A Successful Career in the Garment Business

Students' Guide

By Till Freyer

55 years in Asia’s Export Orientated Garment Industry

Bogor / Indonesia; January 2017
This lecture aims to ..... 

- ..... develop students’ ambitions;

- ..... motivate to study hard;

- ..... encourage to aim for the top in their career 

and

- ..... become proud of their achievements.

The lines on the right of the following pages shall serve:

- ....... Students to make notes and do home work;
# Lecture’s Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module Name:</th>
<th>Export Marketing</th>
<th>Code: IGTEM - 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subject Name:</td>
<td>“An Introduction to a successful Career in the Garment Business”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommended Duration</td>
<td>2 to 3 lectures of 90 minutes each. Do not rush the lectures and get students actively involved.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Background of Lecture</td>
<td>This lecture and all others are based on the work experience of Till Freyer who arrived in Hong Kong from Germany in 1959 and now lives in Indonesia since 1991. He spent all his life in the export oriented garment industry. This lecture shall show that everyone has the chance to reach the top and even run his or her own business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distribution of lecture materials to students:</td>
<td>It is recommended to distribute the Students’ Guide about 10 days prior to handling this subject. Encourage students to study minimum 10 screens in advance to enable them to actively participate in the lecture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Lecture:</td>
<td>To be delivered in English subject to workable verbal &amp; written language skills of the students. Failing this, these Guidelines to be translated into the native language in the space as provided.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Subjects per Screen: | Screens 1 to 2 - Everyone has the same chance  
Screen 3 - We are surrounded by 3 zones  
Screen 4 - The History of the Garment Industry  
Screen 5 - Students’ Assignment (to be done prior to the lecture)  
Screen 6 to 7 - Office Etiquette, Telephone & Communication Skills  
Screen 8 - Professional Education & Practical Work Experience  
Screen 9 - Example of Excellent Marketing  
Screen 10 - Know your Markets  
Screen 11 - Watch your Markets  
Screen 12 - Closely follow your Buyers’ Marketing  
Screen 13 – Fabric & Garment Showroom Management  
Screen 14 - Basic knowledge to achieve success  
Screen 15 – Know your Products - Accessories  
Screen 16 - Know your Products - Fabrics  
Screen 17 - Know your Products – Jeans / Blouses / Shirts  
Screens 18 to 19 = Newsletter & Professional Offers  
Screen 20 - Product Knowledge  
Screens 21 to 22 – The chance of being an Entrepreneur – small task | |
| Teaching Schedule | The subject shall be delivered at the start of a course about Garment Export Marketing & Merchandising or as a stand-alone presentation. | |
| Resources: | Power point projector, screen, computer, pointer if available. Print / distribute the students’ guide prior to the first lecture, | |
| Recommendation | The lecturer to preferably have practical experience in the garment business. | |
| Notes (points) for Home Work & Tests | 00-10 totally failed  
11-19 failed  
20-39 poor  
40-59 sufficient  
60-74 satisfactory  
75-84 good  
85-94 very good  
95-100 excellent  
The same applies to all other lectures as provided by Till Freyer. |
**Screens 1 + 2**

**My Career in the Garment Business**

We all have the same chance ..........

This lecture is meant to develop the students' awareness of the career possibilities which textile, garment and accessory industries offer to each and every one interested in this business. It shall awaken the young people's ambition to strive for the top, climb the career ladder and finally reach the peak of their working life.

All lectures are based on Till Freyer's professional experience over 40 years of practical work in the export oriented garment industry. This shall make it easier for students to understand:

- that it takes years to obtain a top position in the industry;
- that no one is simply handed a promotion unless he or she worked hard and earned it;
- that one needs to have acquired skills and be determined to make progress;

Students shall not simply listen to the lecture but get actively involved by:

- asking questions;
- discussing the many important points as contained in the following screens;
- contributing their own ideas on what a person can do to advance his or her career.

Every single person has the chance to reach the top, a few only get there. Make sure that you are one of them. I did. Your success and career depends exclusively on you and nobody else.

Hard work and concentrating on learning what IGTEM Lectures offer make you fit for early promotion in your career. A little bit of luck will help but are not absolutely essential to make progress.

