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Kon Leong (ZL Technologies) in “The Corner Office”

Posted on: January 19th, 2013 *by* bobmorris



Adam Bryant conducts interviews of senior-level executives that appear in his “Corner Office” column each week in the SundayBusiness section of *The New York Times*. Here are a few insights provided during an interview of **Kon Leong**, co-founder, president and chief executive of ZL Technologies, an e-mail and file archiving company. He believes that the first rule of brainstorming is: *suspend disbelief*.

To read the complete interview as well as Bryant’s interviews of other executives, please click [here](#).

Photo credit: Earl Wilson/*The New York Times*

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Bryant: Tell me about some important leadership lessons you’ve learned.

Leong: One of my early jobs was selling computer hardware. What I learned about selling was probably more valuable than my M.B.A. I had seen selling as a process just about logic. Then I realized that has nothing to do with it.

Bryant: What was the insight?

Leong: You have to present your story in *their* context, not yours. They don’t really care if you’re standing on top of a robot and quoting equations. If they’re in the deep part of the forest, you’ve got to talk the language of the deep forest. Salesmanship is more like a language unto itself. There is no right or wrong. It’s what you make of it, and what’s black can be gray, and what’s gray can be white. It depends on your framework. The challenge is to share the same framework so that you’re seeing the same page in the same way.

Bryant: How do you hire? If you were interviewing me for a job, what would you ask me?

Leong: I would want to know your goals for the job. Is it money? Learning? Fulfillment? What is it? *I would try to figure out if our environment suits your goals.* I would not try to sell you to get you to take the job. I also will ask, “How curious are you?”

* * *



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Adam Bryant, deputy national editor of *The New York Times*, oversees coverage of education issues, military affairs, law, and works with reporters in many of the *Times*’ domestic bureaus. He also conducts interviews with CEOs and other leaders for Corner Office, a weekly feature in the SundayBusiness section and on nytimes.com that he started in March 2009. In his book, *The Corner Office: Indispensable and Unexpected Lessons from CEOs on How to Lead and Succeed*, (Times Books), he analyzes the broader lessons that emerge from his interviews with more than 70 leaders. To read an excerpt, please click [here](#). To contact him, please click [here](#).


Tags: [Adam Bryant](#), [Corner Office column](#), [Kon Leong](#), [SundayBusiness section](#), [The Corner Office: Indispensable and Unexpected Lessons from CEOs on How to Lead and Succeed](#), [The New York Times](#), [Times Books](#), [ZL Technologies](#)


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
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
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