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Leaderonomics

The Science of Building Leaders

Growth and Empowerment

UNDERSTANDING THE
BASICS OF LEADERSHIP

THE strength we seek is most often found within ourselves and the events we have experienced.

Yet, the road to this discovery is an extensive journey of ups and downs – a critical, and sometimes non-linear sequence of events for both organisations and individuals to be able to find and embrace their identities.

In this first issue of our monthly digital magazine, we explore some of the factors that make way for the emergence of natural and transformational leadership: performance character; the development of basic leadership competencies; the influence of role models on children; the ability to drive change and a sense of agency.

Our key focus is on growth – how you can grow and develop into the leader you were meant to be. Growth is painful, yet pain is necessary for you to truly grow.

These elements form parts of Leaderonomics' on-going study on the development of leadership traits. The *Science of Building Leaders* – a framework developed over the course of the last few years – examines the making of leadership capabilities, from character development to identity formation to growth and execution as a leader.

As you read on, you will see how these stories connect to the *Science of Building Leaders*, and

what it is about each story that ties back into the development of leaders. Can leadership be learned, or are people born with this trait? What is the role of parenting in creating a secure base for the development of leaders? What does empowerment truly mean in the context of growth?

We're delighted to bring you our brand new monthly digital magazine after recently ending a six-year run in print in Malaysia. We hope you enjoy this issue, packed with insightful and timeless articles and videos featuring stories of and by leaders around the world.

If you'd like to share your thoughts, drop us a note at editor@leaderonomics.com. We would love to hear from you.

Blessings,
ROSHAN THIRAN



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By ROSHAN THIRAN
roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

“I think time is not put to its best use focusing on where we haven’t been, what we need to do. My thing is: do it. You want to see changes? Then get out there and make those changes yourself.”

If there ever was a true, rags-to-riches story that stands as testament to the fact that bold leadership can achieve great things, it would be the story of a little black girl born in the southern state of Mississippi. This little girl would not only grow up to be one of the finest women entrepreneurs in the world, she would also go on to redefine many aspects of television and become the Queen Of All Media.

Growing up

Oprah Winfrey was born in 1954 into a life of rural poverty in the town of Kosciusko, and was raised by her grandmother until the age of six. Her grandmother was so poor, it’s said that Oprah would attend school wearing dresses made from potato sacks. She later went to live with her father in Nashville and was raped several times, from the age of nine, by members of her own family. At the age of 14, she gave birth to a son as a result of her sexual abuse. The baby died soon after his premature birth. At age 17, Oprah won the Miss Black Tennessee beauty pageant, and while in high school, she was hired by a local radio station as a part-time newsreader. When she was 19, Oprah dropped out of college to take up her new role as Nashville’s WLAC-TV news anchor-woman.

Career breaks

Following her role at WLAC-TV, she was taken on as the news co-anchor at Baltimore’s WJZ-TV. As fate would have it, Oprah’s emotional delivery ran against the grain of the standard new programme, and she was transferred in 1978 to the daytime chat show, People Are Talking. After six years of honing her skills, Oprah moved to Chicago and, in 1984, the morning chat show A.M. Chicago was subsequently renamed The Oprah Winfrey Show. It quickly became America’s No.1 nationally-syndicated talk show. The show was a huge success – running for 25 years. It transformed the chat show platform into the more personal and empathetic format we’re used to seeing today, thanks to Oprah. When her show ended its run in 2011, Oprah launched her own TV network, the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN). By this point, she was such an influential figure in American culture that the term ‘The Oprah Effect’ was coined, referring to the effect that appearing on Oprah’s show or being endorsed by her had on an individual, business or even an idea. It’s even said that her style influenced the public when it came to politics, as people demanded prospective representatives to be more open, candid and to show more of their human side. During Barack Obama’s inaugural presidential campaign, it’s estimated that The Oprah Effect brought one million votes to Obama’s first successful run for the White House. Coming from a background where the odds were heavily stacked against her, Oprah Winfrey built an influential media empire, became North America’s first black multi-billionaire, and has used her profile to raise awareness for numerous charities, causes and social initiatives. She is also an Oscar-nominated actress (for her role as Sophia in *The Color Purple*, 1985), and starred in the critically-acclaimed film *Selma*, and the TV film *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

Be bold and take risks

One of the key traits of Oprah is her willingness to be bold and take risks. To be bold, one has to overcome fear. Fear cripples. Oprah has this to say about fear – “The thing you fear most has no power. Your fear of it is what has the power. Facing the truth really will set you free.” Many people live their lives afraid of failure, but Oprah lives hers as though failure is afraid of her. Writing about the habits of billionaires, American entre-

Pearls Of Wisdom From The Queen Of TV



preneur Paul C. Brunson spent time working for Enver Yucel and for Oprah. He noted that part of their success came with their tendency to be comfortable taking calculated risks. He wrote, “What intrigues me even more about Enver and Oprah was that even at their high financial status and success level, they still possessed a willingness to risk their most precious asset (their name and legacy) on new and bolder projects. If you’re not taking risks, you’re not making moves!” Oprah believes risky situations are also significant opportunities. She says, “I believe that one of life’s greatest risks is never daring to risk.” She also believes that failure should be heralded and talked about. “Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail. Failure is another stepping stone to greatness,” says Oprah. This thinking enabled her to bounce back from multiple failures in her early days. Her advice to fellow entrepreneurs is this: “Nobody’s journey is seamless or smooth. We all stumble. We all have setbacks. It’s just life’s way of saying, ‘Time to change course. Do the one thing you think you cannot do. Fail at it. Try again. Do better the second time.’ The only people who never tumble are those who never mount the high wire.”

Driving change

Oprah truly believes that if we want to make changes – be it for ourselves or the world – then we shouldn’t wonder or talk about it; instead, we should work to make it happen. If one thing characterises the pioneering leadership of Oprah Winfrey, it’s her absolute willingness to be bold, to go after whatever she wants, and to manifest her vision – however long it takes.

Being resilient and optimistic


At the 2018 Golden Globe Awards, Oprah Winfrey was awarded the Cecil B. DeMille Award for outstanding contributions to entertainment. Her powerful acceptance speech was packed full of poignant calls to action to help create a better world of equality of opportunity, understanding, fairness, compassion and humanity. As a self-made multi-billionaire who grew up through a life of poverty, Oprah reminded us that we are in control of our own destinies, and that our lives are shaped by the choices we make and how we choose to move forward in the face of adversity. In her captivating speech, she pointed to the power of resilience, saying, “I’ve interviewed and portrayed people who’ve withstood some of the ugliest things life


can throw at them, but the one quality all of them seem to share is an ability to maintain hope for a brighter morning, even during their darkest nights.” One of the reasons I enjoy watching Oprah is her optimism. Great leaders are optimists. They believe we can do better. They believe there is a higher calling. They believe there is hope. And that inspires everyone around them to do better, be better and keep pushing forward. Oprah displays this optimism and it helps her bounce back constantly.

In conclusion

How about us? Do we fear failure? Are we afraid of change? Do we talk more than we do? Are we resilient in times of pain and despair? Can we keep smiling and spread optimism around us? Oprah believes we can. And I **know** we can. Let’s work to be better versions of ourselves each day and keep spreading the joy of belief to everyone around us!

Be A Leader!

 Roshan Thiran is the founder and CEO of the Leaderonomics Group and is constantly amazed by the numerous leadership lessons he derives from historical figures and celebrities. As a little boy, Roshan constantly read biographies of great achievers and leaders and learnt so much from them. He hopes his writing will inspire others to make a difference in this world and leave a positive legacy too. Follow Roshan’s daily adventures and leadership tips on his LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

 **Did You Know?** When she was just 19, Oprah Winfrey anchored the news at Nashville’s WLAC-TV, making her the youngest person and first black woman ever to hold the post. Later, her hit show, The Oprah Winfrey Show, would become the highest-rated TV show of all time in the United States.

PERFORMANCE CHARACTER: What sets a person apart and earmarks them for success. These are the traits that take us the extra mile, such as grit, self-control, optimism and curiosity. This is part of Leaderonomics’ **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one’s life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

By **BRENT DYKES**
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TODAY, more and more companies are focused on digital transformation initiatives. In a 2018 survey by Tech Pro Research, 70 per cent of respondents indicated that their companies had a digital transformation strategy in place or were working on one.

Aside from 'going paperless', one of the key focus areas of digital transformation is automation, where the goal is to make business operations more efficient, productive and scalable.

In a 2018 IDG survey, introducing more automation to improve process efficiency was the top objective for digital transformation initiatives (64%).

By having machines perform repetitive, manual processes, organisations hope to streamline labour costs and have people focus on more strategic tasks.

Research by the McKinsey consulting firm suggests that 'as many as 45 per cent of the activities individuals are paid to perform can be automated by adapting currently demonstrated technologies'.

Furthermore, they predict automation could become a significant competitive advantage as the magnitude of the benefits are 'between three and ten times the cost'.

Agile start-ups have a unique opportunity to build digital automation into the fabric of their business processes. Meanwhile, existing companies are being forced to embrace these technologies before they're disrupted by more digital-savvy newcomers.

Driving business value

However, as more firms invest in digital transformation initiatives, something critical is being overlooked.

According to McKinsey, less than 30 per cent of digital transformation initiatives succeed. In other words, more than 70 per cent of these initiatives fail.

The flashy promises of 'faster', 'easier', and 'cheaper' can overshadow a fundamental reason for automating something driving business value. At the gooey, nougaty centre of every digital transformation initiative you should always find a rich, decadent serving of value.

Automation won't typically create value on its own – it simply amplifies the value that's already present. If there's little or no intrinsic value already, automation won't magically transform it into something valuable.

In order to drive more value from your digital transformation efforts, I'll offer three value-centred tips:

1 Avoid digitalising the cowpaths

The urban legend is, Boston's chaotic streets were created by paving the paths that had already been worn by cattle.

With digital transformation, you introduce risk when you 'pave' or digitalise business processes without questioning how effective or efficient they are.

For example, in my career in analytics consulting, I've seen many instances where a company wants to streamline or automate a certain report. These reports are often difficult and time-consuming to generate so the technical teams are only too eager to have technology carry the load for them.

However, on many occasions when you talk to the business users, you find they're not even using the reports. Because the reporting lacks key information the business really needs, automating the reports adds no tangible value besides the time savings for the analytics team.

Rather than 'digitalising the cowpaths', first determine whether the existing processes are worth the automation effort. In the scenario I just highlighted, it may mean tailoring the report content to the business users' needs before focusing on how to automate them.

2 Don't define success by past limitations

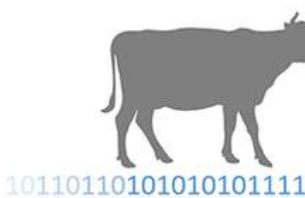
When you start a digital transformation initiative, your vision for the project may be biased or clouded by the limitations of your current processes or legacy systems.

