not greedy. They have a positive attitude and are rarely critical. They are cheerful and fun-loving. There is often lightness and humor not far below the surface, even if the surface is serious.”*

## 10. Loyal

Many expats from both Europe and ASEAN countries praise Myanmar people's loyalty: *"Once Myanmar people trust their employer, they tend to be very loyal. If you treat your employees well and over time earn their respect and trust, then you can expect their loyalty and utmost dedication to work."*

So, you can see that Myanmar people are admired by expats for many of their virtues. Do you see yourself in these comments?

**Exercise: Please write down five characteristics of yourself that foreigners might appreciate most.**

## 2.2 The scarcity of international exposure and a long list of missing skills

To work well with foreigners, understanding where Myanmar's human resource quality stands in comparison with international standards is fundamental. How do foreigners rate the expertise of Myanmar colleagues? The truth is sometimes hard to swallow.

Even though they hold many good feelings toward Myanmar people, one European Human Resources Head of a local business group, with six years of experience in Myanmar, comments, *"They need a lot of skills here."* The list of missing skills among local colleagues is long, he insists.

Sadly, the skills shortage in Myanmar is the result of decades of isolation. This is due to the country's political and historical background, not the faults of the amiable Myanmar people. The outdated education system has contributed to this issue—without proper education, how can young people achieve the mandatory skills to work professionally?

When working in Human Resources, I conducted a survey asking many Human Resource Heads of international and major Myanmar

companies, both local and expats, about the skills they believe Myanmar people need to function in a globalized world.

The list of missing skills I collected is long: *English, IT basics (Excel, Word), digital literacy, communication, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving, time management, leadership, teamwork, negotiation, presentation, research, and attention to detail.*

These results align with a recent survey I conducted, asking expats in Myanmar about the skills they think Myanmar people should have to work well with foreigners.

Are you eager to know how to build these skills for yourself? You will find this information in chapters 3 through chapter 8.

Regarding English skills, Myanmar had a heyday of English as a foreign language long ago. The English skills of many high-ranking government officers and business leaders aged 60 or older are great, as many expats find out. During the colonial period under British rule, English was widespread. Moreover, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Myanmar was one of the wealthiest countries in Asia. Rangoon University became one of the most prestigious universities in Southeast Asia, attracting students from across the region, including Japan and India. Thus, the English skills of these older individuals are remarkable—they can communicate directly with foreigners.

Recently, due to the outdated education system, students learn English in school, but the focus is on passing examinations, not practicing the language. Thus, many of them need to improve their English skills to use it effectively in their jobs.

Generally speaking, the requirements of foreign companies for Myanmar people to meet international standards are far removed from the local skill sets. The expectations of expats, based on international standards, are well beyond their local colleagues' experience, education, and imagination.



There are many struggles for both expats and Myanmar people working together, given that they do not know much about each other. There is a **big cultural gap** between them, a shortage of understanding about Myanmar from the international community, and a lack of international exposure among the local people.

Hold on—that's why this book is written! It will help you deal with foreigners and seize the good job opportunities in Myanmar and overseas.

## **2.3 What Myanmar people think about foreigners?**

### **A Story of Disliking a Senior**

Embedded in the family-style business culture, a friendly and relaxed working atmosphere prevails. A local Myanmar designer, who has worked with expats for over six years, shared his thoughts about his European expat boss:

*"He is so strict! Whenever I am late for work by only 10 minutes, he seems unhappy. For deadlines, he always wants me to submit all the required layouts on time. But I am an artist, and sometimes I need more time for creativity. Why must everything be so precise? I wish he would relax more!"*

*"Expats are so rational and unfriendly."*

Locals feel that foreigners are too strict about deadlines, reporting, or task details. *"Too rational, no feelings – they only focus on the job!"* they say.

On the other side, an expat from Eastern Europe notes, *"People here mix personal and professional issues."*

## **A Story about "Mr. Polite, Friendly, and Caring"**

A local Human Resources Head at a joint-venture financial service firm shared this story:

*"My boss is an Australian who is very polite, friendly, and caring. He is very patient and tries to understand others' opinions. He is also flexible, not as strict as other expats. If there is a company party, he goes around the tables and does not just stick to one table with other expats. If we have problems in our jobs, he asks, 'What are your difficulties?' Also, he is interested in our lives and often asks us questions like, 'Where do you live? How many people are there in your family? Are you happy in your job? What are your career goals?' Sometimes he attends family events or festivals. For example, he went to a wedding or attended a family funeral or joined the Thadingyut Festival. He also went to the stage performance of the festival. He eats local food in the nearby food court. We like him the best and are very willing to do our jobs under his leadership. We also want to help him if he has any problem in Myanmar. He respects us, and we respect him."*

## **Exploring Knowledge and Perception**

In his book *"How Real Is Real,"* philosopher Dr. Paul Watzlawick explores the connection between communication and reality, questioning, *"How do we know what we believe we know?"* In Myanmar, local people observe foreigners through their own perspectives, which are rooted in their values, beliefs, memories, customs, and more.

Myanmar people have mixed views about foreigners, depending on who they are and what their goals are in interacting with foreigners.

## **Positive Perceptions of Foreigners by Myanmar People**

- Foreigners are experts in their fields.
- Foreigners possess extensive knowledge, methods, and techniques.
- Foreigners want things systematic and up to international standards, while things can be chaotic here.
- Foreigners are advanced, so I can learn a lot from them.
- Whatever foreigners say is right.
- Foreigners bring finance and investment here.
- Expats are more approachable than Myanmar bosses.
- My foreigner boss is very caring, polite, and talented, and he inspires us a lot.
- Foreigners are good at strategy and management and are very internationally experienced.
- Foreigners are more straightforward and flexible than Myanmar people. Their subordinates can ask them questions and negotiate with them.

### **Negative Perceptions of Foreigners by Myanmar People**

- Foreigners are strange. They do many things differently than we do.
- Foreigners are too pushy. They want everything quickly, while things are slower in Myanmar.
- Foreigners are very strict. Deadline, reports, rules - everything needs to be accurate.
- Foreigners are very demanding, so working with them is difficult.
- Many foreigners do not understand Myanmar situations.
- I try to avoid talking with foreigners. I am scared. My English is not good enough.
- Foreigners may bully locals who have less knowledge than they do.

- Many foreigners have hot tempers and shout at other people.
- Foreigners come here for money only. Many of them are cheaters.
- Westerners expats are normally more democratic, while Asian expats normally show more power distance.
- They are not caring and not kind. They give me tasks when I am sick. They only want the result.
- Foreigners use bad words such as “F\*ck” or “Sh\*t”.

## **2.4 What Foreigners Think about Myanmar People**

If expatriates might be surprised to learn what Myanmar people think about them, Myanmar people might be similarly surprised to know what foreigners think about Myanmar people:

### **Myanmar People’s Nature**

- People are very kind and helpful
- People have good team spirit.
- Religion is fundamental, a sensitive matter here.
- People follow the five precepts of Buddhism rather than money. They may quit high-salary jobs if they are unhappy.
- People are superstitious and may even invite monks to pray at the office.
- People are very calm and have a peaceful nature.
- People are very polite and soft.
- People are shy and humble, but very friendly.
- People are very generous; they donate a lot even if they are poor.
- People are amiable, resilient, and resourcefulness
- People are loyal when they trust you.
- People are self-contented and cheerful.
- People are eager to learn.

## **Communication**

- People are too shy to say what they think or to ask questions. They are reluctant to offer opinions.
- People say, "Yes," whether they mean it or not. They may not agree when saying so.
- People cannot take being shouted or yelled at.
- People say, "Yes," but may not do what they agreed to as they do not really understand or are not capable of doing it.
- People hide and are not open about things.
- People find it difficult to fully express themselves and to be fully understood.
- People may find it difficult to communicate what they want.
- Frankness can be considered rude.
- Raising your voice is viewed negatively.
- Saving Face is essential, especially when resolving conflicts.
- Hierarchy is fundamental. Age is respected without reason. Seniority is everything.
- Anadeh – consideration sometimes means to avoid communicating/ reporting bad news.
- Anadeh is very important but difficult for Westerners to understand.

## **Working Manners**

- People are relaxed while working.
- People are not too ambitious.
- People try to keep calm and polite at all times.
- People might not report terrible news when issues pop up. They try to avoid confrontation.
- People do not find it easy to accept professional criticism.
- People may lack attention to details.
- People do not like an aggressive approach.

- People are reluctant to commit to something without their managers' approval.
- People may not speak out to managers about their dissatisfaction, but they may resign.

### **Attitude Towards Changes**

- People are fearful of trying new things.
- People may resist change and be stubborn.
- People sometimes do not answer the phone or email if they are not happy with something.
- People consider challenges as threats.
- Changes can be viewed as challenging, and improvements can equal more work.
- People are afraid to try to *"think outside the box"*. Initiatives by locals are few.

### **Management**

- It is necessary to give a clear explanation of how to get things done, i.e., detailed guidance.
- Micromanagement is common.
- People are not good at multitasking.
- When a task is delegated, it is safer to monitor it, even if dealing with managers.
- People are afraid of addressing issues with their bosses and instead discuss them together.
- There is a family working style.
- Decision-making is not delegated.
- It can take till the last minute to organize things.
- Power distance is crucial in getting things done. Only business owners and very top management have decision power.

## **Cultural Understanding and Mutual Cooperation**

Please note that there is a certain generalization here from the expats' view, and it does not mean that all Myanmar people are the same. This perspective reflects expatriates' views, which may not necessarily align with reality or how Myanmar people see themselves.

Furthermore, many expatriates who have lived and worked in Myanmar for years can distinguish between local people of different ethnicities or religions. For instance, they observe that many Chin and Kachin people have good English skills, partly due to exposure to Christian missionaries from abroad. Similarly, Rakhine and Mon people are noted for their business acumen. Expatriates may notice that people from ethnicities other than Burman tend to be more straightforward. I aim to include stories from all major ethnic groups in Myanmar, such as Burman, Shan, Karen, Mon, Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, and Kayah.

In summary, what can we see from the above? While expats are generally fond of Myanmar people's nature, which includes many good virtues, there is **a notable cultural gap** when working together. The two sides often think and behave in mismatched ways, causing misunderstandings and troubles. You are not alone in experiencing these kinds of situations.

So, how can we level the equation of mutual understanding for expats and Myanmar people to cooperate well with each other?

A little effort in understanding the other side can certainly help.

**Exercise: Please identify five characteristics from the list above that are relevant to yourself.**

## **2.5 Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus**

Philosopher Paul Watzlawick once remarked, *“All perception and thought are relative, operating by comparison and contrast”*

(Change: Principles of Problem Formation and Problem Resolution). In the context of Myanmar people and expats' perceptions of each other, one may notice how they find each other "odd," as they often compare behaviors that are fundamentally different from their own.

In many ways, this dynamic resembles John Gray's bestselling book title, "*Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*," which explores the profound differences between men and women and offers strategies for improving their relationships.

**A summary of how expats and Myanmar people think contrastingly:**

(Extract from my first book *When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates Can Succeed in Myanmar* )

	<b>Locals' thoughts about expats</b>	<b>Expats' thoughts about locals</b>
1	Too pushy	Slow
2	Aggressive	Too shy
3	Talk too much	Not outspoken
4	Arrogant	Too humble
5	Cold, distant	Too emotional
6	Not kind, caring	Not professional, bring personal issues to work
7	Too blunt, shouting, rude	Hide their real thoughts and emotions
8	Don't listen and don't understand Myanmar	I have lots of experience and qualifications



	<b>Locals' thoughts about expats</b>	<b>Expats' thoughts about locals</b>
9	I cannot say "No" to others directly	They say "Yes" but do not deliver their promises
10	Strict, on time	Do not respect schedules and deadlines
11	Greedy, only results-oriented, selfish	Not ambitious
12	Their thinking is too complex	They lack analytical skills
13	Don't respect elder colleagues	Why respect without any proper reason
14	Too demanding	Have to upgrade local skills effectively
15	Have many strange ideas	Do not think outside the box

PART 2

**GIVE THE FISHES WHAT THEY WANT**

You are going to fishing – what do you use as baits? Would you use mohinga, Shan noodles, chocolate, or ice cream as baits for fish, because you like them very much?

Likely none of these.

Using such baits would be like "*Playing a harp before a buffalo*" (Myanmar proverb) – enjoyable to you, but not enticing to the buffalo. What might attract them? Fresh grass, perhaps.

Similarly, when interacting with foreigners, it's crucial to understand their preferences and ways of working, rather than relying on our own familiar methods – the ones that you prefer.

Imagine you're fishing for expatriates, aiming to work effectively with them. Consider expatriates as the fish you want to catch. What would you use as baits?

### **A Disclaimer**

*I apologize in advance if the following chapters seem sensitive. Indeed, the upcoming six chapters highlight many shortcomings or limitations of Myanmar people in their interactions with foreigners. They include numerous quotes from foreigners on how to communicate effectively and navigate working relationships. This mirrors the critique expatriates may have found in my first book, "When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates can Succeed in Myanmar," which focused on guiding foreigners in understanding and respecting Myanmar's culture and people. They may feel that I criticize them too much, as well.*

*Upon publishing my first book, foreigners often asked where a guide for Myanmar people on working with foreigners could be found. In response, this second book addresses that need. It's **a two-sided endeavor – each side learning about the other to foster mutual understanding, with perspectives from both angles.** Both books complement each other, forming a comprehensive view. I hope they meet somewhere in the middle.*

## Speak Out

*Throughout this book, you'll encounter insights from Myanmar individuals with extensive experience working with foreigners, often aligning with foreigners' perspectives. It's essential to clarify that my writing is rooted in deep respect for Myanmar's culture and people. I'm profoundly grateful for the support and kindness I've received from Myanmar people, which has allowed me to live and work here for a decade.*

*Thank you all once again, and I hope you find this book engaging and enlightening!*

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## CHAPTER 3

### SPEAK OUT

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#### 3.1 Speak Out

As discussed in the previous chapter, many expatriates describe Myanmar people as polite, gentle, and kind, always aiming to please others. On one hand, these traits are highly valued – everyone appreciates dealing with polite individuals. However, on the flip side, excessive politeness can sometimes lead to misunderstandings and complications in global-local work relationships. Like two sides of a coin, being overly polite can have adverse effects, turning situations sour.

#### **The Pitfalls of Over-Politeness**

In reality, many expatriates struggle with the overly courteous behavior of Myanmar people. Can you believe that over-politeness can actually backfire?

Let's explore some real-life scenarios:

#### **Story 1 - When Saying No is Good**

Sometimes, Myanmar people politely decline requests from expatriates, saying, *"No, sorry I cannot attend the meeting at that time,"* or *"No, sorry, I'm unable to complete this assignment by the deadline."* Both responses are beneficial!

Why is that? While it may initially seem rude, it's actually productive. For instance, if you can't make a meeting at a certain time, suggesting an alternative avoids wasting time and effort for both parties. Similarly, admitting you can't meet a deadline allows expatriate managers to provide support or adjust schedules accordingly. Saying "No" isn't rude; it's clear and efficient.

Do you see the advantages of saying "No", even though it may seem rude in Myanmar culture?

Consider the alternative scenario: instead of saying "No," you say "Yes, I will come," even though you know you cannot. You do this to maintain good relations, but what happens when you don't show up?

When expatriates schedule meetings, they allocate time, often sacrificing other commitments. Time is precious, and they plan meticulously. If you don't show up, it wastes their time, money, and opportunities, potentially eroding trust. Can they believe you next time you say "Yes"?

Saying "Yes" when you mean "No" damages relationships. "Say No" is what expatriates appreciate – it's the bait they want.

In Myanmar, there's a strong cultural emphasis on saving face and avoiding offense. Saying "No" directly can feel disappointing, especially when refusing a senior's request. However, expatriates prefer straightforward responses; they need clarity to act appropriately.

## **Story 2 - When Yes is No**

*An ASEAN expat first came to Myanmar to work. The expat gave the two female colleagues the research assignment to find out which universities offer human resources as a subject in their curriculum and the related faculty contacts. The two young ladies, said, "Yes, yes, yes," nodding their heads continuously. They seemed very enthusiastic and confident, and they repeated, "Yes," when the expat asked, "Are you sure you can do it in a week?"*

*The ASEAN expat felt so glad that she had dynamic colleagues with a “can do” attitude. But after a week, they hadn't made progress.*

Why? They didn't know how to use Google effectively for research. Saying “Yes” didn't mean they could complete the task; it simply acknowledged they heard the request. They do want to say “No”.

Expatriates, however, interpret “Yes” as commitment.

The Yes/No misunderstanding underscores **a communication gap**. Myanmar's respect for hierarchy discourages questioning superiors, which can lead to misinterpreted commitments.

### **How to Speak Out**

*“Speak out”* means:

- Asking for clarification when unsure.
- Saying “No” when unable to fulfill a request, explaining why.
- Disagreeing respectfully, offering alternative viewpoints.
- Confronting issues constructively to find solutions.

Excessive politeness that obscures truth is ultimately dishonest and harmful. Myanmar people are encouraged to adopt a more straightforward approach in communication with expatriates. Being overly polite can lead to misunderstandings; clarity and honesty build trust.

Remember, being direct isn't rude; it's effective.

So, don't hesitate – **speak out!**

**Exercise: Practice speaking out with expatriates three times and document your experiences in your notebook.**

### **3.2 Just Ask**

မသိလျှင်မေး မစင်လျှင်ဆေး – “Ask if unknown, clean if dirty.”  
(Myanmar proverb).

*"When an expat superior asks you to do an assignment, if you do not understand, just ask back. Do not just say "Yes, Yes, Yes..." all the times. Ask him/her back till you really understand the assignment."* A Canadian expat suggests.

Why should you do it?

You may recall the previous story *"When Yes is No."* When someone does not spend some minutes to ask back for understanding, he takes the risk of spending many days doing the wrong things. His senior could get angry with him then - things go out of plan and fall apart. **Only five minutes of asking will save you many days.** Most importantly, your expat boss wants you to ask if you do not understand things. They will not understand that you are trying to be polite by not asking them questions. Totally they don't. They indeed do not value this kind of *"politeness"* at all! Because it causes the waste of time, efforts, and money.

Let us look back to the research assignment in the paragraph article 3.1.

It turned out that the two female colleagues had not done the assignment because they were not sure how to find potential universities or how to check if a university offered the HR subject because they did not know how to obtain the phone numbers.

When she gave the assignment, the expat had said, *"Please 'Google' for universities' names."* However, they were not used to using Google for information searching!

*"Why did not they ask me about it? It is just so easy to ask and do the right things than to keep quiet and fail the assignment!"* The expat expressed her frustration.

In fact, expats only wish that *"You ask back till you do understand."* This is the advice of a Canadian expat who has lived in Myanmar nearly 20 years.



In fact, expats would be very offended if you do things without understanding. Only you know the best if you understand a thing or not. So you need to ask if you don't.

Would you like to compare the consequences of just spending some more minutes (to ask) with the consequences of doing wrong things (due to misunderstanding) and taking you many days to re-do it?

The above Canadian female expat says *“We know that no one is perfect or knows everything. If you need guidance, or it is unclear how to start with something, ask what you need to know early, rather than waiting until you have fallen behind. Be honest and be prepared to say you don't understand and want more information or want to ask questions.”*

**Just ask!** It is simple, isn't it?

**Exercise: Practice asking back expats three times and write it down in your notebook.**

### 3.3 Say No

#### Seven good things about saying No

There is a Myanmar proverb: *“If you carry the word No with you, you will never be poor in old age.”*

Would you like to explore seven benefits of saying No?

1. To professionally please your boss or another person.
2. To demonstrate honesty.
3. To enhance efficiency – saving time and money.
4. To resolve issues promptly.
5. To receive proper support from your seniors and your colleagues
6. To take responsibility for your commitments.
7. To build trust.

A European expat emphasizes the importance of saying No: *“My Myanmar colleagues can be hesitant to say No. Initially, everyone agreeing to suggestions or requests seems wonderful. However, tasks left incomplete or delayed can lead to terrible outcomes.”*

It's clear that the consequences of not saying No are often more significant than the intended positive impact of saying Yes.

A Myanmar repatriate with over 20 years of international experience describes: *“Myanmar people often avoid saying No to avoid offending others, especially seniors. Unfortunately, this often leads to frustration and undesirable outcomes.”* Can you see saying Yes when you do not mean it cannot please your boss but makes things go awful?

Consider this example of the negative consequences of not saying No when necessary: *“The taboo against saying No to foreigners is a major challenge. It has compromised projects, affected budgets, and strained team dynamics, costing thousands of dollars due to oversights.”* Another European expat underscores this issue. In such cases, the refusal to say No results in financial losses and team discord.

Let's consider another scenario illustrating the dangers of not saying No when it's warranted:

*A Myanmar friend shared an incident where Ko Aung, an IT assistant, agreed eagerly when an expat asked to use Room A in the office for a training session with a projector. Ko Aung promised to arrange Room A for the assigned date.*

*However, on the day of the training, both the expat and the trainer were disappointed to find inadequate electrical setup in Room A for the projector. Moreover, the room was too small to project images effectively.*

*Compounding the issue, Ko Aung was unreachable by phone, forcing the expat to seek help from another IT assistant, delaying*

*the session by 30 minutes. This sudden change disrupted the training schedule, adversely affecting both the expat and the trainer within the allotted three-hour timeframe.*

In hindsight, if Ko Aung had voiced his concerns and suggested an alternative room better suited for projector use, the situation could have been avoided. Despite wanting to please the expat by agreeing, Ko Aung realized he should have said No when necessary.

Do you see how expats value clarity and directness? They encourage Myanmar people to assertively say No when appropriate, offering reasons and alternatives when declining.

*“I wish Myanmar colleagues would articulate their reasons for saying No. Acknowledging that it’s acceptable to decline would greatly expedite processes!”* emphasizes a European expat. For instance, when scheduling a meeting, stating, *“Sorry, I can’t attend at 6 PM due to an MBA class then, but I’m available at 9 AM the next day”* can lead to mutually beneficial solutions.

*“More assertive No responses, when warranted, would be preferable to blind agreement with foreign suggestions,”* asserts an Australian expat with over 17 years in Myanmar.

Another ASEAN expat adds, *“Saying Yes without understanding leads to no commitment. It’s better to say No outright.”* Understanding this importance of timely delivery can help comprehend why expat colleagues may react assertively when assured Yes responses fail to materialize.

A Myanmar repatriate from Australia advises, *“Think carefully before agreeing. Only say Yes if you can fully commit. It’s okay to decline if you can’t deliver – better than promising and failing.”*

Importantly, many foreigners, not just expats in Myanmar, admire Myanmar people for their honesty. Honesty is a noble virtue,

foundational for effective communication. Without it, misunderstandings arise, leading to breakdowns in cooperation.

Don't let the pride of being politeness by saying Yes sink in you – **say No when it's necessary!**

**Exercise: Practice declining with expats at least once this week and record it in your notebook.**

### 3.4 Disagree

*"Societal conflict is the force that ultimately drives change and development in society." (Karl Marx)*

There are positive stories where Myanmar colleagues disagree with expats, which makes expats glad and respects Myanmar colleagues more.

*One of our expats from an ASEAN country heads the marketing department. Once, he proposed sending a female marketing executive to a northern city for a customer behavior survey. The girl has strong English skills and relevant research experience. However, sending her alone would be culturally inappropriate and potentially unsafe, given her upbringing in Yangon where she hasn't traveled alone outside the city.*

*During a meeting, the Myanmar deputy manager disagreed with this proposal. He cited cultural concerns and suggested that such assignments might be more suitable for women from Kachin or Chin backgrounds, who often travel independently.*

*Uncertain, the expat manager sought the girl's opinion. She agreed to consult her family, who ultimately rejected the trip, asked her to resign if she had to go.*

*Consequently, the expat revised his decision and assigned a male colleague for the trip. He later expressed greater respect for the deputy manager and encouraged more instances of respectful disagreement.*

Throughout history, major scientific theories have emerged from challenging prevailing beliefs. For instance, in the 15th century, Galileo Galilei contradicted the Vatican by asserting the Earth orbits the Sun. In the 20th century, Albert Einstein's theory of relativity challenged Isaac Newton's understanding of gravity. Progress hinges on dissent and diversity of thought.

Do you grasp the significance and power of dissent?

In Jane Austen's *"Pride and Prejudice,"* Elizabeth Bennet, a young woman of lesser social standing, often disagrees with Mr. Darcy, a wealthy and higher-status man. Despite societal norms favoring men, Elizabeth's confident and articulate objections intrigue Darcy, leading him to introspection and eventual admiration. Austen portrays Elizabeth as a character valued for her unique perspective—a reminder that diversity of opinion enriches understanding.

Your perspective is uniquely yours. Embrace it, especially with expats. They often appreciate constructive dissent. Remember, they too can learn from your insights.

Disagreeing respectfully enhances both personal and organizational performance.

*"They avoid negativity, such as disagreement or conveying bad news, which complicates collaboration."* A Canadian expat notes.

Fear of appearing rude often inhibits assertiveness among Myanmar people. Rather than disagree, they may reluctantly agree to tasks they question.

An American expat observes, *"Many Myanmar people avoid direct or blunt discussions, fearing rudeness in tough conversations."*

Do you recognize the pitfalls of never voicing disagreement? Conversely, straightforward dialogue fosters mutual understanding.

Disagreement with expats is not only acceptable but desirable.

