

PAPER: NEW STRAITS TIMES (1KLASSIFIEDS)

DATE: 09 JANUARY 2017

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**O**f all the things in life, planning in your career path is one of the most difficult tasks. "Where do you see yourself in the next five to ten years?" — You get asked this question a lot. Have you wondered how many times you will change careers before you settle down for that one job?

If you are like a person, you would have changed your job at least twice in your lifetime. Making these crucial transitions in your career can be attributed, to the amount of long-term thinking that you have done regarding your life, career, and how you want to spend the rest of your days.

lingers. Not only does it require hard work to become a musician, but there are also factors of luck and talent involved.

Most of my classmates from Aeronautical Engineering took different career paths. I consider myself lucky to have the easy option of making a full-time living out of my musical talents. My first pay, for instance, was RM3,500 per month, which happened to be more than a typical engineering graduate, which is RM2,500 per month.

The problem, however, remains the fact that a musician's income is fairly stagnant. When someone is in their early 20s, good looking and energetic, the demographic is different from when that same person turns 50. The income does not increase over time as you age in the industry.

on weekends. It is still selling time, however, it does make a brighter career prospect when one is working for a multinational company.

There are also a few of my classmates who chose the entrepreneurial path. These people thrived in sales, found interest in start-ups and worked a crazy load for the initial years of their business. A lot of this involved building a brand image, creating positive outreach, getting clients and making them stay.

Even though the workload is insane in the initial years, the returns begin to increase as the business matures and takes shape. They make more money and have the freedom as their businesses flourish.

Looking at myself, I am glad that I've learnt selling skills and set to be an entrepreneur. My online businesses

However, as you mature, your heroes are replaced by people who are successful in their lives — whatever profession they may be in. Also, think carefully about where you would like to be in the next 10, 20 or 30 years down

Let's take my story, for example, someone who began to make a living from music since I was 17. Working as a piano tutor helped pay my SPM examination fees, pocket money and other expenses. I began playing the piano professionally in a 5-star hotel lounge since 22.

Being a café keyboardist and vocalist was fun. As a bonus, it paid for my degree in Aeronautical Engineering and it funded my passion in making music.

However, when it came to releasing my music under a record label, the path was not as rosy as one might have anticipated. I cut two DIY CD albums, got 1,000 copies printed, yet was left with a few hundred copies.

I had fun with music, yet my problem remains that I did not think of the long term.

I questioned myself about where this path would lead after say five to 10 years, maybe 20. It is, indeed, great to chase one's dream of becoming a famous artiste. The name and fame are lucrative prospects, yet the uncertainty

The fact remains that one needs to compete with younger musicians who are willing to be paid less than you. This is due to the reason that these young people may not have a family to feed, but by the time you are 50, you do.

My classmates who decided to take the engineering path gradually climbed the corporate ladder, resulting in higher salaries. Senior engineers and managers get paid better compared with our struggling musicians. This is definitely a better long-term career.

However, like everything else, this option, too, has its downsides. The first being the fact that one has to trade five for two, i.e. working five days a week and only getting two days off

started to get traction after years of writing free content on my blog. Now, I love working only a few hours in the morning and get to enjoy my freedom for the rest of the day. This is definitely a better deal than the nine to five jobs.

### What should one be taking away from these stories?

First of all, there is no alternative to thinking long term when it comes to your career and investment options. Take a look at your heroes. Ask yourself whether you would like to end up like them? When you are young and naïve, it might sound very appealing to be a travelling musician with nothing to tie you down.

the road. Would you be happy being in that position?

The same rules apply for investment. You want to get into businesses and assets that you are sure will keep producing income, i.e. offer returns on investment in the next 5, 10 or 20 years.

To conclude, keep in mind that your priorities are going to change based on your marital status, presence of children or when you approach retirement. The most successful people think long term before they make their next big move. It is time that you employ the same tactics in your life and your investment options.

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