The basic unit of the Chinese language is the zi (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each zi has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string zi together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about management

務
Pronunciation: wu (Putonghua, 4th tone), mo (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: activity, errand, affair


Noun 務 = 事務 (shi wu = affair-activity): 家務 (jia wu = home/house-work = household duties/chores), 商務 (shang wu = commerce-affairs = business activities), 軍務 (jun wu = army-duties). 公務員 (gong wu yuan = public-duties-members) = public servants. 政務官 (zheng wu guan = political-duties-officials) = administrative officers. 公務纏身 (gong wu chan shen = official-duties-tie-body) means always busy with duties/assignments related to one’s employment.

Some “財務公司” (cai wu gong si = money-affairs-public-bureau = so-called “financial companies”) are loan-sharks. Tramps/crooks 不務正業 (bu wu zheng ye = no-work-lawful-job = loaf around, engage in unlawful activities).

by Diana Yue