## How to disagree effectively?

Distinguish between assertiveness and aggression. Politely explain objections and propose alternatives to foster productive discussions. Mere dissent without rationale may not yield desired outcomes.

*"Myanmar individuals should feel confident in expressing opinions and disagreements in a factual manner. They should also explain why it is"* Suggests an expat. A Myanmar repatriate with two decades of international experience adds, *"Reducing the fear of losing face and cultivating polite assertiveness is crucial."*

*"Respect is important, but direct communication is essential, regardless of cultural differences."* Asserts a Myanmar female repatriate.

**Exercise: Practice respectfully disagreeing with an expat this week and record your experience in your notebook**

## 3.5 Confront

### ***When Fighting is Lighting***

*The expat finance manager was displeased with Ma Hnin, believing that she spent too much time chatting in Burmese with friends on the phone in the office, which he felt hindered her from completing her tasks on time.*

*Unknown to him, Ma Hnin was actively engaging local clients to input vendor information into their new data system. However, she encountered challenges dealing with government officers among her colleagues in the company's joint venture. They were unaccustomed to following requests from civilians and did not respond well to deadlines, making it difficult for her to meet project timelines. Additionally, she faced numerous demands from international offices like Singapore and Australia.*

*All these factors contributed to her carrying a heavy workload. Yet instead of confronting her expat supervisor for guidance or assistance, Ma Hnin attempted to manage everything independently.*

*In reality, there were numerous operational intricacies in Myanmar that expats, particularly newcomers, often misunderstood, leading to misinterpretations of her actions.*

*Ma Hnin reached a breaking point when multiple factors beyond her control caused significant issues, prompting her resignation.*

*Fortunately, during the exit interview, Ma Hnin candidly shared her challenges with the expat manager. It was then that he comprehended the myriad obstacles his local colleague had faced while collaborating with various key stakeholders.*

*Had Ma Hnin addressed these issues with him sooner, it might have alleviated her workload struggles. He emphasized, "You need to confront me whenever such issues arise and you cannot resolve them independently. **Only through open communication can we uncover the truth and devise effective solutions for our business.**"*

*Reflecting on this, he wished she had approached him earlier, as understanding her situation earlier could have led to a different outcome.*

*Ultimately, the expat persuaded her to reconsider her resignation. Today, four years later, she holds the role of Head of Finance, formerly held by the expat.*

Many others face similar challenges but resign silently without communicating their reasons, fearing confrontation. They forfeit potential benefits by avoiding discussions with their managers or directors. In contrast, discussing problems openly incurs no loss.

Can you see the positive power of confrontation? Only through confrontation can we delve into issues deeply and discover the most effective solutions.

If Ma Hnin had not confronted the expat, would she have attained her current position? It remains uncertain!

In some respects, Ma Hnin initially perceived sharing her experiences and seeking help from her expat manager as contentious.

Yet, as illustrated, effective communication clarifies misunderstandings. Confrontation can work miracles!

However, Myanmar's cultural aversion to reporting bad news and confronting issues remains a significant challenge. Myanmar people approach conflict differently than expats—they tend to avoid it.

Consider how expats yearn for Myanmar people to engage in confrontations.

An American expat concludes, *"Many Myanmar people shy away from confrontation, arguments, or disagreements."* Another states, *"Myanmar people avoid confrontational matters."* They insist, *"Avoiding confrontation complicates everyone's jobs, we need greater willingness among Myanmar people to confront expats."*

An Australian expat married to a Burmese woman adds, *"I wish they had the courage to **speak up** when they witness wrongdoing and address conflicts."*

Avoiding confrontation is deeply ingrained in Myanmar's culture. One may not realize his or her behavior aligns with his or her own culture while conflicting with another culture.

A European expat explains, *"It's challenging for Myanmar people to implement necessary confrontations with expats due to a history of 50 years discouraging expressions of opinion. Negative*



*consequences for those who spoke up or contradicted perpetuated silence."*

As the story reveals, confrontations and frank discussions foster healthy work environments.

### **Embrace confrontation!**

**Exercise: Practice disagreeing with an expat, asking him/her to have a discussion with you once this week and document your experience in your notebook.**

**Suggestion: Three Practical Steps to Deliver a Negative Message:**

1. Begin with a positive remark (e.g., It's crucial to conduct a survey in the north).
2. Deliver a negative response: However, a young woman cannot undertake this task due to...
3. Suggest an alternative: Perhaps a male colleague would be suitable...

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## CHAPTER 4

### BE OPEN

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#### **4.1 We Actually Are Open Every Day**

Since Myanmar opened its doors to the global world, there has been widespread optimism for the country's improvement. Myanmar has changed significantly into an open society at a certain level, even though the recent unstable political events have somehow reversed the process. But has this openness extended to people's minds? Let's delve into the following story:

#### **A Story of Hating Foreigners and Business Communication Tools**

*A woman shares with her friends why she doesn't want to work with expats: "I am traditional. I wear a longyi and enjoy mohinga. I love Myanmar. I am proud of Bagan, Shwedagon Pagoda, and so many beautiful places in our country. But I don't like foreigners. They are just strange people. They cheat and steal jobs from us."*

*Over the weekend, she asks her husband, "Hubby, shall we go to the new shopping center? They have Italian pizza I want to try. Our son likes it too." Her husband agrees, suggesting they try a Japanese restaurant another day.*

*She enjoys visiting these international luxury restaurants, later posting photos on Facebook with her iPhone to show she's having a “trendy” and “modern” experience. She also shares pictures of herself in skirts, another source of pride. With a collection of modern-style clothes and high heels, she strives for a glamorous appearance. She is equally excited to share her overseas travel pictures from Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and more—demonstrating she experiences more than most.*

*At work, her boss asks her to communicate with foreign clients via email and platforms like Skype or WhatsApp. She prefers using Facebook, where she spends most of her time. Her boss insists that for business, foreign clients prefer not to use Facebook.*

*“I don’t like it at all,” she grumbles.*

It’s ironic—she wants the luxuries of an open Myanmar she loves but rejects working with foreigners or using international business tools. Her negative remarks about foreigners suggest she advocates for a closed Myanmar, avoiding interactions with foreigners altogether.

In reality, Myanmar has been open in many ways. We embrace global brands from KFC and Coca-Cola to Samsung, Huawei, Apple (iPhone, iPad, MacBook), Dell, HP, and more. Facebook and Viber are part of daily life. Mark Zuckerberg, when he created Facebook in 2004 in a small dorm room, couldn't have predicted it would connect 3 billion people globally—almost one-third of the world's population. Many now can’t imagine a day without Facebook, despite only using it for a few years.

Every day, we use international telecom services like Ooredoo, MyTel—household names in Myanmar. The telecom revolution has connected 24 million Myanmar people to the internet, enabling communication with friends, family, and business partners worldwide.

On the streets, young people dress similarly to their peers overseas: Western-style clothes—T-shirts, shirts, trousers, and occasionally very short skirts. They enjoy Hollywood, Bollywood, Korean, and other foreign movies. Their favorite international singers include BTS, Black Pink, Taylor Swift, Lady Gaga, Rihanna, Justin Bieber, Shawn Mendes, and more.

Young people gather at roadside teashops to watch football, supporting their national team and also clubs like Manchester United, Arsenal, Barcelona, etc.

People flock to modern shopping centers like Junction City, Times Square, and Myanmar Plaza to explore international products, even if just for window shopping. More Myanmar citizens travel or study abroad—to Thailand, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, UK, Germany, USA, Australia, etc.

Simultaneously, there are young Myanmar people want to go abroad for better jobs.

In this globalized world, even in Myanmar, I connect with readers globally—South Africa, Brazil, America, England, Germany, Italy, Australia, India, Thailand, Singapore—through Amazon.com, selling my book *“When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates can Succeed in Myanmar.”* Similarly, Myanmar people can order from Amazon, the world's largest online market. Amazon's annual sales exceed \$570 billion, serving over 300 million users worldwide. Its annual revenues is larger than the annual GDP (gross domestic products) of many countries in the world.

**“Connect”** is today's most significant word. East looks to the West, and vice versa, intensifying connections at all levels—local, national, regional, and global—accelerating integration. Borders between countries are less significant, thanks to the internet and communication technologies.

The woman in our story wants selective openness in an open Myanmar but rejects working with foreigners. Can one be closed in

a globalization era? Everything, especially including our mindset and culture should be open. Often, people cite **“Myanmar culture”** to resist change and cling to outdated practices. Yet, cultures evolve, adapting to new norms and ideas. Let’s not use culture as an excuse to resist positive change.

**Let’s embrace the positive changes of an open culture.**

*(Some readers may argue with me that the current situation’s culture is not open - I mean it is still more open than it was, before 2011.)*

### **The Global-Myanmar Connection in the Global World**

The COVID-19 outbreak shows us a very good example of how no country can be *“isolated”* now – as long as there is movement of people across borders, all countries have infected people. They lean on each other to find out/provide testing equipment, protective measures, machines, treatment processes, medicine, etc. Every day we got updated data about how many people are infected, recovered, or passed away.

At global and regional levels, Myanmar is a member of the United Nations, WTO (World Trade Organization), IMF (International Monetary Fund), WB (World Bank), ADB (Asia Development Bank), and many more international organizations and institutions. Myanmar has been a member of ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) since 1997, which consists of 11 countries (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam)

As a country, Myanmar is now well-connected to the globalized world. Two hundred countries in the world are already open and connected, except for North Korea. How about our individual situation?

Back to the story at the beginning of this article, the lady doesn’t like foreigners and tries to close herself off from them. In fact, even if

she doesn't work for an international company, she still needs to deal with international clients. Even though she doesn't like foreigners, she still enjoys many things from international sources. They have become a proud and indispensable part of her life.

She actually has opened up herself already.

Can we not be open in this open globalized world?

## **4.2 Speak Out, Step Out**

### ***Myanmar People to Be Open – The Expats' Number One Wish***

Do you believe that **“open up”** is the most desirable trait expats seek in their Myanmar colleagues? They desperately want it. Almost all the expats who responded to my questionnaire for this book expressed this desire. They struggle with many Myanmar people **“keeping things to themselves.”** When asked, *“What makes it most difficult to work with Myanmar people?”* they often respond, *“They don't open up at all. We can't know what they think. Issues can stack up without being resolved.”*

For me, this is understandable since the country was in isolation for nearly 60 years—from 1962 to 2011. I explain this to foreigners in my first book, *When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates Can Succeed in Myanmar.*

Again, we need to give the fish what they want. If they want worms, give them worms—not chocolate or ice cream that you like. Now they want you to **“open up”**. Give them what they want, and you will be fine.

In the previous chapter, we discussed **“being rude/being straightforward”** in a polite way. **“Being rude”** here means asking back an expat, saying No to them, disagreeing with them, and confronting them to find healthy solutions to a problem. You've found that asking back helps, and there are even **“Seven things about saying No”** in dealing with expats. You may experience that

*“fighting is enlightening”*—so you dare to disagree or confront expats too.

Now, this chapter on *“being open”* is easy to follow after *“being rude.”* The truth is, *“being rude/being straightforward”* is a breaking point that can help you be more open.

So, what does it mean to be open? It’s about speaking out your ideas, opinions, and feelings. It’s about stepping out of your comfort zone to make it happen. It’s about being open to changes, international standards, and new international exposure.

### ***Speak Out, Step Out***

*A European expat recalls a story about her Myanmar colleagues speaking out in the office. Once, she forgot to take off her shoes at an office that required it when she first arrived in Myanmar. One of her Myanmar colleagues saw this and reminded her to take off her shoes, viewing her behavior as rude or disrespectful to Myanmar culture. The expat was happy to comply—she had simply forgotten. She was also glad to be told to pass paperwork with her right hand by another Myanmar colleague.*

In a professional working environment, **speaking out** is a must. If you watch international movies, such as Hollywood films, you often see people with different opinions accepting that fact. In meetings, people compete to raise their opinions. It’s normal for them to have ideas different from their bosses’. In international conferences or webinars, people commonly try to *“speak out”* in meetings. They have to, in order to get things done!

In business meetings in Myanmar, many expats feel frustrated because their local colleagues do not speak out at all—even when assured there will be no consequences for doing so. Of course, I understand we cannot always say 100% of what we think. But we have to speak out about certain things to contribute to progress. Too many times, I’ve heard expats say, *“My Myanmar colleagues do not speak out at all in our meetings. They just keep quiet, even*

*when I ask them individually. I don't understand why. Whatever the manager says, they agree. Our meetings are stuck—more than the traffic jams!”*

Some expats later find out that when the meeting finishes, people gossip outside the meeting room about it. *“Why don't they discuss those things in the meetings when they are very much encouraged to do so? They will be listened to, and their ideas can be appreciated. But they discuss elsewhere, to no avail.”*

In fact, the **“hierarchy”** culture in Myanmar has a lot to do with this. It prevents people from expressing themselves or their opinions before their seniors or elders. In the government rule's, people just had to follow orders and keep their mouths shut, an effect still present in society. In the classroom, whatever the teachers say is right, and students have to memorize it. They are not encouraged to bring up their opinions. In families, the same authoritative way is followed, where the family head makes important decisions for others to follow.

An ASEAN expat stresses, *“Though they are smart, they are shy to speak up. They are so careful with what they say. But we are at work—they need to be straightforward in a working environment to get things done.”* Another expat from an ASEAN country adds, *“As the most common problem at work is due to a lack of communication, Myanmar colleagues need to have the willingness to speak openly.”*

Do you see yourself in a similar situation when you keep quiet and things just get worse?

As analyzed previously, it is always a two-way learning process. When you speak out, your expat managers learn from your opinion too. At the very least, they understand the situation better. There are specific things on the ground in Myanmar they may not know. They do not know everything, and it does not mean whatever they



say is right. That's why their number one wish is for you to speak out your mind!

A European expat who has lived here for over five years says, *“Myanmar people can be painfully shy, which can inhibit progress. I wish them to be more open about their thoughts and not be scared to act on new ideas. **Don't “overthink”** if there is a problem, but be open about it and look for a solution together. Please try to be blunt with expats and explain the complete situation.”* He also shared that his local reports sometimes procrastinate and don't tell him they cannot do things they don't want to do. A lot of time is wasted.

Another European expat suggests, *“It is usually more helpful and simpler to say how you are feeling, even if you are embarrassed, humble, or anxious.”*

It is understandable that it is not easy to speak out to a foreigner, especially when you do not feel close to them. Foreigners can seem *“cold”* when they appear too rational. In certain cases, it may look like they only care about *“getting the result”* and not about your feelings and emotions. Then you feel *“turned off.”* You do not like them. Or you are scared. And you keep quiet.

Well, they certainly have their own pressures too. And they do not know things if you do not tell them. If we recall the story of the financial analyst in article 3.3, we can easily relate to what expats say above. Because the finance analyst—Ma Hnin—kept quiet about all her issues and tried to solve them herself without success, it led to **a huge misunderstanding** between her and her expat manager. Things were only resolved when she *“spoke out”* about all the issues, explained her situation, and expressed her feelings of helplessness and distress.

Yes, expats have their share of learning about Myanmar culture and people to build working relationships and make you feel more comfortable. I emphasize this in my book *When Global Meets Local*. In the meantime, we do not just wait for them to change. We never

know when exactly your expat could do it. So, we have to do our homework first. And we need to do it well.

If you do not speak out, how can people (especially foreigners) know what you are thinking? What you are feeling? What your position is on a matter? How can we solve possible issues to get things done?

Can you imagine living a day without any issues? In our lives, issues arise every day. Thus, they need to be discussed to find proper solutions. Without you stepping out and speaking up, things remain stagnant and build up into a big mess.

**When you speak out, many things can be solved easily.** It is for the sake of your boss, your organization, and particularly yourself.

### ***What Myanmar Professionals Think About Their Colleagues' Silence***

Many Myanmar people know well how silence can affect their colleagues' performance.

*“Myanmar people are quite shy to speak up, and therefore it is quite difficult to read their minds. It slows down our jobs,”* confirms a Myanmar finance manager of a global company. An Myanmar HR head of an international insurance firm notes, *“Myanmar people normally do not speak out, which makes it difficult to work with them.”*

Can you see that even a Myanmar person can't read your mind if you don't speak out? See what happens? It worsens your job performance considerably.

A Myanmar head of business at an international telecom states, *“Myanmar people often lack openness. They should work with an open culture and dare to give their own opinion where necessary, with confidence.”*

A repatriate from Singapore working in the multimedia field and a Kachin encourages, *“Myanmar people should say what's on their*

*mind openly. They normally try not to offend others by not speaking out about what they are thinking. But this only makes issues tougher to solve later when they are exposed.”*

I have an interesting story to share here. A number of HR Directors and Managers have started proposing my intercultural workshops to their expat seniors. Since this is a bit new in Myanmar, they were initially hesitant. However, knowing that global companies are inviting intercultural trainers to conduct cultural workshops about Myanmar for their expats, they dared to propose it to their country managers and directors. Their expat superiors often liked the idea and asked them to connect with me to arrange these kinds of workshops for their expats.

Initiatives are very much welcome to speak out! For now, we are living in a globalized world. So, step out of your previous comfort zone and **speak out!**

Let me conclude with a saying from a successful media Myanmar repatriate: *“If you can have open communication and **step out of your comfort zone, the possibilities are limitless.** You really have to draw yourself out of your shells.”*

## **4.3 How to Be Open to Change**

### ***A Story of Being Forced to Change***

*Sandar, a business owner, told me, “I am forty years old. I just want to live a peaceful life. I do not want to change at all. I do not want to use Skype video—it’s complicated. I am not used to using emails, too. Meeting face-to-face is the best. Clients normally try to meet me. The products that my company sells are good. Clients like them, for sure. It is good enough for me. Please do not try to change me, I am stubborn.”*

*Then Covid-19 came—face-to-face meetings were to be avoided, and working from home was enforced. Online communication*

*became a necessity. People rarely wanted to come to her office anymore.*

*Sandar's clients started messaging her online more often. They wanted to communicate via email and receive her products through home delivery. They preferred emails to avoid information mix-ups.*

*Her competitors used Facebook promotions and gained many new customers thanks to their free delivery services.*

*She was forced to change. Otherwise, her business could not survive during such tough times.*

Norman Vincent Peale, the father of positive thinking and bestselling author of *The Power of Positive Thinking*, states, “*Change your thoughts and you change your world.*” When you are open to change, you open yourself to a whole new world of opportunities.

Albert Einstein said, “*The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.*” We live in an ever-changing world, and “*Change is inevitable. Growth is optional,*” as John C. Maxwell puts it. Indeed, Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of Singapore who led the construction of an advanced Singaporean nation, said, “*Change is the very essence of life. The moment we cease to change, to be able to adapt, to adjust, to respond effectively to new situations, then we have begun to die.*”

In Myanmar, changes are even more critical. A successful international financial advisor from Myanmar urged me, knowing I am writing this book, “*Make young Burmese realize how FAR the country has been set back for 58 years so that there is a sense of crisis to attempt to catch up with the rest of the world.*”

Mahatma Gandhi stated, “***You must be the change you wish to see in the world.***”

In Myanmar, I have witnessed many people succeed thanks to their willingness to change.

*For example, there is a leading HR professional from Shan State. She was the HR head of a local energy group—a stable job, but with limited learning opportunities after seven years. Then she was invited to take a new role at an international telecom company, with a different operational structure reporting to a regional head in Singapore. If she accepted the job, she would need to learn about new technology, the HR online system, basic telecom knowledge, conference video calls, webinars, new reporting systems, and more.*

*On the other hand, it was a huge opportunity for her to excel in her career.*

*She took the job offer and made it a success, despite being over 40. She went through many changes, experienced exhaustion, felt the pressure from bosses and staff, dealt with recruitment, strikes, joint ventures, and a new terminal building. Yet, she stood firm.*

*She is now happy about her choice to change. She became one of the most respected and best-paid HR professionals before deciding to leave the corporate world to start her own business.*

*Another change was on the horizon.*

The globalized world changes every day, every hour, every minute. Like it or not, globalization is an economic tsunami sweeping the planet. It can affect everyone's life on earth, and we must adapt to the situation. It is better to change voluntarily.

Don't wait until you are forced to change. It may be too late.

### ***Change is a Rule of Life***

Charles Darwin, the British naturalist, discovered that ***“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one most adaptable to change.”*** He learned this from his

five-year Voyage of Discovery, filling countless notebooks and ledgers with an abundance of information on various animal and plant life, shipping home more than 1,500 different species in the process.

Change is actually the evolution rule of life.

Do you see the new iPhone appear often? Today, iPhone 15 is the latest, next year it's iPhone 16. They cannot stand still. Nokia, once the dominant player among mobile producers, is now left behind by its competitors due to insufficient breakthrough changes.

Facebook, the number one social media platform in the world with billions of users, is still making improvements every day. Thousands of programmers at Facebook headquarters work hard daily to improve, change, add new features, and enhance service quality.

Change is a way of life. Without changes, we cannot improve ourselves or our organizations. An ASEAN expat insists, "*People should lower their resistance to change for improvement.*" Whether you like it or not, life is changing anyway. Don't resist it; find your way to live with it. As the philosopher Sun Tzu said over two thousand years ago, "*Go with the flow.*"

If you accept that change is a must, the following steps are much easier. Change is not as difficult as you might think. The most critical aspect is to change your attitude first. "***The greatest discovery of all time is that a person can change his future by merely changing his attitude,***" asserts Oprah Winfrey, the media billionaire, philanthropist, and famous motivational TV show host in America. She has proven this all her life—from being a poor, abused black child to becoming a giant in her field. She did not accept a "*victim mindset*" but overcame her adversity to be a winner, thanks first to her changing attitude.

I'm sure the current situation in Myanmar would make you feel demotivated and even depressed. I hope those inspiring stories and

sayings would help light up your positive thinking. Do whatever possible. **Don't give up.**

An ASEAN expat, who is head of HR at a financial service firm, expresses her opinion: *"I wish Myanmar people to have an openness for new experiences and a willingness to take on new challenges. I see many people avoiding exposure, which limits their opportunities in life."*

Do you see yourself in that statement? If you do, it is great, as you can identify factors that enable you to excel in your career—being open to new experiences and challenges.

Change is for your sake, first.

**Are you ready to change?**

**Exercise: Please think about your situation and come up with three options for change.**

## **4.4 How to Be Open to International Standards**

*A successful Myanmar gentleman recalled his experience of starting his first consulting joint venture. His partner was a Westerner with extensive business consulting experience. The Myanmar gentleman taught his partner how to interact properly with Myanmar people, while his partner taught him the nuances of the international consulting business.*

*When he presented to clients, his files were always very informative, and he felt proud of them. However, his partner constantly pointed out areas for improvement, focusing on what seemed like "tiny" details—grammar mistakes, spelling errors, and adjustments for a more professional look. The Western gentleman insisted that adhering to international standards was crucial in the consulting business. Since clients pay a lot of money for their services, everything must be of the utmost perfect quality.*

*At first, they argued frequently about these details. But gradually, thanks to his open-minded character, the Myanmar gentleman accepted the challenge and adjusted his presentations to meet “international standards.”*

*Conversely, his partner also adapted his behavior to better suit interactions with Myanmar people.*

*Things began to move smoothly after these adjustments.*

My friend, the Myanmar gentleman in this story, attributes his success to luck. I disagree with him. It is his open-minded attitude that led to his success. He was very receptive to adopting and achieving international standards, demonstrating the ability to change—an essential trait for success.

He explains, *“It is about suboptimal services and products. Most Myanmar people find it difficult to understand the concept of “perfect” products or services for clients or customers. Due to a lack of international or corporate experiences, many Myanmar people think that pushing for “nearly perfect” products or services is just extra work or an obsession. I believe this mindset stems from living in an uncertain and chaotic environment for too long. Thus, everything we have and produce seems good enough. But in a very competitive world, this mindset is challenging to overcome. Some foreigners mistakenly see this behavior as laziness. In reality, Myanmar people are among the hardest working in Asia. The real challenge is understanding the expectations of the corporate world.”*

He concludes, *“Young Myanmar professionals need to push harder to meet regional and global standards in their work. It may sound harsh, but I used to say in my office, ‘**never do “Myanmar-good-enough” work.**’ I understand that in our country, everything operates in its own way. But to meet international and global standards, we always need to push our limits. “Myanmar-good-enough” is not acceptable to international corporate standards.”*



His views align with those of a European expat who remarked, *“Quality expectations are not always shared, especially when set by external non-Myanmar stakeholders. My Myanmar colleagues sometimes consider a document ready to share when I think it requires more work.”*

A Canadian expat noted, *“Many think that doing it to the best of their ability is good enough, but for the organization, it must meet certain standards.”*

An expat from Europe who has lived here for over five years observed, *“People seem to pay little attention to details.”* He gave an example from his beverage promotion program, where he often had to request color adjustments in layouts or printouts to match the company's logo, or correct small errors like spelling mistakes to make the materials smoother and more appealing. Often, he could not achieve the desired quality because his local colleagues and printing partners did not pay as much attention to detail as he did.

Yes, their standards are different, but it's okay. The important thing is to open yourself up to international standards.

A Myanmar repatriate from Dubai commented, *“Many Myanmar people lack international exposure. I wish they would be more open and adopt international standards instead of just scrolling through their phones and keeping things to themselves.”*

**Exercise: Please think about your job or study situation and write down what kinds of international standards you should follow.**

## **4.5 How to Make Friends with Google and YouTube**

Much like Panda's slogan – *“thi chin da, thi da mya deh”* – living in a globalized world means embracing new experiences. I encourage you all to explore beyond Myanmar. Start with ASEAN countries like

Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam. Then venture further to Europe, Africa, America, and beyond. Traveling is an excellent way to open our minds.