Skills, knowledge, work qualifications and English, besides others, are looked for by the management to promote some of their staff.
Screen 3

We are surrounded by 3 zones

They stay with every one of us for as long as we live. Nobody can ever manage to stay in the Home Zone for his or her entire life.

A person would not make progress if always staying in the Comfort Zone. Learning is the result of becoming familiar with the “unknown”. This means entering and staying in the Risk Zone for the time needed to add the ‘unfamiliar’ to your range of knowledge and transferring you back into the Home Zone.

The learning process constantly expands your Home Zone which is small at the time of your birth but constantly expands as you “become familiar with the unfamiliar” as you grow up. Life is a constant change between the Home Zone and Risk Zone and back into the Home Zone as progress is made.

It would be great if we could avoid the Panic Zone our entire life but this will be impossible. We might be thrown into the Panic Zone by happenings such as:

- natural disasters;
- serious accidents;
- bankruptcy of your employer or your own;
- national or global financial or economic crisis;
- political upheavals and rioting;

Such happenings are largely beyond our control and unforeseen. It mostly depends on each individual to quickly overcome such situations, to learn from them and get back into the Home Zone via the Risk Zone as quickly as possible.

Being constantly aware of the 3 Zones helps to overcome difficult situations and to make progress in life. Never panic, never fear what might happen next, always stay calm and carefully consider your next step. Following this advise is good for you AND for those around you.
The History of the Garment Industry

Lecture Ref. IGTEM-2 (30 screens & 28 Students’ Guide)

Many believe that you always have to look forward and that the past can be ignored. This is not so. The past and the future belong together.

The sewing machine was invented about 200 years ago. This was the beginning of the industrial revolution and bulk production in garment factories. However, the time until 1945, the end of the second World War, is relatively unimportant today for becoming a skilful Export Marketing & Merchandising Staff. The industry underwent drastic changes once peace was restored and this development has not stopped until today.

You will only understand the future PROVIDED you are familiar with the industry’s development of the past 60 years.

- The USA & Europe had strong textile, garment & sub-industries in the 1950’s. They started to import from Japan for price reasons.
- Such industries were set up in Hong Kong in the late 1950’s becoming the world’s sewing centre. Factories in North America & Europe became importers, HK production costs went up and the industry moved to Taiwan, South Korea & China as a result.
- Export quota restrictions tried to save the industry in the USA & Europe but failed to do so.
- Textile & garment factories spread all over Asia and were also set up in Latin America.
- Production has started in some African countries because of low labour costs.

Learn all about the above. Your buyers will bargain prices with you using arguments about Bangladesh and Africa. Lecture IGTEM-2 give you the needed arguments.
“Adventure” was in my blood

Certain characteristics are in our genes, they are passed to us by our parents and even grandparents. We become aware of them as our learning process develops.

My grandfather’s and father’s wish to see the world was passed to me and played an important role in my life from my early years. It became very much part of my development from my early activities onwards after completion of my formal education. I had no fear to enter and possibly live in the Risk Zone for some time. I fully realize today that this greatly contributed to the success of my professional career. You can enjoy your working life as much as I did.

**Students’ Assignment**

Write an A4 size summery in letter size 10, using a computer, and send it to your lecturer within the next 3 days.

- Remember to show your name, course, date.
- Write in English if possible.
- Describe your life in the Comfort / Home Zone – experiences in the Risk Zone – your moments in the Panic Zone
- Targets and ideas of your future professional life

Avoid long sentences, no meaningless statements, do not exceed one page, give the summery an easy-to-read structure.

You, the students, are encouraged to think about your future plans and career well before you graduate. It can give you a target which you aim for and follow and make it easier to concentrate on your learning. You will for sure fine tune your ideas the more you know about the garment industry and business. I wish you success.

Remember – it is important to concentrate on your studies and your goal. Don’t get distracted from what you want to achieve.
Acquire Office Etiquette, Telephone & Communication Skills

An office, irrespective of whether in a factory or trading/buying office, shall impress buyers based on:

- A modern appearance;
- A well organized and clean look;
- A work force which concentrates on their tasks and does not get distracted by visitors;
- An appearance of the staff reflecting the “fashion of the time”.

The environment is entirely different from the home of staff and different rules apply.

