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Leaderonomics

The Science of Building Leaders

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■ In this series of The Science of Building Leaders, Valentino Lee, a faculty trainer with Leaderonomics speaks about the importance of building accountability in a team, and how ‘accountability’ is different from ‘responsibility’. Check out this podcast on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/RVGaccountabilityteamwork

■ Want to engage with Leaderonomics to learn how to improve team morale and apply the three fundamental principles of strengths-based coaching? Drop us an email at info@leaderonomics.com for more information.

■ Jeff is a former Navy SEAL who helps business teams find clarity in chaos. He is a contributor at Forbes and Entrepreneur.com, speaks at the Harry Walker Agency, and recently authored “Navigating Chaos: How To Find Certainty In Uncertain Situations.” What do you think of this article? Let us know at editor@leaderonomics.com.

By **JEFF BOSS**
editor@leaderonomics.com

I recently had the opportunity to guest speak on team coaching to an undergraduate class at a prominent university. The class was divided into five teams of four to five people. I gave a simple demonstration of what team coaching looked like by using one of the class teams as a guinea pig and then turned it back on each team in the class to practise on itself.

One member from each team would step outside his/her role as a team member and assume the role of team coach – with the intention being to coach his/her team when “issues” arose such as losing focus on the agenda, unhealthy conflict, or decision-making reluctance.

The challenge for each of the team coaches was thinking as an outsider. What happened was this: each team coach started off as an “external” coach but as soon as a topic came up within their team that directly impacted them, they forgot their role as a team coach and reverted back to their role as a team member.

CLEAR TEAM DIRECTION

Leadership teams at the top face the same challenge. They remain “objective” until the moment they don’t – until an agenda item impacts them directly. Then, they fend for themselves.

The first time I saw this was eye-opening because, in my mind, a team is a *team*, not a group of individuals sharing the same space calling themselves a team.

Yet, that’s often what happens – not just with leadership teams at the top but also with project teams, management teams, sales teams, and start-ups.

Each one of these “teams” is comprised of smart, savvy, experienced people, and the assumption is that *because* they’re smart and *because* they’re experienced, they don’t need help or direction in how to come together as a team; that they’ll figure out how to work together on their own.

But they don’t. They rarely do. Without direction, it’s hard to get anywhere.

SOLID FOUNDATION

Start with the basics. In the United States Navy’s Sea, Air and Land (SEAL) Teams, nothing we did was really *that* advanced.

Okay, maybe some things. But the majority of what we practised was fundamental.

You don’t become elite in anything without a solid foundation under you. Get the fundamentals right, and everything else will follow.

WHY TOP LEADERSHIP TEAMS STRUGGLE



GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT



The same holds true for teams. In my experience, there are four fundamentals that every team needs to establish to start off “right” – and stay “right”. They are clarity, competence, confidence and curiosity.

In this article, let’s look closer at clarity – because I can’t think of anybody who suffered from too much clarity.

Here’s how clarity breaks down and how you can find it in your team:

1 Identity

Oftentimes people assume that groups and teams are the same, but they’re not.

One of the main differences between groups and teams is that a team shares the same fate; a group does not.

Nor are teams the ideal solution for

every problem set. Whether you structure yourselves as a group or as a team depends on the task to be achieved.

Another aspect of identity is team membership. You want to clarify those who are directly on the team, those who are directly not on the team, and those who indirectly influence the team.

One common assumption I see as a team coach is equating one’s rank or title with team membership (“I’m a senior vice-president, so of course I’m a member.”)

The problem with porous membership is that it disrupts how the team works together – how they meet, communicate, and make decisions – which impacts results.

2 Purpose

I can’t think of anybody who doesn’t want a purpose in life.

Get the fundamentals right, and everything else will follow.

Purpose pulls, passion pushes. Purpose is what calls you forward *through* the chaos, *through* the uncertainty, and toward the unfathomable that you never knew you had the capacity to endure had it not been for purpose calling your name.

Teams are no different. There needs to be a compelling reason for *why* the team exists and *what* it aspires to achieve.

A purpose should be clear, challenging, consequential, and shared.

Remember what Friedrich Nietzsche said: “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.”

3 Value

On the coattails of having a clear and compelling shared purpose is understanding why pursuing that purpose is important.

Oftentimes, people don’t speak up in meetings because they don’t know how they fit in, and the conversations that would identify how they might add value haven’t occurred yet.

One of the metrics I like to use when coaching a team is a sociogram.

A sociogram maps interactions between members, which is handy when you want to measure social interactions and communications (what gets measured gets managed and what gets managed gets improved, right?).

The beauty of a sociogram is that you can use it to understand how people contribute – how they add value or why they don’t – in a team environment.

TYING IT TOGETHER

Whether you’re in a leadership, management, or project team, start with the fundamentals.

Get so good at the fundamentals that the only struggle you face is the day when you have to leave the team.

That’s teamwork.



By **ROSHAN THIRAN**

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CONFIDENCE can be a tricky subject to broach for some. You either have it or you don't, and if you don't have it, then good luck getting on in life... or so the conventional wisdom goes.

Like much of conventional wisdom, the idea that confidence is a quality afforded to the fortunate few isn't quite as solid as it might appear to be.

Yet, the blind acceptance of any idea (particularly when it comes to limiting beliefs) has the potential to make or break us.

The Scottish novelist and creator of Peter Pan, James Matthew Barrie, once wrote, "The moment you doubt whether you can fly, you cease forever to be able to do it."

WHAT'S YOUR BELIEF SYSTEM?

So much of success comes from self-belief. And it's not entirely down to believing in who you are now.

A large part of self-belief is knowing that the potential you have within you can lift you to greater heights than you've ever imagined.

Know that you have it in you to do great things and make a memorable, positive dent in the world.

Recently, I was speaking to a young entrepreneur who had just embarked on his start-up journey. He had watched a talk I had given on developing the leadership skills necessary to transform your business dreams into reality, and later asked me how I was able to project myself with confidence and ease in front of a crowd.

I immediately reminded him that I had been doing this for a long time, and here he was just starting out.

That's the first rule of entrepreneurship:

No one starts off with all the necessary tools needed to be a success. Your toolkit is cultivated over time and updated as times change and new challenges present themselves.

As any seasoned entrepreneur will tell you: You're never at the stage where you're complete – there is always another challenge on the horizon as well as new ideas and concepts to learn. That's partly what makes it so exciting. You're never done, you're always growing.

THE ART BEHIND CONFIDENCE

Nevertheless, I was pressed to offer a few pieces of advice on how to develop confidence. To me, confidence isn't a tool, it's an art form.

Think of the people you admire who seem to ooze the stuff. They make it look so easy.

And yet, when you try it yourself, you're left wondering why something that was apparently effortless suddenly seems so impossible.

Well, that's because there's nothing effortless about confidence.