Rather than defining an automation project by past constraints, you need to broaden your perspective to consider new possibilities that a digital approach can afford. For example, a media company wanted to automate a monthly spreadsheet-based report that aggregated data from 12 different advertising systems.

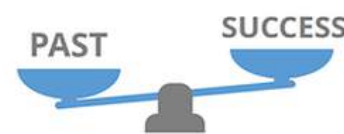
Digital Transformation

3 ways to ensure your initiatives drive value

1 AVOID DIGITALIZING THE COWPATHS



2 DON'T DEFINE SUCCESS BY PAST LIMITATIONS



3 DO THINGS THAT DON'T SCALE



At the end of each month, executives and managers would go through the consolidated report for different insights into the business. The information was clearly valuable to this media organisation, but it didn't fully grasp what it could be doing with its data.

As the business intelligence (BI) team started working on the initiative, they discovered the reporting could not only be streamlined, but it could be delivered on a **daily** basis. Now, they had to rethink what types of information should be shared on a daily basis as opposed to a monthly basis.

In addition, due to the complexity and difficulty of assembling the monthly spreadsheet report, they had never tied targets to any of the metrics. Now, they had the ability to display pacing to targets and manage the business to those monthly goals.

Simply automating this massive, unwieldy monthly report would have been a win, but the infusion of daily insights dramatically transformed how this media company operates.

As you prepare for your next digital transformation initiative, try to take a broader perspective and weigh its full potential rather than just focusing on the immediate or obvious benefits.

3 Do things that don't scale

In a fast-paced, digital environment, we're often encouraged at the outset of a new initiative or programme to consider how it will scale.

On multiple occasions, I've been pressed by leaders on how my ideas were 'going to scale'. By focusing on scalability or automation too early, good ideas may be dismissed before they've had a chance to prove their value or smothered to death by onerous requirements to be automated or scalable.

Y Combinator founder, Paul Graham, advised start-ups to "do things that don't scale". Even though it sounds counterintuitive, it's important to figure out how something is going to generate value before you task it with the burden of being scalable.

At the last Strata Data Conference in New York, data

scientist, Erin Coffman, shared her experience in co-founding the Data University programme at Airbnb. Initially, some people expected to have on-demand videos because this delivery method would be more flexible, convenient and scalable.

However, Coffman quickly recognised that the desire for on-demand content rarely translated into actual usage or effective learning.

So instead, her team focused on building a robust data education programme based on in-person classes only (30 people per class) and not immediately worrying about how it was going to scale. It was only after the programme was successful that they focused on expanding the programme by using a distributed 'train the trainer' model.

If the Airbnb team had placed an emphasis on scale first, the programme may never have achieved the same success (hundreds of classes delivered with an average net promoter score of 60).

In conclusion

Value must be the soul of every digital transformation initiative.

With every organisation working on transforming their business processes with data, you can't afford to have 'soulless' digital projects that fail to deliver value.



Brent Dykes is the director of data strategy at Domo, which is a cloud-based, self-service business intelligence (BI) platform. He has published two books on digital analytics, including Web Analytics Action Hero. In 2016, he received the Most Influential Industry Contributor Award from the Digital Analytics Association (DAA).



SME leaders need to challenge the status quo, become role model of change and continuously engage the rest to embrace technology and digital transformation, if they want their organisation to stay ahead in the game. Let's learn a thing or two from this video: bit.ly/LFsmeAzizah

10 Communication Strategies For New Leaders

By **CHRIS WESTFALL**

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FOR new leaders who inherit a team or are trying to maximise results for a current one, intelligent communication is the key to your success.

Here are ten leadership communication strategies that can change the conversation:

1 Prepare for success

"I had spent my entire life plotting and strategising how to become successful, but hadn't practised or spent a single day preparing for actually being successful," says former Hollywood studio executive, Brant Pinvidic.

The producer of shows like *Bar Rescue* and *Pawn Stars* has seen his share of success. He says it all starts with defining what success really is.

Look in the direction of impact: after the team accomplishes x, what does that really mean to the company, the investors... and to your personal contribution?

2 Start with what's known, to get to what's new

"Remembering the past becomes useful if it gives us insight into future outcomes," says Carmen Simon, PhD, in her latest book, *Impossible to Ignore*.

No matter what you want to accomplish, remember that change always starts at the same place: right now. Can you help others to see what's known, to get to what's new?

3 Memory management

If you burn your hand on a stove, are all stoves bad? Of course not. Stoves are neither good nor bad – they are just stoves! Sometimes, leadership means separating useful historical information from current exaggeration, because getting lost in old experiences can turn memory into a monster.

In this regard, the leader's job is to help the team to look past what's past. Have you ever had an experience go from a valuable lesson... to an artificial boundary around your life? Maybe it's time to take a fresh look at that stove and help your team to do the same.

4 Are you experienced?

Your skills and talents got you to where you are today, but your team is going to get you to tomorrow.

Your experience is probably pretty impressive, but the experience you create for others is the key to new results. Consider carefully the experience that matters most as you lead your team: Speak the language of your listener, if you really want to be understood.

5 Beyond behaviour

In the industrial production model (think Henry Ford), it was important for everyone on the assembly line to perform the same task, with the same tools, the same way.

In the modern work environment, away from the assembly line, there are many paths to the same destination. After all, the best way to get to Times Square will change if you are in SoHo (in Manhattan) or LoDo (in Denver).

Remember that where a team member is right now will always determine the first step. Even when the team's destination is the same, there are many paths to the productivity you need.

6 Cultivate creativity

IBM asked over 1,500 worldwide executives, "What's the number one characteristic you look for in a leader?" In *Capitalizing on Complexity*, CEOs didn't point to technical expertise, financial skills, empathy or charisma. The number one quality of leaders? Creativity.

In other words, the ability to identify creative solutions to the challenges of the marketplace. Since effective leaders create more leaders: how are you fostering and encouraging creativity and creative solutions from your team?

7 Access aspiration

What are the aspirations of your team? What do the individuals you lead, aspire to create for themselves, their families, and your organisation?

We all have aspirational goals. Even if an employee always wants to find the path of least resistance, on some level that's an aspiration for simplicity and efficiency.

Aspirational awareness is an important part of emotional intelligence and the key to driving new results.

8 Acknowledge, acknowledge, acknowledge

Three valuable words in a new leader's vocabulary; and they must be said (and demonstrated) if you are going to create real leadership impact.

"I see you." Take every opportunity to catch someone doing something right and acknowledge the behaviour you wish to see more of. And remember, "I see you" is a close cousin of "I'm watching you" just in case a team member thinks he or she can get away with a less than stellar effort.

How do you use acknowledgement and observation to drive the behaviours you want, and drive out the behaviours you don't?

9 Remember the fifth P

The marketing mix features four famous 'Ps': product, price, promotion and place.

The leadership mix focuses on the fifth 'P': personalisation. How well do you understand the personal puts

and takes of the team you manage?

Motivation on a personal level is what matters here. Can you identify what each person on your team really cares about, and phrase your outcomes in terms that speak their language?

10 Access your super power

Consider that we all have the ability to anticipate. Without it, no one could exit a parking lot. As a leader, what do you anticipate for your team?

Identifying obstacles and empowering team members to find solutions is what a leader does. What does your team anticipate – what obstacles do they see, that you don't? After all, anticipation isn't just your super power – we all have the ability to be heroes (if we choose to do so).

Ask for insights and learn from the experts on your team! It'll help you to anticipate what's next.

In the end...

Communication is the key to bringing your vision to life, and to providing the leadership support your team really needs.

For leaders today, it's helpful to remember these words from *Sunday in the Park with George*:

*A vision's just a vision
If it's only in your head;
If no one gets to see it,
It's as good as dead.*

Don't let your team keep guessing about what you need, and what you expect, if you're really preparing for success. Your vision deserves to be shared with leadership skills that your entire team can understand.



Chris Westfall is recognised as the US National Elevator Pitch champion. He has helped launch over four dozen businesses, coaching his clients onto *Shark Tank*, *Dragons Den*, and *Shark Tank Australia*. He is also a keynote speaker and has published seven books, the latest of which is called *Leadership Language* (Wiley). To connect with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

DEVELOPING BASIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES:

There is a big range of competencies that fall under this. Some key ones are decision-making, driving change, bonding with others, attention to quality and excellence. Developing these and many more is a process that takes significant time and refining over the years. This is part of Leaderonomics' *Science of Building Leaders*, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

Embracing Digital to Power Growth

Insights from the CEO Conference 2019

By **KHOR HUI MIN**

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MALAYSIA is heading towards a digital economy, but many businesses, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs), are not prepared to be part of this digital landscape yet.

At the CEO Conference 2019 with its theme of 'Embracing Digital to Power Growth', Leaderonomics' chief executive officer (CEO) Roshan Thiran spoke about founders setting up their companies and having everything figured out, but now they have to change the way they operate their business.

"We have to constantly change. If not, we face the prospect of living dangerously, which is the tagline for the conference," said Roshan.

Embracing digital to power growth

Like it or not, it is time for SMEs to get their act together and take digital approaches seriously.

First thing to do is for SMEs to educate themselves and spend time with different solution providers. They should start by addressing pain points, engaging in pilot projects, and developing a long-term vision.

"SMEs are critical for the country as they help drive GDP growth, and services and manufacturing play a major role. Their GDP contribution has risen from 22% to 27%.

According to the SME Masterplan 2012–2020, SMEs are expected to arrive at a target of 41% of the GDP by 2020," said Dr Nikolai Dobberstein in his keynote address. Dr Dobberstein is A.T. Kearney's head of communications, media and technology practice in Asia Pacific and also the managing partner of the Malaysian practice.

"98% of companies in Malaysia are SMEs, while 66% of employment is offered by these companies as well," said Dr Dobberstein, who is involved in business and digital transformation programmes of technology companies and telecom operators in Southeast Asia, India, the Middle East and Africa.

Mining the gold in your organisation

It is widely believed that data is the new gold, and if businesses could harness the power of data – if they could collect data and analyse it to uncover trends and insights – it would really give their business the added boost to achieve a higher level of success.

Example 1:

"My husband and I run a restaurant, which serves modern European cuisine without alcohol. When we started the business, it was just the two of us. When the business stabilised, we started to think about how to do personalisation," said Copper Restaurant CEO and co-founder Zeehan Zahari.

"When diners come in, we will take note of their preferences, such as vegan or paleo diet. When they come in the next time, their preferences are already recorded in the system, so we will change the menu according to their dietary requirements without them asking. This created a lot of loyalty among our customers," Zeehan added.

"The next step was to create a loyalty programme and we digitalised that. I did a lot of number crunching and then everything changed. We are probably 22% above industry average, even compared to establishments that serve alcohol," shared Zeehan.

Example 2:

"Initially, we operated our business the traditional way. We made decisions based on hunches. We didn't know where our business came from. Then, we started to think about digitalisation. We had to sit down and look at the numbers," said EGAN Equipment and Parts Sdn Bhd co-founder Nicholas Gan.

