AIAP® Batch #4 Graduation Speech – Michelle Loke

Good afternoon everyone, it's so nice to see you all again. As enjoyable as it is to work from home, and not battle to get onto the bus with NUS and Poly students, I have really missed the camaraderie and interactions in the office.

It seems like just yesterday that we had hot pot together and celebrated the end of the training phase of the AIAP. The gruelling learning period was over and I recall we were all so excited and were looking forward to work on our 100E and Makerspace projects.

Indeed, this apprenticeship programme has been an enriching experience. Learning starting from the very first day. Coming into the programme, I had limited experience with coding and am grateful to all of you, my fellow apprentices for all the support during the first couple of months. My neighbour back then, Yikang was ever so patient, guiding me through the basics of software engineering. I remember in Week 1, he explained to me how git worked and even drew out the workflow. The drawing was so good and clear that I felt compelled to show it off to some of the other apprentices!

The industry projects provide a platform to implement the theory we learnt into a real-world situation. So often when we learn something new, there are minimal opportunities to apply the theory. Yet we were given this valuable chance to do so. Thank you to the leadership and team at AISG as I know considerable effort was put into sourcing and scoping projects for us apprentices to undertake. I am very appreciative.

Yes, the 100E experience has been invaluable. The whole process of developing an AI solution, from data cleaning, model training and deployment was a first for me. The support, guidance and encouragement that I received along the way from my mentor, Ryzal, was invaluable. Besides developing technical expertise, the experience also honed people and communication skills. We had constant and meaningful interactions with the project sponsor and learning from the Project Managers – Anand and Kim Hock – on how to manage expectations.

I have learnt so much during my time here and I'm sure all of you have too. Our mentors – Ryzal, Daniel, Azmi, Gary, Raimi and Sidney – have been instrumental in guiding us through this AI journey. Even after the first two month, they continued to check up on us and provide little nuggets of wisdom. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for joining us on this journey and ensuring we came out on-top and in-tact.

To my fellow apprentices, I really had fun and enjoyed our time together. We are quite a diverse group of individuals – from fresh grads to mid-career professionals, with backgrounds in physics, government, finance, engineering and computing. There is something to learn from everyone. Yikang taught us the necessity of clean code, Edmund showed us how to behave in a working environment, Arvin equipped us with guitar playing skills to enjoy life, Cheng Zhe reminded us to chill and Mark and Lee Ping demonstrated that a walk is the best way to clear the mind. Working in such close proximity to each

other – before Covid, of course – facilitated our bonding as a batch and I value the friendships that I have formed with each and every one of you through this experience.

This Covid crisis was unprecedented and some could say cast a shadow on our apprenticeship as it disrupted our learning and reduced our interactions. However, this pandemic is also accelerating the digital revolution. It is illustrating the importance of embracing technological disruptions, of being resilient and the need to constantly adapt to change. The creative thinking and AI skills that we have learnt on this journey have more than prepared us for this new normal.

These past 9 months has been an amazing experience. I've met so many gifted, talented and awesome individuals and made friendships I will always treasure. The supportive and nurturing environment cultivated at AISG has made this experience so worthwhile and enjoyable. It was an honour to be in this batch and to be part of this programme. As happy and relieved as I am to finally graduate, I will really miss this.

Thank You.

AIAP® Batch #4 Graduation Speech – Sun Yikang

Good afternoon everyone! This is Sun Yikang from AI Apprenticeship Programme Batch #4. It is my honour to give a speech during this graduation. I am going to talk about just 1 question - A question that is frequently being asked, "Have you updated your temperature?" Sorry, I am kidding.

The real question is: How was your experience in AIAP?

Did you regret it or did you enjoy it? Do you feel it is helpful for your career? Before I share with you what I feel, let me tell you 4 stories from my friends who would like to transit into the AI industry.

- NC, a backend engineer from company N, applied for an internal transfer to US Santa Monica AI lab, but got rejected because he did not study AI or had AI-related work experience

- MX, a senior software engineer from company N, chose to pursue an Udemy AI course part time. He gave up after 3 months and told me, "It is just too hard to balance work, life and studies!"

- XP, my ex-mentor and a Software Architect in company A, also chose the same Udemy AI course. He managed to finish it within 6 months but he gave up after going for an AI interview. He told me "You stand no chance when you have to compete with someone who has 3 years research experience in AI."

- BM, my ex-manager, applied for a part-time computer science master degree in Georgia Institute of Technology University, focused on AI. He completed it in 3 years and managed to get the master's degree. After that, he started an AI business, then joined a company in Hong Kong as a Senior Business Analytics Manager.

These are all the 4 stories. 4 cases but only 1 successful case. A 25% success rate.

One year ago I asked myself - Would you like to spend 3 years to get another master degree while working as a R&D director which was already very pressuring? I felt that it would be hard to manage this. Or would you like to quit the job and pursue a full time master's degree for a year? I also felt that this option was not viable as I will have no income to support my 2 children and 4 parents.

At that time, I nearly gave up until my wife told me one day "Hey, I found a programme that can pay you a stipend when you study". And I replied, "Is it full-time?", "Yes, 9 months full-time".   After confirming it was not a scam as it felt too good to be true, I immediately applied for it. Since I knew this was my only chance at that time to step into the AI industry.

During the 9 months programme, I found that AIAP provided me more than just the stipend. It provided:

1) well-prepared programme structure
2) professional mentors
3) proactive classmates
4) self-driving spirit
5) knowledge sharing atmosphere
6) meaningful projects
7) global AI committee platform
8) career enhancement advice

All of these combined created a huge advantage to help me with the transition. In fact when I last checked, almost all the apprentices found AI related jobs after AIAP.

AIAP saved me at least 2 years to transit myself into the AI industry, and made the journey very smooth for me and my family. Now I can tell you exactly what I feel about AIAP -- I feel very fortunate and really appreciate this programme.

I would like to take this chance to thank Laurence and all the staff in AI Singapore. Thank you for creating this programme for us.

Personally, I would like to specially thank my mentor, Daniel, who gave me many wise career advices and wrote a recommendation letter to my future CEO. Thank you Linus, who taught me how to write a resume with CAR theory. Thank you my mentor JJ, my team members Edmund and Yong Sheng, my assignment team members Kenneth and Wai Marn, and my neighbours Jian Ming and Michelle. I am extremely happy to have worked together with you on the project and assignment. And also many thanks to all mentors and apprentices. I have learnt a lot from you and also enjoyed my time around you guys.

You are all the best!   Thank you very much!