Traveling introduces us to new places, people, foods, products, and cultures. It broadens our horizons and allows us to understand and accept people from different cultures more easily. The experiences we gain and the memories we create while traveling are unforgettable. They change us for the better.

However, I understand that not everyone can travel immediately. Personally, it took me seven years of hard work after university to save enough money and time to travel abroad. While we may not all have the means to travel overseas yet, there's another way to explore the world: through Google and YouTube.

Google and YouTube can be your best friends. Do you know that you have a wonderful friend who always wants to please you and has the ability to do so? This friend provides knowledge on any topic you need, is dedicated to you, and never gets angry no matter how much you demand. You don't need to offer anything in return, yet this friend remains loyal.

*With just a second, Google and YouTube can take you to seven continents and four oceans. They offer free access to travel guides, movies, books, paintings, museums, statues, and more—the best in the world. They provide free lessons in makeup, cooking, sports, exercise, meditation, English, Spanish, accounting, finance, HR, IT, management, production, manufacturing, and more. Who can offer you more?*

Everyone can use Google and YouTube, and they bring immense value to our lives. For me, I can't imagine a day without Google. That's why Google is valued at over \$2,000 billion, just twenty six years after its establishment. It's one of the biggest companies in the world. Using Google and YouTube more than Facebook each day will be greatly beneficial.

*When I was teaching English as a volunteer in Bago, I wanted to show the kids how to explore the bigger world from their small village. I asked them about their childhood dreams and why they wanted to study English. They shared their beautiful dreams of seeing kangaroos in Australia, the Eiffel Tower in Paris, meeting their favorite football team in Spain, traveling around the world, and talking to foreigners about Myanmar's most beautiful pagodas.*

*Since they also wanted to travel to ASEAN countries, I asked them to name these countries. They mentioned a few but not all. So, I showed them how to search for "ASEAN countries" on Google. They clicked on links and soon provided the complete list of ASEAN countries.*

*I asked them which continent Paris is in. They searched "Paris which continent" and found out it is in France, Europe. When I asked about America, they searched "America which continent" and discovered it is in North America. Sometimes they had to change keywords to find what they wanted, but it was easy and fun for them. They enjoyed it a lot.*

Even if we can't travel immediately, we can discover the broader world through Google. We can look at images, read about different places, watch movies filmed there, and listen to related songs. Starting with something you like can take you further. For example, if you like Barcelona's football team, Googling "*Barcelona football team*" will bring up numerous articles. You can learn about the team, its coach, history, city, culture, and sightseeing spots. As you read, you also improve your English. The images of Barcelona's people and city are wonderful, sparking curiosity to learn more about Spain and other European countries.

If you love food, Google "*the best food in the world.*" Articles with lists of top foods will appear. You'll see images of Italian spaghetti, Japanese sushi, Thai tom yum, and more—mouth-watering and enticing.

For fashion enthusiasts, Googling *"the most beautiful dress"* will show endless gorgeous clothes. You can enjoy looking at them, learn what kinds of dresses are considered beautiful globally, and feel the beauty that touches your heart and soul.

Isn't it amazing? Just Google anything that interests you. If you like music, search for Lady Gaga or Adele, and YouTube will present their best songs. Classics like *"Born This Way," "Rolling in the Deep,"* and *"Skyfall"* are just a click away. Or try classical music like Beethoven, Mozart, or Chopin for a relaxing and intellectually stimulating experience.

You might be proud of Myanmar ruby since 95% of the world's rubies come from Myanmar. Google *"Myanmar ruby"* and discover what the world says about our ruby pride. Articles like *"Ruby Value, Price, and Jewelry Information"* on websites like [gemsociety.org](http://gemsociety.org) highlight Myanmar's prominence in the ruby market. You'll learn about the value of rubies, see stunning ruby jewelry, and understand the lives of those involved in ruby production.

For movie lovers, search *"the greatest movies ever."* You'll find lists of must-watch films, many of which are free on YouTube, like *"The Godfather," "The Sound of Music,"* and *"12 Angry Men."* If you enjoy romantic comedies, Google that genre and find countless options, available both in Yangon and online.

I encourage you to read the greatest books of all time. Many are free because they are out of copyright. You can download and read works by Shakespeare, Jane Austen, and Charles Dickens. Google *"Romeo and Juliet free download"* or *"Hamlet free download"* to start.

Exploring the world through Google and YouTube feels like traveling, even while staying in Myanmar. You'll realize the vastness and diversity of our world and its rich history. Our planet is just one part of the immense Solar System, and humanity's history spans billions of years.

Global knowledge and experiences enrich our souls, touch our hearts, and sharpen our minds. Beautiful and exciting things await. Life is limited, so let's live beautifully and meaningfully.

Search anything you like! The more curious you are, the more Google and YouTube offer.

The endless world is waiting for you to explore.

Additionally, there are many free (or very cheap) online courses available today in subjects like English, literature, business, and soft skills. I found many of these courses through Google myself. Here are 450 Ivy League courses you can take online right now for free.

<https://www.freecodecamp.org/news/here-are-380-ivy-league-courses-you-can-take-online-right-now-for-free-9b3ffcbd7b8c/>

The eight Ivy League schools in America are among the most prestigious colleges in the world. They include Brown, Harvard, Cornell, Princeton, Dartmouth, Yale, and Columbia Universities, and the University of Pennsylvania. These Ivy League schools are also highly selective and extremely hard to get into. But the good news is that all these universities plus many other reputable universities (such as Cambridge, Oxford, Stanford, etc) now offer **free online courses** across multiple online platforms. These courses are known as **MOOCs** or **Massive Open Online Courses**.

Class Central has made a collection of all these in various categories such as: *Computer Science, Data Science, Programming, Humanities, Business, Art & Design, Science, Social Sciences, Health & Medicine, Engineering, Mathematics, Education & Teaching, and Personal Development.*

For all the MOOC courses, although they are created by universities, universities rarely distribute MOOCs themselves. Instead, they rely on course providers such as: • [Coursera.org](https://www.coursera.org/) • [edX.org](https://edX.org/) • [FutureLearn.com](https://www.futurelearn.com/) • [Udacity.com](https://www.udacity.com/)

This guide is to show you how to access them and choose your courses <https://www.classcentral.com/help/moocs>. And if you are new to online learning, check out these 30 actionable tips to stay focused

<https://www.classcentral.com/report/mooc-motivation-hacks/> and [8 ways to finish your courses](https://www.classcentral.com/report/how-to-finish-your-course/)

<https://www.classcentral.com/report/how-to-finish-your-course/>

You will just need to open an account in these websites with your email.

For example, you can try this free online course - Exploring English: Language and Culture (by British Council). <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/explore-english-language-culture>

After finishing a course, if you want a certificate, you need to pay a certain amount of money – it is variable depending on a specific course. It may be 69 USD for the above course, or less (i.e 44 USD), or more. For most courses on [Futurelearn.com](https://www.futurelearn.com), if you pay 174.99 USD for a year (or 14.58 USD per month), they could provide unlimited certificates for you.

<https://www.futurelearn.com/unlimited>

Please note that some of the Coursera courses are a bit harder to access. Coursera and edX do not provide free certificates, but there are thousands of courses that provide them <https://www.classcentral.com/report/free-certificates/>

There is a time limitation of access to free courses, but you can always save their contents while they are accessible to you. There is a forum for each part of each course, and you can interact with other learners from all over the world there. It is very interesting and interactive. Interaction is exciting!

They have courses in all other subjects as well: *Business Management, Creative Arts and Media, Literature, Health Care and Medicine, History, IT and Computer Science, Language, Law,*

*Nature and Environment, Politics and Society, Psychology and Mental Health, Science Engineering and Math, Study Skills, Teaching.*

I would recommend you to attend this free online course “*Practical Thinking Skills for a Successful Life.*” Very engaging, very touching. It is understandable with all the illustrated vivid stories. <https://www.edx.org/learn/strategic-thinking/the-hong-kong-polytechnic-university-success-practical-thinking-skills>

Would you like to find some of the above courses on Facebook? Go to [Yo Yar Lay's page](https://www.facebook.com/YoYarLay) <https://www.facebook.com/YoYarLay> and search “45 online courses”.

<https://web.facebook.com/YoYarLay/photos/a.247917771918149/985305384846047/?rdc=1&rdr>

Further, in Myanmar, you also have online courses provided from Myanmar – free or with affordable fees, in many subjects similar to the above courses. I found them all via Google.

For examples, one can get free or purchase affordable courses with mobile via [Zabai.org](http://Zabai.org). From this link, you can choose courses in English, hospitality, financial literacy, digital literacy, how to start a business, Life skills and Employability (Eng) etc. Financial Literacy: Learn with Ms. Bookkeeper is a free course and can be found on Google Play too. It's distributed via mobile app. Anyone can download this for free on Android smartphones. This course is Zabai's most popular course – it is developed for people from rural areas to help with access to loans info and better financial decision making.

Besides, we can also search on Youtube for free valuable knowledge from video clips there. Youtube used Google search technology - it actually belongs to Google. Further, LinkedIn offers many affordable paid courses there, many of them are at 20 – 40 USD/course. If you Google “*LinkedIn courses*” they will appear under this link. <https://www.linkedin.com/learning/>

Google and Youtube open a totally new exhilarating world for people.

In the Appendix Chapter at the end of the book, I will put links about scholarships for Myanmar students and how to find them as well. Plus, you will read about *“How to self-study effectively”* there: it helps you to overcome challenges of studying online.

Please, make friends with Google and Youtube.

Spend more time with them!

And less with Facebook 😊

**Exercise: Please choose three courses from the above that you want to learn in the next six months.**



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## CHAPTER 5

### BE BOLD

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#### 5.1 To the Point, Please

Effective communication at international standards requires directness, focusing on key points without *"beating around the bush."*

In Myanmar and many other Asian cultures, indirect communication is prevalent. Various factors, such as social hierarchy, contribute to this indirectness. For example, when speaking with a senior or elder, one must be careful not to appear disrespectful due to the cultural norm of respecting elders or seniors. This often leads to indirect communication without realizing it.

*"Beating around the bush"* means not saying what one means directly, being overly cautious, or avoiding the main point. While some use this approach to smooth conversations or build personal relationships, it doesn't always achieve these goals.

This is particularly important when dealing with Westerners, who tend to be very direct.

Consider the following email example that is not "to the point":

**Dear Sir,**

*How are you? I do hope you are all well.*

*We are all well here and trying to run the business, but it cannot be as usual. We are entering the monsoon season in Myanmar now. In Yangon, even though the weather is not so bad, the rain is still periodic and not very strong. We do not travel to other cities or regions regularly. We need proper documents stating our travel purpose to transport from one place to another due to the government's COVID-19 measures. So, we only travel when necessary. The Sein Ta Lone season is ending anyway.*

*How about you and your situation? Are you currently in your country or in Myanmar?*

*I would like to inform you that we are going to re-open our gym fitness center in Yangon from June 15th. We need to follow the safety measures required by the government, and you are required to wear masks to enter the center.*

*Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to welcoming you again.*

*Thank you so much.*

*With best wishes,*

You can see that the main message appears only near the end, making the reader feel tired or get lost before understanding the writer's intention. Even though the writer might share personal thoughts to smooth communication, the reader may forget the main message after consuming non-important information about the Myanmar travel situation under COVID-19.

The main idea can be stated immediately after "*We are all well here and trying to run the business,*" with the other information deleted.

If we use direct communication, the email would look like this:

**Dear Sir,**

*How are you? I do hope you are well during the COVID-19 time. Are you still in Yangon?*

*We are all well here and trying to run the business. I would like to inform you that we are going to re-open our gym fitness center in Yangon from June 15th. We need to follow the safety measures required by the government, and you are required to wear masks to enter the center.*

*Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions. We look forward to welcoming you again.*

*Thank you so much and take care!*

*With best wishes,*

An expat from Eastern Europe living in Myanmar for 17 years comments, "People should communicate clearly and to the point. Most foreigners prefer not to "beat around the bush" and want a clear "what" and "why." It will be much more effective."

During an interview for a Manager role at an international company, the HR manager asked the candidate about how she got a job in Singapore previously.

**HR Manager:** "Well, great, Finance Executive for ABC International. How did you get that job?"

**Candidate:** "I applied through an online advertisement, A Ma."

**HR Manager:** "Was it easy for you to get the job?"

**Candidate:** "Not really, but also not difficult for me, A Ma."

**HR Manager:** "How many applications did you send out in total?"

**Candidate:** "I'm not sure, A Ma. Maybe 4 or 5 a month or 2 months sometimes... as you know, I am picky."

**HR Manager:** *"How many months did it take you to succeed in getting that job? Just approximately."*

**Candidate:** *"Maybe 4 or 5 months, I think."*

**HR Manager:** *"Then, in total, how many applications did you send to potential employers?"*

**Candidate:** *"Let me think—suppose 4 per month for 5 months, so it may be 20. I even sent out more."*

The candidate did not respond *"to the point"* from the first question, *"How many applications did you send out in total?"* She could have stated right away that she sent 4 applications per month for 5 months, totaling at least 20 applications. Instead, the interviewer had to ask two more questions to get the needed information, which was time-consuming. The candidate could have provided her final statement right away, indicating that it took 4 to 5 months and a minimum of 20 applications to get the job abroad, demonstrating that it wasn't easy.

An HR expat from an ASEAN country concludes, *"To work effectively, people should talk straight to the point and be alert."*

So, **"to the point,"** please!

**Exercise: Reflect on your communication style—are you direct or not? What can you do to improve it?**

## **5.2 No One Knows What You Don't Tell Them**

A Myanmar Head of Finance of a joint venture firm notes, *"Many Myanmar people assume things rather than get confirmation or factual data."*

Can we really assume others know what we're thinking? Let's consider the following story.

## ***Interview Arrangement***

*An expat and a potential Myanmar business partner, Ma Shwe, scheduled a meeting for 3 pm next Tuesday. As the date approached, the expat received a message from Ma Shwe indicating she might not be able to attend: "I may have a meeting at my company, and my boss may want to meet privately afterward."*

*The expat replied, "I understand. I want to meet you today if you can arrange the time. If not, it's fine, and we can reschedule. Please let me know." She responded, "I will try, sir."*

*As the meeting time approached, the expat was unsure if she would come. He tried to call her but couldn't reach her, so he left a message: "Please let me know if you can come or not."*

*Receiving no reply, he went to another meeting.*

*When Ma Shwe arrived at his company, she couldn't meet him. She said, "I tried to come because you were pressing me. I didn't answer, so it meant 'I will come.' I thought you knew what I meant."*

*It cost her over an hour to travel back and forth, taxi fare, and delays in her other tasks. She felt angry, and it affected her work for the rest of the afternoon as she wondered why he didn't wait for her.*

*She expected others to "read her mind," but not everyone will guess correctly. Each person thinks differently, and she risks bearing the consequences of her assumptions.*

*How could the expat know her intentions? He received no specific reply and couldn't know if she would come. The expat simply wanted a Yes or No answer to arrange his time accordingly. As mentioned earlier, saying No when necessary is fine.*

*If she had responded, "I cannot come today," it would have been acceptable. They could have rescheduled for a more convenient time.*

In my previous recruitment job, candidates were often clear about their availability. If something unexpected happened, they notified me immediately, making everyone's life easier.

*"In communication, avoiding assumptions is important. We need to make things clear by asking questions or replying rather than assuming," an Australian expat working in the NGO sector explains. "The main struggle is the communication gap, often assuming others know what you're thinking even if you don't tell them."*

A European expat who has lived in Myanmar for 14 years advises, *"Don't overthink and assume things if there's a problem. Be open about it and look for a solution together."*

Let's look at a story illustrating the negative side of assumptions.

### ***Garbage Collection Equipment***

*A travel and tour business owner shared his experience with a village in a beautiful, untouched beach area. He met with the villagers and their representative for months to plan a joint venture tourism project. They needed a garbage collection system for the village. The expat was away and communicated via calls and emails with the village representative, asking, "What do you think about the garbage system? How can we do it?"*

*It took a long time without a response.*

*When the expat returned and asked again, the representative said, "I think we cannot do this system. It's very expensive; we need to buy a truck, which costs at least \$20,000."*

*The expat asked, "Is there another way besides using a truck? How about other means of transportation to collect and move the rubbish?"*

*The villagers assumed a truck was the only way because they saw trucks collecting cabbages. Hesitant to answer, they kept quiet. Eventually, they found out that a tuk-tuk could do the job and was much cheaper.*

This illustrates the setback of assumptions. How can people know what you think without telling them? If the representative had answered right away, they could have saved time and continued their discussion earlier.

Another kind of assumption to avoid is not documenting agreed points from conversations or meetings. *“Assuming verbal communication is enough can cause trouble since we cannot rely on memory for accurate details. We can easily forget what was said.”* A European expat working in hospitality notes this issue.

**Please do not assume!**

**Exercise: Reflect on your situation—do you often assume things? If yes, what were the results, and what can you do to improve it?**

### **5.3 How to Report Your Progress**

Reporting your progress is an essential part of communication with your seniors, peers, or partners. It allows them to understand what is happening with your tasks and how it may relate to theirs. If any potential problems arise, it is best to identify them as early as possible.

#### ***Being Late to a Meeting***

*Two colleagues, an expat and his report, Ko Thein, agreed to meet at 10 am at a client's construction site. However, by 10:10, the expat was still waiting without any sign of Ko Thein. Despite trying to call him, there was no response. The expat was worried something might have happened to Ko Thein and felt embarrassed since the client was also waiting. The expat couldn't proceed without Ko Thein, who was the translator.*

*Finally, at 10:20, just as the expat was about to leave, Ko Thein arrived hurriedly, explaining he was stuck in traffic on Anawrahta Road.*

While traffic jams are common, Ko Thein could have sent a quick message or made a call to inform the expat in advance that he would be late. Especially when dealing with Germans and many other Europeans, punctuality is crucial. Traffic is not an excuse; one should leave early and rather wait on-site than be late. Never be late, especially when dealing with clients or customers.

If you anticipate being late by even 5-10 minutes, you should inform the other party in advance. This helps avoid speculation and keeps everything clear, preventing any hard feelings.

### ***Notifying Bad News Related to a Deadline***

*A procurement project had a deadline of March 31st for all ordered mobile handsets to be ready for delivery to the customer service department. On March 28th, Ko Aung, in charge of procuring these phones, was informed by the seller that they were short of 18 mobile handsets and might not meet the deadline. Fearful, Ko Aung pressed the shop to fulfill the order but didn't inform his expat manager about the issue. When asked about the progress, Ko Aung simply said, "Everything is fine, sir."*

*On the morning of March 31st, the shop confirmed they couldn't deliver all the handsets as promised. Ko Aung then informed his expat manager, but it was too late. The handsets needed to be delivered by 2 pm that day, causing a rush to rearrange transportation, reschedule the start of phone service, and postpone training dates. The expat, who had many meetings and urgent tasks that day, was furious.*

Had the expat known about the issue three days earlier, he could have arranged things more smoothly. It is crucial to notify your boss about any bad news or changes compared to the initial plan. It is also essential to think about solutions and discuss them with your boss. If you cannot handle the problem yourself, your boss's awareness can help resolve the issue.



Regular progress updates are essential for solving potential problems effectively. Do not wait until the last minute to report bad news—it puts everyone in a difficult position.

An American expat working in an NGO remarked, *"Lack of communication makes our job hard. Many Myanmar colleagues do not convey all matters related to a project. A lot of information goes missing because they do not see the importance of regular communication that pertains to deadlines."* This story illustrates her point perfectly.

She wishes her colleagues felt confident in communicating regularly, asking more questions, and expressing their ideas freely.

**Please update your progress often!**

**Exercise: Reflect on your situation. Do you regularly report your progress to your managers? Was there a time you didn't, and what was the result?**

## **5.4 How to Make Friends with 5W and 1H**

Rudyard Kipling, the Nobel Laureate of Literature in the early 20th century, is known for his poem *"Mandalay,"* expressing his love for Myanmar. Apart from being emotional, Kipling was also rational. He wrote, *"I keep six honest serving-men, (They taught me all I knew); Their names are What and Why and When, And How and Where and Who."*

These *"serving-men"* are commonly referred to as **5W1H: Who, What, Where, When, Why, and How.**

**What is 5W1H?**

**5W1H** is a method for collecting information or expressing an idea. Four of the **Ws (Who, What, Where, When)** and the **H** are used to gather details, analyze conclusions, and make judgments. The last **W (Why)** is used to delve into the core of a problem.

In investigative writing (such as journalism) and research, the five Ws help gather comprehensive information about a topic. These question words allow people to recognize the full scope of the subject being discussed. Many of these words are used in questions to extract information.

## Using 5W1H

**5W1H** is widely used in business and daily life due to its usefulness. Let's look at an example of arranging a meeting:

- *Can you meet (What) Mr. Lukas (Who) on Thursday at 3 p.m. (When) at our office? (Where)*
- *I'm sorry, I'm not available then. (Why)*
- *When is a good time for you to meet him? (When)*
- *Can I meet him Friday at 2 p.m.? (When)*
- *He is engaged then. What times are usually good for you to meet? (What) Can you give me two or three options? (What and How)*
- *I usually would do it after working hours or on Saturday. (When and How)*

In this example, all 5Ws and 1H are employed to schedule a meeting. Note how a question is asked, providing two options, and the reply is simple, limiting options. The questioning person must continue asking different questions to work it out. If the replying person had initially offered more information about their availability, the conversation would be more efficient.

One ASEAN expat in general management in the industrial sector commented, *"Local colleagues do not normally fully express themselves."*

## Fully Expressing Oneself

Fully expressing oneself may seem challenging, but tools like **5W1H** make it easier. Below is another example of **5W1H** usage:

## Introducing Yourself

- *My name is Ma Thandar (Who).*
- *I am the Customer Service Executive (What I am doing).*
- *I come from the Sagaing region (Where).*
- *I have been working at the Sagaing bank branch for 5 years because I love working here (Where, How long, Why).*
- *I attended this meeting to meet people from the same companies (Who) so we can make friends, share experiences, and learn from each other (What).*

**5W1H** can also be used in open-ended and green-light questions in various situations. For example, if you are in sales, use these questions to understand your potential clients:

## Understanding Skin-Care Cosmetic Customers

- *Who are your potential clients? Women over 25/30 years old with good incomes since the product is expensive.*
- *What are they looking for in cosmetics? Smooth skin, silky skin, whiter complexion.*
- *Why do they need it? Aging skin.*
- *When do they want to buy it? When they see themselves in the mirror, or someone recommends it, or they see it in shops or advertisements.*
- *Where do they want to buy it? In markets, shopping centers, or shops near their homes.*
- *How do they want to buy it? With friends, getting advice from both friends and sellers.*

**5W1H** is also an effective tool for analytical thinking, a desirable skill for employees in international companies. Many expats insist that *"People with analytical skills are sought after but not easily found in Myanmar."*

Simply put, 5W1H helps in understanding things quickly and logically.

Now you are equipped with this powerful tool to think more critically and analytically. Please **use 5W1H every day!**

**Exercise: Think about three situations where you can apply 5W1H. What do you think after using it?**

## **5.5 How to Polish Your English**

In today's globalized world, fluency in English is essential for personal and professional advancement. English stands as the only global language, bridging communication gaps across various contexts such as conversations, business, education, and research. While learning other languages like Japanese, Chinese, or German can be beneficial, it is crucial not to neglect improving your English skills.

Have you ever asked yourself why you want to learn English?

Too often, I hear people say, "*If I have good English skills, I can already be a manager,*" or "*If I can speak English well, I can sell a lot more services to foreigners,*" or "*If my English is good, I can introduce our beans and rice to overseas clients without going through agencies, and I can earn much more profit.*"

If only...?

Let me share a story about two friends with different levels of English skills.

### ***Two Different Career Paths***

*Nine years ago, two close friends, Ko Zaw and Ko Soe, graduated from a university in Yangon with law degrees. Initially, they were on similar professional paths. However, three years later, Ko Zaw's superior English skills propelled his career forward. Many law firms, telecom companies, banks, and other organizations sought lawyers*

*proficient in English, a rare skill in Myanmar. Consequently, Ko Zaw's salary became four times that of his friend.*

*Ko Zaw, from Rakhine, had limited resources for learning English. He studied the language primarily at a monastery. I asked Ko Zaw how he achieved his level of fluency. He shared that, initially, he was reluctant to learn English, questioning its necessity. However, after consulting many seniors in his profession, he realized that mastering English was crucial for success as a lawyer. With this motivation, he could better support his family, travel, pursue further education, and engage in charitable activities.*

*From his student days, Ko Zaw used all available means to learn English: grammar and speaking books, novels, songs, movies, library books, and interactions with foreign friends in Yangon and on Facebook. He practiced whenever possible to achieve fluency. His employment further enhanced his English skills daily.*

*On the other hand, Ko Soe advanced more slowly in his career. He admitted, "I wish I could be fluent in English. If I were, I would have progressed much faster in my career."*

Realizing the importance of English, Ko Soe diligently improved his skills, gradually closing the success gap between him and Ko Zaw.