"It wasn't easy, but we did the right thing. For example, we thought we should open a branch in the northern states of Peninsular Malaysia, but when we analysed the data, we found out that the state which gave us the second highest sales was Sarawak. So, we should open a branch in Sarawak, in East Malaysia instead!" revealed Gan.

Zeehan Zahari and Nicholas Gan were part of the first panel discussion on Mining the Gold in Your Organisation – How to Find the Gold that Exists in Your Company, Extract It and Profit From It.

Leveraging technology and digital to grow and scale

There are many benefits to using technology to grow and improve the company.

First of all, employees are able to do more with less, thus efficiency is increased. Secondly, they are able to get to know their customers better.

"The digital economy in Malaysia is not small. In 2016, it contributed to 18.3% of the GDP," said Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) vice president of enterprise development consulting, Gopi Ganesalingam.

According to Telekom's head of SME business, Mohamad Yusman Ammeran, the ICT usage of Malaysian SMEs was highest for computing devices and connectivity, limited for front-end business processes, and low to medium for back-end business processes.

"From day one, you must have a vision, which should include how you are going to scale up," said KAT Technologies founder Khairol Anuar Mohamad Tawi. "We had 14 branches, and it was getting harder to keep track of everything."

Eventually, KAT developed its own system, KATsys, a sophisticated software system that allows for stock tracking from the point of receipt up to the point of sale. KAT was part of the Global Acceleration and Innovation Network (GAIN) programme by MDEC, which helps SMEs scale and grow.

Case study 1: Asia Pacific University

At the CEO Conference, two case studies were presented.

The first was on Asia Pacific University (APU), where the founder, Dr Parmjit Singh explained how he grew Asia-Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT) from a 12,000 square foot establishment on the 15th floor of Wisma Semantan in 1993 with 60 students, to APU with its own 2.1 million sq ft campus in Technology Park Malaysia with 12,000 students from over 130 countries.

"Focus is extremely important. I always focused on technology and never deviated from it. People have asked me, why don't you have law or dentistry, but I didn't," said Dr Parmjit.

"The myth that education is good business is not true. There are so many regulations, accreditations, etc. An educational company has to be fit for business like any other business, and it has to be run very efficiently," he added.

"The fees we charge are in the second quartile of private universities, but the cost per student is in the first quartile, because technology is not cheap. Our two core areas are engineering and IT, which are among the most expensive. My staff cost a lot too – 96% are veterans and experts who have worked in the industry they specialised in for many years."

"Nonetheless, we are one of the most profitable in the business. We achieve this by being organised. We use technology as a backbone to run the business and the campus. The profits are a by-product of our quality and reputation."

"We only have one KPI overriding the whole university, and that is employability. If employers are taking my graduates, it means we are doing the right thing."

The success of APU is proof that Dr Parmjit's philosophy and strategies work brilliantly.

Case study 2: Pos Malaysia

Next, Pos Malaysia's group head of digital, Sangeetha Ranganath presented how Pos Malaysia is evolving its business model. The postal service has existed in Malaysia since the 1800s, and the organisation had to transform from a very traditional business to a modern one that uses all available aspects of technology to cater to changing consumer demands.

They are undergoing a digital transformation to use technological platforms to engage seamlessly with customers and provide transparency. Pos Malaysia has invested in an automated hub with sorters and warehouse management systems, while alternative delivery options are also provided now.

The post office is going from offline to online, and automated bill payment services are also available. The development of a mobile app is in the pipeline.

How can we drive change in business?

The final panel discussion for the day was on the topic of how entrepreneurs can find out what their mistakes are and drive change in their business, as well as understanding how culture can impact the ability to leverage technology.

The panellists were QEOS Technology Sdn Bhd founder and CEO, Dr Gabriel Walter; Comfort Taxi managing director Siti Faradilah Aslah; and BloomThis co-founder and CEO, Giden Lim.

"My family was in the florist business, and I thought it was a good idea to do the business online. The first time I did it, customers were not attracted to it. Then I improved on the website, but still it was the same. After that, I found out that MaGIC (Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre) was offering courses, so I signed up to learn why things were not working," revealed Lim.

"The incremental learnings and the things we do along the way are important. I chose to stay hungry," Lim added. "I found out the entire flower delivery experience is important to the customer. We have to deliver the perfect experience seamlessly, especially when the recipient receives the flowers."

"You don't need to do it alone. Two heads are better than one. Trust and bonding are important. People look up to you not because they fear you, but because they believe in you and your vision," said Dr Walter. "The ones that trust you and follow you are your most powerful assets."

"When we began, we always went for the best, in terms of technology. But over time, we realised that the most difficult thing to do was to simplify complexity. We trained people to be more creative," Dr Walter added.

InsideRisk

Delegates were also given a preview of InsideRisk by Leaderonomics Digital head, Sashe Kanapathi. InsideRisk is an immersive simulation that helps SMEs and their leaders dramatically improve their trust-building and critical thinking abilities through a critical hostage situation.

The CEO Conference 2019 brought together founders and CEOs of SMEs who have succeeded and leveraged on digitalisation to bring themselves up to the next level, to share their knowledge and experiences with delegates.

Industry experts who shared their know-how also benefited all the delegates. It is hoped that all those who were present brought back priceless nuggets of new learning and information to their respective organisations.



Khor Hui Min is a writer, poet, nature lover, face painter, photographer, yoga enthusiast, and meditator. To connect with her, send an email to editor@leaderonomics.com.

What's Holding Women Back?

By **PREMA JAYABALAN**
 editor@leaderonomics.com

WOMEN today have more privileges and exposure compared to women of a few generations ago.

During our mothers' era, career opportunities for women were limited. The working world was dominated by men. Even when it came to pursuing tertiary education, there were more men than women. However, this culture has taken a drastic turn.

Today, women are enjoying the opportunity of having a good education, holding good positions in organisations, as well as having their own families. Nevertheless, despite all these privileges, when it comes to leadership and holding top positions in organisations, the story is indeed very disappointing.

According to the chief operating officer of Facebook and the first woman to serve on Facebook's board, Sheryl Sandberg, women are not making it to the top in any profession, anywhere around the world.

"In a poll of 190 heads of state, only nine are women. Of all the people in parliaments all around the world, only 13% are women. When it comes to the corporate sector, women on the top who are holding C level jobs or who sit on the boards, there are only 16% to 17% of them and sadly, the numbers have not increased since 2002.

"Even when it comes to the non-profit organisations, where we think that women hold a vast number of lead roles, there are only 20% of women at the top," says Sandberg in a popular TEDxWomen talk from 2010.

Where does the problem lie?

Why is this phenomenon occurring? Is it because of one's behaviour or perception? Ontological Coach, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) master practitioner and a PSYCH-K facilitator from London with 10 years' experience in investment banking, Piya Khanna believes that the biggest reason is that women do not believe in themselves and lack the self-confidence to go for top jobs.

"More often than not, women self-select themselves out of jobs (or should I say self-reject) because of their beliefs that their abilities limit them – for example, 'they'll never hire me' or 'I don't have the qualifications' or 'I don't know everything there is to know about doing the job'."

The result is that fewer women actually apply for senior positions, so automatically the talent pool has a disproportionate number of male applicants," she explains.

"The interesting thing is, men often do the opposite – if they don't know everything there is to know about the job, they assume 'I will pick it up as I go along'."

"They go in with the attitude of 'I've nothing to lose, cannot hurt to go for it' and generally believe that they 'have what it takes' to do the job. Also, women constantly seek reassurance that they are doing well, they are not making mistakes and this sort of constant self-questioning is destructive as it does not really foster their managers' belief in them."

On another note, Sandberg says that women don't negotiate for themselves in the workforce. According to her, a study for the past few years on people entering the workforce right after college showed that 57% of the men were negotiating their first salary but only 7% of women were doing so.

Another thing is, men attribute their successes to only themselves but women attribute them to other external factors. For example, if you ask men why they did a good job, their answer will be; "because I am awesome" but a woman would reply "someone helped me" or "I got lucky" or "I really worked hard".

Sandberg has three valuable messages to be conveyed to all women who want to stay in the workforce and carve a name for themselves in their career path.

1 Sit at the table

Always be where the main agenda is.

For example, at a board meeting or any meeting that you attend, play an active role and make sure that you are noticeable. Don't sit at the corner where there are chances for your presence to be missed. According to Sandberg, no one gets to the top by sitting on the side and not at the table.

"No one will get the promotion if one doesn't think he or she deserves success or doesn't even understand one's own success." It is important for you to believe in yourself first and negotiate for yourself if you know you are worth it.

Sandberg believes that each of us should tell ourselves to believe in our potential and to reach for the promotions and opportunities available without doubting our abilities.

"Men are reaching for opportunities more than women and it is time to get women to sit at the table."

2 Make your partner a real partner

Along the years, women have made more progress in the workforce than they have at home. According to Sandberg, data shows that if a woman and a man have a full time job and a child, the woman does twice the amount of housework the man does and contributes three times more into child caring so when the question of who stays at home arises, the answer is easy.

It has been such in the norm of society where the pressure is on the boys to succeed more than the girls. Hence, it is difficult for stay-at-home fathers as they are not given much support by the society.

It is very crucial to give equal importance to the job of working inside the home for people of both genders without coming across as being biased.

By eliminating this stereotype, it will only create a fair play for women to stay in the workforce and to reach out for the top notch positions.

3 Don't leave before you leave

Sandberg says that some women have the objective of staying in the workforce, yet the actions they take lead to them eventually quitting.

For example, amidst the busy working life, some women start to think about having a child.

"From the moment they start doing so, thoughts of making room for the baby and nurturing for the child arise. At that point, these women do not raise their hands anymore.

"They slowly move to the corner, do not take on new projects and do not look for promotions and new ventures to widen their horizons. They start leaning back," she explains.

She adds that it is ironic but women start thinking about this way too early, even before they get pregnant. Some even think about this before they are even married. These thoughts eventually result in them becoming passive in their job and not reaching the milestones which otherwise would have been easy to achieve.

"Once you have a child, your job must be really good to go back to because it's hard to leave that child at home. Your job needs to be challenging and rewarding. If two years ago, you didn't take a promotion and if some guy next to you did, or if three years ago, you stopped looking for new opportunities, just because you were thinking way ahead without realising, [you are less likely to want to come back].

"Keep your foot on the gas pedal until the very day you need to leave to take a break for a child. And then make your decision. Don't make your decision too far in advance," she concludes.



As a travel enthusiast who loves connecting with people from all walks of life, Prema believes that everything thrown to us by life enhances our development. To connect with her, send an email to editor@leaderonomics.com.

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INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER: Mindsets and beliefs holding us back or pushing us forward towards achieving what we want in life. One such mindset is the growth mindset. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.



Exposing The 10% Myth

By **ADELINE TAY**
editor@leaderonomics.com

CONSIDER the following claim found in the introduction of Uri Geller's *Mind-Power* book:

"Our minds are capable of remarkable, incredible feats, yet we don't use them to their full capacity. In fact, most of us only use about 10% of our brains, if that.

