

CIE-USA Keynote

Lily O'Byrne

Good Afternoon.

I thank you for your kind invitation to join you for lunch today. I was asked to be here to share about my experiences and my journey that led to a position of leadership with a large corporation like Lockheed Martin.

Lockheed Martin is the largest Aerospace defense contracting company in US. We have six major businesses and our product span from building military fighter airplanes; presidential helicopters; defense missiles; military and commercial satellites; electronic components for weapons, submarines; and 50% of our business is in government IT work. Our annual income is \$35 billion and we have 135,000 employees based in US and globally.

Let me say that I am very proud of Lockheed Martin and of the work we do to protect and defend our country. I would like you to know however, that it is our people of which I am the most proud. I believe that people are the most important component of any organization's success. So today, I want to share with you about my journey with people, and our collaborative road to success. It has been a journey of ever increasing scope and focus, from a parochial "rice bowl" in Hu-bei China, to bustling Hong Kong, through rural Taiwan and the cornfields of Illinois, to Silicon Valley in California... to a veritable "tossed salad" of expectations, opportunities, challenges, and yes... a tremendous variety of people that fill my life every day.

To talk about success, we really need to have a common understanding about what success IS. I suggest that for different people, success is different things... these things are defined by personal values, desires, and interests... and also by the context for success... the marketplace, our families, our social lives, and so on. For our purposes today, I want to address success in terms of happiness and of satisfaction. I suggest that true happiness is that which satisfies our personal needs and aspirations in a way that brings us joy and peace. Satisfaction is the true measures by which we can call ourselves "successful."

Let me begin by sharing with you some background about Lily O'Byrne...

I was fortunate to be born into a family of means. My grandfather, with little formal education, built a very profitable international business, dealing with no less than eight different countries. My father followed his father into the business, and was able to provide well for our family. Mother was an academic, and her steadfast drive and quiet insight was always a guiding light for my brothers, sister and me.

Political upheaval took us to Hong Kong when I was two years of age. We left most of our wealth in China thinking that we will return soon. I began my formal education in a private Catholic girls' school, with strict regimen and starched, white uniforms. Dealing with a new dialect, a different culture and a new way to live, excellence and obedience became the norm for me.

Six years later found my family moving again. This time we went to Taiwan. Changing family fortunes and my grandmother's desire to be close to the earth took us to the fields of rural Taipei. Again, I found myself confronted with changing culture and yet another dialect. From rigor and starch, I went to a school where I found myself the only one wearing shoes while the demand for academic excellence is stronger than that I was used to! With the changes I encountered, and with a child's need to fit in, I quickly learned that to be successful... to have joy and peace, to be satisfied, I needed to ADAPT to my new surroundings: to be open to the possibilities that change offered, to learn, and to grow.

In many Asian families, a passion for excellence is fundamental. As my education in Taiwan progressed, excellence continued as a key part of my life. All through schools, I found that with effort and application, I could achieve good results. Good results in school brought me esteem, and joy, and peace... I could be successful. I also made an effort to develop my athletic skills, as well as intellectual. The ability to play a good game of basketball brought more joy... more success. I played the position of play-

making guard and learned the benefit of having great team work and the importance of good leadership to a team's success. Upon graduation from college, I was entertaining thoughts of living an academic life myself. I was fascinated with people and with the ways they would behave in different circumstances; I discovered that language, in large measure was the glue and the grease of human interaction. I decided to undertake graduate studies in Linguistics from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana in the United States, with a dream of teaching at my Alma Meta upon receiving my master degree.

Half-way around the world, I was now planted firmly in an Illinois cornfield... and surrounded by new and different people, all of whom spoke with a strange accent! I found too that they shared the same opinion... it seems I have an accent as well. Today, we talk easily of diversity and appreciating differences, but I found myself learning to adapt truly at the graduate level! Here was not only a new culture and a new language but many new cultures and languages because at U of I the over thirty thousand student bodies are from all over United States and all over the world. I roomed with ladies from Long Island Jewish communities, African American ladies from the south and to students from countries like Japan, Korea, India, Australia, Russia and the European countries. Several of them are still close friends today. I was overwhelmed by the new world of technology... computers were exploding into every field of academic endeavor, and Linguistics was certainly no exception. As a graduate student, and a teaching assistant, I was required to use computers to program language lessons. It was here at U of I that I became increasingly involved with technology and computers, and invested enough time and effort that I might as well have been earning a degree in Computer Science. With the shifting playing field, success... happiness and joy, was no longer assured by simply adapting to and leveraging opportunities. I discovered that it was actually necessary to ADJUST my expectations and goals, to capitalize on realities that didn't even exist a year or two before

