

Steven Tan's Top 10 career tips for millennials

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It's not surprising how the young and charming chief operating officer of SM Supermalls Steven



Tan has become the latest online heartthrob. His recent promotion that comes with a greater and bigger responsibility of overseeing all of more than 70 SM Supermalls around the country, and abroad as well, makes one wonder how Steven can still look fresh and relaxed.

In 1999, Steven obtained his master's degree in Business at the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris. He came back to Manila to work for the Barcelo hotel group and was about to leave for Paris when he got a call from Tessie Sy-Coson, which changed the course of his career. The phenomenal rise of Steven Tan in his career can be attributed to his good work ethics. One would hear only praises and positive feedback from people he works with — from his bosses, to SM merchants, his colleagues and staff as well. Steven shares with us his Top 10 career advice for millennials. "This is in no particular order but I feel these are important items for millennials to note in the workplace," he said.

1 Put in the time... The new order today is speed and instant gratification. This is what millennials have grown up to and are comfortable with. Need information fast? You can Google it on your mobile phone. Millennials demand speed in everything. In the workplace, they want to make their mark ASAP, STAT, NOW. There's a lot of frustration and job hopping when the pace is not how they want it to go. My advice is to put in the time. Sustained commitment on long-term projects, for example, can bring you a deeper sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Management will also notice

your capacity for focus and resolve, and most likely, you will get that well-deserved promotion.

2 ...(and) put down that phone. Or look all around you, observe carefully and let new ideas and discoveries sink in. Millennials are digital savvy. But think about it: if you're on your phone glued to social media half the time, you miss out on real-time events and discoveries. The strongest relationships are formed in person, not online. Go out and participate in your immediate world. Don't lurk in the shadows, looking down on your phone. Talk to people (live) and develop a genuine interest in things. Real, actual experience is the best teacher.

3 Relatedly: Travel and experience new cultures. I believe in the saying "the eye must travel." We live in a global marketplace and companies are looking to expand and hire the best talent, those who infuse globalized views and merge them in local contexts and settings. The more you travel and experience the world, the better you will be at serving new inspirations and fresh takes. That is invaluable to any company or brand interested in continuing market and customer relevancy.

4 Listen, your job description is elastic. It is just the beginning of what is to come. If you want to succeed in today's workplace, you'll need to do a lot more than what you're hired to do. You need to demonstrate elasticity. Fortunately millennials welcome change and often see it as a beneficial, learning experience. Your current job may be a springboard to what you are meant to do in the long run. So always be on the lookout for new projects and collaborations with other groups and do as much training and development as possible. Go beyond your work scope and don't limit yourself.

5 Instead of trying to find your purpose, learn it. I read this in a management book once, "The only way to figure out what to do is to do — something." Millennials know that possibilities are unlimited and endless. They are ready to take on the world. Their parents told them that they can do it, and they will. But resist overthinking and don't be stuck on flexibility and experimentation. At some point, you have to take action: explore your talents, build on strengths and really just go for it. Learn your purpose and develop it. If you want to get somewhere professionally, you need to stay somewhere. Not in limbo overthinking your next move or your next job.

6 Stay interested, be interesting. Stay involved and always be open to new experiences. Participate and engage in group activities. Remember that those who stay interested, remain interesting. Make it a joy for people to work with you, and around you.

7 Find a mentor. So, you're committed to the long haul. Now, go and find your mentor. Someone who is more experienced and knowledgeable. A person who can guide you, train you, point you to the right direction. A mentor is a source of wisdom, teaching and support. Finding one is an invaluable part of career success. Ms. Tessie

Sy-Coson, vice chair of SM Investments, shared in a recent forum for Go Negosyo how she was mentored by her father, Henry Sy. "The best mentor is pressure. It's true that you can learn from everyone but the mentor I really look up to is my father."

8 Keep that balance. Never lose sight of the world around you. The thing with the older generation is that we work hard and think nothing of spending 60-hour work weeks. We can learn a thing or two from millennials who spend their lives with diverse, multiple activities. There is work and then there is a 5K run for a cause, spin class and circuit training, time with family and friends. Lunch out with colleagues, and plan for the next company event or committee. So my young ones, be our teacher. Keep championing life-work balance and encouraging a fun, employee-centered workplace. Show us the way to structure one's day while maintaining 100 percent productivity. Management will clearly appreciate and value your builds in maintaining a fun and functional corporate setting.

9 Brand yourself. How you communicate your identity and core values matter to those who work with you. It may seem superficial, but how you dress, your posture and grooming can say a lot of things about you. It is also important to note that social media presents a convergence of our personal and private lives. Your online social networks enable you to connect with people who have interests similar to yours. Your online presence can help you build your reputation. So, don't go posting unbecoming work-related rants and keep the angst in check.

10 A good reputation is the best asset. Your resume may be long and impressive and your skill set varied and multi-dimensional. You may be the best in your field but how people perceive you is equally, if not even more, important. Never forget that. What are you known for? Do your co-workers trust you? How do you make them feel? What you do is critical. And equally important: what others think you can do. Build a strong reputation and you'll always be at the top of your game.