The other 90% is full of untapped potential and undiscovered abilities, which means our minds are only operating in a very limited way instead of at full stretch.

I believe that we once had full power over our minds. We had to, in order to survive, but as our world has become more sophisticated and complex we have forgotten many of the abilities we once had."

The above statement has the power to ignite something within us: the desire to achieve more.

It makes us realise how little of our brain we are 'using', and how if we can tap into the 90% of our brain where our 'undiscovered abilities' are, we could achieve much more than what we can now.

I am sure that at some point in your life, you have come across the '10% brain myth' – either from a peer, parent, movie, or even from your science teacher.

According to Richard Cytoowic, an American neurologist, two-thirds of the public and nearly half of science teachers mistakenly believe the 10% myth.

Well-intentioned people such as motivational speakers often cite the 10% myth as a way to demonstrate that all people should strive to live up to their full potential.

Meanwhile, others have used the myth to promote and sell products and services that they claim will unlock the brain's hidden abilities.

Regardless of the motive, it remains a fact that the claim is false.

So who started this myth and if this is truly a false statement, why has it prevailed over the ages?

Theory 1: A Game of Chinese Whispers

In the early 20th century, American philosopher and psychologist William James wrote *The Energies of Men*.

In that book, resides the following statement which some claimed to be the origin of the 10% brain myth.

"We are making use of only a small part of our possible mental and physical resources." (p. 12).

James was optimistic that people could achieve more, but he was not referring to brain volume or quantity of cells, nor does he give a specific percentage.

This statement has been misinterpreted and has more or less formed the basis for the myth.

Lowell Thomas later popularised the 10% figure in a foreword to the 1936 edition of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, which made the following statement:

"Professor William James of Harvard used to say that the average man develops only 10% of his latent mental ability."

Like in a game of Chinese Whispers, this message has been heavily propagated in the media and has morphed into the 10% myth that we know today.

Theory 2: The 'Silent Cortex'

Another contributor for the 10% myth dates back to the early days of neuroscientific research.

Though there were a number of early studies which contributed to the myth, two of the more prominent and popularised studies were conducted by Karl Lashley and Wilder Penfield.

In the 1920s and 1930s, behaviourist psychologist Lashley attempted an experiment in which he trained rats to run a maze as he chopped away increasing amounts of their cortex.

Penfield, a pioneering neurosurgeon, probed the brains of his patients with an electrode while operating on them for epilepsy.

In summary, both found that there were large areas of the brain which were 'inactive'. These 'inactive' areas of the brain were termed the 'silent cortex'.

Fortunately, today's research in neuroscience is much more advanced and we have a much better understanding of our brains as compared to those times.

Brain imaging scans clearly show that almost all regions of the brain are active during even fairly routine tasks such as talking, walking, and listening to music.

It was found that there is not a single area of the brain that can be damaged without resulting in some sort of consequence.

Furthermore, brain-mapping research has yet to find any region of the brain that does not serve a function, and detailed probing of the brain has failed to identify the 'inactive' 90%.

Theory 3: I Want Psychic Powers!

Some New Age proponents promoted the 10% myth by asserting that the 'unused' 90% of the human brain is capable of exhibiting psychic powers and can be trained to perform psychokinesis and extrasensory perception.

This notion of gaining extraordinary powers is so alluring that the entertainment industry is milking it for all it's worth.

To be sure, the possibility that you might have psychic powers is tempting indeed. I mean, how cool

would it be to be able to read minds and control objects like Professor Xavier of X-Men?

Unfortunately, for those who fantasise about manipulating objects with their minds, there is no scientifically-verified body of evidence supporting the existence of such powers.

Basic brain-boosting tips – For REAL!

If you truly want to boost your brain power, forget about all those 'brain games' for now and start by focusing on achieving these basics first.

1 Exercise regularly

It's time to get up from your chair/bed and move your body! Physical exercise is not only important for your body's health; it also helps your brain to stay sharp.

Physical exercise increases oxygen to your brain, reduces the risk for disorders that lead to memory loss, and has shown to have positive benefits for the hippocampus (i.e. a brain structure that is important for learning and memory).

According to a study conducted by the Department of Exercise Science at the University of Georgia, even briefly exercising for 20 minutes facilitates information processing and memory functions.

2 Sleep well

I cannot stress this enough: Sleep is critical for our brains as it is during this time that our memories are consolidated.

Studies have shown that people who don't sleep enough have more trouble learning new information, while sleeping well after learning something new helps the brain effectively put that information into long-term memory.


Though sleep requirements vary slightly from person to person, most healthy adults need between seven and nine hours of sleep per night to function at their best.

3 Eat right

It's amazing what a healthy diet can do for you. There are a number of foods that contain nutrients which promote a healthy and active brain.

Some examples include blueberries, cruciferous vegetables and dark leafy greens, fatty fish, nuts and seeds, wine, avocado, and my personal favourite, dark chocolate.

■ This article was previously published in print.

 Adeline Tay completed her Masters in Education (Educational Psychology) at Sydney University. To engage with her, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

How To Rejuvenate Your Brain

By **ZARA JAYNE**
 editor@leaderonomics.com

STUDIES have shown that exercise can create new brain cells and generate other changes. However, did you know that physical inactivity can also modify your brain?

Scientists at Wayne State University School of Medicine along with other academics, conducted a study with a dozen rats. Half of them were placed in cages with running wheels while the other half were in cages without them and remained sedentary.

After about three months, the rats were injected with a specific dye that marks the neurons in the rostral ventrolateral medulla, the part of the brain that controls involuntary actions.

Although this experiment was conducted on animals, studies have shown that people have the same brain region and they function similarly.

The scientists found prominent differences between the two groups of rats when looking inside their brains after three months.

The shapes of the neurons in the running rats were almost the same as when they started the experiment.

However, the neurons in the brain of the sedentary rats grew more branches which were abnormal.

As a result, Reynolds explains that these altered neurons can possibly increase blood pressure and heart disease.

So, start working your brain and body the right way. Simple activities like walking, cycling or jogging will benefit you in the long run. Don't be a couch potato!

Here are five interesting facts on physical activity according to the World Health Organisation:

1. Physical inactivity is the fourth leading risk element for worldwide mortality.
2. People who are between five and 17 years old should exercise for at least 60 minutes per day.
3. People who are 18-64 years of age should exercise at least 150 minutes per week, a minimum of 10 minutes for each session.
4. People aged 65 and above are advised to exercise at least 150 minutes per week. They should particularly work on balance and countering falls.
5. Good support system from family and friends motivates people to be more physically active.



Now that you have a deeper understanding of physical activity and inactivity, take it seriously. Keep your brain healthy and alive!



Zara Jayne encourages everyone, young and old, to practise a healthy lifestyle for a healthier brain and body. To engage with her, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

Negative Thinking And Its Effect On Your Brain

By **TERRY SMALL**
 editor@leaderonomics.com

WHEN was the last time you thought about your thinking? How much of your thinking is positive? Negative?

Willie Nelson once said: "Once you replace negative thoughts with positive ones, you'll start having positive results."

It turns out that this is true where your brain health is concerned.

Is negative thinking bad for your brain?

Scientists seem to think that it is. Researchers at King's College London found that repetitive negative thinking may increase your risk for Alzheimer's disease (Journal of Alzheimer's Disease). Remember, at this time there is no definite cure for Alzheimer's, so this deserves your attention.

The study found that a habit of prolonged negative thinking diminishes your brain's ability to think, reason, and form memories, essentially draining your brain's resources.

Another study reported in the Journal of American Academy of Neurology found that cynical thinking also produces a greater dementia risk.

Remember, brains get good at what they do. Negative thoughts create 'channels' in your brain. This way of thinking can become your default.



If you do a lot of negative thinking, your brain wires to be good at producing negative thoughts. Your brain also gets good at seeing things to think negatively about.

One of the by-products of negative thinking is stress, which then leads to more negative thinking.

A 'sure-fire' stress buster

Here's a suggestion: When negative thoughts come – and they will – don't just ignore them. Pay attention. Stop what you are doing. Close your eyes if you need to. Replace the negative thought with a positive thought. Hold the positive thought in your brain for a

full minute, or more.

When you do this, neuroplasticity starts to work in your favour. The two keys are attention density, and holding the thought long enough for your brain to begin to create new 'channels'. Scientists refer to this as quantum zen effect.

Sculpt your brain

A good book to read on self-directed neuroplasticity is *You Are Not Your Brain*, by Jeffrey Schwartz. When you change your habits of mind, your life changes.

Tom Hopkins once said: "Being miserable is a habit; being happy is a habit; and the choice is yours". There is some truth to this.

One more suggestion: Go for a whole week without complaining – not even once. Log it. If you relapse, start your week over. Back to day one. Go for a week without complaining... and watch the people around you change. Such is the power of mirror neurons.

■ *This article was previously published in print.*



Terry Small is a brain expert who resides in Canada and believes that anyone can learn how to learn easier, better, faster, and that learning to learn is the most important skill a person can acquire. To engage with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.



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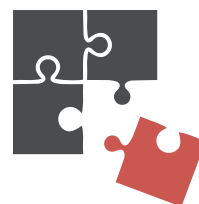
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Empowerment Is Not Everything

3 tips for organisational success

By **JOSEPH TAN**

editor@leaderonomics.com

“What good is power without the right focus?”

WHenever I consult with organisations, I am amazed with the prevalence of a utopic mindset when it comes to dealing with the behaviours of employees. There is somehow this sense that if I spell out the numbers and expectations clear enough, everything else should fall into place.

In fact, I should learn to control less and empower them to take charge – after all, isn't every employee a responsible human being who has no need to be reminded on what is the right thing to do?

The word 'empowerment' has become a catch-all phrase that in my observation, has been a simplistic approach towards everything from productivity to profitability.

In today's context, empowerment means assigning authority and trust to an individual to carry out certain responsibilities. This all sounds good as an end goal. However, we do ourselves a great disservice when we overestimate the power of potential goodness and underestimate the pull of human nature.

The hype of potential goodness

Think about it – if everyone on planet Earth is inherently good and full of goodwill, then there is really no need for an organisation to have a department called human resources (HR) or training and development.

This is because everyone is already empowered and enabled to do what contributes toward the common good, and every behaviour and mindset will be directed towards the welfare of others. Sounds utopic, right?

Yet, when a company grows, it is the HR department which groans! The growing pains of an organisation has more to do with its people rather than its processes, and more to do with mindset rather than methodology.

The fact of the matter is that when people are left to their own devices, the tendency is towards degradation and the breakdown of order (very much like the second law of thermodynamics which states that without any external intervention, all closed systems tend to wind down).

That is the reason why leaders in any organisation are constantly vigilant to make sure that there is a strong emphasis on the need to communicate, converse and connect.

This is not to say that employees do not have the desire to do what is right. However, there is a gap between desire and deliberation, and between intention and being intentional.