It's like learning how to dribble a football (or 'soccer' in some countries). At first, it can feel uncomfortable – unnatural, even – but with enough practice, perseverance and determination, the dribble soon becomes second nature.

How does one develop the confidence to walk into a room like a veteran chief executive officer (CEO), confident in their abilities, and unlike a startled entrepreneur caught in the headlights?

4 WAYS TO BUILD CONFIDENCE – RIGHT NOW

These are four key practices I've developed for myself over the years, and

WHAT SELF-ASSURANCE MEANS

4 PRACTICAL WAYS TO BUILD YOUR CONFIDENCE



they've served me well. I hope they'll be of use to you, too.

(As a side note, I should mention that feeling confident does not mean never again feeling nervous. If you walk into a room to deliver a major pitch or present a commencement speech to students and there's no nervousness, that can be a worrying sign.)

1 Get your posture right

This means standing straight, holding your head up, moving with purpose, and making eye contact.

People who are self-assured, walk purposefully with an open posture that tells the world they're ready for anything.

Conversely, those who have hunched shoulders, a bowed head and walk slowly often come across as uncertain and apologetic.

Whoever is in the room, you have to believe that you have as much right to be there as they do. Meet and greet them with this conviction in your mind and you'll automatically open up and stand tall.

2 Talk your talk

We've been in the situation (at school, university, a network event) where one or two people naturally

become the main contributors while the others remain passive listeners.

This happens every time a teacher asks, "Any questions?" and most students remain silent, lest they screw up or ask the 'wrong' question. Don't be that person.

Without trying to overshadow everyone else, any time you have a thought you want to share or a question you want to ask, speak up.

Not only will this help to develop your speaking skills, there's also a good chance that others would have had the same thought or question in mind, but were afraid to speak up.

With this in mind, people will come to see you as a natural leader, someone who is not afraid to be out in front.

3 Present yourself well

Research suggests that people who dress for success are more likely to be successful. This doesn't mean that you have to wear the most expensive clothes.

However, donning a well-put-together outfit gives you both the look and feel of a confident person.

When you take your appearance seriously, that's exactly how other people will take you. On the other hand, if

you're always turning up to meet people in a T-shirt, shorts and flip-flops, your image is likely to give the vibe of "easy-going" rather than "ready for business".

Of course, context is paramount: don't turn up to a beach barbecue in your best suit!

4 Make gratitude a habit

Take a moment to think about what you don't have yet but would really love to own. You might experience feelings of longing, regret, despair, perhaps even hopelessness.

This is exactly why gratitude is so important when it comes to developing confidence, because it focuses your attention on appreciating what you have now.

Gratitude inspires you to walk courageously towards the next achievement, assured in the knowledge that you've been blessed with so much already.

Focusing on what you don't have, on the other hand, leads to you becoming insular, closed-off, and (literally) smaller as those hunched shoulders project a "poor me" image.

Walk tall and be thankful, and you'll attract all the right people and opportunities as a result.



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■ Self-confidence isn't something you're born with, it's something you build within yourself. In this article, Peter Economy lists five ways to increase your self-confidence: bit.ly/PEbuildconfidence

■ Whether for work or interview, these seven non-verbal cues are good to master to exude confidence in your conversations or presentations. Check out this article on Leaderonomics.com at: bit.ly/TJnonverbalconfidence

■ *Roshan Thiran is the founder and CEO of Leaderonomics – a social enterprise working to transform lives through leadership development. Connect with Roshan on Facebook and Twitter (@lepaker) for more insights into business, personal development, and leadership. Share your story on building your confidence with us at editor@leaderonomics.com.*



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By DR MARSHALL GOLDSMITH
editor@leaderonomics.com

MOST of us have difficulty articulating our struggles in a public forum, especially in the presence of our boss and peers.

This probably stems from history we may have with bosses who said things like: “Don’t come to me with a problem, come to me with a solution!”

When you think about it, this creates the opposite of the environment an effective leader wants.

If people have problems, you want to get them out on the table so you can help them find solutions.

CONSIDER EXECUTIVE COACHING

The practice of executive coaching introduced corporate culture to an exciting new idea: the end of shame when it comes to needing help.

Under the guidance of a coach, it’s okay to admit what you don’t know and ask for help.

My coaching process brings my clients’ shortcomings into the light, through a process of accumulating confidential feedback from their key stakeholders (colleagues, direct reports or board members, for example).

If that sounds terrifying, it’s because most of us have been conditioned to hide our flaws for fear of punishment,

NEED SOME HELP?

ADMIT WHAT YOU DON’T KNOW AND BE TRANSPARENT ABOUT IT

reprisal or a rival seizing a competitive advantage.

A good coach takes away that fear and uses feedback and self-analysis to guide clients toward positive and lasting behavioural change.

The process works – which is one reason I have seen the perception of coaching shift over the last three decades: Instead of a punishment, it’s now a mark of prestige to have a coach. It means you’re probably going places in your career.

LESSONS FROM ALAN MULALLY

What I find so remarkable about my friend and colleague, Alan Mulally, is that he put these ideas into practice across an entire organisation – and in an intense, high-stakes setting.

When he took over as Ford’s chief executive officer in 2006, the company was in dire straits, with market shares down 25% since 1990 and its very existence threatened by the great recession.

The story of how Mulally turned Ford around is now well-documented. The company was the only big-three automaker to emerge from the recession without a government bailout.

When Mulally retired from Ford in

2014, *Fortune* magazine ranked him as the third greatest leader in the world, behind only Pope Francis and Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel.

1 Target transparency and applaud when you get it.

One important thing that Mulally did early on was to effectively eliminate shame. He never said, “Don’t come to me with a problem!”

Up to that point, meetings at Ford were notoriously vicious. Mulally rooted out those problems through his Business Plan Review programme, which made meetings highly structured.

Executives had to introduce themselves and report on their progress according to a precise formula (and no cell phones were allowed).

In this much calmer environment, he encouraged his reports to be honest about their problems. Instead of bravado, he encouraged them to show humility and admit where they needed help.

2 Lead by example.

He did this by modelling the behaviour himself – the hallmark of a truly great leader. Mulally was not ashamed of what he didn’t know, or what he had or hadn’t done.

He simply reported on the condition of the company with an attention to

detail befitting his background as an engineer.

When he didn’t know how to fix a problem, he wasn’t afraid to ask for help.

IN CONCLUSION

It sounds simple, and it is.

But it takes tremendous courage to be so forthright – so unashamed – especially in a situation like the one he faced at Ford, on the brink of collapse at one of the nation’s biggest companies in an industry that serves as the backbone of the nation’s economy.

When the world is watching and the stakes are high, a lesser leader would have armed himself in ego. Mulally chose the other path.

This approach has the potential to do tremendous good in settings beyond Ford.