It describes how visitors should be handled from the moment they enter the lobby and approach the receptionist. A visitor forms an opinion about a company the moment he/she enters through the front door. Collecting impressions continues throughout the time whilst in the office and talking to staff. The correct handling of visitors is of utmost importance.

The telephone including SKYPE are highly effective marketing tools. Effective English communication maintains good buyers relations and can even get new buyers. Lecture IGTEM-4 shows what to avoid and what to observe.

The Students’ Guide contains a number of tasks to establish whether students have understood the details of the lecture.

Garment marketing and production is a complicated business. The products change constantly because of “fashion”. This makes it so much more important to think clearly and differentiate between “important” and “unimportant” points especially whilst:

- talking to someone (buyer) in person or by phone;
- writing an e.mail. letter, memo etc.

The lecture deals with extensive details.
Screen 8
Professional Education & Practical Work Experience

Germany has one of the best “Dual Education System” for learning a profession of any country in the world. You decide before the end of your school years what you prefer to do in your working life, I wanted to go into international business. This meant a commitment at a nominal salary:

- in an export company as an apprentice.
- to join an Institute, specialized on international business, attending classes twice a week at the same time;
- and to undergo extensive examinations after 2 ½ years to be a certified export merchant.

Such an apprenticeship gives young people solid basic practical qualifications combined with theory. It gave the writer of this training material the chance to go to Hong Kong from Germany at the age of 23 and:

- to be given the assignment to build up an export business as part of an old established English trading company;
- to become one of the largest Hong Kong exporters of garments to Germany;
- and to be commonly called “The King of Shirts” after successfully handling an order of 1.200.000 shirts.

The professional education of people in major export markets – USA, Europe, Japan – is of a high standard. These are the persons, buyers, designers, technicians, whom you will be dealing with in future. You need to do your utmost to match their work qualifications and general knowledge to be accepted as an even partner.

This can be achieved by closely following the IGTEM training material, to constantly improve your English language and communication skills and general knowledge.
Example of Excellent Marketing
Lecture IGTEM-5

This lecture is based on actual experience of repeated visits to a large factory in South Vietnam, manufacturers of Touch Fastener – Elastic – Webbing – Shoe Lace Reflective Material – TPU Logos. They make every visitor feel HIGHLY WELCOME resulting in the wish to work with them.

This lecture aims at…..

….. developing students’ awareness of customer care and promotion at no cost;

….. demonstrating to students how little work is needed at practically zero cost to be ready at a moment’s notice to receive visitors;

….. making it clear to students that promotion and advertising does not have to be expensive;

….. remind students that a well organised office and production floor install confidence in buyers.

In addition to the Students’ Guide, an extra attachment “Teacher’s Guidelines” shall inspire to make the lessons interesting and lively and to encourage students to actively participate in the learning process.

The 29 presentation screens and supporting guides show in details how Excellent Marketing is possible without significant expenses. Buyers and their designer teams need “inspirations” and ongoing information about new product developments of their existing suppliers and in their supply sources in general. The factory in Vietnam is providing this service on a regular basis, making themselves to desirable suppliers to work with. Such support is much appreciated by buyers who, as a result, will not easily switch their business to other parties unless the quality of bulk deliveries does not match their outstanding customer service.

Quality deliveries are self-understood today. Today’s consumers’ expectations will not tolerate sub-standard goods.
Know your Markets
Ref. IGTEM-6

A successful supplier will need to know his markets, his buyers’ position in the retail business, the spending power of the targeted consumers and what they will purchase and wear at the respective times of the year.

Knowing your buyers and his and thereby your retail markets allows you to fully concentrate on what consumers are looking for and wear. It makes you a qualified partner for your buyers.

- Your offers, whether fabrics, accessories or garments, have a good chance to be bought by your buyers.
- You reduce your costs by concentrating on what the market is looking for instead of paying for samples and freight charges of items which are of no interest to your customers.
- Closely following market developments and consumer preferences makes it possible for you to streamline your production range which has a positive impact on your overall expenses and productivity.

A factory’s specialization cannot and must not be too narrow. The fashion business requires a certain degree of flexibility without producing an excessive range of garments within the same factory. To concentrate increases an overseas buyer’s interest in your company.