When it comes to empowering employees, it is important that we focus on the power to serve a greater purpose. Without this focus on a greater purpose, then whatever power is given to the employee will end up being utilised for self-serving purposes.

Hence, there should be less focus on power and more emphasis on purpose.

Tapping the potential goodness in an individual is not like turning on the tap! The song *Let It Go*! (from Disney's animated movie, *Frozen*) is certainly not a song of empowerment which I would promote – if every employee sings in the same spirit as Elsa, you will witness the creation of many, many small 'icy kingdoms'.

What we need is to first decide which 'kingdom' to seek, then the power will flow in the right direction.

Empowerment tip 1: Make the leadership decision

Leaders can never expect to be popular. On the con-



trary, as a leader, he is expected to deliver even when he may not win the popularity contest.

The leader is known for his decisiveness rather than desirableness. The commitment to stick through a decision regardless of shifting circumstances is what makes empowerment meaningful.

Empowerment within the context of decisive leadership requires that:

1. The focus of the chief executive officer to be communicated clearly at all levels of the organisation
2. The focus of the manager to act swiftly against non-performers
3. The focus of the employee to understand the real priorities

When the above foundations are in place, then the act of empowerment makes sense because decisiveness gives direction to the energy of empowerment. Without decisiveness, empowerment generates more heat than light.

The hype of performance management

Besides a superficial understanding of potential goodness, there is also the quick fix approach of measuring everything. The thinking seems to be: If measurement drives behaviour, why not measure everything and anything? Now, this line of reasoning ignores the reality that when it comes to human motivation, the correlation is hardly linear.

The output from a human being is not as predictable as the input just because we keep drumming in the same message. So, some managers would go about chanting the performance mantra: “You all know the numbers, go bring in the results... or else.”

This is repeated over and over and the sound can oftentimes be so familiar that employees are no longer excited about achieving their goals.

I remember consulting for a pharmaceutical company which was losing 24 per cent of their sales force the year before and when focus group interviews were conducted, the feedback was this: “It was not about the numbers, rather it was the way the numbers were communicated. We felt that we had no say in the planning process and worse still, we are expected to perform, minus the needed support and resources.”

Unfortunately, managers today are more concerned about what they want rather than what their team needs in order to do a good job. When employees lack the means to do their work well, frustration with their inability quickly follows, as does anger with the company for placing the worker in such a difficult spot. In this case, just reciting the empowerment mantra will only add more salt to the wound.

Empowerment tip 2: Make the support available

Although having a clearly communicated goal is motivating, another equally important point is the employees' perception that the company is backing them up with the equipment they want and need to do a good job – this serves as a powerful psychological motivator.

More than ever, managers today need to realise that it is not about the pressure of performance that is going to hit the home run, rather it is the psychology of performance that is going to seal the deal. It is not only about getting people to work but we need to know why people will work on something.

According to Gallup, whether a person has the materials and equipment needed to do his work well is the strongest indicator of job stress. The data shows that some of the things that frustrates employees is when they want to make a difference at work, but are held back from doing so due to lack of resources.

Here are three practical steps for employers to consider so that your effort to empower does not backfire:

1. Consider the materials, equipment and resources required by employees to do a good job
2. Celebrate current accomplishments first before communicating the next one
3. Conduct small group conversations to address any doubts or lingering issues which might affect the achievement of the set goals

The hype of practising innovation

Then, there is also the well-intended focus on creating a culture of innovation. It all sounds like the lyrics of a well-sung tune – if we do not innovate, then someone else will eat our lunch. So, in the name of innovation, we keep pushing the boundaries with best practices and knowledge-sharing.

This is all well and good, and it all sounds very empowering. Let's empower our people to be innovative, let's give them the freedom to explore and to think out of the box. All of this sounds really good, but it could be a case of being too good to be true. Let me explain why.

When an organisation implements initiatives of innovation, there is more to it than just stringing a few

“More than ever, managers today need to realise that it is not about the pressure of performance that is going to hit the home run, rather it is the psychology of performance that is going to seal the deal.”

events together. There is the additional element of team dynamics which requires careful attention. There is also an emotive element which is even stronger than innovation – it is a sense of fairness and right recognition.

Often, when innovation is pitched, the factor of work distribution is not considered. In fact, according to Gallup, two out of three employees reported that they are doing more than their share of the designated workload. This means that two out of three employees feel that they are carrying the slack of someone who is not performing.

This perception that their co-worker is not committed to his work as much as them can be counter-productive to your innovation programmes!

Talented performers are very alert towards matters of recognition and contribution. On the other hand, there are organisation leaders who go the other extreme and treat everyone the same – with the thinking that since there could be accusations of favouritism, I might as well then treat everyone the same. Now this mode of approach is not going to work either!

When it comes to the worth of a person, one cannot discriminate, but when it comes to the quality of one's work, then discrimination can take place. If a talented employee perceives that non-performers are rewarded at the same level as them, then the message sent is clear – mediocrity is tolerated.

So, there are two options left for them, either they join the crowd (become a part of the culture) or look for another crowd to join (seeking to move on to a better culture).

Empowerment tip 3: Make the team accountable

Hence, it is not only about the bright, individual 'sparks' which make innovation really work, there is also the additional factor of team accountability.

Often, when a select few talented individuals feel that they are the only ones carrying the load, it may

feel great to have this 'saviour' experience in the beginning, but after a while, the load might be too much to bear.

Furthermore, if others are taking a free ride in the process, then it becomes a disengaging experience.

The key then is to ensure that an accountability process is put in place so that when the initial innovative enthusiasm wanes, there is the ownership commitment to make things happen in a collaborative way.

Here are three steps for you to consider so that empowering your employees for innovation does not become an exercise in futility:

1. Define the scope of innovation into a series of key results and targets that are cascaded to every team member's role and job expectations.

2. Reward contribution openly and recognise the efforts of performers.

3. On the same token, non-performers must be reprimanded swiftly as well. However, this needs to be done in a way that protects the dignity of the individual and by giving opportunities for change and a turnaround.

In order for the above to work, managers ought to be comfortable in learning the skills of conducting accountability conversations. Without accountability, it is every employee for himself and this will lead to individual star performers, and we will never be able to win as a team. And when it comes to sustainable high performance, it is the team's contribution that matters.

There is a saying that rings true – if you want to travel fast, travel alone, but if you want to travel far, travel together.

Conclusion

Empowering employees is great, but it is never designed to be a solo activity – it must be done in the context of having a proper understanding of individual behaviour, team dynamics and management support.

Without the right focus, empowerment of employees can actually end up being disengaging for them

because it is energy produced which does not have the proper channel for expression.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Joseph's passion is to work with performance-focused leaders to capture the hearts and minds of their employees through a strengths-based and accountability-driven approach. Much of what is shared in this article comes from his work as a Gallup-certified strengths coach. If you would like to enhance the engagement level of your organisation, get in touch with us at info@leaderonomics.com for more details.

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AGENCY: The capacity to act independently, make one's own free choices and make decisions quickly. Personal agency refers to one's capability to originate and direct actions for given purposes.

DEVELOP VISION FOR SELF AND A CLEAR SENSE OF PURPOSE: Having a future-oriented picture of the end-result, as a goal to work towards.

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Key Lessons From *Move Up*

By **LIM LAY HSUAN**
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WE can't run away from culture. Wherever there is a community, there is bound to be a set of cultural norms that define the community.

Avid travellers would attest to finding out more about the culture of the people living in the region to understand why they behave and practise certain things so as not to experience a 'culture shock'.

While this book, *Move Up: Why Some Cultures Advance While Others Don't* by Clotaire Rapaille and Andrés Roemer, talks about culture in various countries and how it fosters movement of people, we will relate their research to the organisational level.

After all, it is common in job interviews to discuss company cultures to see if a potential candidate can fit well in the company.

The heart of culture

Culture is defined as how different groups of people process the same information in their own way, leading to differences between groups in behaviour, rituals, practices, attitudes and beliefs.

Where is your company culture heading at the moment? Did the culture described by the interviewer match your expectations after you joined the company?

Just as in any community, not all aspects of a culture are instantly obvious. Most times, the heart of a culture is only discovered over time, with experience and interaction with others.

The authors likened this as a vast ocean in which what we see is usually the surface of the sea. It is at the bottom of the ocean (the 'imprints') where we find underlying roots on why people behave the way they do.

These imprints include values, motivations for success, expectations of leadership and tolerance for change.

Move up by moving away

Most challenges can be tackled when we are aware of its existence, and when we are ready to move forward.

The sense of awareness helps us to personally, collectively and culturally recognise our core needs, and to work toward deliverables that we want to achieve.

This naturally empowers us as stakeholders in the organisation with a choice to choose a culture that suits us best.

So if a company culture doesn't suit us even after we've tried to understand its culture codes, it may mean that we need to move away (i.e. leave the organisation or move to a different team) for us to grow.

Of course, we can also do our best to transform its existing culture, especially if we are in the position to make such decisions in the organisation.

The authors also explored fundamental human motives as they find that what motivates us is what moves us.

The logic behind survival

According to the book, the best cultures for survival are those that are demanding, citing Singapore as an example.

Although such places don't offer the kind of lifestyle we would prefer, you have to admit that they are good at helping people survive. After all, survival has its connection with discipline, learning and being exposed to



risks.

Organisationally, cultures that encourage you to embrace learning, to be inquisitive and to think critically are cultures that are going to help you improve.

The extensive knowledge gathered from our learning culture is what will propel us forward as an organisation threading today's unpredictable business environment.

A sense of security

Humans always need to feel secure. While 'homeland security' means maintaining national borders and protecting our countries from threats, security in the organisational sense equates to how we can protect our business and stay relevant in the market.

The degree of stability of a company would then depend on how it is run. Ideally, a collaborative and innovative culture among business circles would help a company stay ahead and remain competitive.

On another aspect of security, employees need to feel that their future with an organisation is safe. In that, they often place hope that a 'responsible' organisation will look after them, should anything happen to them or the organisation.

As a reputable organisation, stakeholders have to ensure that all due diligence is adhered to, by upholding trustworthiness and integrity while maintaining a transparent channel of communication with its employees.

A taste of success

The book says that we can improve our success in two ways, either by increasing our achievements or by lowering our expectations.

More importantly, the question for you is, "What is organisational success to you?"

Do you measure organisational success in terms of 'ringgit' and 'sen'? Or do you see it in terms of the marks your organisation has left through its various social initiatives?

An example would be: if you see your organisation as virtuous, then success to you has nothing to do with power or money, but about the common good. As a leader of such an organisation, you will do what is best for your people.

Once you're able to articulate what organisational success looks like to you, you can then craft an environment that makes people feel that it is the best place for them to grow.

A way to judge success is to look at whether people develop in an open or closed system. A closed system is never going to allow people to move up.

An open system, however, will allow individuals to move with freedom (with responsibility, of course) to nurture their growth and development.

Concluding thoughts

The common culture traits behind successful organisations like Google and Apple are that they embrace diversity and integrate challenges from others.