Are you implementing or could you implement it in your organisation, with your team? Could you share it with your boss? I’d love to hear what you think about this approach!

■ *Marshall Goldsmith is the author of 35 books, which have sold over two million copies and have been translated into 30 languages. Email us your thoughts on asking for help in the workplace at editor@leaderonomics.com.*

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CREATING A SERVICE CULTURE

6 MINDSETS TO BUILD CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS THAT STICK



By **JAQUIE SCAMMELL**
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WE are more connected than ever before thanks to technology. But at what cost does this hyper-fast connection come?

Our employees provide products and services to customers without ever having a face-to-face conversation.

We type questions or issues into live chat feeds on websites, Facebook Messenger and other online conduits.

It's actually our desire, our *need*, for speed and convenience that is compromising our customers' greatest and basic needs as humans: care, kindness and one-on-one attention.

MAKE IT EMOTIONAL

Other than speed, efficiency and consistency, there is a less tangible measure that we talk about and critique when we are served as customers: the emotions that we experience with an employee in the moment of service.

Consider the inherent power of a service provider in their relationship with the customer:

- An employee will make a customer feel important or will not.
- An employee will make an interaction feel personal or will not.
- An employee will be 100% attentive to the customer or will not.
- An employee will give meaning to the customer's purchase or will not.
- An employee will allow the customer to feel connected to your brand or will not.

How a customer feels when they interact with your brand relies on how your employee makes them feel, while serving them at the front line.

Yes, customers can feel a connection to your brand by watching a great video in-store or on your website, or experience your brand when they use your products; however, it is *how they are treated* that lingers long after this.

Humans have the unique capability, unlike any robot or automated solution, to provide an interpersonal interaction that creates the social bond that all of us look for when seeking connection.

The real challenge is to, therefore, embrace technology and automation without compromising emotions and customer relationships.

WIN THEIR HEARTS AND MINDS

When it comes to winning the hearts and minds of your customers, it's the *behaviours* of your frontline employees that influence your whole organisation's performance and results.

How customers *feel* when they interact with your employees determines how they *feel* about your company itself. This is what determines whether they will be a one-click wonder or a customer for life.

Procedures and steps of service may be great for robots and androids, but it's the ways in which your service staff act and the emotional connection they create with your customers that will determine your ultimate success.

Rather than look at complex customer service strategies and ways to engage your staff, you must look to the most powerful

and influential people in your business – you and your frontline employees.

ADOPT A SERVICE MINDSET

So, even if everyone in your business is already excellent at what they do, sharpening their behaviours at work will contribute to a service mindset that will give you and your organisation an extra edge.

When we are highly tuned in to the people in front of us, we start to frame questions differently, pause before we speak and even start to see things from someone else's perspective.

Small business owners and leaders who operate with a service mindset help build a service culture: a high-performing culture where customer loyalty is constantly increasing.

In fact, if we were to replace the word ‘customer’ with ‘humans’, we could say that our goal in business is to create greater loyalty with other humans.

YOUR 6 SERVICE MINDSETS

The best, simplest and easiest way of developing this successful service culture is to work on your service mindset.

This is a continuum of behaviours that impact your employees' performance, which in turn impacts your customer interactions and loyalty, creating a virtuous circle that enhances your whole business.

The six mindsets you need are:

1 Empathy – Practise empathy to create a team of employees who feel understood.

Cultivating trust in this way is essential if you have teams who are continually coaching, mentoring, teaching and caring for others.

2 Questions – Show sincere interest in your employees as humans to help them grow into their role.

Ask the right questions, and you'll start to encourage your staff to think for themselves and learn the effects of their decisions.

3 Energy – Shift the focus and energy onto supporting all employees to deliver great service. What you give attention to, grows.

4 Heart – Trust and appreciate your staff and they'll have a greater willingness to serve, which automatically increases their discretionary effort. This creates a cumulative advantage for a business.

5 Purpose – Make staff feel valued and that will motivate them further.

An engaged workforce interacts with your customers more positively and this creates customer loyalty.

6 Practice – Seek information, develop your people and helping them grow in their working roles.

Knowing that you are only as good as your last performance is key to continual growth and improvement and business longevity.

TYING IT TOGETHER

What you need to see is that human capital is just that: a capital investment in your organisation and your brand.

When we yield better actions from our employees, we will yield better results in our business.

When you do this, when you build this service mindset (instead of an automatic one), then and only then, do you start to move the needle in your business and watch your profits soar.

■ *Jaquie Scammell is a customer service relations expert. Jaquie works with teams who want to influence their staff to love serving customers. She is also the author of “Creating a Customer Service Mindset (Major Street).” What did you think of this article? Share your thoughts with us at editor@leaderonomics.com*



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■ In a game of football, who do you think are the unsung heroes? Who ensures conditions are just right for these players to be at their peak to bring glory to self and nation? Check out this thought-provoking article on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/footballheroes

■ If a picture is worth a thousand words, Albert Einstein would appear to be simply having the most joyful time on his bike. In fact, Einstein wrote that he conceptualised the theory of relativity while riding his bicycle. So, there is more in riding a bicycle that meets the eye. Read it here on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/Sabikerides

■ Justin Ooi T.Y. has 16 years of experience in corporate communications and marketing. His professional experience provides him with rich insights in public relations and brand-building through strategic engagement with stakeholders. Who are your unsung heroes, and why? Write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com – we would love to hear from you!

■ While the most part of this article was written by Justin, Lay Hsuan couldn't help but to include a short portion of her thoughts of Abe's mothers in this story. She supports the content team whenever her service is needed. To recommend some credible leadership resources for her to read (books, magazines and web-sites included), write to her at editor@leaderonomics.com.

By **JUSTIN OOI T.Y.**
and **LIM LAY HSUAN**
editor@leaderonomics.com

IT'S easy to miss the invisible engines that keep the wheels turning in the organisations where we work or the communities that we live in.

Here are the five most valuable characteristics of unsung heroes who work silently but steadily among us.

1 HUMILITY
Let's start with humility, one of the endearing but elusive traits found mostly among unsung heroes today. Everybody loves humble leaders and supportive colleagues, but in today's Twitter trigger-happy age – led by the United States (US) President Donald Trump, no less – most of us would prefer to be the star of the day (these writers included).

Humility is also probably what makes modest heroes, 'unsung' to begin with. They are not likely to post their achievements on Facebook to get the most 'Likes' possible, simply because they perceive such acts of service and standards of excellence as part of their job.

Other times, extraordinary efforts of ordinary heroes just go unnoticed because of their status or lack thereof.

Take the *lai sui mui* (Cantonese) or Kongsu Women during the Independence period of Malaysia [Malaya], for example. "The *lai sui* who?!" one may ask.

Precisely. These humble female labourers were unheralded heroes of Malaysia's nation-building process.