### ***The Smart, Self-Contented Guy***

*Ko Tun, a bright young taxi driver with a degree in engineering, can communicate in English with me. He said, "If I had good English skills, I could work as an engineer in a big local company that provides services to foreigners." As a recruitment professional then, I told Ko Tun that starting in such a company could lead to promotions and a stable career, eventually earning over a million kyats per month.*

*However, Ko Tun seemed content with his current job, earning 3 to 5 lakhs per month as a taxi driver. It was easy for him at the moment. But this job required daily work without stopping, offered*

*no pension, health insurance, holidays, promotions, or year-end gifts, and faced increasing competition from new drivers.*

While taxi driving is a respectable job, Ko Tun might face challenges in the future when he grows older and has fewer options. Now, he has the chance to choose a more stable job aligned with his qualifications.

## **The Importance of English Skills**

Mastering English is essential today. This does not mean you only need English to work with international companies. English skills are necessary across all jobs and organizations. Even in a local company, you may deal with foreign clients, partners, or suppliers.

A Myanmar repatriate from America, who owns a technology service firm, explained, *"Many young people lack strong verbal and written English communication skills. Graduates from universities outside Yangon are even worse at English communication."*

He added, *"I wish Myanmar people prioritized improving their entire suite of communication skills: written and verbal English, presentation, and public speaking skills. Many Myanmar people are intelligent and hard-working but struggle to express their ideas or present them in public."*

A Myanmar repatriate from Dubai working in hospitality stated, *"Language barriers prevent people from succeeding."* Many expats encourage young people to master English. It is easier to learn when you are young. *"If one is not good at a foreign language (most often English), there will be a communication barrier,"* expats say.

The outdated education system contributes to this issue. Students learn English in school to pass exams rather than practice the language, resulting in many who can write well but not speak well.

However, it has never been easier to learn English. You can access numerous resources and opportunities, as demonstrated in Ko Zaw's story. He learned from books, songs, movies, foreign friends,

and jobs. Learn from everyone, everywhere, anytime, and anything possible. The key is to have **the desire to improve your English skills.**

### **A Success Story from Sagaing**

I know a Myanmar professional who rose from humble beginnings in a small village in Sagaing. He was eventually sponsored to study in the US and now works for an international NGO in Yangon. Curious about his success, I asked him to share his story.

*Ko Myint was the only person from his rural village to attend university. As a teenager, he moved to Mandalay to find a job since there were no employment opportunities in his village, where most women worked in textile weaving. By chance, he discovered a monastery offering free education. However, to be accepted, he had to return to his village to obtain his education certificates.*

*No matter where he stayed or what he did, Ko Myint always gave his best effort, especially in improving his English. He offered free tours to European tourists visiting the monastery school, starting by memorizing ten sentences to introduce local sights without fully understanding the tourists' questions. Gradually, his English skills improved.*

*For seven years, Ko Myint worked as a tour guide. He made many international friends and volunteered to learn new teaching methods in Yangon, which he then taught to the monastery school teachers. He also accumulated knowledge in various fields, including civil society, human rights, and environmental issues, and built a network of influential contacts.*

*An American friend asked if he wanted to study at a university in the US and helped him apply for a scholarship. Ko Myint succeeded, transitioning from a poorly educated boy in a rural village to a university student in the US—a dream for many students from privileged families.*

## **The Benefits of Mastering English**

What do you think about the benefits of mastering English? I have good news for you: many free English courses are available online today. Unlike Ko Zaw, who faced high internet costs in Myanmar, you can now access fast internet at affordable or cheap prices.

How can you find these English online courses? Google and YouTube, as mentioned in the article 4.5, can be your best friends. Simply search "*Free English courses,*" and you'll find numerous options.

Here are some recommendations:

- [Edx.org](https://www.edx.org) offers courses from reputable universities worldwide, covering vocabulary, business English, listening, grammar, speaking, pronunciation, and writing.
- [Futurelearn.com](https://www.futurelearn.com) ([British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org)) provides three to four-week courses on topics such as English for the Workplace and IELTS preparation, allowing you to study at your own pace and connect with learners globally.
- [Udemy.com](https://www.udemy.com) offers elementary grammar courses.
- In Myanmar, [Zabai.org](https://www.zabai.org) offers basic English courses for beginners at a very affordable price of 3000 Ks for two months.

With so many free or affordable courses available, there are no excuses for not learning English.

**Start learning today** and improve a little every day.

**Tips for Improving English** (besides going to an English class)

- **Follow Youtube English lessons:** if you search on Youtube according to your learning needs, there will be multiple free classes or lessons there. For example, search "improve English pronunciation", "build English vocabulary"



- **Attend free online English classes:** as in articles 4.5 you can find many good free online English classes
- **Listen to English songs learn the lyrics by hearts:** Many young people enjoy Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber, Rihanna, etc. Combining your hobbies with learning can be inspiring.
- **Watching English movies** (with subtitles): there are many free movies on Youtube, too. You can look at the 7 classical movies I put in article 8.5, for your movie search.
- **Join English-speaking clubs:** Connect with like-minded friends to practice and improve together.
- **Read books about Myanmar:** For example, "From the Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey" by Pascal Khoo Thwe, "Burmese Days" by George Orwell
- **Read English media daily:** BBC.com, CNN.com, Economist.com
- **Engage with foreigners:** Meet foreign friends at InterNations.org events, communicate via Facebook or other social media, and exchange language lessons.

**Note:** Please also read articles 4.5 and 8.2 for further ways of improving your English.

**Exercise:** Choose a free online English course and complete it within the next three months.

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## CHAPTER 6

# BE THE CLOCK

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### 6.1 The Kingdom Lost for a Drop of Honey

Do you know what asset everyone on the globe has in common, from a billionaire to a beggar? **Time**. Everyone has 24 hours in a day—no more, no less. It's crucial to manage this asset well. Have you ever thought about it?

While many Myanmar people I meet are punctual, some struggle with timeliness, which can affect their job performance. A Myanmar Finance Manager working for an international firm suggests, *"Punctuality is one of the areas many Myanmar people need to improve on."*

Punctuality in Myanmar is an issue many expats notice. A European expat analyzes, *"Many Myanmar people can be bad timekeepers. They have a very loose interpretation of timeliness and deadlines. Deadline issues are one of the things that make working with Myanmar people challenging."*

Many expats are concerned about the lack of urgency regarding deadlines in Myanmar. While expats view locals as **"relaxed,"** locals think expats are too **"pushy."** This *"relaxed manner"* in Myanmar can lead a local colleague to miss deadlines, especially when juggling various assignments.

### ***Failing to Meet Deadlines***

*On a beautiful Tuesday, Ma Khine, a junior sales manager, discussed with her expat director how to develop business relationships with more potential customers for their real estate business. They had just completed building a new luxury complex and needed to push sales.*

*They agreed that Ma Khine would make a list of 100 new potential clients and call them all by next Friday to invite 20 VIP clients to the building and hear their feedback.*

*The expat insisted, "If you need any help or have any questions, feel free to ask me."*

*Ma Khine replied, "Okay, sure, I will if I need your help."*

*The expat asked, "Are you sure you will complete it by next Friday? We only have about 10 days."*

*She confidently responded, "Yes, I am sure."*

*The expat was reassured and left it to her. The following Wednesday, he asked her about the progress. She said she was trying and hoped to be finished by tomorrow. "How many customers did you call? Did you get the acceptance of the 20 most important target customers to visit our complex?" the expat asked.*

*"I am calling them, nearly finished," she replied.*

*On Friday, in agitation, Ma Khine admitted, "I am so sorry, I have not called them all yet. I only called 70 people and got replies from only 10 critical clients."*

*The expat asked her when she could finish it.*

*"Honestly, I am not sure yet since another friend of mine promised to give me a list of potential clients, but I have been waiting to no avail. He said he lost it somewhere and is trying to find it."*

*The expat shared with Ma Khine that he had informed his superior, the Country Manager, that they could finish calling and reporting by tomorrow. The Country Manager, in turn, had promised the Singapore office the same thing.*

*Ma Khine felt enormous scruples—her friend's failure to fulfill his promise affected her, she reported to her expat manager, he reported to his superior, and his superior reported to his senior. They had all made different plans related to property sales. Her plan's failure affected all other plans, including those of the top boss of her global company. If one team member fails to execute their plan, everything can fall apart. Their jobs are interconnected. She felt deadly scared thinking about the systematic consequences.*

Do you see similarities with the story "A Kingdom Lost for a Drop of Honey"? A very small thing can cause a kingdom to fall due to the "domino" effect. Can anyone believe it?

### ***A Kingdom Lost for a Drop of Honey***

*The King and his chief minister laughed when they spilled some honey and did not mind having it wiped off, thinking it was nothing to care about. They entertained themselves by watching the ensuing events: the honey drop trickled onto the street below, a fly feasted on it, then a spider pounced on the fly, a house lizard swallowed the spider, and so on. A cat ate the lizard and was attacked by a dog, leading to a quarrel and fight between their owners, which then involved their friends.*

*The King and his chief minister laughed until a much bigger fight broke out on the street, prompting them to order the palace guards to quell it. However, it was too late—the guards had already joined the fray, some supporting the cat's owner and others the dog's. It escalated into a civil war, the city burned, and the palace was destroyed along with the King and his chief minister.*

(From the book "A Kingdom Lost for a Drop of Honey" by U Maung Htin Aung and Hele G. Trager)

So, remember that a kingdom can be lost by a mere drop of honey! Your failure to meet deadlines can be fatal. It is linked to other deadlines, and the "*domino effect*" can happen.

Please also note that many expats prefer to communicate through email. Learn how to respond timely and communicate efficiently through email. We should respond within 24 hours for normal cases. For more urgent matters, instant replies are needed. If you are away for a while, activate the automatic reply with your return date.

**Exercise: Think about three situations in which you have met your deadlines at work: what happened when you did, and what happened when you didn't.**

## **6.2 The Myth of "*I Am Too Busy*"**

*Either you run the day or the day runs you.* (Jim Rohn)

Once upon a time, Ma Hla wrote in her diary about what she did in a day. Her mishaps, as she called them, were eye-opening:

*"I read the celebrity page for one and a half hours (thinking it was just half an hour).*

*I chatted with my friends on Facebook for 40 minutes (thinking it was a quick chat but got engrossed in a lover's story).*

*I went out and ate street food for 35 minutes.*

*I talked over the phone with a cousin for 25 minutes about unimportant things. There was a promotion, so the call was nearly free, and that's why it was long."*

It's easy to unconsciously waste time on such unimportant activities. Despite feeling busy, Ma Hla's tasks weren't priorities.

We often think, "***I am so busy.***" We may feel externally controlled and unable to manage our time. In reality, we could be busy doing non-sensical things.

## **Are We Really as Busy as We Think?**

A young Myanmar friend of mine shared that some students in her class come late and tell the lecturer, "*I am sorry, I am so busy,*" but stay up late chatting on Facebook. Similarly, some employees come to the office late, claiming to be too busy, but were actually up late watching romantic Korean and Indian series movies. These movies are addictive, especially for those who are emotional and may not think about anything serious to do in life. Some people avoid these time-consuming movies to focus on learning English or new skills at night.

Others say traffic consumes their time on the bus, while some make use of it by reading, doing assignments, or planning their work. Some people sleep for nine hours a night and wake up late. As adults, eight hours of sleep is sufficient, so we don't need to oversleep.

We may not be as busy as we think. Let me share a story about my friend Jennifer, who wasn't truly busy but failed to meet a deadline, costing her a distinction degree.

### ***Failing Five Minutes of an Academic Deadline***

*During the second assignment of Jennifer's master's course, she felt sleepy and submitted her assignment via email five minutes late. As a result, she was graded 45 (on a scale of 0 to 100) for that module due to the late submission. Her professor told her that if she had submitted on time, she would have scored at least 50.*

*At the end of the course, Jennifer was short of exactly five points to achieve a distinction degree—the highest level of academic evaluation.*

*She thought she was unfortunate, but recalled that she wasn't serious enough about ensuring timely submission. If she had aimed to submit by 5 p.m., she should have set her deadline for the*

*previous day to account for unexpected delays. Prioritizing the assignment was crucial.*

*Jennifer missed her dream degree by five minutes. She could have been prouder of her achievement if she had earned the distinction. After investing significant time and money in her studies in the UK, she ended up with a merit degree.*

This example illustrates how five minutes can have a huge impact if we don't take deadlines seriously. In most cases, we can control our time and meet deadlines instead of blaming external factors to avoid responsibility.

**Exercise: Think about your situation and list seven unimportant activities that make you feel busy.**

### ***A Story of Wasted Youth***

*At 17, Ko Kyaw was a passionate gamer, excited to be a hero in the virtual world using various weapons. His favorite games were Data, Center Strike, PUBG, and Clash of Clans. Ko Kyaw also watched TV for 3-4 hours daily and was very active on Facebook, Viber, and Instagram for several hours a day. Teashops were his favorite places to gossip with friends and watch football matches.*

*Yes, Ko Kyaw spent all his youth vicariously. When his mother asked him to teach her how to use Facebook, he said, "I am not free, Mom!"*

*Before his matriculation exam, he had suddenly fallen ill due to a neurological issue, which affected his ability to walk normally. He felt fearful of being looked at by others. Only in the hospital bed did he realize how he had wasted his youth.*

Below is a list of common time killers to help dispel the myth of "I am too busy."

### **Common Time Killers**

- Casual office conversations

- Social media activities
- Inability to refuse others, even when it adds to your workload
- Numerous personal calls, texts, and emails
- Procrastination
- Too many or prolonged meetings, especially those far from the site
- Conflicts in task priorities

For better time management, start by writing down how you spend your time each day. Use the 5Ws and 1H to recall your day's activities. Identify your priorities and time-killers. Focus on your priorities and eliminate time-killer activities, such as excessive online chatting, aimless wandering (on Facebook, Viber, Instagram, etc.), gossiping for hours, sitting endlessly in teashops, and watching TV and movies for hours.

You can find time killers at home too. Unnecessary items, poorly arranged furniture, or unused belongings (clothes, furniture, kitchen utensils, etc.) take time and effort to find, arrange, fix, clean, and place. Think about how long it takes to find a skirt in a messy cabinet—it could take half an hour. You might discover you only wear 10 items regularly out of a hundred. So, what are the others for? Donate 70-80% of them to charity; both you and the recipients will be happy. Next time, you'll find what you need right away. It will save you a lot of time.

Similar time killers exist in the office or on your computer: too many unnecessary documents, poorly arranged files, or unused documents.

**Exercise: List five unnecessary items at home and five at the office (items you haven't used in a year) and get rid of them in the next two weeks.**

### **6.3 How to Get the Miracle of a Daily To-Do List**



*“The bad news is time flies. The good news is you are the pilot.”*

Do you want to be the pilot of your time?

### **Life Without a Purpose**

*Ko Kyaw, mentioned in the previous section, realized the waste of his time only when he was in the hospital bed, unable to finish his matriculation exam due to poor health. He saw how he had squandered his precious time when he was healthy, living without a clear purpose. His health became an obstacle to achieving his goals, and he deeply regretted his wasted youth.*

Meanwhile, there is a different story.

### **Know What to Do in the Next Five Minutes**

*Dr. Daniel T., a leading neurologist in America, exemplifies living with purpose. He has published over 130 articles and six books, earning the title of "Miracle Worker" from the Los Angeles Times for curing over 15,000 patients. His remarkable achievements, such as the botox method for curing voice loss, stem from his passion for his job and meticulous planning.*

*To achieve greatness, Dr. Daniel T. always knows his goals ahead. “If I know where I will be in the next five years, I will know where I will be in the next one year, then one month, then one day, then in five minutes what I should do.” He meticulously plans his work years in advance and knows exactly what to do in the next five minutes.*

*Inspired by his own regret, Ko Kyaw decided to live with purpose. His immediate goal was to finish his matriculation and become a good student at a university of his choice. He created a daily to-do list to guide his actions.*

### **The Miracle of a Simple Daily To-Do List**

Ko Kyaw made significant lifestyle changes to achieve his goals:

- He stopped playing video games.

- He sought motivation from books and courses.
- He dedicated more time to studying languages like English and Japanese.
- He practiced daily meditation for calmness and mindfulness.
- Most importantly, he created a daily to-do list with key activities.

### **Sample Daily To-Do List:**

- Wake up: 5 am
- Personal hygiene
- Meditation: 30 mins
- Exercise: 30 mins
- Breakfast: 7 am
- Study or go to university
- Lunch
- Afternoon activities
- Dinner: 6:30 pm
- Sleep: 10:30 pm

By waking up at 5 am, Ko Kyaw felt fresh, meditated, exercised, and had breakfast, all before starting his day. To ensure a 5 am wake-up, he went to bed by 10:30 pm for a sound sleep. Successful people often wake up early, around 4 am, 5 am, or at least 6 am.

### **The Ivy Lee Method: Six Tasks for Peak Productivity**

1. At the end of each workday, write down the six most important things to accomplish tomorrow.
2. Prioritize these six items in order of importance.
3. The next day, concentrate only on the first task. Work until it is finished before moving on to the next.
4. Approach the rest of the list in the same way. Move any unfinished items to a new list for the following day.

5. Repeat this process daily.

### **The Pomodoro Technique by Francesco Cirillo**

This technique emphasizes periodic breaks to maintain peak mental performance. Our brain needs rest to function well. Sometimes, working for long periods without breaks can lead to mental fatigue and inefficiency.

#### **Pomodoro Technique:**

- Work for 25-30 minutes.
- Take a short break of 3-5 minutes after each interval.
- After four intervals, take a longer break of 15-30 minutes.
- Repeat the process.

This technique helps keep your mind fresh and focused on necessary tasks, maximizing productivity.

A daily to-do list with prioritized tasks and scheduled breaks can help you organize your time and work efficiently. This list acts as a map, guiding your daily actions and ensuring you stay on track. Over time, you'll find ample time for hobbies and relaxation, without feeling guilty.

You may eventually realize that *"I am too busy"* is a myth.

### **The daily to-do list is indeed a miracle!**

**Exercise: Create a simple daily to-do list for yourself, following Ko Kyaw's sample. Adjust it to suit your preferences.**

## **6.4 How to Empower Yourself with the Time Matrix**

*A friend of mine, a Chin ethnic, and an executive director for an international commerce-related organization, emphasizes that setting priorities to finish tasks is crucial for her success. From*

growing up in a rural mountainous region to her current position, she has always prioritized effective time management. Without focusing on her priorities, she believes she wouldn't have achieved her current level of success.

The **Time Matrix** is a powerful tool that helps individuals focus on their priorities. When I conducted a Time Management workshop in Myanmar, the Time Matrix received enthusiastic praise from the trainees. Let's explore why it's so effective and how it can significantly improve our time management skills.

	Urgent	Not Urgent								
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## Understanding the Time Management Matrix

The **Time Management Matrix**, popularized by the late Stephen R. Covey, author of *“The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,”* is designed to help individuals identify how they allocate their time. It serves as a framework for prioritizing tasks across work, personal roles, goals, and commitments.

One fundamental principle of the Time Matrix is that everyone has the same 24 hours in a day, from a beggar to a billionaire. The key

to effective time management lies not in changing the amount of time available but in efficiently allocating it across different priorities.

## **Divisions of the Time Matrix**

The matrix is divided into four quadrants:

**1. Urgent and Important: Do it now.** This quadrant includes tasks that demand immediate attention due to crises, deadlines, or significant consequences if not addressed promptly.

For example, evacuating during a building fire or meeting a crucial work deadline fall into this category. These are reactive tasks that require immediate action to prevent negative outcomes.

**2. Important but Not Urgent: Decide when to do it.** Tasks in this quadrant are important for long-term success but don't require immediate action. Effective time managers prioritize these tasks to prevent them from becoming urgent and stressful. For instance, completing a report ahead of schedule or booking flight tickets early to secure promotional prices fall into this category. This quadrant encourages proactive behavior and helps maintain a balanced workload.

It also includes activities that enhance the quality of life and work, such as building relationships, regular exercise, healthy eating habits, and skill development. By dedicating more time to these activities, individuals can improve overall productivity and well-being.

**3. Urgent but not important: Delegate it.**

*While Ma Htun was working at home, her neighbor suddenly asked her to come over and take care of her baby because she needed to attend a family event. However, Ma Htun was under pressure from her boss to complete a task. Balancing the urgency of her job with the request from her neighbor posed a dilemma.*

This scenario exemplifies what is known as “*the Quadrant of Deception*” — where people end their days without knowing what

they accomplished, often sacrificing time for essential tasks due to the "emergencies" of others. It's easy to fall into the trap of taking on someone else's urgent but not necessarily important problem.

*For instance, early one morning, Ko Aung received an urgent email from a friend asking for help in sending English learning materials immediately. Feeling sympathetic and pleased to be of assistance, Ko Aung immediately set out to locate the required materials, estimating it would take just 5-10 minutes. However, the search ended up consuming 30 minutes of his time, distracting him from other pressing tasks.*

Ko Aung could have postponed this task until the evening, considering his friend had delayed learning English for many years. Why did he need to prioritize it instantly?

It's common to get stuck attending to tasks that appear urgent but hold little importance in the grand scheme. Many meetings, activities, and simple tasks can consume valuable time without contributing significantly to personal or professional goals.

*Another example involves Ko Htin, who, despite needing to finish an impending report, was urged by a long-lost acquaintance to meet immediately. Although Ko Htin valued reconnecting, this social interaction did not advance any crucial friendships or work objectives, risking his ability to meet the report deadline.*

Similarly, imagine a scenario where a colleague interrupts your busy schedule with an urgent request, though the deadline is not until next week. Learning to say no in such situations, as exemplified by Ko Aung and Ko Htin, can be crucial. Alternatively, delegating tasks, as illustrated by Ma Htun, ensures that responsibilities are managed effectively among her neighbour's friends with more availability.

*Ko Zaw's experience further emphasizes the importance of delegation. When his mother requested a trip to the pagoda while he was occupied with an impending MBA assignment deadline, he*

*enlisted the help of his brother, who had more flexible time, to fulfill their mother's wish without compromising his academic obligations.*

In summary, the third quadrant of the **Time Matrix** encourages us to practice saying No and delegating tasks effectively. By prioritizing important activities over urgent but less critical demands, we can enhance productivity and achieve better work-life balance.

**4. Neither Urgent nor Important: Delete it.** This quadrant encompasses activities that neither contribute to long-term goals nor demand immediate attention. Engaging in activities here is often a form of time wastage that could be better spent elsewhere.

Examples include excessive social media use, prolonged entertainment activities, or unnecessary meetings and phone calls. Effective time managers minimize time spent in this quadrant to maximize productivity and focus on meaningful activities.

## **Applying the Time Matrix**

To effectively manage time using the **Time Matrix**, it's essential to:

- Identify and prioritize tasks based on their urgency and importance.
- Allocate more time to proactive tasks (Quadrant 2) to prevent them from becoming urgent.
- Learn to delegate tasks that are urgent but not important (Quadrant 3) to maintain focus on critical priorities.
- Minimize activities in Quadrant 4 to optimize productivity and allocate time wisely.

## **Real-World Application**

In my experience working with diverse groups in Myanmar, the **Time Matrix** has proven invaluable in improving time management skills and overall productivity. A Myanmar doctor who worked

abroad for over a decade highlighted with me the importance of organization among Myanmar nationals, emphasizing the need for strategic planning and prioritization.

Similarly, an Australian expatriate working in an NGO noted common weaknesses in strategic planning and time management among Myanmar nationals. Many struggle with deferring less important tasks to focus on critical priorities, affecting their productivity and work performance.

## **Conclusion**

Effective time management is crucial for personal and professional success. The Time Matrix provides a structured approach to prioritize tasks, manage time efficiently, and achieve goals effectively. By applying the principles of the Time Matrix, individuals can optimize their time, reduce stress, and enhance overall productivity.

Will you integrate the Time Matrix into your daily routine? Take the opportunity to **apply the Time Matrix** to your activities for a week, month, quarter, or even a year to experience its benefits firsthand.

**Exercise: Implement the Time Matrix in your daily life and reflect on its impact on your productivity and well-being.**

## **6.5 How to cheat yourself for good?**

*"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop."*  
(Confucius)

### **Challenges in managing your time**

If you find discipline, meeting deadlines, and punctuality challenging, you're not alone. These are struggles I've faced as well. However, discipline brings its rewards—it leads us to success. Let's revisit Ko Kyaw from the previous article, *"A Daily To-do List."*



*Ko Kyaw realized the extent of his time and energy wastage while hospitalized and unable to complete his matriculation exam. This setback prompted a change in mindset; he realized he couldn't achieve everything at once.*

*Ko Kyaw began with small steps. For instance, he struggled to wake up at 5 am; sometimes, he'd snooze for an extra 15 minutes. Determined, he experimented with methods like washing his face, doing light exercises, or having a bit of coffee to wake up promptly. Today, he meditates for 30 minutes daily—a practice he initially struggled to maintain but gradually increased. After establishing a routine, he added 15 minutes of physical exercise, then expanded it to 20, and now 30 minutes.*

*Starting with half-hour English sessions, Ko Kyaw's progress was slow at first, but consistency paid off. Within a year, he became one of his university's top students, a remarkable feat considering his previous health-related academic setbacks. Even if he had remained an average student, his journey would still inspire.*

*"I faced similar challenges when I started using a daily to-do list many years ago. I couldn't accomplish everything immediately; often mixing up tasks or missing deadlines. I failed numerous times. Yet, as Mark Manson aptly puts it in 'The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*\*k,' improvement follows failure. Each small step leads to the next."*

*Initially, I focused on setting a consistent sleep schedule—bedtime by 10 pm and waking at 5 am. Sufficient rest made mornings refreshing, starting my day with positive energy. Gradually, my body adjusted to this routine, allowing me to wake naturally at 5 am without an alarm.*

*Over time, I tackled other items on my to-do list step by step, beginning with manageable tasks to ensure success, motivating me to take larger strides forward.*

**Keeping an alarm with you all the time**

Another critical tip is always having an alarm handy, typically on your mobile phone. Setting reminders keeps you mindful of tasks and deadlines, aiding productivity.

