




How Rachel Leng overcame cultural shocks and strived toward success.

Home / 2018 / November / How Rachel Leng overcame cultural shocks and strived toward success.

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 Denise Alyssa,  November 28, 2018, Female Features, 0 

RACHEL LENG

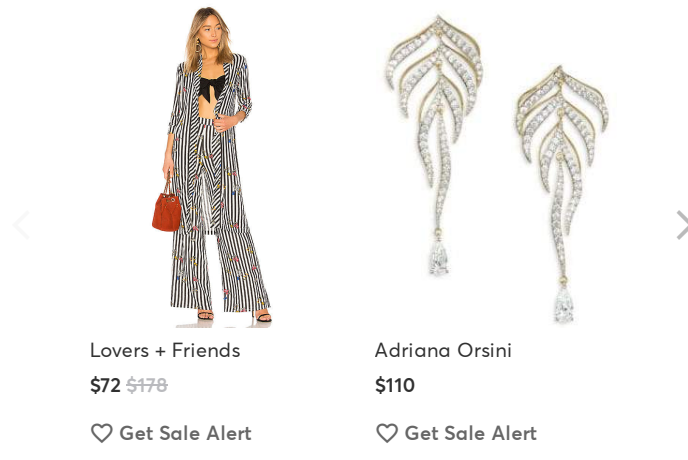
RENOWNED INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS

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Managing multiple tasks proficiently at the same time is no easy feat – but for Rachel Leng – anything is possible.

Originally from Singapore, Rachel currently works at Whiz Partners, Inc. in Tokyo, Japan as an Investment Management Associate since 2017.

Before working at this reputable company, Rachel has proved herself over and over again with numerous achievements in different aspects from multiple accolades in the previous years. In 2013, she won Miss Beauty with A Purpose and second runner-up at the Miss Singapore World as well as the Lowell Aptman Award for Excellence in Research from Duke University and received a full MA scholarship from Harvard University also in the same year.

But that doesn't stop there, Rachel is also an international speaker who held talks in various organisations and universities such as Harvard University, Duke University, Columbia University, Stanford University, University of California – Berkeley, National University of Singapore, Sophia University, and Ewha Womans University.



We recently caught up with Rachel, and she shared with us some life lessons she learned the hard way, and what makes her always on top of her game. Check out her motivational responses here.

Q: Let's talk about your current business/profession, what do you do?

A: I currently work in a Japanese private equity firm as an investment management associate focusing on the healthcare and tech sectors in Japan. Previously, I worked in a top policy think tank in Seoul, South Korea before moving to Tokyo, Japan to enter private equity.

In addition to my full-time job, I also regularly hold seminars as an international speaker, act as a freelance writer and editor, serve as an education consultant, and I am very interested in the media industry (as a presenter and also as a producer of educational shows and documentary films that feature cross-cultural and travel content with a focus on East Asia).

Q: Tell me something that's true, that almost nobody agrees with you on.

A: When faced with a situation where I feel that there could be more, I often say, "You never know until you ask." I honestly believe that the worse that could happen is for the other party to say "no" and turn you down. However, it is always a pleasant surprise how often you will get a "yes" or be proposed an alternative that is better than what you would have expected. If you ask, the universe will usually find creative ways to respond.

Q: How old were you when you had your first paying job?

A: When I was in primary school, I would find various ways to make extra pocket money to buy some of my favourite books (there were a few series that I found addicting at the time). Everything from rabbit sitting to household chores was fair game! As for more a stable and consistent job, I would say that it was when I was about 12 or 13 years old when I started tutoring younger students regularly.

Q: Given what you know today, if we took a time machine back to the beginning, what would you have done differently?

A: I would have taken even more chances with different opportunities and options. Looking back, I now recognise the truism in the saying that the only regrets are the things you didn't do, rather than the ones that you did.

When you are young, it is possible to recover from almost anything if you make a misstep along the way. I was kind of a late bloomer, and really only started to take advantage of more resources and opportunities after college. Nowadays, however, kids have access to so many adult leadership programs even during early teenage years and are exposed to a diverse knowledge base through the internet. I often wonder how I would have been different now if I had the confidence at a younger age to make even bolder decisions.