Armed with nothing more than their bare hands, shoulder poles and buckets, these resilient women toiled at muddy construction sites in the 1950s and 1960s to bring us iconic buildings such as the Subang Airport, the Parliament House, Stadium Negara and more.

Humble people are also willing to acknowledge their mistakes. In fact, they are glad to learn from them.

So, they continue to improve and make the organisation they work for better. Often, quietly and steadily.

Of course, there are many loud and visible leaders, who have also exercised humility when warranted.

No Malaysian can forget the video in which our Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is seen teary-eyed, explaining to a young child why he is still working at age 92 – admitting he has made mistakes in the past and acknowledging there is much to do in rebuilding this country in his final years.

There were probably many Malaysians who were moved to vote for him and the then opposition parties in the 14th General Election (GE14), which led to a sweeping change of the Government after 60 years under the previous administration.

Malaysia's GE14 was celebrated as a triumph for democracy in Asia and a bloodless coup.

Of course, there were other macro issues such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), rising cost of living and financial issues, but it's amazing how a little humility can go a long way in transforming the lives of many, if not an entire nation.

Meanwhile, true humility is hard to find because, ironically, the moment you think you are humble, you no longer are.

2 EMPATHY

We often hear that behind every great man, there is a great woman.

In the case of Abraham Lincoln (we'll call him Abe thereafter), the 16th US President, there were two – her birth mother Nancy Hanks Lincoln who passed away when Abe was nine, and her stepmother Sarah Bush Lincoln.

History has shown that these two women played crucial roles during Abe's

UNsung HEROES

WHAT MAKE THESE LEADERS TICK



developmental years.

It enabled the unassuming, self-taught gawky lawyer from Illinois to become one of the greatest presidents of the US, remembered for his extraordinary character traits – honesty, resilience, integrity and empathy.

Sarah Bush, in particular, was said to have dressed young Abe up to 'look more human' when she was brought into the family's unprivileged living conditions, according to Jeff Oppenheimer, author of *That Nation Might Live: One Afternoon with Lincoln's Stepmother*.

Under Sarah's motherly care, Abe developed a great hunger to read all the books he could get his hands on. It showed in his later years of leadership, as he communicated some of these ideals he had read before through his well-known oratory skills.

She also helped Abe develop a feminine touch as an empathetic listener. It was a 'rare' soft skill back in his day, especially as a political leader, which eventually served Abe well in his position as a president.

Working with his core team – who initially hated each other – he turned his political rivals into allies and earned their utmost respect for him as the commander-in-chief who listened to other people's point of views, before he made decision for the country.

3 COMMITTED TO A CAUSE

Unsung heroes are committed to give more than they take. They are focused on the big picture and are willing to sacrifice time and effort for the good of others, whether in the family or the organisation they work with.

Case 1: Homemakers

The first example that comes to mind are modern-day homemakers such as my wife [in reference to writer Justin Ooi's wife].

Despite holding a Master's degree in biomedicine and being an award-winning writer, she gave up her career as medical writer to focus on looking after our twins when they were born three years ago.

Her 'favourite' question is: "Are you still working? Or just looking after the kids these days?"

As a deep introvert, she would just answer affirmatively to the latter.

Though it would be interesting to see her give a no-holds-barred answer like,

"Oh, I'm not writing anymore if that's what you mean. But I'm breaking my back round the clock looking after my two boisterous twins and husband.

"I'm just the maid who wakes up at the crack of dawn every day to prepare their breakfast. Even though I was awoken several times the night before by my boy or girl while my hubby snores on blissfully.

"I'm also the chauffeur for the kids, driving them to kindergarten and clinics, and the nanny who cleans their puke, other mess.

"I'm also the teacher who taught them how to speak, sing and recite ABC and count 123. I'm their life-coach who toilet-trained them, showed them how to ask for help without screaming their heads off and say 'please', 'thank you' and other basic courtesies.

"I'm the cook who shops for groceries, plans a varied daily menu and prepares delicious, nutritious meals for my family.

"I double up as the cleaner throughout the day – sweeping, mopping, scrubbing and doing endless piles of laundry.

"Because I have spare time left in the evening, I'm also a therapist whenever my husband comes back from a stressful day at work.

"I listen and dispense subtle advice so he thinks he comes up with most of the solutions himself. Did I also mention that I handle the household finances, juggling the bills and our budget?

"But to answer your original question, no, I'm no longer working. I'm just 'a homemaker these days.'

Yup, that would be one heck of a scenario.

Case 2: Teachers and volunteers

Looking beyond a happy home, other quiet heroes we would like to highlight are teachers, and polling agents and counting agents

(PACAs) of Malaysia's electoral system.

Sure, we celebrate Teachers' Day once a year around the world.

After all, they are the women and men whom we entrust to teach our children to read and write, count, think, solve problems and groom to become overall decent human beings.

Yet, we pay them salaries that are a fraction of what pop stars and professional footballers earn in a single concert or club match.

(OK, fine. Some of those footballers are now doing their national duty that keep us entertained during this 2018 Fifa World Cup season.)

Our point is, teachers do not get rewarded nor recognised nearly enough for the nurturing that they do day-in-day-out for the workforce and leaders of the next generation.

Amidst the drama of GE14, PACAs or polling monitors were the ordinary heroes who played a big part all over the country to ensure there was no significant electoral fraud during the election.

These volunteers went beyond the call of duty as citizens – attending training on their own time.

Many of them rushed to vote on polling day, before dashing to another voting station for their monitoring duties.

Some of them worked past 10pm on polling day to tally the votes, especially in tightly contested constituencies.

From giant portraits in public squares, slogans plastered on government buildings, to his likeness on all renminbi banknotes – Mao's virtues were being extolled everywhere.

Strangely, the image of Deng Xiaoping, the man who opened China to the global market is scarcely to be found.

It was Deng's economic reforms starting in 1979 that helped lift many lives out of grinding poverty among China's massive 1.3 billion-population at the turn of the 20th century.

Deng's famous quote, "It doesn't matter whether a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice" epitomised his pragmatic approach to development in a post-Cultural Revolution era where any form of capitalism was akin to heresy.

Despite his shortcomings, he was a leader more interested in his fellow countrymen's quality of life than one trying to achieve a cult-personality status.

4 COURAGE TO DO THE RIGHT THING

Real courage is required to follow one's conviction. Unsung heroes take action, rise against status quo and make changes for the betterment of others.

At a backpacking trip in China five years ago covering Beijing, Chengde, Hangzhou, Suzhou and Shanghai, I [Justin] noted Mao Zedong's ubiquitous influence was evident throughout the country.

5 CONSISTENT EXCELLENCE AND TEAMWORK

Attention to detail and teamwork are two core traits of those who contribute behind the scenes. They work towards the team's objective and deliver quality performance every day, whether for major projects and minor tasks.

