

2012 Young Horticulturist of the Year winning speech

Daniel Chong¹



Daniel Chong identifying pest and disease samples during the oral and practical challenge.

At the grand final dinner on 15 November 2012 all six competitors gave a three-minute speech to a 200-strong audience consisting of the competition judges, sponsors, employers, industry peers, family and friends.

The topic for the speech was: *Successful and dynamic horticultural businesses and industry organisations require strong leadership to equip the horticultural industry into and beyond 2020. Discuss the attributes and skills our future leaders in your industry need to have to meet the challenges and aspirations to fulfil a sustainable and vibrant horticultural industry.*

Daniel Chong, representing the Nursery and Garden Industry New Zealand, was awarded the Fruitfed Supplies Best Overall Speech Award. Daniel is production nursery foreman for Rainbow Trees Ltd, Auckland.

Here we publish Daniel's award winning speech:

"There has been a perception in the past that a career in horticulture or agriculture was a suitable vocation for only those who lacked ambition. This erroneous perception is perhaps one of the world's great misunderstandings.

Today the value of New Zealand's horticulture exports is close to \$3.5 billion. Successful and dynamic horticultural businesses and industry organisations operating in this sector require strong and capable leadership, to equip our horticultural industry and to take it into and beyond 2020.

So what are the qualities required by our future leaders to meet challenges that will present themselves in the horticulture industry of today and into the future?

First: Passionate curiosity

You need to be looking over the horizon for new things. Things that may pose threats. Things that may provide opportunities and that may be game-changers.

Be fearless! Step out of your own comfort zone, explore the unfamiliar. Be prepared to push ahead and operate in new ground. In one sense, it's about being on page 6 when everybody else is still reading page 5.

Second: Battle hardened confidence

You have got to be bold. Focus on what you believe is right and good for the industry. You need to accept that you will not always get it right, but you must not be afraid to try, and try again a different way. Not everybody will agree with you. However, it's not about being afraid of what you can't do, it's about going out and showing

what you can do and what you can bring that is important.

Third: Teamwork

You need to be able to work with people, and get people to work with you.

Team members have to be given opportunities to succeed. You need to value education, experience and quality, while understanding that not everyone that comes along will be suited to your task. And be mindful that a group of people working together is not the same as a team.

Finally: Simplicity

Keep it simple. It is an old adage but it still works. Have a simple mindset. Always look for the simplest way of doing things. Break things down into fundamental principals, and then remove non-essential steps.

Our leaders of tomorrow will need to come prepared with both knowledge and technical skills, along with business skills that will need to meet the challenge of producing a perishable living product. That is what makes a successful horticulture business unique to any other business.

Passionate curiosity, educational intelligence, teamwork and fearlessness are all attributes leaders of the future will need to bring to the fore.

However, your vision and passion will not always find favour with everyone, the best you can hope for is respect.

But in the words of Winston Churchill: "You have enemies? Good... That means you've stood up for something, sometime in your life."

That is what a leader does every day.

Good night ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for your attention."

¹ Rainbow Park Nurseries, PO Box 415, Drury, Papakura 2247, Auckland, New Zealand.