- A sensible specialization helps to keep production costs within competitive limits.
- You will be able to get slightly higher prices for your products compared to a competitor who offers all kinds of garments.

Screens 28 to 38 show what product groups your customer might be concentrating on. Establish such facts especially whilst first meeting a potential new buyer.
**Screen 11**

**Watch your Markets**

**Ref. IGTEM – 7**

Retail markets change because of changing consumer preferences of where/what to buy.

Social insecurity and a general rise in living expenses influence people’s readiness to spend money on garments – examples:

- job security resp. fear to become unemployed;
- higher taxes;
- increased energy costs such as petrol prices for cars or heating oil.

The above seriously affected retail sales during the past 10 years – see screen 3.

As a direct result, consumers’ shopping shifted to lower priced outlets causing serious declines in turnover for small family owned shops and traditional Dept. Stores. Many bankruptcies were the result.

Consumers developed a taste and preference for “adventure and entertainment shopping” for the entire family. Many traditional outlets could not offer such an atmosphere and lost customers, some even had to close down.

Modern shopping malls created such an atmosphere of “adventure”. International vertical brands occupied the shop space in these centers and thereby benefited from this trend which attracted buyers.

Global trading made countries world-wide dependent upon each other. The financial crisis in the USA as started in 2008 affected economies all over the world including retail sales and therefore exports. You in the business of producing and exporting garments must keep informed about such developments at all times and adjust your marketing concept accordingly.

Adjustments of marketing strategies should be developed in cooperation with your major buyers.
Closely follow your Buyers’ Marketing

Ref. IGTEM – 8

A successful brand depends on quality suppliers. Very few European and American brand names still produce their products in their home country. They work with independent manufacturers and totally rely on a reliable performance of their suppliers.

The brand names = your buyers are nevertheless considered as “manufacturers” by their retail customers, shops, and consumers and are expected to give an all-round service and support.

This requires a very close, partnership-like cooperation between the actual manufacturers and buyers. The business will suffer if such preconditions do not exist.

Today’s competition world-wide is very severe. The many brand names all fight for a growing market share whilst retail sales in most countries stagnate or even decline.

Most buyers are active today on international markets and are not restricted to domestic sales. Coordinating international marketing concepts, logistics, promotion campaigns and advertising are expensive and work intensive.

Suppliers do not usually share the financial burden of brand awareness programs but carry the responsibility for delivering products in line with promises as given to retail buyers and end consumers.

Everyone in the supplier’s organisation, especially Marketing, Merchandising, Production and Quality Assurance Staff need to be aware of such buyers’ efforts as outlined in this lecture.

Joint efforts of buyers and suppliers are an absolute precondition to be successful in today’s business. Knowing each other’s business concepts, work procedures and product philosophy are essential. Closely follow market developments.

Your buyer makes promises to the consumer and you need to deliver quality goods.
### Screen 13

**Fabric & Garment Showroom Management**

Ref. IGTEM - 9

Every manufacturer, exporter and buying agency, in fact every company, has two major targets:

1/ To build up and enlarge the customer base and achieve yearly sales increases;

2/ To satisfy its customers long term.

This requires extensive and modern working facilities and staff's expertise. IGTM courses cover corresponding subjects to install these qualifications in the work force.

Showroom Management is an important subject which newcomers to the industry and existing staff need to carefully study. It is closely connected with a great number of other lectures which, once fully absorbed, result in the necessary skills to successfully:

- receive and handle visiting buyers;
- enlarge the customer base;
- introduce the product range;
- give qualified answers to questions,
- conclude new orders whilst personally meeting customers;
- support your clients’ product development;
- demonstrate your understanding of market developments and fashion.

It requires extensive skills to make utmost use of a showroom such as:

- all round English communication;
- Computer knowledge;
- Organisation skills;
- Talent to deal with people;
- Product knowledge

A functional showroom can be a cost saving factor. It reduces the need to make overseas visits and increases buyers’ wishes to frequently visit you.
Basic knowledge to achieve success

The previous 14 pages introduce some of the basic skills as needed to satisfy your customers’ expectations. Practicing them when-ever possible helps to improve the quality of your work leading to a satisfactory career. They however cover general subjects only and do not yet include Product Knowledge.