### **Cheating yourself**

Sometimes, achieving goals requires a bit of self-deception for the greater good. For example, aiming to run for 45 minutes around Kandawgyi Lake, I initially set a more attainable goal of 15 minutes. Then I increased it step by step, to 20 mins, 25 mins, 30 mins. This approach reduced pressure, making the task more manageable and boosting my confidence. Gradually, I extended my running time—35 minutes after two weeks, then 40 minutes, eventually reaching 50 minutes within a month. The progression felt like a miracle; anyone who maintains a daily exercise routine understands the challenge of consistency.

This "*cheating technique*" applies to various aspects of life, including work and writing. Starting with modest objectives focuses on habit formation rather than lofty goals prone to failure. Once a habit is ingrained, goals can be progressively increased.

Step by step, imagine improving by 1% daily—over a year, that compounds into significant progress.

### **The 7 things that successful people do every day**

Learning from successful individuals can guide us efficiently, saving time and effort. Here are the first three time-management practices of highly successful people:

<http://under30ceo.com/7-things-successful-people-every-day/>

The author interviewed over 30 multimillionaires, 5 billionaires, world-class athletes, New York Times bestselling authors, and billionaires. Moreover, he has a family member who has been ranked # 21 wealthiest person in the US and #41 in the world by Forbes - it gave him some insides on what ultra successful people do daily to become the best in the world.

1. **Exercise First Thing:** Successful individuals prioritize physical activity in the morning to energize themselves for the day ahead, whether through stretching, yoga, running, or weightlifting.
2. **Plan the Day:** They meticulously plan their day before tackling tasks, valuing their time above all else.
3. **Prioritize Important Tasks:** They adhere to the 80/20 rule, focusing on completing the most critical tasks first, as these yield the greatest results in their business or personal endeavors.

Let's learn from their practices on our path to success, taking one small step at a time!

**Exercise: Choose a habit you wish to cultivate, set a modest goal, and begin today. Consistently practice it for 21 days; research suggests this duration forms a habit.**

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## CHAPTER 7

# BE YOUR BOSS/ BE PROACTIVE

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### 7.1 How to Be Proactive

#### ***A Story of Searching for an Internet Provider***

*The expat manager asked Ma Myat to find new internet provider options for the office because the current one was unreliable. Myat's task was to search for options based on criteria such as pricing, speed, quality, and service availability at her office location.*

*Myat reached out to friends and colleagues who might have some knowledge or experience with different providers to understand who was in the market and how their services were rated. She also searched Google for "internet service provider Myanmar" and explored Facebook groups like Yangon Expat Network and Yangon Connection, where such topics were frequently discussed.*

*Next, Myat contacted providers servicing her office's location via phone and email to get updated packages in writing for comparison. She compiled a list of those rated as good quality, including supporting data on speed and price. Her boss was thrilled with her proactive approach.*

*A Head of HR for an international financial firm states, "People should be proactive and show initiative in their jobs to succeed."*

*Bring solutions, not problems. Ask yourself, 'What does your boss want?'*" Similarly, a Myanmar repatriate from Australia emphasizes, *"Be proactive. Don't just follow orders."*

Many Myanmar expats echo the sentiment that *"Myanmar people should be more proactive in their jobs."* In the above story, Myat exemplifies proactivity. But what does it mean to be proactive? Why should we be more proactive? How can we be more proactive?

Let's delve into another story to understand better:

### ***A Promotion Story***

*Ko Kyaw had worked for a company for nearly three years. Recently, a newly recruited employee was promoted to a Supervisor role while he was not. Confused, he approached his boss.*

*"Sir, have I ever violated the company's rules and regulations?" he asked.*

*The boss replied, "No, not at all, Kyaw."*

*"Then does the company have prejudice against me?" he inquired further.*

*The boss, taken aback, responded, "Of course not, Kyaw."*

*"I don't understand why a newcomer with less knowledge than mine has been promoted while I am still doing a trifling job," Kyaw lamented.*

*The boss was quiet for a moment, then said, "Okay, we will discuss it a bit later. Now I have an urgent task. Can you help me with it?"*

*"A client will come to our company to check out our products. Can you contact them and ask when they will arrive?" he asked.*

*Kyaw, without much enthusiasm, agreed. After 15 minutes, he returned. "I contacted them, but they said they will only come next week, Sir."*

*“When exactly next week?” the boss asked.*

*“I didn’t ask them, sorry,” Kyaw admitted.*

*“How many people will come?” the boss continued.*

*“Oh, you didn’t ask me to inquire about that,” Kyaw replied.*

*“How will they come – by train or plane?” the boss asked.*

*“You also didn’t ask me about this,” Kyaw responded.*

*The boss, withholding further comments, called for another employee, Ma Sandi, who had joined the company a year after Kyaw but had been promoted to team leader. She received a similar task.*

*After a while, Sandi returned. “Sir, they will arrive at 3 pm next Friday at the airport and will come here at about 6 pm. There are five people, led by the Procurement Manager, Mr. David. I told them we would pick them up at the airport. They have a research plan for two days and want to discuss further upon arrival. To create convenience for them, I suggest they stay at a nearby international hotel. If you agree, I will book the rooms tomorrow. Also, next week is forecasted to rain, so I will keep in constant contact with them and report any changes to you right away.”*

*After she left, the boss asked Kyaw, “Now, we can discuss your question.”*

*Kyaw responded immediately, “No need. I understand now. I’m sorry to have bothered you.”*

Kyaw realized that tenure in a company doesn’t determine an employee’s role. People start with small tasks and can excel to larger roles only if they manage their current responsibilities well. He understood that Ma Sandi was proactive in her tasks, unlike his passive approach.

## **What Is Being Proactive?**

According to vocabulary.com, "active" means doing something. The prefix "pro-" means "before." If you are proactive, you prepare well before something happens. The opposite of proactive is "passive," which means waiting for things to happen. Being proactive means taking the initiative.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, proactive measures included washing hands, wearing masks, taking vitamins, eating healthy, and exercising to build up the immune system. In contrast, a reactive person might do nothing and only take medicines if they get sick.

The story of Ko Kyaw and Ma Sandi illustrates proactivity: the supervisor thinks of all the necessary steps to welcome the clients, while the other just waits for orders, which is time-consuming and may inconvenience the boss.

**If you don't understand something, asking your expat manager questions is proactive.** It ensures clarity and prevents misunderstandings that could lead to bigger problems later.

An ASEAN expat notes, *"Most Myanmar people tend to follow instructions but usually do not want to take the lead in decision-making or setting examples. If they are eager to work, learn, and have the will to improve their jobs, they could excel quickly. They are smart."*

Putting your head and heart into your job greatly impacts performance. Any company needs proactive employees. Good employees are never passive, waiting for detailed instructions from their superiors. Instead, they learn what to do and take the initiative themselves.

**Be proactive. Take the initiative.**

**Exercise: Pick one of your tasks and write down all the steps you would take to complete it proactively. Do them. Did you achieve the desired result?**

## **7.2 How to Follow Up, Follow Up, and Follow Up**

Now that you are proactive and ready for things to come, it is crucial to continuously follow up to achieve desirable results. You've likely heard someone say, *"Please follow it up."* By closely following up, we can reach our goals. Without it, tasks often remain incomplete.

A Myanmar Finance Head of a joint venture suggests, *"People should have more open communication with peers and bosses about work and take more follow-up actions."*

At the same time, we should communicate the results of our follow-up efforts. Remember the advice from article 5.3, *"How to report your progress."* A European expat says, *"Please update foreigners about progress frequently. It is important to monitor the progress."*

### ***A Follow-Up Story***

*Ko Aung needed to hire a meeting room in a nearby hotel with a projector for the company's annual meeting. He found a good one, but the projector was out of order. The hotel promised it would be fixed in time. The expat manager asked him to ensure this since the meeting involved all senior managers and was crucial. Ko Aung called the hotel again and was told, "Okay, okay, I know." However, on the meeting day, the projector did not work well. Ko Aung had not checked it beforehand. He relied solely on the hotel staff's promise, which proved inadequate.*

### ***Another Follow-Up Story***



*Ma Kyi shares an experience highlighting the necessity of follow-up. While working as an Admin Manager for a financial services company, she forgot to check the bank balance and financial obligations, resulting in insufficient funds to cover simultaneous payments due to the government tax office and office rental fees. The expat senior, understanding her newness to the job, explained the consequences and how to prevent such issues in the future. The chief representative had to use his own money to cover the payments while waiting for funds from the mother company.*

*Since then, Ma Kyi has learned the importance of following up. Without it, we cannot control outcomes, leading to potentially serious consequences. Thankfully, her boss noted her professional progress despite the initial mistake.*

Following up and reporting progress are essential when working with foreigners. As discussed in article 5.2, “No one knows things that you don’t tell them.” It’s also crucial to meet timelines and deadlines. Failing to do so can lead to disasters, like in Ma Kyi’s story, where the office could have been in jeopardy without a flexible and understanding boss.

Following up helps avoid saying “Sorry” too often.

*Ma Zarchi often forgets to follow up. When her manager asks for product sales numbers, she tends to forget until reminded, leading to repeated apologies and discomfort. Her disorganized habit causes her to miss responsibilities and feel guilty.*

In the previous example of finding an internet service provider (article 7.1), after collecting a list of providers, you must proactively request their packages. Some respond quickly, others don’t, necessitating follow-ups through emails and calls. Without this, people might neglect their jobs, leading to negative consequences.

Following up is essential for achieving desired results.

It is our responsibility, and no one else can do it for us.

**Exercise: Apply following up to one of your current tasks and see how it goes. Did you achieve the desired result?**

### **7.3 How to Be Goal-Driven**

Having followed up closely on your tasks is excellent. Another important aspect is being result-oriented to achieve what we want effectively. If we are determined to complete a job, it will be done, especially by being result-oriented.

Being result-oriented also involves meeting deadlines, a critical aspect of achieving our goals.

#### ***Another Promotion Story***

*Ko Phyo and Ko Kyaw joined a company simultaneously and were given similar jobs. After two years, Ko Kyaw was promoted to Manager, earning a higher salary. Ko Phyo, feeling uneasy, approached the Director.*

*“Sir, why has Ko Kyaw been promoted while I haven’t, even though we joined at the same time and do similar jobs? It seems unfair.”*

*The boss responded, “You have a valid point. I will give you a task. Tomorrow, go to the market to find out the mango prices. We need to buy a lot for a special project, and we want good prices and high quality.”*

*The next morning, Ko Phyo eagerly reported, “Today’s price is 2,000 kyats/kg.”*

*The boss asked, “What kind of mango? Green or yellow?”*

*Ko Phyo, realizing he missed details, said, “Let me check again.” He went back to the market and returned, “It’s green. The yellow ones are 3,500 kyats/kg.”*

*The boss continued, “Is that retail or wholesale price? Remember, we need to buy a lot.”*

*Ko Phyto hurried back to the market and reported, “If we buy a lot, the price drops by 20%.”*

*The boss asked, “How many kilograms to get the discount? When is the best time to buy? Is the price going up or down?”*

*Ko Phyto replied, “I will ask, don’t worry, Sir.”*

*The boss, noting the time, said, “There are too many questions. Let’s talk. It’s late, and there’s no time for another market visit.”*

*He explained, “You wondered why you weren’t promoted like Kyaw. When I assigned the same task, Kyaw reported back in two hours with all the details: prices, discounts, and timing. He had prepared an information sheet with everything we needed. He understood the objective and acted accordingly. You spent the entire day going back and forth.”*

*Ko Phyto, understanding now, said, “Thank you, Sir. I see the difference.”*

So, who are you? Are you like Ko Kyaw or Ko Phyto? Do you want to be like Ko Kyaw? Ko Kyaw focuses on the results – good price and quality for a large quantity of mangoes. He asks many questions to understand different prices and qualities rather than waiting for detailed orders from the boss.

The same applies in personal life. For example, if you want to buy a new computer, you need to visit different shops to compare prices and quality. Shop assistants will provide details on brands, models, memory, chips, batteries, weights, and prices. Whether it’s a Macbook, HP, Asus, Samsung, or Dell, you need to compare key criteria to make the best choice.

**You may start without much knowledge, but with effort and thought, you can learn and improve.** Putting your best into tasks brings excitement and new knowledge, leading to betterment and commitment.

Being proactive, following up, and being result-oriented can make people more active and smarter. These qualities help complete tasks well.

An ASEAN expat notes, *“Determination and being goal-driven are essential behaviors. It helps Myanmar people work well with expats.”* Another ASEAN expat comments, *“Myanmar people should work harder with clear objectives in mind, not just for the sake of doing.”*

**Let us be result-oriented!**

**Exercise: Apply being result-oriented to one of your current tasks and see how it goes. Did you achieve the desired result?**

## **7.4 Being Kind vs. Being Accountable**

Being kind is not the same as being responsible.

Let us hear the opinion of an expat about her colleagues:

*“The three main strengths that I appreciate in my Myanmar colleagues are helpfulness, kindness, and collaboration. I can rely on their help when I need something. They are always eager to help out with any questions that I may have. My Myanmar colleagues, especially women, are genuinely kind. They are supportive of me, work collaboratively, and help each other. They help out others even if it is not their own project or responsibility.”*

Now, let's hear another opinion from an expat about her local colleague:

*“Many conflicts go unresolved because my Myanmar colleagues lack a sense of accountability. Especially, they do not take the initiative to proactively seek engagement.”*

Do you believe both quotes are about the same person's colleagues? While the expat lady deeply appreciates the kindness

of her Myanmar colleagues and their willingness to help out whenever needed, she also mentions a *"lack of accountability."*

So, being kind and being responsible are not the same, unfortunately.

Most Myanmar people want to please others and go out of their way to help, even strangers. They do not expect anything in return for their help, showcasing their genuine kindness.

May I remind you of article 2.2: Myanmar is the most generous country in the world. It is true—Myanmar people are very generous in donations, volunteering, and helping strangers. Many expats agree that Myanmar people are exceptionally kind, and I have shared many stories of being helped by them. One expat who has lived here for nearly 20 years says, *"Myanmar people are among the kindest in the world."*

In a personal setting, kindness is essential for being a good person. In Buddhism, we have five precepts that one needs to follow to be a good person. In a professional setting, fulfilling your tasks is essential. It is one of the *"precepts"* of professionalism. One may be very kind and often help others, but he/she needs to be responsible for his/her job first before offering help to others.

Neglecting responsibilities is irresponsible, even if they help others during that time, except in special cases.

Being kind is not the same as being responsible.

### ***Saying No is Responsible***

A Myanmar repatriate from Australia advises that saying Yes to please others without the ability to follow through could be irresponsible. Even though you have good intentions, if you cannot deliver on your promises, the short-lived pleased feeling will be replaced by long-term negative consequences.

She states, *"Ethical, Responsible, Professional—think before saying YES. Say YES only if you can take full responsibility and*

*deliver. It is OK to say NO if you cannot do something. It is better than saying YES initially and then failing to fulfill it."*

*A European expat recalls, "Sometimes my local colleagues don't want to do something but don't tell me. They just procrastinate, postponing the task again and again. Meanwhile, I am waiting and waiting, getting mad eventually."*

In such cases, it is better to say No and tell him directly that you cannot do it. (*You cannot, right?*) It is better for both sides than procrastinating until your senior is driven mad. Because nothing gets done over time.

**Exercise: Think about your situation—are you kind, responsible, or both? What should you do to improve your job performance?**

## **7.5 Taking Responsibility**

Fear of being blamed for mistakes is common in Myanmar, as many professionals have shared with me. This behavior can be seen at home, in school, or at work. At work, regardless of the level, this fear leads people to avoid responsibility, inaction, and indecision.

### ***A Story of Who Is to Blame***

*A manager responsible for collecting and analyzing user requirements for an IT project later found that the requirements were insufficient, leading to flawed functionality. This could have been caused by multiple reasons: the requirements might have evolved after the gathering process was completed, there could have been an oversight from the client's side, or the IT team might not have conducted enough interviews. Regardless of the cause, the fact remained that the functionality was incomplete and urgently needed fixing.*

*Instead of focusing on quickly resolving the issue, the project lead and the client spent too much time ensuring they weren't blamed*

*for the oversight, creating friction between the client and the IT team. They escalated the issue to senior managers, causing delays.*

One major root cause was the fear of being blamed, leading both sides to emphasize who was right rather than finding a solution.

### **Personal Responsibility and Excuses**

It's not always easy to get our job done, as anyone in the workplace can tell you. There can be many reasons for failing to complete tasks. But will you take responsibility, or will you blame someone else?

*Consider someone who plans to jog at 6 am. A week ago, he said, "I couldn't go jogging because I had to do something urgent." Yesterday, he said, "I couldn't run because it looked like it was going to rain, and I didn't want to get wet." Today, he says, "I didn't jog because I was tired after staying up late last night." These are all "reasonable" excuses.*

But what's the real reason? He is blaming external factors for his lack of determination. **Successful people take full responsibility for their actions.** They don't make excuses while others blame everything around them for their misfortunes.

### **The Video Production Story**

*A training institution planned a video showcasing its achievements and student testimonials to attract donors. They agreed on a 15-minute video, budget, and a three-month timeline.*

*However, three months later, the project manager hadn't found a director, citing that everyone he knew was busy.*

*The expat consultant suggested exploring more options for directors, which eventually worked. They found two options and requested proposals. But another three months passed, and the proposed prices were too high. They had to look for more affordable*

*options, and when they found one, they had to wait two more months because the director was busy.*

*Then the rainy season came, preventing them from gathering trainees for testimonials. After a year, the video was still pending.*

There were always "reasonable reasons" for the delays. The true reason was **a lack of responsibility and determination** to complete the video.

### **Fear of Blame – A Cultural Trait**

Many Myanmar professionals reveal that they live in a "**blame culture.**" Conditioned by traditions and a flawed educational system, many Myanmar people grow up fearing mistakes and failures. This fear makes them incapable of making tough decisions and being accountable. It often leads them to look for excuses, blame others when things go wrong, or play it safe by not making any decisions and shifting accountability.

### **What We Should Do About It**

Florence Nightingale said, "*I attribute my success to this: I never gave or took any excuse.*" To succeed, people must have the courage to make mistakes, speak up when something is wrong, and address conflicts. Blaming others prevents self-improvement and job advancement.

### **Embracing Ownership Culture**

In a professional environment, simply working from 9 am to 5 pm is no longer enough. Accountability is essential. A Myanmar HR Head of an international financial service states, "*People should have accountability when they work. They need to get their jobs done. Rights come with responsibilities.*"

A Head of Business at a telecom corporation adds, "*I wish Myanmar people would overcome obstacles and not give up easily, especially in cross-functional projects. Taking full ownership and executing*



*end-to-end is crucial.*" This mindset enabled her to excel in a senior role previously held by expats.

Expats advise young professionals to avoid a mindset of merely following plans, receiving salaries, and avoiding initiative. **Responsibility and ownership are key to personal and organizational success.** Ownership drives results and brings the energy to achieve them.

### **Challenges and Responsibilities Make You Stronger**

In "*Man's Search for Meaning*," Viktor Frankl, a psychologist in Nazi concentration camps, highlights the strength found in responsibility.

*No words can be enough to describe the misery that people were suffering there both physically and mentally. Their clothes were thin and torn, their shoes barely cover their feet, their bodies were deteriorated to show their bones, they were starving all the time, but had to work hard under the cold weather and were subject to insults from the Nazi officers. Their most important concern was simply about food to survive. On the other hand, they were not sure when they would be sent to be gassed. Their families were separated, and many members were dead.*

*Imagine how one could live under these circumstances?*

*Many people could not stand up the dire situation, they did not want to live anymore when there was not any hope about a brighter future. They could not know when all these disasters will end.*

*But there were people who could stand up and becomes good examples for others.*

Who are they?

They are the ones that take responsibility. Instead of asking "*What the world has for me*"? They were asking "*What the world expects from me*". For some, it would their parents, their husband, their wife, their children would expect them. For some, it would be a project pending that needs to finish. For some, it would be a

promise with a close friend that kept them alive – a promise that he would never give up.

Despite extreme suffering, those who survived often had a sense of purpose and responsibility. Those who found meaning in their suffering, who felt responsible for something or someone beyond themselves, were often able to endure the unimaginable.

Friedrich Nietzsche's quote, "**He who has a why can endure almost any how,**" explains this resilience.

Research shows that the oldest children in families are often the strongest because they take their responsibilities seriously. Responsibilities can be a source of energy and motivation, not a burden. This principle applies to the professional world as well, where taking on responsibilities can lead to personal growth and a stronger sense of achievement.

### **Be Responsible!**

Taking responsibility means not only recognizing your duties but also actively seeking ways to fulfill them despite challenges. It involves a proactive approach to problem-solving and a commitment to personal and professional growth. By embracing responsibility, you not only enhance your own capabilities but also contribute to a more efficient and effective workplace.

**Exercise: Think about your situation. Are you responsible enough to get your job done? Analyze three of your tasks regarding this. Reflect on whether you are making excuses or taking full ownership of your responsibilities. What steps can you take to improve your accountability and ensure the successful completion of your tasks?**

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## CHAPTER 8

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### BE LAZY/ BE INITIATIVE AND CREATIVE

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#### 8.1 Examples of Having Initiatives

*"Until timber is available, use bamboo as a grinder." (U Maung Khin Zaw)*

Being proactive is closely linked with taking initiative. Initiatives can be very simple, such as solving an issue or improving a situation.

*For example, a foreigner calls a company inquiring about car rental services. He wants to receive an email with the packages the company offers. However, when he spells his email address, the receptionist cannot get it. After several attempts, she suggests, "Can you send me your email address in a message? I will give you my phone number now." After the foreigner sends her his email address, she emails him the quotation.*

Problem solved with a simple initiative!

Taking initiative helps save time, money, and effort. It can start with small, everyday actions. We don't need to be geniuses to take initiatives.

#### ***A Story of Taking Initiative***

*I once called a bookshop to buy a book. The seller promised to deliver it the next Monday. By late afternoon Monday, I saw no sign of my book. I called him again, and he said the delivery man took leave, so he could not deliver it. He promised to deliver it on Wednesday since Tuesday was a holiday. I was upset since he broke his promise. How could I be sure I would receive it on Wednesday?*

*I explained, “I already mentioned it is urgent, and you promised to deliver it today. Now you have a reason for not delivering it today, and another reason for tomorrow. How can I be sure about Wednesday?”*

*Sensing my concern, he said, “Okay, let me try. I will find another delivery man and deliver it to you tomorrow morning.”*

He did it. I received the book and appreciated his initiative. Simple yet effective!

### ***Initiative During the Covid-19 Pandemic***

*An expat owner of a street food tour took the initiative to provide free meals to people in need. He asked for donations from other expats on Facebook—USD 45 could provide 100 meals (the exchange rate then was much lower than today’s rate). He received a lot of donations from expats who wanted to help but didn’t know how. He co-organized with charity organizations to reach more people in need.*

*He said, “I am happy to see poor people receive the gift of free meals and enjoy it. Sadly, they are easy to find everywhere, even downtown.”*

With this initiative, many people in need were supported, expats could donate, and he gained recognition in the business community. His reputation improved, although it may not have been his initial goal.

### **What is Initiative?**

According to the Cambridge Business English Dictionary, **“initiative”** is *“a new plan or action to improve something or solve a problem.”* Initiatives improve situations or solve problems, like helping poor people or meeting a client’s expectation of timely delivery.

Initiative is a self-management skill for young professionals. It means doing things without being asked, solving unnoticed problems, and continuing to learn and grow. From the above examples, taking the initiative can help you gain customers, reputation, and money.

Sometimes, ideas for initiatives come from connections or resources like Google.

*For instance, a marketing manager asks a colleague to find out which shopping centers allow a car brand's display of promotion. Where can you get this information?*

- *Google using keywords “Shopping centers Yangon” to get contact details.*
- *Use the Yellow Pages Directory, 1816, for contacts.*
- *Ask friends, family, or marketing teachers who have done similar promotions.*
- *Try many ways—think about any possible way to get the information. One way is normally not enough, but combinations of ways could bring the most desired results.*

Expats often say, *“It would be great if my Myanmar colleagues could be more initiative.”* A European expat notes, *“Many people are fearful of taking initiatives. It’s due to the system and may become a habit of lacking the desire to take initiative.”*

Due to the old system in Myanmar, people were not encouraged to be proactive. In school, students memorized lessons without

questioning teachers. In many other contexts, dissent was dangerous, making people passive and afraid to think differently.

But international standards encourage taking initiative. Success now requires proactivity and initiative. Taking initiative has become integral to daily life. A European expat in Myanmar for over 25 years says, *“The issue of lacking initiative can be fixed by developing the right culture.”* International companies aim to foster a culture of proactivity and initiative among employees. When working with foreigners, it is critical to take the initiative to solve problems and get things done.

From the examples, taking initiative is not as tough as you may think. So don't be afraid—step out of your comfort zone! They appreciate it.