"It is the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen," said legendary basketball coach John Wooden.

This brings us to retired National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star Scottie Pippen, who doesn't get nearly enough credit for his achievements. He played alongside the great Michael Jordan for the Chicago Bulls in the late 1980s and 90s.

Pippen was consistent and reliable, averaging about 20 points and seven rebounds per game in his prime, while playing top notch defence.

Constantly honing his all-round skills as a player, whether attacking the basket with high-flying athleticism, chasing down opposing players to block shots or improving his jump shot over the years, Pippen was Jordan's trusty partner, both in offence and defence.

He sought to complement Jordan's effort night after night in NBA games rather than try to outshine the superstar.

Together, this dynamic duo scored about half the team's points in most games. This ultimately led to the Chicago Bulls winning six NBA championships, one of the most enduring dynasty in the modern era of basketball.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

So let's ask ourselves:

- What are we currently doing towards continual excellence as individuals?
- How can we help improve our team's performance as a steadfast leader or a supporting player?

Ultimately, the people who genuinely want to contribute to the team and help others, want to do better and be better, whether they receive credit or not.

In the process, they improve the lives of those around them and inspire others to achieve greater heights.

FLOWER POWER

3 LIFE LESSONS FROM THESE BEAUTIES



By **AASEM PURI**
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHY do flowers exist? They exist so that others can live. The only reason flowers exist is for others.

Hence, they are prized, valued, admired, loved and are precious.

Considering how vital they are to life, here are three lessons we can learn from how a flower lives its life:

1. Flowers give out beauty

They are often found in various colours; adding beauty to our world, our lives, our homes, our weddings and our festivals.

You, too, can do this every day. Offer a smile to the people you meet, a "how are you" to a colleague, a compliment to your spouse – simple ways to become a beautiful bloom.

2. Flowers give themselves to others

The whole reason flowers exist is to produce pollen which is then used to produce other flowers and plants. They create life every day.

With your time, energy, ideas and resources, you can too.

Give a little to charity, help someone without seeking a reward, help educate a child, feed someone who is hungry, mentor a younger person, take a teaching class in a subject that you know well.

Give yourself to others and experience the enormous pleasure of creating a better life for someone else.

3. Flowers collaborate with everyone else

To create life, flowers realise that they cannot do it alone. They need to collaborate with other 'stakeholders' in the universe to send pollen to all corners of the world.

They depend on the wind, insects,

and birds – to spread their pollen.

The moment we realise that our success is a result of our relationships, and we invite others to come to our help, we start to accelerate our success.

We do this by actively listening to others, asking for their advice and support, inviting them to partner with us and acknowledging their contributions.

WRAPPING IT UP

Flowers play a vital role in the ecosystem and contribute greatly to the lives of others; they represent an embodiment of love.

Let's choose to emulate the lives of flowers.

Let's share our scent and our essence with the whole universe. That's the only way to live a beautiful and happy life.

■ Aseem is a digital coach and a faculty trainer with Leaderonomics. He has many years of experience creating disruptive online and offline campaigns around the world. To engage him for digital transformation of your organisation, email us at info@leaderonomics.com.

We all know we should be kind to others – our families, co-workers, neighbours, strangers. Everyone benefits. But did you know that kindness benefits your brain? Read on Leaderonomics.com to find out more: bit.ly/kindness-brain

While we seem to be doing a whole lot of communicating, we seem to be struggling with connecting. Learn how a simple banana made a difference in someone's day at: bit.ly/2MSQ3SB



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By **NG YOU JING**
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHAT'S the first thing you do when you arrive at the office? Do you grab a cuppa or rush to work because you're one of the usual latecomers?

Experts believe how you handle the first 10 minutes at work pretty much sets up the rest of your day, so it's best to start it on the right foot – clean slate, refreshed and focused.

Let's not forget how you spend your last 10 minutes before leaving the office too. While there is an urge to wrap up earlier than your official clock-off time, stay disciplined and use your time wisely.

Choose to be productive aside from waiting for the time to pass and prepare for the next working day.

To ensure a productive day, follow these simple approaches at the start and end of your day at work.

THE FIRST 10 MINUTES

1 Say 'Hello'

Unless you're the first one to arrive at the office, initiate small talk with your colleagues first thing in the morning. It is an effective way to build better work communication at work.

Employees will be more motivated and engaged if this is practised regularly. A huge benefit will be for internal communication whereby colleagues can become each other's support system at work and even foster friendships outside of work.

That said, you shouldn't be too persistent with morning office chats because not everyone will be eager to participate, so be alert and read their body language well.

Factors like a lack of common interests or introversion of an individual may be reasons behind it. Be mindful, have respect and leave room for personal space.

2 Arranging your emails

Organising your emails before you start working on your main task is a great way to get yourself in tune to what's to come in the day. Move your urgent emails, old emails, spam and junk mail into their respective folders.

It's good to keep your email space clear and organised so you can focus on one task at a time. You might want to keep some old emails for future reference, so take some time to separate them accordingly.

Other than receiving new emails from your peers, clients and other work-related matters, the biggest clutter in your inbox and spam list is probably the e-newsletters you've subscribed to – voluntarily or involuntarily.

What you can do is to unsubscribe materials you no longer need, so you can save time from deleting them constantly.

WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

HOW TO USE YOUR FIRST AND LAST 10 MINUTES AT WORK



Studies have shown that goal-setting increases your overall performance, well-being and improves your managerial skills.

3 Organise your work files

As a working adult, keeping your documents and digital folders neat and tidy is a plus point. It makes for an accessible and fuss-free workstation and allows you to be more productive at work.

While it sounds easy, many people don't take enough time to maintain theirs. With a few clicks at the end of each day, organise your digital folders and sort out saved documents into respective folders.

It's advisable to do this at the end of the day because you're most likely to have more time and would have a chunk of work tasks completed from the day which needs filling.

If you need to save your files on your desktop, bear in mind that it can be very messy and hard to locate. What you can do is create one general folder and save named files there before segregating them eventually.

Also, don't forget to permanently delete irrelevant files to save storage space. This tip is also applicable to your cloud storage.

4 Organise your work desk

A cluttered desk is a recipe for disrupting your productivity and focus. The physical clutter from your desk will confuse and overwhelm you whereas your mental clutter will derive from the confusion and anxiety caused by the physical mess.

Based on a study, it was found that an individual faced a severe constraint to focus and lacked attentiveness if they had variables placed all over their field of view.

With 10 minutes in hand, tidy up your desk and give it a good sprucing up. Put your important paperwork on the side or use file trays to organise them.

Place your stationery in your drawer or holder on your desk. Try the KonMari method of clearing your space if you find it difficult – most people claim it does wonders!