Most buyers, especially those of large companies, are specialists in certain product groups such as, for example, woven shirts or circular knits (T- / Polo Shirts) or flat knits (Pullovers). Your expertise shall finally be on the same level as those of the people you are dealing with.

Today’s introduction contains three subjects which are part of the specific knowledge of Export Marketing & Merchandising Staff. They show the wide ranging qualifications of an effective and success orientated person – just to mention three:

1/ **Accessories:**
   They are items partly costing pennies or cents only. If, however, one such accessory only is of poor quality, it can spoil the entire garment resulting in a massive loss. Once working, a person shall acquire practical knowledge about the many types of accessories to avoid risks in future.

2/ **Fabrics:**
   The range of qualities is very wide, new developments are added all the time. A close working relationship with fabric suppliers is important to keep up-to-date and your customers informed all the time.

3/ **Ready made Garments:**
   Learn as much as possible about the entire product range whilst studying – wovens, circular knits and flat knits. This allows you to choose your first work place based on your personal preference. You will – most likely – become a specialist within your first about 3 years of being employed. The subjects as listed on screen 14 are only some of those which you should study.
**Screen 15**
**Know your Products – Accessories**
**IGTEM - 10**

Accessories are both functional and decorative. A small percentage of a garment's FOB export price represents their value, pay utmost importance to:

- Building up reliable supply sources;
- Make sure of their acceptable quality;
- Trust on confirmed delivery dates;

The cooperation between accessory suppliers and garment producers needs to be “partnership-like”. You will require reliable information for the correct choice of accessories depending on the type of garment and fabric used. However, carry out quality tests to avoid later claims.

The range of accessories is very large to choose from. Each such product group includes a big variety and many items. New articles are developed all the time. Your customers expect to be supplied with such new samples. They are important to give future collections a new look.

Visiting designers and buyers are very happy to find such a comprehensive collection in the sample room. The most effective display is in glass vases. The quantity per item shall be such that you can give samples to visitors if asked. Prices for ALL ITEMS on display must be instantly available.

Different types of fabrics, woven or knitted, have different characteristics in respect of “wear & tear”. Accessories need to match and react to changes such as getting wet (outdoor garments), during washing or dry clean, during ironing etc.

Test all accessories by producing ADVANCE SAMPLES, make washing tests and make sure that no quality problems can arise. Lecturers to carefully read the “Teacher’s Guide” (14 pages) – distribution to students is optional. Small low cost faulty accessories can result in big claims/losses,
Screen 16
Know your Products - Fabrics
Ref. IGTEM – 11

This lecture shall develop students’ awareness of the importance of “Knowing their Products – Fabrics”:

- To enhance the quality of their products;
- To establish effective working relationships with fabric suppliers;
- To avoid the risk of claims by using tested and approved bulk deliveries of fabrics.

REMEMBER – you are or plan to be in the apparel business exporting ready made garments. Fabrics are roughly 50% of the cost of your product. You need to have sufficient knowledge to:

- Choose the right supply sources;
- Test the quality before cutting it;
- Compare the care label instructions with the handling of the material especially regarding:
  - Shrinkage;
  - Color fastness;
  - Breaking strength;
  - Color fastness to sunlight.

Equipment and machinery for the production of fabrics starting with spinning to a finished fabric is high-tech, expensive and requires a high degree of technical expertise. You do not have to be an expert in this field. You only need to know enough for discussions with fabric suppliers and your buyers to understand:

- What your customers wants;
- What your supplier has to provide you with.

You have to make sure that you will not take any risks. Your supplier will not accept any claims once the material has been cut except for so called “hidden faults” which cannot be discovered before starting the production. “Hidden faults” will be explained in this lecture later on.
**Screen 17**  
**Know your Products – Jeans, Blouses & Shirts**  
*Ref. IGTEM – 12*

This lecture shall develop students’ awareness of the importance of knowing their Products – Woven Garments. Jeans / Pants – Blouses – Shirts

- To enhance the quality of their products;
- To establish effective working relationships with buyers and the production;
- To avoid the risk of claims by avoiding misunderstandings because of a lack of knowledge / understanding.