**Let's embrace more and more initiatives!**

**Exercise: Think about your situation—write down three of your initiatives in your job and/or life.**

## **8.2 How to Storm Your Brain**

Brainstorming is a powerful tool for enhancing creativity. It involves generating new and useful ideas, often by thinking outside the box. Creativity is essential in fields like marketing and sales but is valuable in all professions. An expat from Europe in the advertising industry emphasizes the importance of continually pushing for more ideas: *“Ideas, ideas, ideas—don't stop at just three. The right solution is rarely in the first three. Work at it, nag it, push and prod it to get to a better place, or preferably the right place.”*

Creativity involves breaking routines and taking risks to find solutions. It helps you become a better problem-solver, see things differently, and deal with uncertainty. Training yourself to be creative by generating many new ideas, even for old problems, is essential.

## Techniques for Effective Brainstorming

Effective brainstorming sessions, typically lasting 15 to 45 minutes, can produce a high volume of ideas, 10-15% of which are usually practical. Even companies like General Electric can generate 170 ideas in an effective session, increasing efficiency by 70% compared to individuals working separately.

The concept of brainstorming, created by advertising executive Alex Osborn in the 1950s, remains effective today. In Spanish, it is called *“lluvia de ideas,”* meaning *“rain of ideas,”* suggesting a fun, free-flowing process.

For a group brainstorming session, an ideal number of participants is four to seven, though it can be done individually. The group leader should encourage free-flowing ideas and creative thinking. A comfortable, distraction-free environment is crucial for focus.

### Steps for a Good Brainstorming Session:

1. **Clear Problem Statement:** State the problem or question clearly and simply. Discuss it briefly and write it on a flip chart.
2. **Encouragement:** The leader should encourage everyone to contribute ideas without judgment.
3. **Free-Flowing Ideas:** Positive emotions, laughter, and ridiculous ideas are encouraged. No criticism is allowed.

### Four Rules of Brainstorming:

1. No judgments.
2. Think freely; no idea is too crazy.
3. Aim for a large number of ideas; the more, the better.
4. Many heads are better than one.

A second session can be held to evaluate and select the most practical ideas.

### **Brainstorming Example: Learning English**

Here are the results of a brainstorming session on “*How to learn English well?*” The first session focused on generating many ideas, and the second on evaluating and selecting the best ones:

1. Learn four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
2. Attend English training centers.
3. Join English-speaking clubs.
4. Search “most important English words” and learn them by heart.
5. Use Anki software for vocabulary.
6. Learn “100 sentence structures in English.”
7. Find free online courses by Googling “Free English courses.”
8. Watch YouTube videos on learning English.
9. Read English books and Myanmar-related books for context.
10. Listen to English songs and read lyrics online.
11. Watch movies with English subtitles.
12. Read/watch English media daily (e.g., CNN, BBC).
13. Make friends with foreigners and exchange language lessons.
14. Travel to English-speaking countries.
15. Teach English to poor kids for motivation.

**Exercise: Conduct a 30-minute brainstorming session with friends on how to self-study effectively.**

### **8.3 How to Win Over Foreigners**

Job vacancies in Myanmar for expats often prioritize those with Southeast Asia or Myanmar experience. Senior management roles sometimes specify “*Only Myanmar citizens*” due to the need for local expertise. Practical work experience in Myanmar means familiarity with the culture, people, behaviors, legal frameworks,



infrastructures, industry practices, and daily business routines—knowledge that eases job performance.

Myanmar citizens can leverage their local language skills and connections, which expats usually lack. While expats might fulfill their contractual roles, they often don't have time to deeply understand the culture, speak the language, or form personal relationships. Local knowledge and connections give Myanmar citizens an edge.

Many Myanmar people feel distant or afraid of foreigners, thinking, *“I don't want to work with foreigners; my English is not good enough.”* The opposite should be true: *“I want to work with foreigners to improve my English.”* Some may think foreigners are hard to relate to, but a European expat notes, *“Stop treating foreigners like they are from Mars. We are people just like you. We laugh, cry, get upset, love fun—we are not so different from you.”*

Foreigners are human beings with different characteristics, but they are understandable and manageable. Don't conclude that foreigners are superior. Many Myanmar people hold professional and leadership positions abroad such as in Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Dubai, UK, US etc. Foreigners are not always right or more knowledgeable; each has strengths and limitations.

An editor of an English magazine shares that local colleagues often propose great ideas about people and culture. For example, a colleague proposed writing about Chin holidays and traditions, which the editor, though familiar with Chin culture, knew less about than the local. Similarly, a female journalist suggested writing about the mistreatment of menstruation in Myanmar, a helpful topic but foreign journalists might not easily grasp.

Foreign journalists often hire *“local fixers”* for arranging meetings, providing connections, translating, and managing logistics. Basic information in Myanmar isn't always available through Google, so local knowledge and connections remain crucial. An Australian

expat who has lived in Myanmar for over 18 years praises the locals: *“Myanmar people are very smart and have much to teach us about their country.”*

**Exercise: Reflect on your situation—what are your strengths compared to an expat superior?**

## **8.4 How to Meet Our Best Friend Google and YouTube Again**

Albert Einstein famously said, *“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.”* This quote highlights the vast potential of imagination. Our imagination can be enhanced by expanding our knowledge and experiences and, most importantly, by allowing ourselves the freedom to think, imagine, and create.

Google and YouTube can significantly boost your imagination. In article 4.5, we mentioned that they are our best friends. Let’s revisit them and explore how they can enhance your creativity. We’ll start with Google Search skills.

### **Google Search Skills**

I’ll share some examples of how easily Google can be used and how valuable it can be. These examples don’t require technical expertise—I’m a low-tech person myself. As an entrepreneur and lecturer for International MBA courses in Vietnam and Myanmar, I’ve guided many students and employees to use Google search for their assignments and daily needs. They have found it incredibly helpful both personally and professionally.

How can you use Google Search effectively? Suppose you want to be more creative in your writing job and learn from international resources. You go to Google.com and type the keywords *“Free creative courses.”* You’ll get about 650,000,000 search results—

amazing! While not all results will be relevant, the first few pages will offer many good options.

For instance, Future Learn offer Creative Arts & Media Courses <https://www.futurelearn.com/subjects/creative-arts-and-media-courses>

Class Central lists many design and creativity courses: <https://www.classcentral.com/subject/design-and-creativity>

For more practical options, Coursera offers courses like “*Creative Problem Solving*”, “*Creative Thinking: Techniques and Tools for Success*” <https://www.coursera.org/courses?query=creativity>

You can also search for “*How to be more creative*” or “*How to be more initiative*.” Multiple articles will provide solutions you can apply daily to enhance your creativity. For example: “*25 Ways to Be More Creative*” <https://www.inc.com/christina-desmarais/25-ways-to-be-more-creative.html>

As mentioned in article 6.5, many reputable websites offer free online courses you can take at your own pace, such as *FutureLearn.com*, *Edx.org*, *Udacity.com*, *Udemy.com*, and *Coursera.org*. Google and YouTube can help you find free courses on any topic. While traditional classrooms remain important, these online resources offer valuable learning opportunities.

### **Consider Google and YouTube as your best friends:**

- How much knowledge do they bring?
- How much time and money do they save?
- How many new horizons do they open?

Imagine a day without Google—how would it affect you?

### **Let's make Google and YouTube your best friends!**

### **Five Ideas for Google Search Skills:**

1. **Use Keywords:** Start with broad keywords and refine them based on your results. Adjust words or phrases as needed.
2. **Specify Document Types:** If looking for specific files, include the type (e.g., PDF, DOC, JPG) in your search.
3. **Check Relevance:** Ensure your keywords are relevant. If initial results are unsatisfactory, think of new keywords.
4. **Search Specific Websites:** For example, if you're looking for a Shakespeare course on Future Learn, start with the main site and then search within it.
5. **Use Web-Friendly Words:** Opt for simpler terms like "stomachache" instead of "stomach hurts."

Use Google in all areas of your life. For example, planning a trip to Hpa An or Pyin Oo Lwin involves researching travel times, transport options, attractions, accommodation, and dining. Google can help you find better and cheaper solutions. Similarly, if you're considering an MBA, Google can help you compare universities based on reputation, courses, lecturers, fees, and location.

Google is a great reference tool. **Use it alongside advice from others to make informed decisions.**

**Exercise: Think about a product or service you want to buy. Use Google to find possible options and compare them.**

## **8.5. Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish**

Japan, the most advanced country in Asia, owes much of its success to the relentless curiosity and hunger for knowledge among its people. The Japanese are not afraid to learn from their adversaries if it benefits their growth. This openness to external influences led to the "*Great Translation*" period, which transformed Japan from a Confucian-influenced society to a powerful and modern nation. During the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), books like John Stuart Mill's "*On Liberty*" and Samuel Smiles' "*Self-Help*" (a bestseller in the US and England) sold over a million copies in Japan, despite the population being only 30 million at the time.

As Einstein said, imagination can push us beyond our limited world and is more important than knowledge. Imagination is like a muscle—the more you use it, the stronger it gets. Do you want to increase your imagination, be creative, and *"think outside the box"*? You should *"Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish."* Steve Jobs, the father of the iPhone, iPod, iPad, MacBook, and Macintosh, famously said this. He is considered one of the most creative minds on Earth.

Sometimes, having too many new ideas, especially unusual ones, can make you seem crazy. However, in a globalized world, you are encouraged to be open, initiative, and creative. Speak out and step up.

To be creative, one must lower their resistance to change and be open-minded.

A Myanmar finance manager for an international company says, *"Myanmar people should be more creative and think out of the box."* For example, don't just follow instructions or guidance; try to solve problems yourself. Think in your own terms.

*He gave an example of a software system implementation in his department. There are many ways to navigate the system, but most of his colleagues follow only one method.*

Remember, being creative means finding multiple routes to reach a destination. All roads can lead to Rome; there are numerous ways to get things done.

In many cases, when you want to solve a problem, brainstorm ideas and see how it goes. Don't be afraid to put new ideas on the table. Without creativity, the world wouldn't have developed to its current level. We wouldn't have phones, computers, televisions, music, books, paintings, the internet, buses, cars, or planes.

As a species, humans would have created nothing without imagination and creativity. We might still be in the Stone Age, eating whatever we find—raw meat from hunting, fruits, or vegetables we

cultivate or pick. We might still be crawling on all fours or be giant apes. Of course, we wouldn't have any of the modern conveniences we enjoy today.

Since the Stone Age (started over 3 million years ago), humanity has progressed through the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, the Industrial Age, and now the Digital Age. We have evolved and developed thanks to hard work and creativity. This is the rule of development.

A creative routine, including time for learning, metacognitive understanding, and practice, should be an integral part of your daily life. Creating new things is a key part of the human experience; it designs the meaningful ways to use and enjoy those new things. It means we are living vividly. We create, and we exist.

Each day, aspire to create something. Shape a small piece of the world in a new way. Our ability to create depends directly on the time and effort we put into learning, practicing, and enhancing the meaning it creates. For example, for dinner, it may be as simple as arranging food in a more decorative way with red chili slices and green leaves, making it more appealing to your family. Turn on some classical music, and it will make you and the other participants feel that life is more beautiful. This can be called creative, as long as you create something new and useful.

For a real and lasting creative life, learning is its unending source. A thirst for learning is precious and mandatory. In a globalized world, lifelong learning is a must to keep up with the ever-changing world.

To sum up, being creative and initiative keeps you young and gleeful forever, helping you solve problems and excel in your job and personal life. You will be more successful and happier than ever, living an exciting and creative life. Stay Hungry, Stay Foolish!

**Exercise: Think about one of your issues and write down at least three ways to solve it.**

**Reference list:** For books, movies, and courses that you should read and watch. You can Google “*a book name*” and “*summary*” to know its key contents.

## **7 books to read**

Life Change When We Change (Series), Andrew Mathew

7 habit of Highly Effective People, Stephen Covey

How To Win Friends and Influence People, Dale Carnegie

<https://www.booksfree.org/how-to-win-friends-and-influence-people-by-dale-carnegie-pdf/>

Managing Oneself, Peter Drucker

<https://www.pdfdrive.com/managing-oneself-d184575973.html>

Thick Face, Black Heart, Chin Ning Chu

Men Search for Meaning, Viktor Frankl

<https://www.booksfree.org/mans-search-for-meaning-by-viktor-e-frankl-pdf/>

Rich Dad Poor Dad, Robert T. Kiyosaki

## **7 classical literature books to read**

Hamlet by William Shakespeare (1623)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1524>

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen (1813)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/42671>

War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy (1867)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2600>

To kill a Mocking bird by Harper Lee (1960)

Les Miserables by Victor Hugo (1862)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/135>

The Great Gatsby by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1925)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/64317>

Madam Bovary, Gustave Flaubert (1857)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2413>

## **7 movies to watch**

The God father 1 (1972), 2 (1974)

The Shawshank redemption (1994)

Seven Samurai (1954)

12 Angry Men (1957)

The Sound of Music (1965)

Silence of the Lamb (1991)

Casablanca (1942)

## **7 classical music works to listen to**

Moonlight Sonata by Beethoven

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4591dCHe\\_sE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4591dCHe_sE)

Jupiter Symphony by Mozart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0vfU4cmdx-s>

Brandenburg Concertos by J.S. Bach

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NCPM8DEsvmc>

Spring Waltz by Chopin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVau-JRGirg>

Swan Lake by Tchaikovsky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdjXkTJ0kCA>

Serenate by Schubert

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv5xPlm6etI>



The Ring Cycle by Wagner

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PBhIPeTJ\\_g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1PBhIPeTJ_g)

### **7 paintings to enjoy**

The Starry Night by Van Gogh

Mona Lisa's Smile by Leonardo de Vinci

Sistine Chapel Ceiling by Michelangelo

Girl with a Pearl Earring by Vermeer

The Old Guitarist by Picasso

Impression, Sunrise by Monet

The Two Fridas by Frida

## PART 3

**ARE YOU READY TO WORK WELL  
WITH FOREIGNERS IN MYANMAR AND  
ELSEWHERE?**

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## CHAPTER 9

# WHAT I GET FROM WORKING WITH FOREIGNERS?

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### 9.1 Do Not Take It Personally, It Is Good for You

Do you remember the article "*Be Open to International Standards*"? My Myanmar friend has found success by being open-minded and receptive to his partner's feedback. He adapted his work style to meet international standards. Similarly, his partner—a Westerner with extensive international experience—also listened to feedback about working with people in Myanmar and made changes. This mutual willingness to learn and improve led to their successful collaboration and business ventures.

Regarding feedback, a Myanmar HR Head of a financial services firm suggests, "*Don't take it personally. Don't be too emotional.*" She has worked with international companies for over ten years. Professional feedback is not personal; it's about performance and aims to support better job execution. Feedback should be based on facts and data, and it's essential for professional growth.

Feedback goes both ways. Seniors provide feedback to subordinates on performance and expectations. Likewise, juniors should feel empowered to give feedback to seniors about their guidance and support. When asked for feedback, be honest and

constructive. Don't just offer praise; if you need more coaching or support, state it clearly. Your expat superiors will appreciate your candor and will likely value the opportunity to improve their own methods.

### **Feedback Is Natural**

We encounter feedback throughout our lives. As children, we receive feedback from our parents and surroundings. For instance, when I was a child, my parents punished me by making me stand facing the wall for half an hour because I broke a precious vase. This punishment was their way of providing feedback so I wouldn't repeat the mistake. Feedback is also a natural bodily response, like pulling your hand away from fire when it's too hot. This feedback mechanism helps protect us and guides our actions.

When writing this book, I sought feedback from my Myanmar friends during the final draft phase. I encouraged them to point out what they liked and disliked, and I invited them to challenge my views. Their feedback, especially from young readers, was invaluable. If someone only praises my work while I know there are still areas for improvement, it may not benefit me further. Readers' feedback helps me write a book that appeals to them and ensures I am on the right track.

### **Feedback Helps You Excel**

An ASEAN expat mentions, *“Many Myanmar people strive to become professionals, but some are too emotional at work and cannot handle professional feedback or criticism. Those who can handle feedback and improve will excel.”*

A New Zealand expat echoes this sentiment by sharing a story about giving feedback to volunteers in her organization.

*These volunteers had been there for several months and eventually expected to be hired after their internships, but they were not ready. Although she liked them personally, she had to explain politely and kindly that they were not yet fit for the current Myanmar team. Their*

*attendance was irregular, their attitude towards work needed improvement, and their knowledge and experience were lacking.*

*When she gave this feedback, the volunteers reacted emotionally, saying, “So you don’t like me.”*

In reality, her feedback was intended to help them improve and find good jobs in the future. However, they took it personally and failed to consider the facts. Facts are crucial.

She could have simply said, *“You are very nice people, and I love you! We just can’t recruit more people at the moment.”* This would have saved her the effort of crafting thoughtful feedback. But would this have helped the interns understand their capacity and mindset from a professional perspective? No, it would not.

The truth is sometimes hard to accept. However, if the volunteers had looked at the feedback rationally, they would have seen it as an opportunity to better equip themselves for the job market with the right mindset and skills. If they ask back *“How do you suggest us to improve our attitude towards work, our knowledge and our experience?”* the answers would enable them to improve themselves to land good jobs later.

When you are open to constructive criticism, you open yourself to becoming a better version of yourself and to unlimited opportunities ahead.

It empowers you to achieve a happier and more successful life.

### **Feedback Is Part of International Standards**

When your expat boss gives you feedback, it doesn't mean they dislike you. It's part of their job due to company rules and regulations. Their supervisors also provide feedback, including criticism. Giving and receiving feedback is essential in a professional environment. Without it, you wouldn't know how others evaluate your performance or how to improve. It's a standard practice globally.

### *What I Get from Working with Foreigners?*

In Myanmar, many people lack international exposure, making it difficult for them to accept even constructive criticism, especially from peers. However, feedback is crucial for professional growth. An ASEAN expat elaborates, *“In our office, we provide feedback for every project, covering both soft and technical skills. It’s the only way to learn.”* A Myanmar repatriate educator adds, *“Many Myanmar people get upset if colleagues are straightforward at work. But we need to be straightforward to ensure quality work.”*

Feedback is a suggestion for doing things better. For example, if you need to prepare an annual sales report, feedback from your manager can help you improve its quality and make it more effective for an important meeting.

### **Give Feedback and Try to Solve Issues Before Resigning**

An American expat comments, *“I wish my Myanmar colleagues and partners would be more comfortable providing feedback in an unemotional, matter-of-fact manner.”* A European expat, who has lived in Myanmar for over 20 years, observes, *“Many people prefer to leave rather than address issues when faced with criticism or difficulty. I wish they would address issues before considering quitting. Together, we could solve these issues.”*

In Myanmar culture, people are often shy and not outspoken. However, without addressing an issue or raising feedback, problems remain unsolved. We discussed the importance of speaking out in Chapter 3. Remember the story in article 3.5 **“Confront”**? The lady spoke out, solved the problem with her expat manager, and now sits in the expat’s previous seat after five years with the company.

Problems are normal and happen to everyone, including the richest and most powerful people. The key difference lies in how we handle them. Speaking out and providing feedback can lead to solutions and improvements. In the worst case, you can still resign, but at least you will know you tried your best to solve the issue.

Feedback is essential for personal and professional growth. **Embrace feedback, use it to improve, and you will achieve greater success and happiness in your life.**

### **How Steve Job gave brutal feedback?**

If you admire the iPhone, iPad, and MacBook – products that have become icons of innovation and design excellence – have you ever wondered about Steve Jobs' approach to collaborating with his colleagues to create these technological marvels?

Steve Jobs was notorious for his intense and often brutal approach to giving feedback, which was aimed at pushing his teams to achieve greatness in product development. His methods, though harsh, were instrumental in creating some of Apple's most iconic products. He was uncompromising in his pursuit of perfection and pushed his colleagues to achieve unprecedented standards. His interactions were often direct and blunt, aiming to extract the best from those around him.

*For instance, when recruiting Bob Belleville, a hardware designer from the Xerox Star team, Jobs famously remarked, "Everything you've ever done in your life is shit! So why don't you come work for me?" Despite the initial shock, Belleville joined Apple, and their collaboration contributed significantly to the company's success.*

*Jobs' demanding nature was evident in his dealings with suppliers as well. During one incident with VLSI Technology, a chip supplier facing delays, Jobs passionately criticized them as "f\*cking dickless assholes" in a meeting. Despite the harsh words, VLSI delivered on time, highlighting Jobs' ability to drive results through intense motivation.*

*Perhaps one of the most infamous instances of Jobs' uncompromising standards was during the launch of MobileMe in 2008. Facing widespread criticism and technical issues, Jobs publicly challenged his team: "Can anyone tell me what MobileMe is supposed to do?" Dissatisfied with their responses, he*

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*straightforwardly asked, "Then why the fuck doesn't it do that?" He promptly replaced the team leader, emphasizing his intolerance for anything less than excellence.*

While Jobs' abrasive management style was controversial, many of his employees understood that his criticism was not personal but driven by a desire for excellence. They accepted his brutal feedback and channeled it into improving their performance, ultimately leading to the creation of groundbreaking products like the iPod, iPhone, iPad, Macbook, and Macintosh. They understood that his tough feedback stemmed from a deep commitment to innovation and quality.

In the broader context of life and business, Jobs' approach reflects a reality where success often requires resilience and a willingness to confront harsh truths. His team did not take his feedback personally.

That is why they succeeded.

### **Life Is Brutal Out There**

Compare the way Steve Jobs gave feedback to his team members with the feedback you might receive from your seniors in Myanmar. It's more brutal elsewhere than in Myanmar, isn't it?

If you are a boss giving feedback, there is no need to emulate Steve Jobs and yell. You can convey feedback politely.

*When a multinational corporation restructures, they can fire thousands of people globally. These individuals, including the good ones, are left without jobs and must equip themselves for new opportunities. They don't say, "My company doesn't like me." They understand what they need to do next.*

*During Covid-19 time, some factories in Myanmar closed due to a lack of materials, leaving employees to seek new jobs. Those with better skills had better chances of finding employment because they listened to supervisors' feedback and improved necessary skills.*



*Those who are lazy and take things personally are most vulnerable and struggle to find new jobs in the pandemic.*

The reality is harsh. People cheat, fight, yell, and reprimand each other. Wars, natural disasters, accidents, diseases, and betrayals happen constantly. Amidst all this, a professional feedback pointing out how you can improve your performance is beneficial.

A Myanmar repatriate educator from Europe and a Mon ethnic hints, *“People should not feel offended when someone is trying to be honest with you.”*

### **Don't Get Upset if a Foreign Colleague Loses Their Temper**

Sometimes, you should help foreign colleagues by directing them to behave according to Myanmar culture. For example, a European expat advises, *“If your expat colleague is behaving rudely or disrespectfully, it's usually because they simply don't know any better. Please don't be shy to tell them if they need to take their shoes off or pass paperwork with their right hand.”*

International standards also involve accepting that people express their temperament sometimes. If your expat senior shouts at you unintentionally, it would be normal elsewhere. However, I do not mean to accept it if it happens often.

Myanmar people are generally gentle and polite, and they take *“shouting”* very seriously. People might be afraid and try to avoid expats who shout. Of course, I advise expats not to shout! (In my book *“When Global Meets Local – How Expatriates Can Succeed in Myanmar.”*) I also criticize them if they do not try to learn about and respect Myanmar culture.

But remember, expats are human and can be emotional sometimes. Like Steve Jobs, who shouted at people a lot, people elsewhere are more open to expressing their feelings. In Hollywood movies, you often see people disagreeing, arguing, and shouting at

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each other at work. Later, they don't seem to remember the incident at all. Nothing. They do this with friends as well. Not an issue.

In China, Korea, or Vietnam, you may see people arguing loudly. If your expat colleague slips and shouts at you, don't get upset. Don't take it personally. A European puts it, *"Please don't get upset if a foreign colleague loses their temper – it's not personal."*

They will probably just forget it after five minutes!

### **Feedback Is Mandatory in a Competitive Globalized World**

An open-minded person has a high chance of achieving success. However, not everyone is open to feedback. In Myanmar, an American expat says, *"Feedback is tricky anywhere, but I've found it especially difficult in Myanmar."* Expats often wish that Myanmar people were more open to feedback.

Myanmar is already open and connecting to the global world. A Burmese doctor suggests, *"Myanmar people should be open to constructive feedback. It just helps them and their organizations perform better."*

In a globalized world, competition is fiercer than ever. You are playing on a global field, not in a village anymore. If you stand still while others move ahead, you fall behind. We all need to improve our productivity daily. Competition will only increase. We should learn from feedback in our daily jobs, from our mistakes, successes, and failures. Every player needs to advance and excel. Otherwise, competition will kick you out of the game.

Organizations also need feedback to grow, develop, and maintain their position in the competitive market. Many businesses in Myanmar have failed under the competitive environment because they did not listen to market feedback.

Meanwhile, many successful Myanmar people are open-minded.  
**Open-minded people will succeed in the globalized world.**

**Exercise: Recall three times you received feedback and what you did with it.**

## 9.2 Connected in a Globalized World

Many years have passed, but the strong impressions from my first job at a leading global FMCG firm remain vivid. Getting there was a rigorous process, involving four rounds of testing, assignments, and interviews. It was one of the dream companies my university classmates and I aspired to join after graduation.