These organisations maintain an open environment that encourages innovation and creative ideas.

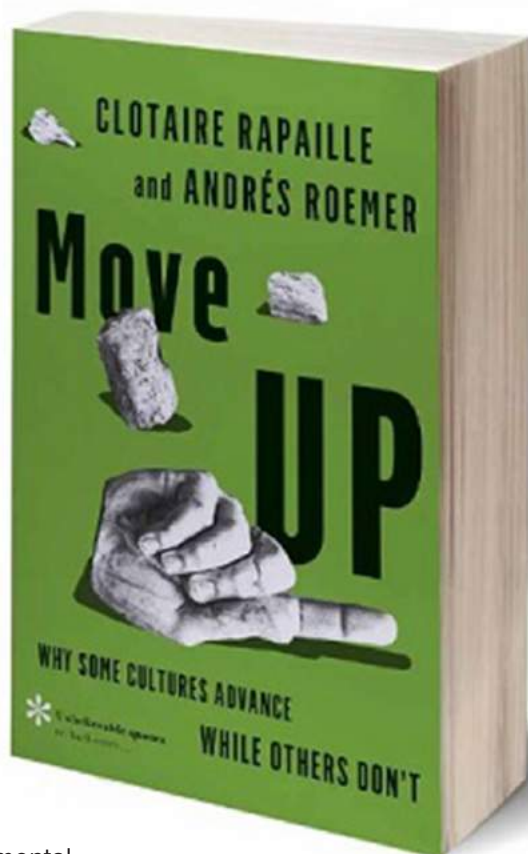
It's time to ask yourself now, "Is my organisation moving up?"

■ This article was previously published in print.



Lay Hsuan was part of the content curation team for Leaderonomics.com, playing the role of a content gatekeeper as well as ensuring the integrity of stories that came in. She was also an occasional writer for the team and was previously the caretaker for Leaderonomics social media channels. Write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com if you have read a good book recently and would like to share what you have learnt from it.

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DEVELOP VISION FOR ORGANISATION: Ability to go beyond a vision for self, combining it with a collective in order to come up with a common vision. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.



The Leaderonomics Show



Datuk Dr. Hamzah Kassim
Co-Founder and Group Managing Director of The iA Group



This video is available at bit.ly/TLSHamzahKassim. For more (200 and counting!) The Leaderonomics Show videos, check out bit.ly/TheLDRShow.

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

ONE of the main reasons we gravitate towards great leaders is that they always treat their work as a purpose and never a job – arguably, it's the secret to any leader's success.

To love what we do, to be driven by meaning, ensures that we invest everything we are and have into creating the best for ourselves and others.

From here, not only do we flourish and thrive, but so do those who work alongside us, as well as those we serve. This is the wonderful effect for any leader who views their life as a service to the greater good and benefit of others.

One such leader, who has given over 30 years of service to Malaysia, is Dr Hamzah Kassim, the co-founder and managing director of the consultancy firm, The iA Group.

Affectionately known as 'Doc Hamzah', he has worked for both government and multi-national companies, and as a serial entrepreneur, he has created and invested in a number of businesses.

Appearing on The Leaderonomics Show, Dr Hamzah talked about his journey; from studying at a liberal arts college in the United States to gaining his Ph.D. in the UK, to coming back to Malaysia in the 1980s and helping to shape the future of a young nation.

In the 1990s, he held several senior government positions overseeing strategic developments in industrial research and development, technology and innovation at a time when the country was transitioning from an agricultural-based economy to one driven by industry and innovation.

As seen from the conversation between Dr Hamzah and host, Roshan Thiran, they share common aspirations: to help build a bright future for Malaysia, one that is built on the talents of home-grown leaders who can lead the country forward as bold and creative entrepreneurs.

What does it take to be successful?

When asked what it takes to be successful in whatever field we find ourselves in, Dr Hamzah spoke about the attitude that's required to push past the challenges and obstacles that will surely arise.

It's Never Work If You Enjoy What You Do

Life lessons from Dr Hamzah Kassim

1 Be passionate

He said, "You have to know your passion, what you like to do. To me, it's not working; it's just enjoying what you're doing. I wake up in the morning and, on Saturday and Sunday, I can't stay home – I'm looking forward to Monday. On the weekend, my staff know they'll get a bunch of emails from me, and sometimes they answer!"

The passion that Dr Hamzah has for consulting – helping businesses, organisations and institutions solve complex problems and thrive – is clear when he talks about his experiences in working to help Malaysia move past its previous difficulties, and work towards realising its true potential on the world stage.

2 Be patient

He also highlighted the importance of being patient as leaders and being strategic in how we manage ambitious goals and objectives.

He said, "I would suggest to people that they really find their passion and take the long-term view – put money aside. Sometimes, if people worry about the profits of a company, you have to take a long-term view and know where your company is heading and how you create value. You also need trust. In business, you can't survive without strong relationships and trust."

3 Build networks

Dr Hamzah revealed that he often asks young people today how they go about making connections and building their network. In any business, leaders need to realise that fundamentally, any endeavour is created and shaped by people.

When we can understand the needs and desires of

those we work alongside, and if we can use our skills to be of benefit to them and create strong bonds, that's when we see the fruits of collaboration begin to blossom and grow.

4 Have a purpose

But there are more qualities required for success. "To know that what you're doing has a purpose and that you're doing good is important," according to Dr Hamzah. "The staff who come and join us are encouraged to think about what kind of value they want to create, what kind of legacy they want to leave, and how they'll be remembered – these are important issues."

5 Anticipate change

Sharing more of his valuable insights, the serial entrepreneur shared that it's crucial that leaders be able to anticipate change, prepare for opportunities as technologies evolve, and make the most of the possibilities that can arise from tackling the most pressing issues and needs of the day.

He said, "We are always moving through different stages of development and each stage requires a different set of capabilities and mentality."

You cannot bring in the old to do new things, and so I find that some of the old institutions that my generation built have reached their life cycle and need to be revamped.

"The strong capabilities of any leader or CEO includes being able to know where the next challenge is coming from, to ask 'What if...?' Sometimes, people don't like coming out of their comfort zones, but growth comes from asking tough questions."

The Leaderonomics Show



PROF. CHARLES G. PROBER
Professor of Pediatrics, Microbiology & Immunology, Stanford Medicine



This video is available at bit.ly/TLSCCharlesProber.
For more videos like this, head to bit.ly/TheLDRShow.

Lecture Halls Without Lectures

Prof Charles Prober talks about education and his secret to success

By **SANDY CLARKE**
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WHAT excites you? What would make you want to rush out of bed each morning, eager to start the day knowing that the role you play makes a difference in the world?

These are the questions that drive Stanford University professor Charles G. Prober, as he pursues the possibilities of bringing education to a wider audience, and making that education more interactive and engaging to its audience.

Appearing on The Leaderonomics Show alongside host Roshan Thiran, Prof Prober discussed his frustrations and hopes about current and future education models.

While he focused on medical education, his vision is easily applicable across all sectors and industries to help drive forward the standards of learning.

The evolution of education

One key issue according to Prof Prober – currently the senior associate dean for medical education at Stanford School of Medicine – is transforming education into more palatable mediums, where students can learn more efficiently.

He said, “I think people have trouble sitting in a lecture hall and have somebody teach them important material for long periods of time, like an hour. For most of us, our attention spans are – best case – 10 minutes before we start to lose focus, and that’s becoming even shorter.

“So, it became clear – when one looked at the lecture halls where medical students were supposed to show up, they were often quite empty because the students would actually prefer to watch videos of the lecture.

“In fact, I published a piece in the New England Journal of Medicine that talked about a new model for medical education. I think what should be happening when you’re interacting with learners is, interacting with learning. So, moving from being

the sage on the stage where you’re trying to tell a bunch of people something, to be the guide by the side – working with students in a very interactive and lively way.”

Tips for success

As a leader, Prof Prober is a respected figure in the worlds of medicine and education. The secret to his success, he reveals, is that he makes sure to keep his mind sharp by reading, exercising and – most importantly – keeping an open mind.

He said, “There’s no replacement for reading, whether it’s reading books or articles. Certainly, I keep myself up-to-date by being enriched by the colleagues around me; I get a conversation about what’s relevant, what we care about – whether it happens to be clinical care or the latest research, or education.

“I’m often at international meetings, meeting new people who think differently – and that helps to reframe my thinking while I’m trying to keep it current.

“I’m addicted to exercise, so I have to do a certain amount of exercise each morning or the day doesn’t seem to work. I’m also addicted to reading the New York Times in hard copy, but I think a person’s morning routine is highly individualised – it really depends on the person.”

And what’s the importance of looking to others for guidance on how we learn? For Prof Prober, it’s all about knowing what resonates with you.

He said, “I observe people in different leadership roles and take away from them what seems to work for me – what I regard as great strengths that they have in their success. I think it’s about hearing from others, observing others, trying what works for you and discarding that which does not work for you.

Collaboration is key

Another key area that helps to bring success, according to Prof Prober, is the ability to collaborate, to come together and work to solve a

particularly complex problem. As the old proverb says, to go faster, we go alone; to go farther, we go together.

According to Prof Prober, “Collaboration is a richness in the environment. That means, for example, having different faculties working with each other. So, having the business faculty, engineering faculty, and the medical school faculty taking on a particular type of problem. None of those particular faculty types might necessarily solve it on their own.

“There’s a bio design programme at Stanford that’s been incredibly successful, and it’s been successful because students are brought together from business, engineering, and medical school who focus on the problem from different perspectives.”

Collaboration certainly appears to be crucial, and it’s something we can all see at work across the globe, be it in politics, business, education, tech or medicine.

But in order to be able to contribute to the collective, what sort of enhancements can we look for in ourselves? How can we become the best of who we are?

As Professor Prober advised, “I’ve had the good fortune of being able to follow my passion. So, my advice to young and older people would be to identify and follow your passion. Follow it with a principled and consistent approach – I don’t think you will go wrong.

“The Nobel Laureate, Bob Dylan, said, ‘While I try my best to be just like I am, everybody wants you to be just like them.’ I would say be careful of that: be just who you are, and to thine own self, be true.”



Sandy is a former managing editor at Leaderonomics, and previously enjoyed 10 years as a journalist and broadcaster in the UK. He has been fortunate to gain valuable insights into what makes us tick, which has deepened his interests in leadership, emotions, mindfulness, and human behaviour. Get in touch with him by sending an email to editor@leaderonomics.com.

The Netflix Of Knowledge

By KARL MEHTA and ROB HARLES
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WITH 4.6 billion pieces of content produced daily, it might seem that our hunger for knowledge should be satisfied but information production and distribution is not the same as consumption, and it is not as simple as just putting information out there.

The problem is this: We are drowning in content but starving for knowledge and insights that can truly help us be more productive, collaborative and innovative.

When we want to acquire useful knowledge, we have to search the web extensively, find experts by word-of-mouth, and scroll through various poorly designed, internal document sharing systems. This method is inefficient.

