

The mark of good worker is attitude, not aptitude

ONE of my favourite movies – and I say this at the risk of reminding readers which generation I belong to – is *You've Got Mail*.

The movie released in 1998 featured Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan and is a remake of the 1940 classic, *The Shop Around the Corner*.

It's a nice romantic comedy that belongs to my most-watched DVD collection alongside *Amazing Grace*, *Chariots of Fire*, *Yes Prime Minister* and *Gandhi*.

In the movie, sparks fly when a huge bookstore chain owned by the Fox family (Hanks plays the character Joe Fox) comes to town and puts the little book shop owned by Kathleen Kelly (Ryan) out of business.

It's a typical big guy versus little guy story and we are shown how, despite its size and modern resources, the bookstore is totally devoid of the personal touch and its staff do not know anything about books.



Such a scenario was played out in the movie when a mother was looking for a book for her children and the shop assistant did not have a clue as to what the book is about.

Ryan, sitting nearby, told him the book title, the author, and where to find it.

If you have been working in a small organisation for years and finally thought you found your dream job in a bigger company, such scenarios are not uncommon.

Suddenly you realise that job specifications are so specific that it is rare to find someone who will go out of the way for a colleague.

We interact with people who, when you are trying to check on something, will tell you, quite curtly, "Not my department," or simply, "I don't know."

But there are exceptions, and it is such a joy to find a worker who is passionate and helpful.

I met one recently at an outlet of a huge book chain.

Here was a fine young man who not only helped me find a book but was practically a walking encyclopaedia of the store he worked in, and he was just an assistant, not even the manager.

I was looking for the classic book *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald for my son's literature class.

He remarked, "Oh yes, the same author who wrote *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*."

I was totally impressed that he was able to connect a novel published in 1925 to a lesser known

short story written by the same author which went on to become a hit movie in 2008.

The book was not in the store but he went to great lengths to call up the other outlets before referring me to a website where you can find practically any book you are looking for.

This young man was bristling with enthusiasm to not only give good service but to share beyond what is required of him.

At the end of the day, the mark of a good worker is really the attitude and not the aptitude.

A good attitude, backed by solid character, speaks volumes beyond the impressive CV one can put together.

● Deputy executive editor Soo Ewe Jin is reminded of one of those HR nuggets of wisdom that says: "If you truly love what you do, you never have to work a single day for the rest of your life."