The key here is to keep the things that hold value for you. Look around your desk, pick one item and determine if the item is worth placing on your desk. If it does not, you can put it away. Repeat the step for each item on your desk until everything is clear.

3 Expand your knowledge

This is similar to becoming a thought leader, but you will be recognised for your expertise in your field of work.

Use your spare time early in the day by reading up on industry news and business trends. That way, you will be able to share knowledge with your colleagues or participate in open discussions with like-minded individuals.

Your presence will add value to your organisation and colleagues, making you a trusted asset and a good example. Moreover, you can volunteer as a professional mentor to guide new employees in familiarising themselves with the organisation.

4 Review to-do list

We all have our own to-do list to help track our daily tasks at work, but sometimes, we find ourselves getting overwhelmed with multiple tasks at hand and end up losing track.

What would be a better time to plan and make adjustments to your task list than at the start of the day before actually doing them?

The key to maintaining your to-do list is to prioritise. Plan your tasks from the most important and urgent to the least. This will make things easier to manage.

Each task completed from then on will give you a sense of accomplishment and the motivation to continue your next task at hand.

THE LAST 10 MINUTES

1 Self-reflection

When was the last time you asked yourself about the things you have accomplished no matter how trivial the task was? Most of us wouldn't bother reflecting and prefer to look forward to the things to come.

There is no issue to keep moving forward, but what if there are vital lessons and improvement areas for your career or personal life that you missed from past encounters? Self-reflection helps.

Use the last 10 minutes of your work day to reflect on the things you did throughout the day. Jot them down on paper and go through them one by one. Chances are you will notice the positive and negative things clearer compared to before.

2 Set your goals

Picking your everyday battles in order to avoid a burnout should be part of your career goals.

If you want to accomplish something greater or learn from your past experiences, we recommend making goal-setting a frequent activity of yours. Make a list and place it prominently at your workstation as a daily or monthly reminder to motivate you.

Examples of realistic goal-setting include: to achieve 70% sales target monthly, write two articles a day, or plan a marketing and public relations campaign three months in advance.

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WHY IS MENTORING SO CRUCIAL IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE?

By **SANDY CLARKE**
editor@leaderonomics.com

OPRAH Winfrey, Mark Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, Bob Dylan and Quincy Jones owe their success stories to a shared experience – all of them had mentors to guide them in their careers.

It's easy to think of such people as being "self-made".

To a degree, they were, but none of them, talented as they each are, could say for sure that the same success they have enjoyed would exist without the guidance from someone who had been there before them.

WHY ARE MENTORS SO IMPORTANT?

Mentors are invaluable, as they push us to see our latent potential, and encourage us to unleash our talents and capabilities to the fullest.

What's more, they offer us glimpses into their past experiences, so that we may avoid the pitfalls they've encountered along the way.

That doesn't mean that our journey will be plain sailing. However, having someone to show us how to side-step common mistakes certainly makes the path ahead much smoother.

Mentors also provide us with a solid sounding board, off which we are able to bounce ideas. They also help us to navigate our struggles and frustrations, and at the same time, fuel the fires of our curiosity and passion.

When we have someone beside us who has travelled a similar path to the one we are on, it's like having our own personal library at hand whenever we need a quick reference point to help us overcome obstacles.

The actor Will Smith, once alluded to the importance of mentors when he talked about reading (mentors may also come in book form).

Smith said, "There have been gazillions of people that have lived before all of us. There's no new problem you could have – with your parents, with school, with a bully. There's no new problem that someone hasn't already had..."



THEY ARE A NECESSITY, NOT A LUXURY

In these increasingly competitive times, mentors can become the whetstone (sharpening stone) that gives us the edge over the competition.

They are the ones who offer us the inside track, hone our critical thinking skills and tackle challenges head-on, ensuring that we are well-equipped for the job that lies ahead.

Most importantly, mentors help us to build beyond who we are, and to see the things we are capable of.

The power of mentoring is perhaps summed up best by Winfrey, who said, "A mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself."

As many successful people know, hope is a mighty force that can lead us to our greatest achievements and build a powerful legacy.

5 QUOTES ON THE POWER OF MENTORING

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn." – Benjamin Franklin

"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled." – Plutarch

"Mentors have a way of seeing more of our faults that we would like. It's the only way we grow." – George Lucas

"An employee made a mistake that cost the company \$10 million, he walked into the office of Tom Watson, the CEO, expecting to get fired. 'Fire you?' Mr. Watson asked. 'I just spent \$10 million educating you.'" – Adam Grant

"Leaders should influence others in such a way that it builds people up, encourages and edifies them so they can duplicate this attitude in others." – Bob Goshen

3 BENEFITS OF MENTORING

1 Helps people to focus and take charge of their career

How many drivers learn to drive without an instructor? How many pianists are self-taught to Grade 8 level?

While it's not impossible to learn these skills without instruction, it's much more beneficial to be shown the ropes by someone who's already been there.

For a start, fewer mistakes are made, and obstacles are easier to overcome when someone who has travelled the same path shows us how it's done.

We take instruction in so

many areas of our lives – it makes sense that we should give our careers the same level of consideration, given how important it is to us.

2 Mentoring improves networking

A mentor will inevitably introduce their mentee to acquaintances who will be relevant and useful in their journey of development and growth.

A vital part of career success is the relationships we are able to build, and a resourceful mentor will likely have cultivated a wide network of connections within their industry.

Mentees who are introduced to other figures in their field

can only stand to gain from the additional pearls of wisdom.

3 Builds confidence and interpersonal skills

Interacting with others and establishing relationships naturally develops communication and interpersonal skills.

With "soft skills" said to be lacking in fresh graduates and young professionals, this is one of the key benefits that come with having a mentor.

Besides the interactions with others, mentors tend to routinely nudge mentees out of their comfort zones, which helps to build confidence quickly as new challenges are tackled.



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■ When most of us try to help someone, we often get seduced into focusing on the things that need to be fixed, like a person's weaknesses. In the process, we invoke the Negative Emotional Attractor (NEA) and the body's stress reaction. Do we then coach with compassion or out of compliance? Check out this thought-provoking article on Leaderonomics.com here: bit.ly/RBcoaching

■ Every effective leader is inevitably a mentor and a coach who strives to raise the competency level of others. Leaderonomics has comprehensive coaching and mentoring programmes to help individuals develop relational skills that build a strong mentor-mentee relationship. Through this workshop, participants will learn about the different types of mentoring relationships while setting mentoring goals and strategies to achieve intended results within and outside the organisational life. Participants will also learn influential traits and qualities of successful mentors to create the right mentoring dynamics for a win-win relationship. To find out more, email info@leaderonomics.com

■ Sandy has been blessed to have found a few mentors – in person and in book form – that have made a considerable impact on his life, mainly through the tendency to ask more questions than they answered. To connect with Sandy, you can follow him on Twitter @RealSClarke. How was your mentoring experience like? Were you a mentor for someone, or were you the one being mentored? Share your experience at editor@leaderonomics.com.