There should be a better solution to help users find what they need.

Such a solution would adapt to the user's needs and learn how to make ongoing customised recommendations and suggestions through a truly interactive and impactful learning experience.

Borrowing from the entertainment industry to make learning easier

Before Netflix, Spotify, Reddit and similarly curated content apps, you had to go to numerous sources to find the shows, music, news, and other media you wished to view.

Now, the entertainment and media you actually want to consume is easily discoverable and personalised to your interests.

In many ways, the entertainment model is a good framework for knowledge management and learning development applications.

The solution for the learning and development industry would be a platform that can make education more accessible and relevant – something that allows us to absorb and spread knowledge seamlessly.

Just as Netflix delivers entertainment we want at our fingertips, the knowledge and learning we need should be delivered where and when we need it. The good news is that technologies are emerging to accomplish this.

Using artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning, solutions available can now aggregate, curate and personalise learning processes and content.

Company success depends on having a great learning culture

"An organisation's ability to learn and translate that learning into action rapidly, is the ultimate competitive advantage," says former General Electric CEO, Jack Welch.

Based on the data, it is clear that Welch is correct.

According to Institute of Corporate Productivity (IACP) CEO Kevin Oakes, in high-performing organisations, employees are four times more likely to share newly acquired knowledge with co-workers.

It's essential that employers create a learning culture – one in which knowledge is more freely acquired, absorbed, and exchanged.

To do this, we need to deal with internal and external hurdles:



- Internally, tacit knowledge is sitting inside the minds of your subject matter experts (SMEs). These experts should be easy to find and easy to engage based on their reputation and areas of expertise. There should also be a way for internal experts to publish important knowledge quickly, clearly, and share it with everyone who needs it in the organisation easily.
- Externally, there is content everywhere, but it is difficult to know which content is good, authoritative and relevant. This requires new ways to gather external content that are applicable and useful and safe for employees to consume.

A big part of the solution to these internal and external challenges is for organisations to embrace technology that does not just aggregate, curate and customise learning content but also allows for the quick creation of content.

This is how a truly efficient learning culture is built.

What the Netflix of knowledge will look like

New AI-driven platforms will deliver the content your knowledge workers need at the right time and right place. The ideal learning and development solutions will use the following to help accomplish this goal:

- **Aggregation:** Optimal solutions will gather relevant content in one place; from a company's Learning Management System (LMS) and intranet, to external providers and other preferred resources.
- **Curation:** Using AI and machine learning will be key to curate relevant and contextual content for your team at the right time and at the point of need.
- **Personalisation:** Ideal solutions will make increasingly personalised recommendations for learning content to suit your needs, based on the analysis of many factors.
- **Creation:** Your small and medium-sized businesses have tacit knowledge that must be unlocked. The best approach will allow your organisation to release and build your own content libraries quickly and conveniently.

Bringing it together

With as much as half of all current jobs going away in the next 10 to 12 years, let's adopt the fol-

lowing mission: making learning accessible and feasible for every single employee. This will be the democratisation of knowledge at your company.

With personalised micro-learning and internal and external content more accessible than ever, let's re-double our efforts to give our employees the skills and knowledge to thrive, which would have previously been time-consuming or impossible to obtain.

In the end, let's use AI and machine learning to help advance our employees' learning and career paths and not to replace them.



Karl Mehta is the founder and CEO of EdCast while Rob Harles is managing director at Accenture Interactive. EdCast is partnering with Leaderonomics Digital to revolutionise learning in Asia. To find out how your organisation can take learning to the next level, drop us an email at info@leaderonomics.com.



Whether you blame robots, artificial intelligence or automation, is it all doom and gloom in the future without jobs? Check out this article on how the proactive professional can plan for a successful career in this scenario: bit.ly/CCLfuturewithoutjob



We are firmly in the embrace of the fourth industrial revolution at work, at play and at home. It is transforming what, how and where work happens. Still think we can run a business without technology? Not a chance. Check out the article here on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/MGcontinuouslearning

INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT: IQ, EQ and CQ facilitate a person's abilities in leadership as these are fundamental areas of understanding that form a base for the development of other abilities. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

What 20 Graduates Taught Me About Young People

By **AARON TANG**
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WHEN I ran my first five-day, four-night camp for 20 young graduates, we had a series of training modules to help them learn things, plus a bunch of smart people who came by to teach. Then, we had me. I tried to teach them what I knew about work and careers.

The best thing about being a 'teacher' is that you learn a lot more than being a student. By trying to give, you actually receive. These are some lessons I learnt from them.

1 Young people worry about meaning

One of the first things we tried to impart was that young people need to be flexible. Just because someone is a finance graduate, he shouldn't expect to work in finance, or a bank.

I know. My degree is in electrical engineering, and here I am trying to be a teacher and a writer.

However, I realised most of them were **already** open to the idea of exploring other fields. What they were afraid of was getting a job that was meaningless to them.

I had graduates tell me that if they couldn't find a job in their field – they'd be willing to do something totally different, like teach children in remote areas of the country. As long as it was meaningful.

I was touched to hear that so early in their careers, they were already thinking about the **'why'**. Plus, I didn't hear any complaints about low pay or hard work.

Sometimes the older people say that young people today are spoilt. Maybe they're just way ahead of us.

2 Young people learn better by doing instead of listening

If you think staying awake during an after-lunch meeting is difficult, try keeping a class of 20-somethings awake during an after-lunch class.

I knew that it would be difficult, but I didn't realise **how** difficult it could be.

Granted, I'm not the best teacher in the world, but I found that beyond a certain point, the only thing that could keep people awake were activities. More activities; less talking.

At the end of the five days, when we looked at evaluations, hard data proved it too. Participants were most engaged while doing activity-based modules, not modules where someone (no matter who the person is) took the stage and 'preached'.

3 Young people love authenticity

Over the five-day camp, we had many different people taking the stage.

Some of our speakers were high-ranking people in both the government and private sectors. Predictably, they spoke very well.

But we had other less-accomplished, young speakers who came and spoke too. Despite not having a lot of experience, speaking ability or charisma, it was inspiring to see how these graduates connected with the speakers.

The crucial element? Our guest speakers were authentic when sharing their personal stories. It made all of us laugh and cry together.

For a presentation to be successful, the presenter must know what he's talking about and be able to connect with the audience.

It's not enough for a speaker to be smart; then it just feels like he's talking down to us. He needs to be **real** too – that makes us **feel** something.

4 Young people feel small sometimes

During one of our breaks, I commended one of the graduates for doing a good job.

"Really?" he asked, "I felt I was worse than the others."

It was a valid concern. He had struggled with presenting in English. If we compared him to the other presenters, he would have ranked lowly.

But I wasn't congratulating him; I was encouraging him.

Throughout the camp, he had been one of the quieter ones. Perhaps it was because he was naturally shy and English wasn't his first language.

It's easy to feel small, because the world always compares you to everyone else. The world wants to sort out its winners and losers, and to keep us competing. But it's a losing battle. There's always someone smarter, faster and better than you.

That is why I tell young people this: Just worry about making yourself 1 per cent better every day. The only person you **really** have to compare yourself to is yourself **yesterday**.

■ The full article was previously published in print.



Aaron is the founder of mr-stingy.com and is an expert in personal finance, money management and cryptocurrency. Leaderonomics Youth designs and delivers fun and engaging camps, workshops, school clubs, and conventions for youths between the ages of 8 and 18. For more information, email youth@leaderonomics.com.



JAMIE ANDREW

Leading from The Edge

Despite losing his hands and his feet in a climbing accident at the age of 29, Jamie Andrew has achieved the seemingly impossible: running marathons, completing an Ironman triathlon, skiing, snowboarding, sailing, and of course mountain climbing.

Jamie has inspired people across more than 30 countries through his 13 years of speaking experience where he tells his story with great passion, sincerity, and humour.

As a regular presenter for The International Institute of Management Development in Switzerland on several programmes, including the hugely popular High Performance Leadership course, Jamie uses his experiences as a mountaineer in relation to principles of successful business practice. His sessions are gripping, inspiring, and uplifting – addressing the following topics:

**LEADERSHIP | MANAGING CHANGE | RESILIENCE |
MOTIVATION | GOAL SETTING | TEAMWORK |
ACCEPTING CHALLENGE**

Book a session with Jamie Andrew for your organisation today!

Available dates: 28 March – 8 April 2019

By LOUISA DEVADASON

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... our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.

– M. Scott Peck

I don't know about you, but my life hasn't entirely gone according to 'my plan'. In fact, this very moment in my life looks nothing like I had envisioned it to be 10 years ago.

Is that a bad thing? Have I failed at accomplishing my goals? I've often wondered.

The last decade has been both harrowing and somehow liberating. I began my foundation programme at age 18, like many others my age, with a million ideas and dreams.

However, after a series of illnesses and degenerative disc disease, I began to feel like everything was derailing. I returned to class in-between stints in the hospital, feeling lost and weary.

I struggled, trudging behind in my course content and not being able to form deeper connections with my peers due to my absence.

I no longer felt confident that the subjects I had chosen were right for me.

One day, I said to myself, "Maybe I should take a hiatus and work as a barista till I have an epiphany about where I'm headed". The java-junkie in me swooped in to the rescue. Coffee has, after all, elevated most of my days.

No opportunity wasted

I began fervently applying for jobs at various cafés, percolating with anticipation, but it was taking a lot longer than I thought it would to achieve barista status. In the meantime, I sought out the fellowship of others for support and company during my recovery.

At one such event, I met someone who gave me an opportunity to train as a behavioural therapist for an early intervention centre for autism spectrum disorder. It sounded so uncharacteristic and so unlike anything I could have planned for myself. Yet, the more I mulled over it, the more serendipitous this opportunity became.

I began training and it was an education unlike any I had received before. Working filled several gaps my mainstream schooling hadn't and I felt stretched beyond the boundaries of all that was familiar to me.

Every day was mentally and emotionally challenging as I had to step out of a shell of self-consciousness and engage the children.

Crossing over

The two years I spent doing this gave me purpose and direction.

I began to understand the important role social engagement plays in my own self-fulfilment. Values and visions started to take form or be reinforced. I understood a significant fragment of myself; I was designed for community and social exchange.

My health began to worsen in my second year and the physical demands of my work was detrimental to

Even The Best-Laid Plans Can Often Go Awry

my spine. I hadn't yet completed my foundation course, so I took some time to rest and focus on completing it privately.

I still felt torn between choices for my undergraduate programmes. My time studying Psychology as a foundation subject had ignited curiosity and passion for the field, but part of me felt Economics, the other subject I was studying, would be the safer and more acceptable career choice.

I was blessed with choices but cursed with having to choose.

I chose what I loved most about working, i.e. the fulfilment of seeing people progress and be elevated. I chose Psychology – an applied science that focuses on the mind and behaviour.