Most of you studying this teaching material will be working with an export orientated organization such as:

- **A garment factory** meaning that you will concentrate on one of the main three types of garments and selected product groups – this means that you will soon become a specialist.

- **An buying office** which is likely sourcing all kinds of garments for their collection – this means that you might be handling more than one or even two product ranges.

- **A buying agency** offering sourcing services for a wide range of products – you are less likely to become a specialist.

It is advisable to have broad based knowledge at the start of your career. Try to develop a feeling for your preferred products and become a specialist over the first few years of work in the industry.

It is recommended to collect a few garment samples prior to the first lecture of this subject. The Students’ Guide contains a number of tasks and samples will be helpful to handle them.
Once graduated, please advise the student's name and e.mail address to our con-tact graduate@tillfreyer.com and we add you to our mailing list of the IGTEM NEWS LETTER, you will receive them free of charge. We are interested to hear how you are doing in your work after having completed studying our training material.

Our news letter will contain information about the below and other topics:

- the job market;
- developments in the garment industry;
- growing competition from new supply Sources.

Success breeds success. You doing an excellent job and your qualifications being talked about, you will receive tempting offers from third parties asking you to join them. Don’t jump onto such opportunities but carefully think about making a change.

Do not rush to write a letter of resignation. A fair exchange of ideas has always important to me and still is today. I discussed such an opportunity with the Managing Director of the company which I joined in 1959 in Hong Kong. He was not surprised. He even encouraged me to make use of this chance which I did.

It needs the thinking of a real gentleman to give a leaving manager a farewell party knowing that it meant the loss of the company’s biggest. He even invited manufacturers / suppliers to a Farewell Cocktail Party to demonstrate that we parted in friendship. This highly pleasant event stays in my memory till today. It further enhanced my reputation among factory operators in Hong Kong.

Being fair and frank with all, in business as well as in private life, leads to net working, often spread all over the world. Everyone can do it.
**Screen 20**

**Product knowledge**

Make sure that you have comprehensive knowledge of the products which you handle. Computers make it easy to record every item which you work with. Some buyers, not all, are very familiar with the products which they purchase and expect you to know all about the articles which you offer. They want to work with experts:

- whose skills allow them to support a customer in every respect,
- whom they can totally rely on.

You are expected to know at all times about the status of orders irrespective of samples or bulk bookings. You commit yourself to specific delivery dates which you need to adhere to. Buyers will frequently call you to be assured of punctual deliveries. Shipment delays are not tolerated in this competitive business and may have serious consequences if they occur. Computers allow you to instantly retrieve information even whilst you are on the phone and give immediate replies.

Being up to date with developments in the production and able to instantly reply buyers’ queries is what is expected. The result is a growing order volume. Customer satisfaction is achieved if it includes that:

- you are know well what is going on in your business;
- a comprehensive and supportive service is given to your customers;
- you follow market developments both on the suppliers’ and buyers’ sides.

This may lead to a partnership-like relationship and possibly long lasting friendships which buyers and sellers can benefit from. Such knowledge is very much appreciated by your customers. They welcome you to visit them since your skills allow instant answers and offer prices whatever is discussed in THEIR office.
The chance of being an entrepreneur

I emphasize that this lecture is not meant to “glorify” my career. It shall serve as a motivator and example to demonstrate that every person has the chance of reaching the very top in his working career and can become an entrepreneur.

A friend of mine joined HSBC as a junior clerk as a young man. He retired about 40 years later as the bank’s Chairman. His success was based on his own merits and not because of his family background or connections.

You have to understand the need to study and make full use of the chances which are being offered to you. You then have a solid basis to build your career on.

What is needed, besides capital, to start your own business?

Write down additional characteristics which you consider important for an entrepreneur to have. Those as listed on the screen are not to be listed again.

___________________________________
___________________________________
___________________________________
___________________________________

We all need to have a target, you may call it a dream. Dreams can become true but this needs you to be willing to enter the Risk Zone time and again throughout your entire life in order to enlarge your Home Zone.

Think about what your targets are, talk about them and discuss them with close friends. Listening to your fellow students may motivate you and give you new ideas which you have not previously considered.

I repeat – there are chances for everyone, be courageous, take well considered risks and work hard.

I wish you success
The writer of this material may be contacted:

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