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■ Self-mastery is an important 'tool' that will keep us on our toes, pushing us out of our comfort zones and driving us towards excellence. Leaderonomics has several empowerment programmes that uncover self-mastery techniques to help you discover and maximise your potentials. Reach out to us through info@leaderonomics.com to learn more.

■ Let's assume you're in a situation where your corporate culture is in tatters. It has run way ahead of you and is basically destroying everything in its path. How do you arrest the situation and turn the situation around? Check out this article on [Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/LDRculturecrisis](http://Leaderonomics.com:bit.ly/LDRculturecrisis)

■ Dr. Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of the #1 bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, and the cofounder of TalentSmart. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. Share your thoughts with us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

UNDER PRESSURE?



HOW TO REMAIN CALM IN THE MIDST OF A CRISIS



By **DR TRAVIS BRADBERRY**
editor@leaderonomics.com

MOST of us have experienced that sickening moment when you realise you've made a serious mistake.

Perhaps it was a typo that threw off a financial forecast, or maybe you forgot to reserve a venue for an important meeting that's scheduled for the following day.

The details are different for everybody, but at some point, all of us have felt that rising tide of dread and panic. Mistakes and pressure are inevitable; the secret to getting past them is to stay calm.

New research from the Harvard Business School shows that most of us go about staying calm the wrong way. People who welcome the challenge of a crisis – so much so that overcoming the challenge excites them – perform far better than those who try to force themselves to be calm.

Study author Allison Wood Brooks says: "People have a very strong intuition that trying to calm down is the best way to cope with their anxiety, but that can be very difficult and ineffective. 'When people feel anxious and try to calm down, they are thinking about all the things that could go badly. When they are excited, they are thinking about how things could go well.'"

Staying composed, focused, and effective under pressure are all about your mentality. People who successfully manage crises are able to channel their emotions into producing the behaviour that they want.

In other words, they turn their anxiety into energy and excitement.

LOGICALLY SPEAKING

This can't happen if you don't engage your logic. Yes, making a big mistake is embarrassing.

You might get yelled at by your boss, and the mistake might even show up on your next performance appraisal, but, in all likelihood, it's not going to result in your getting fired, losing your house, living out of your car, or in any of the other catastrophic thoughts that fuel anxiety and keep you from getting focused.

If you struggle with putting things into perspective, just ask yourself two simple questions:

- What's the worst thing that could happen as a result of this?
- Will this matter in five years?

Your answers should put a stop to catastrophic thinking. You'll probably realise that you're panicking due to the anticipation of public embarrassment more than anything else.

Once you get over that, you can build confidence by picking up the pieces and making things better.

PUT THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE

Think about situations that were worse than yours.

More than likely, the people at your company who have made serious mistakes are still there and doing just fine. Those legendary mistakes usually have few long-term effects on otherwise good employees.

Remind yourself: "There's more to me than this situation. One honest mistake won't define me."

NOT ALL EYES ON YOU

Next, you need to recognise that people are less focused on you than you think they are. It's easy to see yourself as the centre of the maelstrom.

You're embarrassed, and you're worried about your job. The more you feel judged by others, the more intense your anxiety.

But your boss, and everyone else, will spend far less time worrying about you than they will about trying to improve a difficult situation, which is what you should be focusing on in the first place.

You need to realise that they won't have much time to think about you until after the dust has settled, and by that time, you'll have become part of the solution.

MAGNIFY YOUR LOGIC

Nothing helps you maintain the right frame of mind in a crisis like logical thinking.

Once you've forestalled the panic, it's time to ask yourself important factual questions:

- What exactly happened?
- What are the possible repercussions? Is there still time to avoid those repercussions? If so, how?
- Who needs to be involved?
- If it's too late to head off the repercussions, what can be done to mitigate the damage?

Don't let your mind run off with ridiculous self-accusations.

TAKE ACTION!

Once you've figured out the facts and screwed your head on straight, it's time to own up to the situation.

Putting off the hard work of cleaning up the mess just gives your sense of dread more power.

Pouring your energy into making things better is both empowering and a wonderful distraction from any anxiety that might surface.

Remember, getting excited by the

challenge of rising from the ashes will improve your performance dramatically.

NOBODY'S PERFECT

To keep things humming, don't be so hard on yourself. Even the most successful people make serious mistakes.

Henry Ford's first car company failed after just 18 months, Oprah Winfrey was deemed "unfit for television" in an early reporting job, and Walt Disney was fired from the *Kansas City Star* for his lack of creativity.

Beating yourself up might be a tempting option, but it never accomplishes anything, and it certainly doesn't make you any calmer.

Instead, keep your energy focused on the future and the things you can change.

BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

The ability to manage your emotions and remain calm under pressure has a direct link to your performance.

We've found that 90% of top performers are skilled at managing their emotions in times of stress in order to remain calm and in control.

Nobody likes making mistakes. But no matter how big the mistake is, succumbing to panic isn't going to help.

Giving in to catastrophic thinking undermines your ability to make good decisions and to move forward effectively.

Instead, use these strategies to stay calm so you can assess the situation, develop a plan, be accountable, and get busy making things right so you can move on.

What's the worst crisis you've ever dealt with at work?

WHEN YOU NEED TO GIVE A HUG

By **REBECCA MORGAN**
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHEN I stepped into the hotel elevator on the second floor, the only other person inside was a 20-something-year-old woman. She was crying but working hard not to. Yet she couldn't stop.

I have been there – something hurts so badly you can't control the emotion, even when you're in a public place and you feel embarrassed at not being able to stop.

I paused briefly to look at her, unsure whether to ignore her and mind my own business to my 14th floor room. I noticed she'd pushed the 6th floor button so I knew we wouldn't share this space long.

LEADERS DO THE RIGHT THING

But ignoring someone in pain did not seem like the right thing to do. I had no idea what caused such agony



and had no idea if she had someone to comfort her on the 6th floor. But when I see human pain like this up close, I feel compelled to respond. "Can I give you a hug?" I asked. She nodded yes. So I hugged her until we arrived on

the 6th floor, without saying a word. Whatever awkwardness there was from two strangers silently hugging was dissipated by being authentic with each other in real time. The elevator stopped at 6 and she exited. I never saw her again.

POINTS OF REFLECTION

Later, I wondered if I should have reached out further: "Do you have someone to talk to in your room? Or someone you can call?" Then, if she said no, would I have felt compelled to be the one she poured out her

angst to? Would I then be embroiled in this stranger's life when I had other things on my docket for the day?