Somewhere along the line, I met Terrance O'Byrne, and within a year we become husband and wife. I found myself facing several challenges: A new family with new culture, new habit and new....;giving up my dream of returning to Taiwan to teach; not

to pursue a Ph D while my husband is getting his. (I believe the pressure of having two Ph D candidates in one household is not healthy for our marriage) and what do I do while he is studying? This is where I made the adjustment of entering the field of Information Technologies. Little did I know how big a decision that was at the time. Upon my husband completing his doctorate studies and the birth of our son, we seized an opportunity to move to California, and to set the course of our now collaborative journey toward industry. We accepted positions with the Lockheed Missiles and Space Company in Sunnyvale, California... the nascent Silicon Valley.

If I thought adapting and adjusting was a challenge in Illinois, just imagine a young, assertive, (and talented!) Asian woman, dropped into the middle of an 'engineering society' populated with white men of experience who had known and worked with each other for years who have never worked with a female or Asian. It might have been very easy for me just to become invisible, to do what I was asked, and to have enjoyed my peace, my satisfaction, my joy, in my own little corner... but I was not interested in returning to an isolated rice-bowl... even a Silicon Valley rice bowl.

One very important lesson I learned very early at the work place was that I would never achieve the satisfaction, joy, and peace that I was seeking by simply doing my job and waiting for someone to "discover" me. Certainly, I held no expectation that I would become a senior leader or manager immediately, but I did take personal responsibility for the work we were doing, and, in short order, found others were looking to me for guidance, support, and affirmation. Soon, I had assumed a degree of "informal leadership," and that led to more formal responsibilities and positions. Often, we see the process of progress as a "pull" function... that is, we wait for a specific demand, and then try to meet it as best we can. This is good, but I want to suggest that at the same time, the wise individual will have in hand some ideas and solutions to "push" when the time is opportune. Leadership is always in demand, and good leaders will always occupy essential roles in any organization.

Going to work for Lockheed certainly exceeded my expectations of variety and technical challenge. The company was so large and so diverse that there was never an opportunity to become complacent, and my adapting and adjusting skills bore real fruit both in terms of the systems and products we designed, and in terms of the organizations I was now leading. I grew from the role of technical craftsman to an orchestrator of people's skills and talents to create not only business solutions for Lockheed, but to instill satisfaction in my co-workers, to enable them to find their own joy, and peace... to build an environment of success for us all.

Adapting and adjusting served me well. Then, in 1995, there came a pretty big revolution. The Lockheed Corporation and Martin Marietta merged, creating one of the largest Aerospace-Defense establishments in the world. This was an enormous undertaking: to be successful, both organizations needed to recognize and assimilate the very best of each other's technologies, processes, assets, methods, and systems. Both companies had incredibly talented people. Probably our biggest challenge was how to combine our human resources to forge an even stronger organization. From Information technology perspective, the new Corporation chose to combine the systems, assets, and people from over 60 different business entities from the heritage companies into one common organization to serve the entire spectrum of Corporate IT needs... we call it "Enterprise Information Systems." One of our first challenges was to take out \$900 Million in IT costs over the Corporation's first five years... combining systems, consolidating computer centers, driving standards and common solutions. We actually achieved that total in only two years! Truly... a wonderful technical achievement; but it pales next to the job we had at integrating our workforces... at combining and leveraging talent... at instilling a genuine sense of belonging and value in each individual... at creating a new culture... In one sense, it was like trying to build the proverbial battleship while it was teaming at flank speed, while under fire in battle!

There were so many different considerations, so many factors, so many changes and adjustments to make. Finally, in order to make sense of all the varying conflicting points of view, the many valid solutions, propositions, and concepts, we found it necessary to

come together to define and to adopt a new set of principles and values, synthesized from all we brought with us, and from what we had learned together. This effort has helped our company to remain competitive and continue to enjoy being the largest defense contracting company in US.

So my formula is rather simple and they are ADAPT, ADJUST, and ADOPT. I think this formula is appropriate in our rapidly evolving technical and business communities, but I believe it's also a very important message for us to keep in mind as members of the Asian community. We bring a wonderful heritage with an emphasis on values like hard work, perseverance, respect, honor, humble and sometimes a bit stubbornness which give us a tremendous foundation to build upon. Leveraging the formula, we can adapt our strengths, and adjust our expectations and attitudes to adopt new paradigms that will bring us, and our organizations, success.