*Once hired, I received a professional email address and access to the intranet, which contained all the necessary information for my job. However, my access was limited to public relations and didn't extend to other departments like sales. The company operated very systematically.*

*The corporate culture was strong, characterized by a clear vision, corporate values, and defined goals. We worked according to strategic plans, participating in webinars with regional and global colleagues and clients. We traveled to Southeast Asian countries for conferences and brand events. The company even rented a playing field for weekend sports where we played volleyball, tennis, and football.*

As I write this, all those pleasant memories come flooding back.

*My colleagues were excellent communicators, working effectively and professionally. I learned from them every day. We had a feedback system, including quarterly performance reviews. My salary increased steadily, reflecting the mostly positive feedback I received (though I did have some negative feedback, which helped me improve significantly). I once received a prize for excellent media coverage of the company, announced in front of everyone. The pride and happiness I felt then are hard to describe.*

*We were a global company in Vietnam, though there weren't many foreigners at our office. However, we worked online with many foreigners from regional offices and occasionally with the global office. I felt like an integral part of a global network, something I had read about in numerous management books such as "Re-*

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*engineering the Corporation" by James Champy & Michael Hammer, "Good to Great" by Jim Collins, "Competitive Strategy" by Michael Porter, "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People" by Stephen Covey, "Who Moved My Cheese?" by Spencer Johnson, and "The One Minute Manager" by Kenneth Blanchard and Spencer Johnson. Simultaneously, I pursued my MBA, which included case studies of reputable global companies, including my own. It felt exhilarating and proud to see concepts from classic management books come to life in my work. I worked with passion and never felt tired.*

When I moved to Myanmar and co-founded an HR service company, we introduced candidates to international companies for job interviews. I experienced the same excitement I felt years ago when young people landed their first jobs at international companies after rigorous testing and interviews.

Later, they shared with me how much they had learned and grown in their professional environments. They felt thrilled to be part of a global network, expanding their circle of acquaintances far beyond their previous limits. Their minds broadened, performance improved, and their manners grew more confident, fueled by knowledge and experience from a different world.

A globalized world.

**Exercise: Think about your situation—do you want to become a part or a stronger part of a global network? Write down at least three ideas on how you could achieve this.**

## **9.3 Proud of Being a Professional**

### **Always Saying Yes is Not Professional**

In a proper organization, there are goals to pursue and tasks to accomplish—it's very result-oriented.

You should impress your foreign boss through your professionalism. This fosters mutual relationships and helps you complete your work effectively.

To please your foreign boss, don't apply "Anadeh"—saying Yes all the time regardless of understanding or being able to fulfill the promises. It's unprofessional and can cause numerous problems, as discussed in Chapter 3, *"Be Bold/Straightforward."* A European expat asserted, *"There is no place for "Anadeh" if you want your company to be efficient and your projects to succeed. If you can't do it, your expat colleague will find someone who can."*

Similarly, don't please your foreign boss by overly respecting seniority to the point of silence. They encourage and appreciate it if you disagree, say no, explain why, argue, or confront them to find solutions—politely. This approach is respectful and professional.

Your professionalism will please your foreign boss. Professionalism is highly expected in international organizations or local organizations aspiring to international standards. An ASEAN expat, Head of Finance at a global energy service firm, stresses, *"Myanmar colleagues should try to maintain professionalism."* An Eastern European expat echoes, *"Be more professional and not emotional."*

Another Eastern European expat with over 16 years in Myanmar states, *"Myanmar people should apply a strict professional atmosphere at work—your colleagues are not your family (as much as I personally like it), and your office is not a social gathering; leave that for after work."* This emphasizes the importance of critically fulfilling job responsibilities, distinguishing between professional duties and familial bonds.

### **What is Professionalism?**

An international HR expert states, *"The key to being professional is to remove your emotions from your negative actions. Emotions such as anger, being petty or childish, being dramatic, over-sharing your personal problems, over-sharing anything personal."*

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She adds, "*Positive emotions that help you be a better professional include empathy, positive reinforcement, corrective action, striving to be a person that others look up to, respect, and want to be like.*"

Professionalism encompasses behavior, attitude, appearance, and workplace ethics, demonstrating commitment to effective job performance. It includes specialized knowledge, competency, responsibility, teamwork, honesty, and ethics. Professionalism also extends to communication—whether in person, via phone, email, or more. Observing and analyzing professional office behavior, combined with common sense, helps you "*sense*" professionalism.

For example, when calling a company, the receptionist should state the company name, ensuring the caller knows who they are. If the person you want to speak to is unavailable, the receptionist should take a message. Dressing politely at work shows respect. Confidential terms in contracts must be honored. Disclosing them is unprofessional and breaches work ethics.

Professionalism emphasizes a "*commitment*" to effectively perform one's job. Professionals keep their promises, often being perceived as more credible and reliable. Giving and receiving feedback matter-of-factly is professional. Being too emotional or taking things personally is not.

#### **Examples of Professional Behavior:**

- Being straightforward to expats with yes or no answers.
- Saying yes all the time to please expats but failing to follow through is not professional.
- Speaking out and presenting ideas in meetings.
- Saying nothing in meetings but gossiping afterward is not professional.
- Asking your expat manager for discussions to find solutions.
- Keeping quiet when issues arise and just resigning is not professional.
- Requesting leaves in advance.

- Informing your manager of leave on the same morning, except in urgent cases, is not professional.
- Submitting a resignation letter before quitting a job (one month or more in advance).
- Leaving a company without submitting a resignation letter in advance, except in urgent cases, is unprofessional.

### ***A Small Note About Nga Pi:***

*If you work for a foreign company and bring Myanmar delicacies, leave or eat them in the kitchen—most expats are sensitive to strong smells, and a whiff of nga pi can be overwhelming. Some may love it, but leave food tasting for the kitchen, especially if your company has foreign clients visiting.*

### **Act Towards International Standards**

Professionalism is closely related to international standards—the common accepted ways of communication and interaction globally. This enables people worldwide to work together.

Myanmar is connecting with the globalized world. To be professional, you should embrace international standards. A Myanmar repatriate from the Middle East says, *"Many Myanmar people lack international exposure. I wish they would be more open and adapt to international standards instead of just scrolling down on their phones and keeping things to themselves."* If you find yourself constantly scrolling for entertainment, it's time for a change!

Remember the success story of adapting to international standards from article 4.3? By embracing new things—international standards—one individual advanced rapidly from a Consulting Partner to Senior Associate, Chief Representative of an international financial firm, and then Country Manager of a global consulting firm.

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He emphasizes, "Young Myanmar professionals need to push harder to meet regional and global standards in their work. Maybe it is too harsh, but I used to say at my office, "never do "Myanmar-good-enough" work." I understand our country works in its own way. But for international and global standards, we always need to push our limits. 'Myanmar-good-enough' is not acceptable to international corporate standards."

**Let us be professional and act towards international standards.**

**Exercise: Think about your situation and write down three aspects of your professionalism and three ways you could improve it.**

## **9.4 Exposure to New People and Cultures**

### **Where Are Your Bosses From – The East vs. The West**

*"Please be more open about what your motivation is, be more ambitious, and work harder with more focus towards the future,"* advises an Asian expat who has lived in Myanmar for nearly thirty years.

This book offers the basic principles for working with foreigners and the fundamental aspects of professionalism. By following it, you can make significant improvements and achieve success or be on the path to it.

However, not all foreigners are the same. So, what if you want to please your expat bosses more individually?

Some Myanmar HR Heads of international corporations share their advice: *"Please ask questions—what does your boss want?" and "Be proactive and take initiative. Bring solutions, not problems."* They also stress the importance of asking yourself, *"What does my boss want?"*

Generally speaking, expats from the West (such as England, Germany, France, Australia, and America) are a bit different from



expats from the East (such as Japan, Korea, Singapore, China, Thailand, India, and Vietnam).

### **Western Expats:**

Expats from the West are often frustrated by indirect communication in Myanmar. Most Western countries are democratic, where people freely express their thoughts and pursue what they like within legal limits. They are often straightforward. In Myanmar, historically, it has often been the opposite. Therefore, it is best to be clear when saying Yes or No.

Western expats desire you to *"speak out, disagree, argue, and confront"* for healthy discussions. They can accept your criticism and encourage *"thinking outside the box."* They value blunt communication. If you have seen American presidential candidates debate publicly, you will understand why they value bluntness.

A European expat working in human rights says, *"I would add that there is rarely anything to fear about open communication."*

### **Eastern Expats:**

For many Eastern expats, the power distance is greater than in the West, so they tend to enjoy a bit more hierarchy. They appreciate respectful signs and may appear more caring and emotional due to cultural similarities.

Many Asian expats, particularly from countries like India, Thailand, and Vietnam, expect local people to work harder and be determined to complete their tasks. German expats also often share this view, as they are known for their hardworking nature.

To understand your expat boss's characteristics better, revisit your best friends—Google and YouTube. Search for their nationality along with *"culture traits," "personality,"* or *"characteristics."* For example, if your expat manager is German, you can Google *"German culture traits"* or *"German personality."* You will find many articles that can help you identify common characteristics, such as

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being tall, hardworking, disciplined, efficient, straightforward, punctual, beer-loving, and sometimes lacking a sense of humor. While these are generalizations and may not apply to all, they can help you understand and cooperate with your boss better.

Additionally, you will learn a lot about German culture and people, exposing yourself to new experiences.

Isn't it amazing?

**Exercise: Think about one of your expat managers or friends. Write down your thoughts about their personality and how to work with them effectively.**

## **9.5 How Lives Have Changed from Working with Foreigners**

As mentioned, whether we like it or not, globalization is an economic tsunami sweeping the planet, affecting everyone's life on Earth.

*Years after Myanmar opened to the outside world in 2011, I was thrilled to reconnect with many individuals. One such reunion was with Ma Kay and Ko Aung, a young and lovely couple I first met not long after arriving in Myanmar at the end of 2012. Back then, they had recently graduated from university and appeared quite modest, like many of their peers.*

*Fast forward several years, and this couple has achieved remarkable success in their careers. Kay joined an international beverage firm and later moved to a fast-moving consumer goods company, where she was eventually promoted to a managerial role. Aung, not to be outdone, has impressive experience working with international companies and currently holds a marketing manager position with a major local business group.*

Today, they present a completely different image to me: mature, professional, and confident. They exude grace and self-

assuredness, no longer the shy individuals they once were when interacting with foreigners. Their faces glow with contentment, and their eyes sparkle with enthusiasm. Their expanded knowledge now spans not just the business landscape in Myanmar but the broader world as well. They both earned master's degrees and have traveled to numerous countries across Southeast Asia and Europe. They have built a global network of colleagues and friends.

*Most importantly, they joyfully share how they can now take care of themselves and their families. They give back to the community through donations, volunteer work, and funding scholarships for talented but underprivileged students in their hometowns. With each earning over a thousand USD per month, they manage this without difficulty. On full moon days, they merrily visit Shwedagon Pagoda.*

I have witnessed countless "success stories" like this wonderful couple. Many individuals have embraced new opportunities, sharpened their English and professional skills, and worked hard to seize the unique opportunities presented by Myanmar's opening. They have achieved promotions, higher salaries, and improved living conditions.

Here are a few more success stories of those who seized opportunities in Myanmar and overseas:

**G.** *started her career as a secretary 20 years ago. She gradually transitioned from an assistant role in an embassy to a career in HR, advancing through international organizations. She eventually became a regional HR leader, overseeing Myanmar's office and several others in the SEA region. Nine years ago, she joined one of Myanmar's largest telecom investors to lead their HR department. After reaching a career peak, she moved to another corporation and was sent abroad with her family. Her child was enrolled in an international school in the foreign country.*

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**L.C.** spent over six years working for both local and foreign companies in Myanmar before being sent to work in Hong Kong. She chose to return to Myanmar to be with her ill mother, but upon her return, she was highly sought after by various companies and secured a prestigious role in the financial services sector. She now supports her family financially and emotionally and writes articles to help young professionals advance in their careers.

**D.K.** from Kachin, has a background in banking and previously worked for a Japanese bank. He later rejoined a local bank and led it through numerous challenges to succeed in the market, including selling shares to a regional bank. He and his family now live comfortably. He transitioned to a public servant role, believing he can help more people in this capacity.

**Aung** works for a large local construction company. His strong English skills and ability to work well with foreigners have led to continuous promotions. His friends envy his Facebook posts, which are filled with photos from business trips abroad to countries like Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Germany, France, and England.

**Z.B.**, of Arakanese origin, is a lawyer who rose from learning English at a local monastery to attending the law faculty of Yangon University. He is now one of the most respected lawyers in a major corporation, attributing his success to his ability to work well with foreigners.

These are just a few examples among hundreds of thousands of success stories. Are you ready to add your name to this list of successful individuals?

**Exercise: Reflect on how working with foreigners can enhance your career success and outline strategies to improve your interactions with them.**

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## CHAPTER 10

# HOW TO GRAB THE GOOD JOBS IN MYANMAR AND OVERSEAS?

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### **10.1 They Say: You Are Stronger Than You Think**

You've been equipped with six key skills and the right attitude to work effectively with foreigners. Are you confident yet? If you are, congratulations! If not, it's understandable.

An Australian expat who has lived in Myanmar for over 17 years observed, *"The Myanmar people lack confidence because their education system has not allowed them to develop natural confidence in themselves."* We previously discussed how rote learning and unquestioning acceptance of teachers' words can make people passive and unsure of themselves.

Confidence grows when people are allowed to make decisions and trust their judgment. Working with foreigners often provides this opportunity, as they expect you to be independent in your job.

Many foreigners say, *"Myanmar people are stronger than they think. They are too humble and often don't speak out, show their*

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*abilities, or embrace new ideas. They should be more confident."* This means you should naturally be more confident than you are now.

Remember the European expat's comment: *"Stop treating foreigners like they are from Mars. We are people just like you. We laugh, cry, get upset, love fun; we are not so different from you."* Foreigners are human beings, and understanding this helps us feel more confident in dealing with them.

This book has provided insights into Myanmar culture (from foreigners' perspectives) and how it differs from international working culture. Seeing things from different perspectives and gaining knowledge brings confidence.

Life-long learning also builds confidence. In the 4.0 era of digitalization, continuous learning is essential for success. You're on the right track!

If you haven't developed your confidence yet, now is the time to start. **The most important thing to help build confidence is taking action and applying what you've learned in your daily life.**

An Australian expat who has lived in Myanmar for over 17 years said, *"More open communication and more saying NO will work, instead of agreeing with what foreigners suggest."* So, if your boss asks for your opinion in a meeting, just give it. If you don't understand something, ask your expat superior. If you disagree or can't do something, say No and explain why. If your expat boss asks you to make a decision, just do it.

**Be on time. Be proactive. Be initiative.**

You will certainly become confident!

**Failure is Inevitable**

Failure is normal. Are you afraid of failing? Michael Jordan, the legendary basketball player, said, *"I've missed more than 9,000*

*shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. 26 times I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."*

Mark Manson, author of *"The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck,"* states, *"Happiness is a problem; failure is inevitable."* Despite numerous failures, he succeeded eventually.

Thomas Edison, the inventor of the light bulb, conducted thousands of experiments before succeeding. Can you imagine our life without electricity? We will encounter failures many times if we want to excel. Accepting this makes us stronger and more likely to succeed.

We will surely encounter failures many times in our life if we want to excel. Accepting this rule will make us stronger and lead to success.

Don't be afraid of failure—you will always gain something, at least a lesson, or perhaps even a handsome guy.

Let me share a secret. A shameful defeat once brought me a cool guy! I almost fell in love with a senior manager at my previous company which I mentioned in chapter 9.

*It all started when he sent me an email to make friends after we played in a volleyball competition. He included a photo of me that he had taken secretly. I had been brave enough to register in the women's contest, despite having only practiced twice in the company's sports field and had limited experience of playing volleyball. The result was predictable—I faced one failure after another, being continuously defeated. But I gained a valuable personal victory—a cool guy wanted to connect with me! Perhaps he felt pity for me? Whatever it was, I got it thanks to my failure. 😊*

## **Be Thankful and Positive**

Gratitude makes us stronger and attracts more positive things into our lives. The *"Law of Attraction"* suggests that being thankful

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attracts more beautiful things. This happens to many people, including me. You will read more about this in the next chapter.

Every morning, when you wake up, say to yourself, "*I am so grateful.*" If you're reading this book, you've finished high school and have access to the internet. Meanwhile, 34% of people worldwide do not have internet access and have never used it. Nearly three billion people lack access to the internet – just imagine!

The project "*100 People: A World Portrait*" scales the world's population to 100 people. Of these 100, 22 would not have an adequate place to shelter, 11 would be undernourished and 29 would be moderately or severely food insecure, plus 21 would not have access to a private toilet or latrine.

You may also see some examples around you. Think about many children in Myanmar work in restaurants or as street vendors, or many people have to work as trishaw drivers. Those are heavy jobs for them with limited compensation.

Be thankful for what you have now, whatever it is.

### **Don't Be Jealous**

Jealousy weakens us. Why? When we are jealous, we view others as enemies, nurturing negative energy that harms us and prevents us from excelling. It distracts us and makes us less effective in our jobs.

Instead of being jealous, focus on self-improvement. Learn new skills, read good books, make helpful connections, exercise, travel, and take good care of yourself. Achieve greater success and happiness on your own terms. This is within your control.

Dream big. If you aspire to be a CEO, you may become a CEO or a deputy CEO. If you dream of being a Director, you may become a director, a deputy director, or a manager. Jealousy makes us mean; thinking big empowers us.



Furthermore, success requires collaboration. If we are jealous of each other, we all fail. *"Envy and jealousy are areas that need work in Myanmar culture. Helping each other benefits everyone in the long term,"* said an expat who has lived in Myanmar for nearly twenty years.

Being jealous is negative. Being positive lifts you up.

**Exercise: Think about your situation—have you ever been jealous of someone? How did it make you feel, think, or behave?**

## 10.2 You Are Responsible for Your Life

It's much easier to blame others than to take responsibility for our lives. In his book, *The Art of Not Giving a F\*\*k*, Mark Manson shares a story of how taking responsibility transformed a life from misery to success.

### William James' Transformation

*William James faced numerous severe problems. He had life-threatening health issues: temporary blindness, excessive vomiting, hearing problems, and a back condition that made it impossible for him to sit or stand upright. He frequently failed in high school, medical school, and even as a painter. He was ridiculed by others, including his father, especially since his siblings were all successful and famous. His last effort to join an anthropological expedition to the Amazon rainforest ended disastrously when he contracted smallpox and nearly died in the jungle.*

Can you imagine a life filled with such continuous suffering?

*His back spasms returned, leaving him unable to walk. Miraculously, he made it back home but fell into a deep depression. Everything in his life had fallen apart—his achievements were nonexistent, his body betrayed him, and his mind urged him to end his life.*

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*After attending a philosopher's lectures, he decided to experiment by spending one year believing he was 100% responsible for everything that happened in his life. During this period, he resolved to do everything in his power to change his fate, regardless of the likelihood of failure. If nothing improved in that year, he would accept that he was truly destined to fail and would take his own life.*

Do you know what happened next?

The result? *James became the father of American psychology, an influential philosopher, and a Harvard professor. He married and had five children. He called this experiment "a rebirth" and attributed his achievements to taking responsibility for his life.*

### **The Power of Taking Responsibility**

To be honest, I used to blame others for my circumstances. Fifteen years ago, I thought, *"Because my parents are not powerful or rich, it took me a long time to excel in life."* Despite working hard, my success seemed elusive.

Another time, I blamed others, thinking, *"Because the people I met are so hateful, I get angry and can't accomplish anything."* When I failed, I often thought, *"Life is so hard, it's not my fault."*

I even blamed my nationality, thinking that not being from a rich and powerful country like the US, UK, or Germany hindered my dreams.

However, many people succeed despite having less privileged backgrounds than mine. They face uncomfortable situations without losing their temper and rise again after failing.

Life is challenging, but not necessarily the toughest for me. Lee Kuan Yew, the founding father of modern Singapore, said, *"Life is just like that."* Realizing this, I changed my attitude. I became grateful for what I have, feeling more peaceful, happier, and focused on my goals.

**Suddenly, life became easier. Being thankful and knowing what I want brought me closer to my dreams every day. It felt like a miracle.**

Florence Nightingale, a great humanitarian of the nineteenth century, attributed her success to never making excuses. Mahatma Gandhi said, ***"You must be the change you want to see in the world."***

When I blamed others, I had no control over them and felt worse. Taking responsibility allowed me to control certain aspects of my life. I could choose how to see, react to, and value things. The whole universe seemed to change.

Stephen Covey said, *"I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions."* Embrace the decision to take responsibility for your life.

**Exercise: Spend one year believing you are 100% responsible for everything that happens in your life, no matter what. Reflect on the lessons and knowledge you gain after a year. Do you dare to try this experiment with me?.**

### **10.3 You Can Excel Every Day**

In school, you might have felt forced to study for marks and exams. Now, in the school of life, you have the freedom to choose your path. In school, teachers pushed you to try hard for high scores. In life, self-learning determines your success.

You have the tools to excel professionally. Now, it's up to you to make your job a success. There's no quick fix or miracle cure. *"Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was Bagan."* It's all on you, for your sake!

The good news is you can improve and sharpen your skills every day. Remember when you started school at six years old? You didn't know the alphabet or how to count from 1 to 10. Years later,

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you could read smoothly and perform complex math. Confucius said, ***“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.”***

If you ask where to start, I suggest getting a notebook. A simple one can work well. Whether it looks beautiful or ugly, no problem. Choose one or two skills to focus on first (You can change them later after three months or six months). Write down daily what happens regarding those skills. Note what you did, what you learned, what went well, and what needs improvement. **Learning from your experience is deep learning - very effective.**

After a while, even a week or a month, you'll see progress. Things change.

Do you remember the daily to-do list from article 6.3? I advise using it daily. You'll learn to appreciate time—yours and others'. You'll achieve things step by step. Experience is our best teacher, and practice makes perfect.

Like the saying, *“You are the best doctor for yourself,”* you are also the best teacher for yourself. You know yourself best. And you can excel every day with your teacher's help.

### **The Fight Against Indiscipline**

If you struggle with discipline, we're in the same boat.

*When I first started exercising, running from my house to Kandawgyi Lake in the morning was exhausting. It took half an hour round trip. I wanted to give up—feeling tired, thirsty, and lazy.*

*Some days, I did give up. Some days, I went back to bed after waking up. But I tried to continue. Sometimes, it was a nightmare to get up and put on my running shoes. But once outside, the fresh air and my own sweat made me feel stronger. After jogging and a bath, I felt very energetic each morning.*

*It took time to make this a daily habit, but I got better. My health improved, I felt less stressed and more peaceful. I became more*

*confident, overcoming myself. The positive energy carried me through the day. I no longer felt exhausted by day's end.*

*I started running more. Now, 45 minutes a day feels fine. If I don't run, I can't stand it. Jogging has become part of me.*

Small achievements lead to bigger ones. We can improve every day by taking it step by step. “*There are no traffic jams along the extra mile,*” said Roger Staubach. The more we try today, the easier things become tomorrow.

Here's a super effective tip—the **2-minute rule**. Start doing something you've been avoiding for just 2 minutes. Then continue at ease. For example, if you need to clean your floor but it feels daunting, just start for 2 minutes. Once you begin, it's not as tough as you thought. Then finish the task.

Another rule is **to do something for 21 days**. It will become a habit, and you'll do it automatically. Apply this rule, and you'll see results.

Let's get disciplined in these simple ways!

**Exercise: Apply the 2-minute rule to something you've procrastinated on for a long time. Write down what happens. Similarly, apply the 21-day rule to an easy-to-achieve but good habit. Write down what happens.**

## **10.4 Don't Forget Your Childhood Dreams**

Have you ever recalled your childhood dreams? What did you want to be or do when you were a little kid? A doctor, engineer, singer, teacher, director, manager, seller, or business owner? Have you ever missed those dreams or wondered why they don't relate to your current situation?

As a child, you dared to dream. What about now?

Your childhood dreams are directly connected to your heart. The heart is crucial to our existence. Even if one's brain is dead, one

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can still live a vegetative life. But if the heart lacks oxygen for just a few seconds, life ends. When you do something connected to your heart, you can go all the way, like when you do something for your loved ones.

*A famous Vietnamese V-blogger, Giang Oi, shared her story of doing something that connected with her heart. She loved dressing her doll beautifully. She knew nothing about sewing, but she became a sewer to make a dress for her doll. She made jewelry and shoes for the doll, putting in time and effort without hesitation because it connected to her heart.*

When I was volunteering to teach English to poor children in Bago, I asked them about their dreams and why they wanted to learn English. In a small library, a group of small children eagerly expressed their dreams:

- To visit Australia to see kangaroos
- To visit Paris to see the Eiffel Tower
- To meet the Barcelona football team in Spain
- To sing songs in English
- To make friends with foreigners in Myanmar
- To travel around the world

### ***A Successful Story of an Educator***

*An educator from Mon ethnic group recalls her journey. From a normal family in Loikaw, she advanced to become an educational expert in an international NGO. She achieved two international master's degrees in Thailand and England through scholarships, both in education. She doesn't compare herself to her classmates, now businesswomen, government officers, or housewives. Everyone has a different mission in life. She follows her heart—her childhood dream of becoming a teacher. Though it's not a career to make one a millionaire, it's noble because it builds the foundation for others to excel in life.*

*Her path wasn't straightforward. When her university was uncertain to open, she decided to volunteer teaching children in refugee camps, connecting with a church near the border, despite her mother's wish to send her to another vocational college. She persuaded her mother to let her follow her passion. She volunteered for four years.*

*Life had its way of rewarding her. The priest helped her find a scholarship to study abroad. She achieved a bachelor's degree in education and continued pursuing her dreams of working in education to help children. She insists on the importance of looking into oneself, staying connected with the heart, which is why she has been happy and successful.*

Many around me share similar stories. They work for foreign or local companies, determined to realize their childhood dreams. They have a good command of English and can work well with both globals (foreigners) and locals.

