

Transforming leadership



Judy Feng, graduate of CityU's DBA programme.

After a long, successful career in business involving various leadership positions, including head of organisational development for the Hong Kong Jockey Club, Judy Feng decided it was time to pass on her learnings to the younger generation.

She managed to do so by enrolling in CityU's College of Business DBA, which stimulated her to pursue innovative research on female leadership, as well as transition into a brand-new career as an adjunct associate professor at Chinese University of Hong Kong.

"I chose the CityU DBA because of its reputation for academic rigour, integration of business relevance and reputation in research," Feng explained. "But one main reason

was its programme design. I'm a professional in programme design and development, and found that CityU has a very systematic research structure. Other programmes may focus on teaching content, but at CityU, they help equip us with knowledge and the capability to conduct important research."

Feng's thesis was entitled *The Four I's of Transformational Leadership and Team Performance: A Leader Gender and Transactive Memory System Perspective*. The Four I's stand for idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. She found that female leaders with behaviours of intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration

made a stronger impact on team performance via the transactive memory system than their male counterparts.

"Research shows that women generally tend to be more effective at one-on-one, individual approaches to leadership," said Feng, who works as an organisational development adviser to corporations. "I think this is because in modern times, people have more acceptance of female leaders, and there is a higher demand for feminine leadership qualities. For example, listening to subordinates' needs and more in-depth communication, especially when organisations are going through so much uncertainty and change.

"There is a need for masculine leadership styles, which are more focused on decisiveness, assertiveness and risk-taking, but we also believe feminine leadership behaviours are

required for every leader, not just women," she added.

Feng also praised her "amazing" supervisor, programme director Muammer Ozer, who she said had very high standards, but consistently gave thorough feedback to guide her through the research process.

"It was not easy – I had never done anything like the thesis project before and there were times it was quite painful, especially when I had to do rewrites and change my approach to make it better," she said. "But overall, it was the most rewarding learning experience I've ever had."

Feng's advice to potential DBA students is to find a topic they're truly passionate about, be disciplined and committed, and "stay in the driver's seat".

"You will have amazing support from your supervisor and staff, but in the end, it will all be up to you."