Well, it's been an exciting and a challenging journey so far. I'd like to take just a few minutes to "put some dressing" on this tossed salad for you, and to add some extra flavor, extra insight, and maybe just a little spice...

Earlier, we talked about the need and importance of defining success, each one of us with his or her own unique idea and concept. I all of us need to spend some time in creating a clear picture of our own success. With that image in mind, we must take the time and effort to create our own roadmap... figure out what it will take to achieve our own vision of success. This is a very important step, and one not to be taken lightly... consider consulting a mentor or coach, a leader whom we respect. Build that map carefully, and then GO! Applying the three A formula as we travel on our journey.

I would urge all to recognize the need to be "there for each other," to join in supportive, collegial relationships. I think it's very important to remember that there are only a very few 'geniuses' with a gift to stand far above others in their ability to achieve and to contribute. For most of us, sharing and collaborating is a sure path to success, not only for us as individuals, but for our organizations as well. Along these lines, I want to

suggest the need for our organizations and groups to be “permeable,” that is, we need to assure that we have ‘soft boundaries’ that will enable us to connect and to collaborate with others across our enterprises, and in our increasingly global marketplace, across industries. Internally, this is key as well. We share a responsibility to welcome newcomers into our working groups, our companies, and our professions.

We share a responsibility to renew our organizations, and to replace ourselves. Please, recognize our critical roles in bringing up the next generation, offering guidance, opportunity, direction, counseling, and mentoring.

I think ultimately that leadership is an important ingredient in our “salad” metaphor. In that light, remember always to set the best example we can. Then, ask the very best of our people. Show them the “bigger picture,” expand their thinking to new and broader horizons... at the same time, remember that “the devil is in the details,” don’t allow them to be blind-sided (nor to blind-side YOU), by failing to pay close attention to every aspect of their endeavors.

Be an active listener and an inclusive leader . Use your teams to foster a challenging environment, built on mutual respect. Don’t be afraid to challenge people, and encourage them to challenge each other, and to challenge you. Use the forge of debate and thoughtful questioning to build strong ideas that will grow in scope and strength as they are implemented. In all of this, remember that respect for one another is fundamental. It is crucial to include all ideas that come forward. Leaders must be willing to take calculated risks; weigh the alternatives, decide on a course, and follow it. Take responsibility for your course and for your actions, but be willing to take risks.

An area where I believe many Asians could pay attention to is in learning and honing the social skills of our American culture. Asian families are often conservative in retaining their heritage ways. Those who aspired to be leaders must extend themselves socially. This means that it is critical to engage in activities and environments that go beyond the requirements and obligations of the work and the task at hand. As leaders, it is very

important for us to be a part of the cultural fabric of the workplace, to be involved in luncheons, or get-togethers, or just engage in the office “small talk,” spending time in conversation of interest to those around us, about sports, or entertainment, the family, or the news... Having an opinion isn't necessary, but engaging is essential for the leader.

To this end, I believe that it's often necessary to put forward perhaps a little extra effort, not to deal with or to overcome biases, but rather because the foundation of leadership is respect, and to achieve respect, one must be known and understood. A good analogy came to my mind as I thought about this area: I have just returned from Italy, from a vacation with my husband. As we reached our decision to go, and made our plans several months ago, I made it a point to get some tapes to review on the Italian language. I took them with me in my car, on airplanes, virtually everywhere I went, and listened to them at every opportunity. Please note this well: my goal was NOT to learn to speak Italian, but rather to become familiar and comfortable with the Italian language, and therefore, the Italian culture... to learn how to adapt and to adjust to a new environment, and to assimilate enough to be successful on my trip... without becoming Italian.

Another vital ingredient for those that pursue responsibilities as leaders is a little trite in expression, but I really want you to note this: it's very important to “dress for success.” Do not confused Business casual with sloppiness. Meeting the everyday expectation for appearance in the office is fine if you aspire to the (very important) role of individual contributor, but if you desire is to lead, your appearance, wardrobe, and demeanor must communicate that message one hundred percent of the time.

Lastly, and this applies no matter what course you choose, the ultimate arbiter of your success is you. You hold the keys, you hold the ball, you hold your own future in your own hands. You will chart your own course, and you will choose your own path. What brings you joy, what brings you peace will be your own choice.

I hope you enjoy my journey of transforming from a rice bowl to the toss salad bowl. I thank you for this time to be together and good bye.