Q: What does empowerment mean to you?

A: Empowerment is the ability to make decisions that affect one's own life and happiness, and the freedom and confidence to pursue making those changes.

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Q: There are ups and downs in life, can you tell us an interesting story?

A: Living and working in a foreign country guarantees that there will be an endless number of miscommunications and incidences of things being lost in translation – some hilarious, others sometimes embarrassing or even disastrous depending on the situation.

Often, they will be quite stressful at the time – everything from figuring out how to rent an apartment or using the post office to how to conduct yourself when meeting new people socially (e.g. whether to shake hands, kiss, hug, or to bow, and how exactly to do so?) and developing your business network (e.g. the specific nuances of whether and how to exchange contact information depends very much on which country you are in and who you are meeting)!

It was certainly an adventure moving to a foreign country alone not knowing the local language or having any prior connections of the country. First, I moved on my own to Durham in North Carolina, USA to start college, then moved on my own to Seoul, South Korea for my first job in policy.

As if I had not had enough tough challenges of culture shock and adjusting to foreign environments, I decided to move again to Tokyo, Japan to find my current job in finance even though I had no real background in the industry. What I have learned along the way, is that you never truly know how much you can achieve and how well you can adapt until you try it first-hand and constantly push yourself out of your comfort zones.

Of course, there were stressful times with many low points, but because of these experiences, the highs are also so much sweeter in contrast. Moreover, there is no better way to learn so much about the world and yourself than being fully immersed in a different country and society. Let's also not forget the fact that cultural currency – including the ability to communicate and adapt cross-culturally – is gaining increasingly greater value in our globalizing world.

I guess this does not exactly qualify as an interesting story, but simply reflecting upon my own experiences, I very much recommend for anyone especially women to challenge themselves to live and work abroad for at least a year and to truly immerse themselves in that locality. The experiences to be gained can be priceless and provide invaluable insights and confidence to any individual.

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10, how weird are you?

A: Perhaps an 8? I would say I am pretty weird sometimes as my close friends and family may agree, but I also know how to behave when necessary (I think).

Q: What is one question you wish we had asked you?

A: "If there was one thing that you could change, what would it be?"

I believe that this is an important question everyone (especially an entrepreneur) should ask themselves – what is it they would like to change around them, why, and how are they going to go about affecting that change they hope to see?

Q: If you could only choose one song to play every time you walked into a room for the rest of your life, what would it be?

A: Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" from Titanic. This is one of my favourite songs and is such a classic! Always a good reminder to make time for love and care no matter how busy we may get in our daily schedules.



Rachel Leng proves that anything is possible if you put your mind into it. She is dedicated, full of motivation, and an empowered woman we all should look up to. She believes that immersing oneself in a different city is the best learning experience, as you get to learn about their culture and their world.

Stepping out of her comfort zone makes Rachel the multi-talented woman that she is today. She took those low moments of her life as a challenge that makes her stronger as time passes by.

Rachel Leng is definitely a woman of substance and there's more to be expected in her in the following year.

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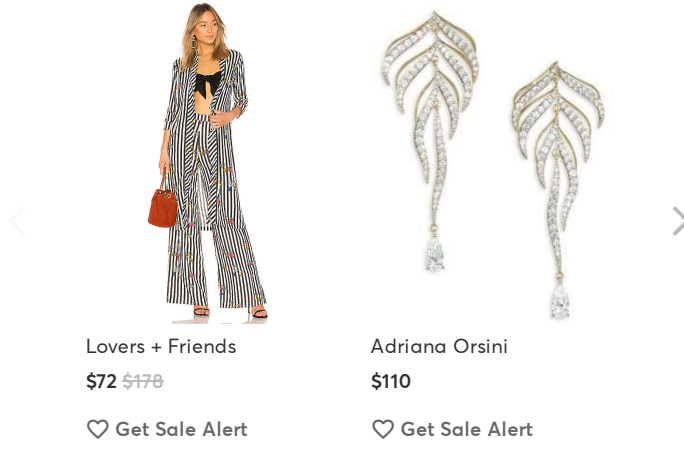
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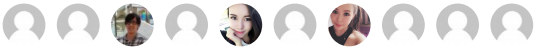
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