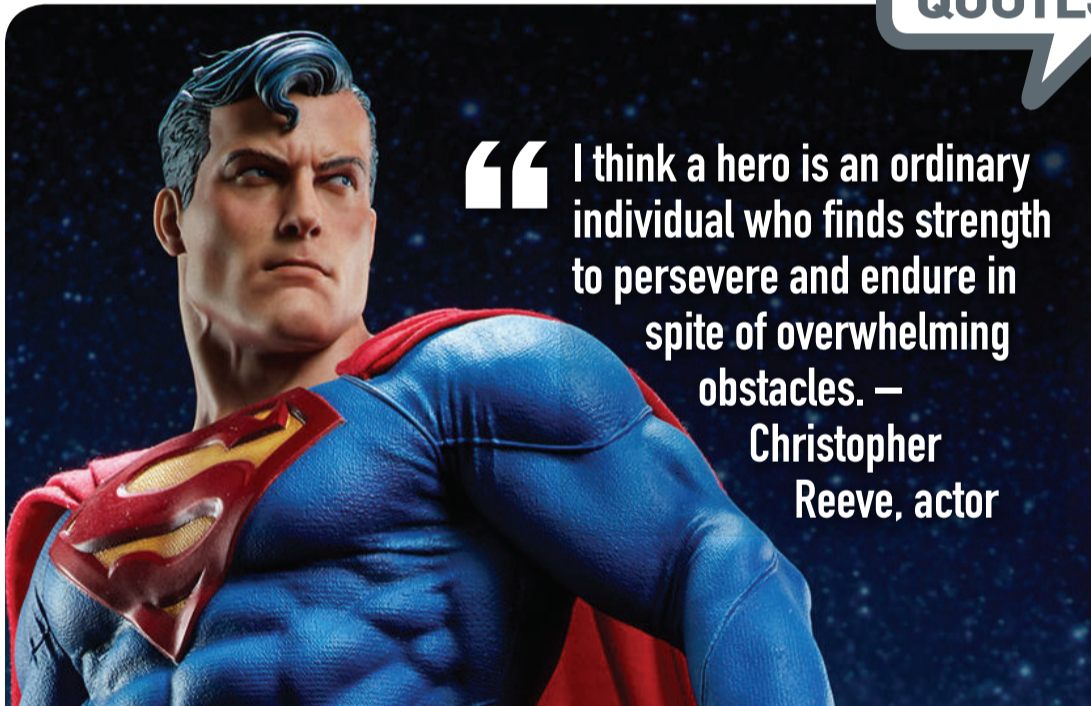
I'll never know what caused her such strong emotion. But I am glad I offered the hug.

■ *Rebecca Morgan is a bestselling author, and one of America's sought-after adviser to many global executives. She is the architect for focused, tailored solutions designed to meet an organization's needs. To connect with her, email editor@leaderonomics.com.*

Is there a colleague who is feeling low due to unmet personal and professional expectations? Here are 10 things you can do to cheer him/her up. Check out this infographic: bit.ly/igTop10cheerup

Throughout your lifetime, you've probably given away (and received) one of the most profound gifts – hugs. You wonder how such an insignificant act can lead to any difference at all. Well, apparently it does. Check out this article on how hugs can make a huge difference in a person's life: bit.ly/LDRhugs

QUOTES



“I think a hero is an ordinary individual who finds strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles. — Christopher Reeve, actor



In marketing, there's never a set way of doing things and there's always something new to learn. Leaderonomics content marketing leader Sarah Lim discusses how organisations can keep up and leverage the changing nature of the marketing industry. Listen to the podcast: bit.ly/RYGLeveragingOnMarketing

Online Exclusive

Can you name all the players in your favourite football team? How about the people providing behind-the-scenes support to the team? Let's take a look at five people who help make football successful without actually scoring a goal: bit.ly/footballheroes



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■ All of us typically get frustrated or end up in tough situations from time to time. We naturally look for answers and solutions but in doing so, we unwittingly create blocks instead of openings. In fact, we end up recycling the same over-used, unhelpful answers. To overcome this, we need to ask new questions. Results are driven by questions. Check out this article here on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/Ldrquestion

■ Customers today can spot a hard sell and false sincerity easily. In sales, one needs to show genuine interest in understanding what a customer really wants. Check out this article by Sandy Clarke: bit.ly/LDRcustomerrapport

By EVETTE CORDY
editor@leaderonomics.com

In a 2017 Harvard Business Review article, Are You Solving The Right Problems?, a survey of 106 C-suite executives across 17 countries uncovered that 85% strongly agreed or agreed that their organisations were bad at problem diagnosis. Furthermore, 87% strongly agreed or agreed that this flaw carried significant costs.

Author, Thomas Wedell-Wedellsborg remarked, "The pattern is clear: spurred by a penchant for action, managers tend to switch quickly into solution mode without checking whether they really understand the problem."

THINK LONG-TERM SOLUTION

The challenge of every business is the incredible pressure placed on short-term results, with constant deadlines looming.

We are always chasing outcomes, which creates a culture of doing. So, when a business problem arises, we quickly jump to solution-finding and implementation.

When things aren't going well in our business, our instinct is to 'fix' whatever we perceive to be the problem, as quickly as possible.

We jump ahead and try to solve what might not be a problem in the first place. This results in fast, cheap solutions that do not last long and do not have much impact for your customers.

If we don't take the time to dig deep, observe and figure out what is really going on, then we throw time, money and resources into something that will fail to have any impact on our business at all – except wasted time, money and resources.

GET CURIOUS

In today's business world, you need to



UNDERSTANDING YOUR CUSTOMERS

WHY THIS IS CRUCIAL FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

be able to walk in the shoes of your customer. To find clues and collect artefacts that build a whole picture of your customers' experiences.

That means sitting with them in their lounge room, shopping where they shop, drinking where they drink or eating where they eat.

You must spend time discovering their hopes, fears and values, and viewing the world through their eyes. Noticing what delights them and observing their irritations, frustrations and pain points.

You need to curiously observe what people say, and what they do, and seek to understand deeply what matters to them. This is the best starting point to

finding the right problems to solve.

Curiosity is the tool we use to find our most valuable problems; to turn our insights into opportunities.

You need to become curious about identifying what problems you need to solve. You need to be curious about the opportunities that become possible when you are open to change.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

Having this deep understanding of your customers' problems is essential to inspiring growth.

When you understand the real problems your customers' face (not the perceived ones), then you start to solve their

deepest problems – you start to stimulate breakthrough innovation and implement initiatives that will truly benefit (not drain) your bottom line.

■ *Evette Cordy is curious – and she's passionate about making you curious, too. As an innovation expert, registered psychologist, chief investigator and co-founder at Agents of Spring, she identifies opportunities and facilitates new ways of thinking in organisations. She is also author of the book Cultivating Curiosity: How to unearth your most valuable problem to inspire growth.* Liked this article? Share your thoughts with us at editor@leaderonomics.com

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