You can do it too.

### ***A Successful Story of a Travel Lover***

*A Rakhine woman shared how, as a child, she always wanted to travel abroad. Reading travel magazines excited her and sparked her curiosity about the world beyond Myanmar. First, she had to go to Yangon to study English and find a job. Persuading her mother was challenging, as women in her area were not expected to travel. Learning English was also tough. Twenty years ago, there was no internet, few books, and limited language centers. Teachers were expensive and sometimes rude. Many friends gave up and returned home. She faced discrimination but remained focused on mastering English to work with foreigners and travel.*

*She succeeded!*

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Now, she is the Head of Administration at an international European organization. She is happy and successful, attributing her achievements to following her childhood dream.

Your childhood dreams are always in your heart. Don't forget them. It's never too late to pursue them, but it's best to start sooner rather than later.

**Exercise: Think about your childhood dreams. What were they? Do you dare to follow one of them?**

### **10.5 Own Your Job, Live Your Dream Life**

Imagine one day before you die, you ask yourself what you did in your life. What are the answers you want to hear? Do you want to hear, *"I lived a so-so life. I gave up many times and fell short,"* or would you prefer, *"I lived my best life. I tried hard and persisted to succeed and help others. Whatever I achieved—big or small—I did my best. I had a meaningful life."*

Ask yourself what you want to do in your life. If you haven't done it yet, now is the time to start. Aristotle said, *"Human beings are different from animals because we have rationality and can be happy only when we live up to our full potential."* Steve Jobs added, *"The only way to do great work is to love what you do."* He also advised, *"Your time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life."*

Don't forget your childhood dream. Connect it with your current situation and ask yourself, *"Am I living a meaningful life, doing my best to realize my full potential?"*

This book aims to connect you with your heart, dreams, and endeavors, illustrating how a successful career can enable you to fulfill various aspects of your life. If you felt forced to study in school to pass exams, now you have the freedom to choose what to do with your life.

Find your mission—it's why you exist—and live it to the fullest.



## **What Is It Like to Live Your Dream Life?**

### ***A Successful Story of a Lady Helping Her Family, Friends, and Community***

*H.P. is traveling in Europe, sponsored by her company for a business trip that includes on-the-job learning and a short course in Belgium. Some say she is lucky, but it took her years to get here. She started as a shy girl from Mawlamyine who worked in a Malaysian factory for three years before returning to Myanmar. Then, over nearly ten years, she worked for various companies and NGOs.*

*She received a South East Asia Leadership scholarship and went to America for two months. She helped two young Sri Lankan men land internships at a famous restaurant in Yangon, where one eventually became a chef. Grateful for her help, they remained close friends. She also earned a master's degree through another scholarship, studying in Switzerland and Southeast Asian countries.*

*Back to her old days, H.P. learned English on her own, starting with a single grammar book and borrowing others from friends in Malaysia. Initially, she could only read English but could not speak it well since her schooling lacked speaking practice.*

*She witnessed many painful stories of Myanmar migrants risking their lives for jobs abroad to support their families. Without legal documents, they faced inhumane treatment, accepting any salary and living conditions. For example, five or six people living together in an empty container near the factory. If they were punished, harassed, or bullied, they couldn't voice their grievances as no one protected them.*

*H.P. felt the misery and also felt luckier than many others - she had a university degree and some money from her family to pay the agency fee to get a job in Malaysia. Then she resolved to excel in life.*

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*Now, all those struggles are behind her.*

### **Make Up Your Mind About Your Dream**

A clear goal makes all the difference. It directs you in the right way and brings positive energy.

### ***A Successful Story of Knowing What One Wants***

*Ko T.R., a repat with over ten years of overseas NGO experience, shares his advice for young people on succeeding in a newly opened Myanmar. The first and most difficult step is knowing what you want. “What do I want to be?”*

*He has achieved many excellent goals by knowing what he wants. He worked various jobs in Myanmar before going abroad. His first job was in Mogok for three years while managing the family jewelry business. Changes in government policy affected this sector, so he shifted to a marketing manager role at a consumer goods distribution corporation for four years. Another policy change prompted him to move to an advertising company for two years. He then transitioned to an international NGO, driven by his desire to help disadvantaged people, but military government intervention disrupted this sector.*

*Realizing he wanted to work overseas for various reasons—helping people, earning like an expat, and avoiding policy changes—he pursued opportunities abroad. He succeeded because he knew what he wanted. During his overseas tenure, he earned a master’s degree in his relevant field, understanding the importance of education for career advancement. Eventually, he found a job that balanced helping people, providing a comfortable income.*

Ko T.R. insists young people need to know what they want as the starting point for their success. Remember, it’s never too late to live your dreams. Many “*rags to riches*” stories begin later in life. For example, J.K. Rowling, the author of “*Harry Potter*” became a billionaire writer with over 500 million copies sold in 68 languages, starting her writing career while in misery—divorced, her mother

died, and caring for a sick child. Colonel Sanders changed jobs at 40 years old and started KFC at 56 years old. Now, KFC is everywhere, including Myanmar, where it offers an inspiring restaurant environment.

Live your dreams, no matter your age.

## **The Advantage of Generation Y and Generation Z**

If you are still young, know you are luckier than many. As mentioned earlier, we live in a globalized world with abundant opportunities and challenges.

This era of knowledge, information, and global connections opens up endless possibilities. The ICT revolution highlights the need for lifelong learning to be happy and successful.

You have the right mindset and key skills to work professionally, overcoming cultural traits you may not even realize limit you. Furthermore, Generation Y or Millennials (born during the 1980s and early 1990s) is distinctive, having grown up during the technological revolution. They rely on technology to live and work better, unlike previous generations who struggle to catch up with IT skills. Generation Y communicates through email, text messaging, and social media like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. And Generation Z or Zoomers (born 1997-2012) is even more tech-savvy than Generation Y.

This tech-savvy generation has significant advantages in modern life. Take them seriously!

## **Take Your Actions**

Nothing ever happens if you don't do anything. Change comes to those with a burning desire to succeed and the readiness to take action. You've worked out your goals—what you want to do in your life—now is the time to act.

Yes, the Dalai Lama says, "*Happiness is not something ready-made. It comes from your own actions.*" And the Myanmar proverb

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“တကယ်လုပ်လျှင် အဟုတ်ဖြစ်” translates to “*When you really do something with your best effort, the result will be success.*”

Mark Manson, in *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*, explain in more details about the power of action, “*If you’re stuck on a problem, don’t sit there and think about it, just start working on it. Even if you don’t know what you’re doing, the simple act of working on it will eventually cause the right ideas to show up.*”

**Believe in yourself. Accept the challenge. Push through it. Achieve what you desire.**

*"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined,"* said Henry David Thoreau. Leonardo da Vinci adds, “*I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.*”

This book is your starting point to live your dream by taking the good job opportunities available in a globalized world, leading to success. This is an action book! When you practice the book’s suggestions, you will see the outcomes. Start as simply as getting a notebook, like a daily diary. Begin today.

**Are you ready with a diary notebook and 5 minutes a day?**

**Take your actions!**

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## Appendices

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[How to use Google to search free online courses – chapter 4.5](#)

[How to learn English effectively – chapter 6.5 & 8.2](#)

[How to manage your time – my daily schedule chapter 6.3](#)

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[How to make a daily schedule – A.1](#)

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## A.1 My daily schedule for a more successful and happier life

I will change my daily habit from day.....to day.....(21 days).

Note: *The best timing for sleeping is from 11 pm to 5 am*

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
4:00							
5:00							
6:00							
7:00							
8:00							
9:00							
10:00							
11:00							
12:00							
13:00							
14:00							
15:00							
16:00							
17:00							
18:00							
19:00							
20:00							
21:00							
22:00							
23:00							

24:00							
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**Analysis and Strategy for my daily schedule**

1. What is my daily schedule? (as in the table above)
2. Where I should focus my time on in this period of life?
3. What are my objectives in various areas of life? Example:  
Health; Study; Job; Family, Friends and Relationships;  
Money; Spiritual Life
4. Where are the areas that have the biggest impact in the long run?
5. How do I waste my time? What costs me lots of time but brings little benefit?
6. What should I say YES to my schedule?
7. What should I say NO to my schedule?

## **A.2 How to have a basic conversation with foreigners?**

This section offers you tips for communicating with foreigners – whether it is your boss/manager or friends you meet at an event or on the road. Please note that besides questioning to know about them, listening and replying are the basic thing in communication for a good conversation.

### ***1. Avoid private questions such as age, height, weight, appearance, salary, marital status.***

For example:

- How old are you?
- How tall are you?
- What's your height? How tall are you?
- What is your weight? How much do you weigh?
- You look a bit fat/thin, right?
- You look tired/ Why do you look so tired?
- How much do you earn per month? How much is your salary?
- Are you married/single?
- Do you have a girlfriend/boyfriend?

### ***2. To start a conversation with a new acquaintance***

- What is your name?
- Where are you from? / Where do you come from?
- Where do you live?
- What do you do?
- What do you like doing in your free time?/ What are your hobbies?



**3. To "break the ice" to have an interesting conversation:**

- How long have you been in Myanmar?
- Are you on your holiday or business?
- How many places have you visited in Myanmar?
- Do you like travelling?
- How many countries have you been?/ How many countries have you traveled to?
- You travel alone or with your friends?
- How do you feel about the weather in Myanmar?
- What is the season in your country now?
- What is your favorite season?
- Do you try Myanmar food? Is it delicious?
- How do you think about Myanmar and Myanmar people?
- What about traffic here?

**4. To warm up the atmosphere**

- Your name is very nice.
- Your country is very wonderful!

**5. To end the conversation**

- I have to leave now.
- It's very nice to talk to you.
- Thank you so much.
- Have a nice day.
- I am very happy to meet you.

### **A.3 Example of a professional email**

*Dear H.,*

*Thank you for your email asking me about scheduling our virtual meeting. I'd be glad to talk with you. I can do it on next Thursday morning or Friday morning. If it is convenient for you, please fix a time.*

*Regards,  
(Your name),*

Besides your name, your signature may include your role, your contacts: phone, Skype/Viber and/or company website. For example:

*Regards,*

*Aung Than  
Production Supervisor  
Phone & Viber: (95).....  
Website: .....*

#### **Professional Email Structure**

- Email title
- Dear Sirs/Madam
- Body: introduction, purpose, expectation, thank you
- Best regards
- Signature: name, company, phone, email, website

#### **Proper business email outlook**

Please note that small things tell people about your personality, habits, and importantly your professionalism level. Thus do pay attention to:

**Space:** after a full stop or after a paragraph

**Punctuation:** where to put comma, full stop, and space

**Capital letters:** for people names, places

**Spelling:** right words right meanings

**The way to address people,** particular the senior: Dear,  
Thanks & Best Regards,

**The way to put our signature** at the end of the email

## **A.4 How to excel in your job – career advice blog and posts**

Laura Cho's career blog in both English and Myanmar. How to choose a career, find jobs, change jobs, write CV, do interviews, work with boss, reduce stress, talk about salary and so on.

<https://www.laurachointernational.com/english-blog>

## A.5 How to Not Take It Personally - Less Emotional and More Rational

We should not bring too much emotion into our work. Excessive emotions can lead to poor decisions—when we're emotional, we might do things we regret later. In the office, our colleagues are not our parents; they won't easily forgive us. Thus, we face consequences if we are too emotional at work.

After years of trying to be more rational, I discovered that the most effective approach is **to avoid acting when we are emotional**. Emotions can drive our actions, often leading us to make biased decisions. It's dangerous to let emotions overwhelm us and dictate our behavior, as this can result in foolish or irrational actions.

For example, imagine you're upset because your manager told you to improve in areas such as punctuality and meeting deadlines. You might feel an immediate urge to argue, questioning why you're being singled out while others aren't. Your emotions push you to react impulsively to relieve the pressure.

But if you do react immediately, what happens? Your manager will be surprised and likely form a negative opinion of you. However, if you refrain from acting, you give yourself time to cool down. The next morning, after a night's sleep, your anger subsides. You can then reflect on the situation more clearly. Are your manager's points valid? Yes, you do tend to arrive late and submit reports past the deadline more frequently than others. It's possible your manager has also spoken to others privately, which you wouldn't know. Additionally, your manager expressed a desire to support you, offering to help improve your performance. His feedback, therefore, could be beneficial for your growth.

At the moment of anger, you might have overlooked these positive aspects of his feedback, focusing solely on the criticism.

Another effective way to remain rational is to **write things down**. Putting our thoughts on paper helps clarify them. Instead of acting on emotions, jot down your feelings, what upset you, and why. This process helps emotions fade gradually, making you more rational.

**Exercise: Practice one tip today.**

**More tips for becoming more logical and rational (Source: Blogger “Giang oi”)**

- Always listen to others attentively to understand them (without distraction and without assumption). We often listen with prejudice or while multitasking.
- Read more and write more. Reading helps us learn from how writers organize their thoughts, and writing helps us organize our own thoughts logically.
- Avoid sharing personal stories with everyone in the office. Be selective and cautious about whom you confide in. When eager to share, take deep breaths to slow down.
- Do not vent negative emotions on Facebook just to feel better. Even if you set the privacy to *"Only friends,"* it can still become public. If you must share, write a post and set the audience to *"Only me."* After a few hours, reconsider if it's appropriate to share.
- Leave personal thoughts at home when you go to work. Write down your thoughts, feelings, and worries on a sheet of paper and leave it at home. This simple practice doesn't cost time, money, or effort but is effective.

## A.6 How to Self-Study Effectively?

Do you meet your best friend, Google, every day? I do. I learn a lot from the internet and feel grateful to my best friend, Google—it offers unlimited free knowledge, expertise, and courses. I wish I had utilized it earlier. Because of this, I urge you to make use of it for your own benefit. It saves you time, money, and most importantly, you can instantly find the knowledge you need.

But *“How to self-study effectively?”* is the next question. Many young people tell me that it's not easy for them. They're used to attending classes with a teacher and friends, where they receive support and can chat with peers. I understand this, and learning with a teacher is still an option.

However, you can still self-study effectively. Especially when you don't have much money, online learning provides knowledge without cost (except for internet service fees). There is knowledge you can only find online—sometimes no local teachers can provide it, particularly outside Yangon or Mandalay. Therefore, it's essential to seriously consider how to self-study using online resources.

For acquiring general knowledge, search by keywords as demonstrated in Chapter 4.5. For instance, if you want to know which countries are in the EU, simply Google *“EU countries”* and you'll find the information. Or if you want to know how to get more likes on LinkedIn posts for your business, search for that and you'll find countless articles.

Now, let's talk about learning a course online by yourself. I agree, it's not easy. But we can make it easier by following the right strategies and methods. As you read through this book, you'll notice that I'm a pretty lazy and weak person, but by recognizing this, I adapt my tactics to succeed. The ancient philosopher Socrates said, *“Knowing yourself is the first step to wisdom.”*

According to Van Nguyen, an expert on international business and education, the first thing to consider when self-studying is **“Why?”** **Then, “How?”** and **“What?”**

**Why:** Why do you want to learn it? Choose to learn something you truly need. This is called problem-based learning, where learning helps solve a specific problem. Only you can answer this question. Don't learn something just because your friends are learning it. Learn something applicable to your daily job or life. This necessity will drive you. Otherwise, it's easy to give up when self-studying.

**How:** How can you learn most effectively? Humans prefer fun over hard work, so choose enjoyable or relaxing ways to learn. Many find learning English through movies or songs effective. Personally, I learn writing by watching movies about great writers, observing their philosophy, sources of ideas, and lifestyles. I also learn world history through internet articles and movies, which make historical events memorable. By integrating entertainment with learning, the process becomes easier.

**What:** What do you want to learn? If your job requires extensive use of Excel or Word, choose a course on these tools, not a literature course. If you frequently give presentations, learn how to improve them. This might not require a course—searching *“How to make a good presentation”* on Google will yield many YouTube videos and articles. If you want to improve your English, focus on that.

Choosing a course with a clear purpose naturally motivates you because it helps you advance in your job. You can see how the course will benefit you, which energizes you to continue, even when it's challenging.

**Applying 5W1H:** After determining why and what, consider how in more details (methods, hours, parts of the course), and then when and where. Use these tactics to deal with your weaknesses in self-study – things are clear and you would just follow the schedule. They are adapted from the 30 motivation hacks in self-study.



### **Time Management:**

- Use the Pomodoro technique: study for 25 minutes, then rest for 5 minutes. After four intervals, take a longer break of 15-30 minutes.
- Schedule study sessions in your calendar, e.g., every Tuesday at 8 pm for two hours.

### **Isolating Yourself:**

- Find a private place to study without interruptions. Close doors and windows if necessary.
- Turn off your phone and social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn etc) to avoid distractions.
- Listen to music without lyrics. Music that aids relaxation, memory, and deep thinking can support your learning.
- Wear formal clothes to remind yourself that you're in study mode.

### **Other Tactics:**

- Form a small study group with the objective of enhancing learning, not just socializing. Discuss course material and share learning experiences.
- Reward yourself for completing study sessions. Enjoy an ice cream after two hours of study or treat yourself to a new shirt or pair of shoes after finishing a course.

## A.7 Getting a Scholarship to Study Overseas

Do I dare to dream? If you're asking yourself this question, you're not alone. Many recent scholarship recipients in Myanmar once felt the same way. For a long time, they doubted their chances until they finally succeeded!

Imagine a vast sky opening before your eyes. You can travel to beautiful places, discover new cultures, and meet diverse people. Studying abroad will equip you with valuable knowledge about the world and new skills for excelling in a globalized environment. Life will become more enjoyable and opportunities more attainable. You'll be more confident and competitive!

**Firstly, getting a scholarship to study abroad is easier than you think.**

Every year, more and more Myanmar youths receive scholarships to study overseas. Many share their amazing stories, and I believe them because they achieved it. Some never considered applying for a scholarship, thinking it was too difficult. While it's not easy, it's more accessible than you might believe.

**Secondly, your best friend Google is still your best friend for finding scholarships.**

If you Google "*Scholarships for Myanmar students*," you'll find innumerable articles. (Some links may just refer you to scholarships to international students in general). Scholarships come from various sources: governments, universities, organizations, foundations, and research projects. They can be for short courses, undergraduate, master's, or doctoral programs. Opportunities are available in regions all over the world: Asia, Europe, America, Australia, Africa, and more. Scholarships cover a wide range of subjects, including social sciences, natural sciences, IT, education, law, healthcare, social services, communications, journalism, public management, business, management, arts, and more.

Examples of Scholarships for Myanmar students:

<https://myanmarstudyabroad.org/scholarships/>

<https://mymyeo.com/opportunities/scholarships/>

<https://www2.daad.de/deutschland/stipendium/datenbank/en/21148-scholarship-database?detail=57692564>

<https://sim.sc.mahidol.ac.th/norway-mahidol-university/>

<https://www.iie.org/programs/usaid-lincoln-scholarship-program/>

<https://www.usaid.gov/burma/press-releases/feb-29-2024-usaid-launches-university-scholarship-program-myanmar-youth>

<https://mm.usembassy.gov/education-culture/scholarship-programs/#>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/myanmar.scholarship.news/?ref=share>

[https://m.facebook.com/MYANMAROPPORTUNITIES/?\\_rdr](https://m.facebook.com/MYANMAROPPORTUNITIES/?_rdr)

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Scholarships-for-Myanmar-100064024990705/>

<https://www.facebook.com/MyanmarSearchInternational/>

There are many others offered to international students, students from developing countries, or ASEAN countries by governments or universities or organizations.

### **Examples of Government Scholarships:**

- Fulbright (U.S. Government)
- Chevening (U.K. Government for public sectors)
- Lincoln & YSEALI (U.S.)
- Australia Awards (Australia)
- Monbukagakusho (Japan)
- Global Korea Scholarship (Korea)
- ASEAN Scholarships (Singapore)
- Thailand International Postgraduate Programme (AIT)
- HKPFS (Hong Kong)
- Chinese Government Scholarship (China)

Information about these scholarships is often shared on their embassies' websites and appears in search results when you Google them. The British Council and American Center in Myanmar are excellent sources for scholarships to study in Britain and America. A hot tip is the German Goethe Institute: German universities are top-notch, and their scholarships are easier to get.

Some other scholarship sources:

- Erasmus Mundus (Europe)
- DAAD (Germany)

This is just a starting point. Use Google to explore further and find more opportunities! *Note: When preparing for your application, you can find advice for applying particular scholarships by Googling or searching on Facebook. They would offer valuable suggestions for you.*

### **Thirdly, there are common basic requirements for scholarship applications:**

The subjects for scholarships vary depending on the organization offering them. Each scholarship may require different tactics to apply, but they share some common points. Most often, you will need a certain GPA level, English proficiency, work experience, letters of recommendation, and a persuasive essay or personal statement.

#### **Common Requirements:**

- **GPA:** While a GPA of 3.5/4.0 is often required, some scholarships only require a 2.5. For example, the Vietnam-Japan University offers two-year master's scholarships with that requirement. Extracurricular activities can be very beneficial, as they demonstrate your passion, ability to work with others, and desire to contribute to society. They can also serve as additional references if your GPA isn't high enough. Many universities may not fully trust the GPA

system from developing countries like Myanmar, so your other social activities can speak for you. Being a team leader of a Girl/Women association, an active member of a volunteer group, or a founder of a chess/football club can be advantageous. Plus, participating in these activities is always good for you.

- **English Level:** TOEFL or IELTS scores often need to be above 90 or 6.5, but sometimes only 80 or 5.5 or even lower is acceptable. You can find numerous lessons and tactics for achieving high scores online by using Google.
- **Work Experience:** Master's program scholarships often require a minimum of 2-3 years of work experience, but sometimes no work experience is necessary.
- **Letters of Recommendation:** These are crucial. Often, 2-3 letters are required, showcasing various positive aspects of yourself that align with your personal statement and CV. For example, your thesis mentor can mention your intelligence, effective learning methods, and research skills, while your manager can praise your proactivity, teamwork, leadership skills, and determination to complete tasks.
- **Essay or Personal Statement:** This is the most important element if you meet all the basic requirements. It's unique and answers questions like: Who are you? Why do you want this scholarship? Why should they give it to you? How will you use it later? You need to highlight your strengths and clarify your purpose for applying. Explain how the course fits your future plans and helps you achieve your dreams. Show how your background aligns with your future goals and, critically, how you will give back to society or the community after finishing your studies if you win the scholarship. Demonstrating passion and sincerity is crucial, though you

can seek help to refine the essay from those experienced in securing scholarships.

**Fourth, it can take years or less, but you can always start today:**

Some people may be lucky to get a scholarship on their first try, but for most, it takes longer. Some spend years preparing to fulfill all the requirements, and it's common to face failures before succeeding. A friend once told me she applied ten times before finally getting one.

But if you truly want it, there is always a chance! Start preparing today, and don't be discouraged by setbacks. Your persistence will pay off in the end.

**Just start!**

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## About the Author and Intercultural Workshops: Bridging “Local” and “Global”

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Hana Bui is an intercultural trainer and best-selling author specializing in mainland Southeast Asia. Originally from Vietnam, she covers Vietnam, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand. After living in Myanmar for over a decade, Hana enjoys wearing *eingyi*, savoring Burmese cuisine, and conversing in Burmese. Myanmar has truly become her home.

As an expatriate working in Myanmar's human resource and education sectors, Hana observed the cultural struggles between expats (the “global”) and the amiable local people (the “local”). She recognized that expats often face significant cultural conflicts upon their arrival, which must be navigated to achieve success.

Her book, *“When Global Meets Local: How Expatriates Can Succeed in Myanmar,”* was created to help expats harmonize their work with the Burmese. Since its launch in 2019, it has become a best-seller in Myanmar, praised by many expatriates as *“a must-read for foreigners in Myanmar.”*

Following the success of her first book, Hana responded to requests for a second book aimed at the local side—particularly young Myanmar people. This led to the creation of *“When Local Meets Global: How to Work Well with Foreigners.”* Hana hopes this book will equip Myanmar readers to effectively engage with foreigners and thrive in today's globalized world. No matter where they are, handling international interactions proficiently is always advantageous.

Both books reflect Hana's passion for solving intercultural problems and her love of writing. Her mother, a librarian, nurtured Hana's

voracious reading habits from a young age, and she has been writing about global-local connections ever since. With years of experience in education, human resources, and intercultural communication, Hana sees herself as a cultural bridge between Myanmar and the world.

Her interest in global-local interrelations was solidified over fifteen years ago when she completed an MA in Globalization and Communications at the University of Leicester, England. Hana's straightforward and practical approach, evident in her books, also guides her workshops for both audiences: "*How to Work Well with Myanmar People*" and "*How to Work Well with Foreigners and Meet International Standards.*"

For inquiries about her books or workshops, please contact Hana at [hanabui.mm@gmail.com](mailto:hanabui.mm@gmail.com).

About the author: <https://interculturesea.edu.vn/about-and-contact/>