University was a change of pace for me and I was anxious. It was a new style of learning, unlike my earlier years at school and my time working. It was also a change of lifestyle; my time had to be managed differently as work meant specific time allocated to my tasks but university meant being accountable for how I planned and used my time.

As I expanded my mind and became more enthralled by what I was learning, I began to share my new findings and was made aware of how little people knew about the field and the aversion many had to what the field does.

Many people think it's entirely philosophical and theoretical or just common sense while others only associate it with mental illness and Freudian psychoanalysis. What astounded me further was the apprehension people still had toward mental illnesses and the impression that was still held against those experiencing mental illnesses.

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.

– Philo

My new life

My three years studying psychology have been a revelation but not unintentional. It has stimulated my own self-evaluation and introspection. I went into this degree with a simple understanding of it, but it has altered my mental schematics and challenged my ideals and values.

This isn't the experience of every psychology student.

We all take away different things from any one event. My time in psychology has allowed me to embrace that diversity. Change is hard but harder for some who value concrete ideas and find it crazy living in a grey world.

I began my study, fixated on becoming a psychologist because that's what I believed the end goal of completing this degree should be.

Over time, I have had new ideas about the career and life I want. Maybe, I still want to be a psychologist but is that all I can do? Is a career the only way I can



find fulfilment and contribute to society?

All I know is that I do not want to stagnate. I want to grab exciting new opportunities and live a life filled with diverse experiences, connected to others, and affecting lives.

I am drawn to a more lattice model of career management, a multi-directional, flexible and expansive model that shifts one's mindset from the chasm of Industrial Age ideology to the knowledge economy. I am in the process of creating the person that I want to be and developing skills that I want to have; living and reinforcing values I feel strongly about.

The road from here

Visions don't change; they are only refined. Plans rarely stay the same, and are scrapped or adjusted as needed. Be stubborn about the vision, but flexible with your plan.

– John C. Maxwell

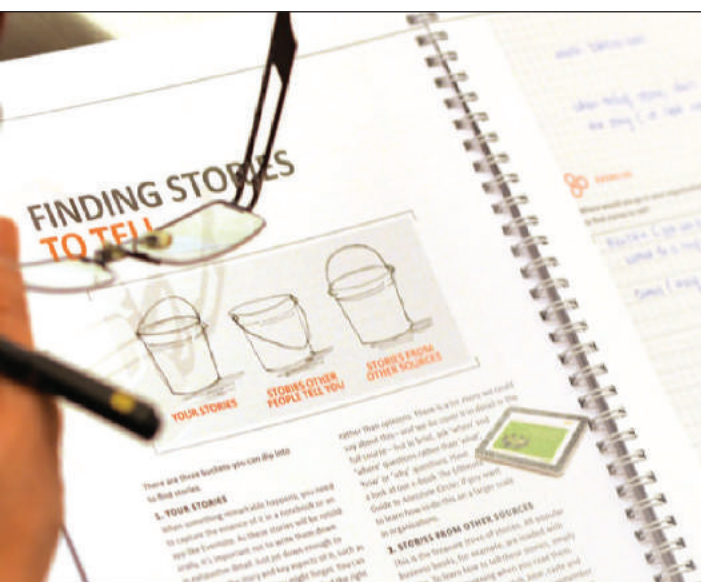
I have no guarantee what the next few years will look like or exactly where I'll find myself, but I'm anxious and earnest. I will go where curiosity and opportunity take me. I love to write and bake, and I love what I am learning.

Finding joy in learning gives you so much to love and wonder. What I do know for sure, is my vision; to innovate, learn and empower communities.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Louisa is currently pursuing a Masters of Development Practice overseas, majoring in community development. She is an editorial associate and freelance writer with Leaderonomics. An extrovert who loves the outdoors; she thinks change is exciting and should be embraced. Chat with her by emailing louisa.allycyn@leaderonomics.com.



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Leaderonomics
The Science of Building Leaders

Every Step You Take

**Role modelling for
parents: Who do your
children look up to?**



By **JEAN SELVAM**
editor@leaderonomics.com

WE often hear about the importance of parents being good role models for their children. However, being a parent brings with it challenges and hurdles. At times, mums and dads can feel like they're not doing a good enough job.

Some parents wonder whether their children are actually aware of their presence in the home and in their lives instead of viewing them as just financial providers and housemates. But then again, don't most parents feel this stress and experience guilt-driven feelings at some point in their lives?

My guess is that most of them do, but many feel alone in their parenting struggles. Therefore, wouldn't it be great if parents have role models to look up to for inspiration and for support? I think, ultimately, many parents do not want to feel alone in doing one of the hardest jobs on earth.

So, who are these role models?

This is certainly a tough question to answer mainly because there is no perfect parent. Even as adults, our role models are either our own parents, close friends or sometimes even celebrities! But let's forget all of these celebrities and fictional characters for a moment; get back to basics, and look at our own parents for inspiration.

Not everyone is fortunate enough to have a great relationship with their parents. Regardless of a positive or negative relationship, there is always something to take from their teachings or their outlook on life. You may not realise this until you see them playing with your children or offering advice on how to look after them.

Remember the things that your parents have inspired you to do, think or believe. How many of those values have you held on to till your adult years, even now as parents?

Another significant group of people in our lives are our friends. Many of us have friends who have become our most trusted confidants over the years. These could be friends whom we've known since we were in school or college, or even from work.

Who better to learn from than people we trust and

who are a big part of our lives? So why not look to them for support, and maybe even share our struggles of maintaining a 'sane' work-life balance.

I have often encouraged parents to meet up with their friends and have conversations or discussions regarding their struggles. It can be a good outlet for anyone to have a safe space to vent, feel reassured and most importantly, know that you are not being judged.

Now what about famous parents?

Is it a good idea to look to celebrity parents as role models? As we often tell our youth, there is good and bad to having celebrities as role models. We have to always be cautious of the culture, lifestyle, traditions, and many other aspects of their lives that will be different from our lives.

However, it could be comforting to know that regardless of their fame and fortune, they are still just parents struggling to maintain a good work-life balance.

Many celebrity parents have often discussed about their struggles as parents. For example, Gwen Stefani, a singer and mum of three boys, has said that, "Finding that balance between work and family is the hardest thing I've ever done, by far. I've always worked really hard, and the hardest thing I've ever done is have kids! All of it – everything from getting up in the morning to trying to be consistent to trying to have the right feelings. But, of course, the rewards are so great."

Actor Will Smith, a father of three children, discussed the strain of maintaining a good work-life balance by saying that, "It is really something that will happen in time. And you'll realise that you're either really committed to having a relationship, or you're really committed to coming up (in your career). At some point, one or the other is going to have to suffer."

Even the former President of the United States Barack Obama, who is a father of two girls, has expressed that, "Too often, these issues (caring for the family) are thought of as women's issues, which I guess means you can kind of scoot them aside a little bit. But anything that makes life harder for women makes life harder for families, and makes life harder for children. This is about you too, men."

These famous parents and many others can cer-

tainly be good role models because they are open in sharing about their thoughts and difficulties in raising a family.

Nonetheless, I believe that the most important role model to look up to is yourself! You work hard, you care for them, you make them laugh and you might even have an interesting hobby. All of these traits make you an inspirational figure in your children's eyes as you can do so much that they can't – and teaching them these things only makes them admire you more.

Keep this in mind the next time you start doubting yourself as a mum or dad. Remember that your children look up to you and think you're brilliant (most of the time!).

Concluding thoughts

If you're a working parent, you know all too well the struggle to balance your never-ending personal to-do-list with your never-ending work emails. While you might really love your job (or just really need two incomes), finding a way to make it to every meeting and every game, dance recital, and parent-teacher conference is enough to send your parent-guilt into overdrive.

Therefore, to give you a boost of confidence and faith, remember to be a top role model yourself. Always remind yourself that you can be pretty great too!

■ *This article was previously published in print.*



Jean enjoys working with children and youth because they inspire her to be a joyous and courageous person. If you have any parenting tips you would like to share with us, send an email to editor@leaderonomics.com.

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ROLE MODELS: Role models provide learning and inspiration which help individuals define themselves. Individuals choose their role models and the qualities which they wish to emulate. Individuals judge themselves against the standards that role models set, and seek to emulate them. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

Leaders Are Made, Not Born

Children who become great leaders have parents who teach them 8 things

By **JEFF HADEN**

editor@leaderonomics.com

ALL the extremely successful people I know – and all the great leaders I know – are exceptionally good at persuading other people to follow them. Maybe that's why Mark Cuban has said that knowing how to sell is the one skill everyone needs to be successful.

But being persuasive doesn't mean you have to manipulate or pressure other people.

At its best, persuasion is the ability to effectively describe the benefits and logic of an idea to gain agreement – and that means we all need to be more persuasive.

And that's why the art of persuasion is critical in any business or career – and why successful people are extremely good at persuading others. So, how can you teach your children to become more persuasive in their arguments and, in turn, become effective leaders in the future?

1 Teach them to start with small 'wins'

Research has shown that getting people to agree with you has an enduring effect, even if only over the short term.

Teach your children to focus not on jumping right to the end of their arguments but to start with statements or premises with which they know their audience will agree. Build a foundation for further agreement.

Remember, a body in motion tends to remain in motion, and that also applies to a head nodding in agreement.

2 Teach them not to be afraid to take strong stands

You would assume data and reasoning always win the day, right? Nope.

Research shows humans prefer cockiness to expertise. We naturally assume confidence equates with skill.

Even the most sceptical people tend to be at least partly persuaded by a confident speaker.

In fact, we prefer advice from a confident source, even to the point that we will forgive a poor track record.

So teach your children to be bold. Teach them to stop saying "I think" or "I believe". Teach them to stop adding qualifiers to their speech.

Tell them: "If you think something will work, just say it will work. If you believe something will work, just say it will work."

Teach your children to stand behind their opinions – even if they are just opinions – and to let their enthusiasm show. People will naturally gravitate to their side.

3 Teach them to adjust their rate of speech

There's a reason behind the 'fast-talking salesman' stereotype – in certain situations, talking quickly works. Other times, not so much.

Here's what one study indicates – if your audience is likely to disagree, speak faster; if your audience is likely to agree, speak slower.

Why? When your audience is inclined to disagree with you, speaking faster gives them less time to form their own counter-arguments, giving you a better chance of persuading them.

When your audience is inclined to agree with you, speaking slowly gives them time to evaluate your arguments and factor in a few of their own thoughts.

The combination of your reasoning plus their initial bias means they are more likely to, at least in part, persuade themselves.

In short, if your children are preaching to the choir, teach them to speak slowly; if not, they should speak quickly.

And if their audience is neutral or apathetic, teach them to speak quickly so they will be less likely to lose other people's attention.



4 Teach them to know their audience

One of my supervisors used to frustrate me to no end. I was young and enthusiastic and would burst into his office with an awesome idea, lay out all my facts and figures, and wait breathlessly for him to agree with me. And he would disagree.

Every. Freaking. Time.

Finally – it took way longer than it should have – I realised that he wasn't the problem. My approach was.

His personality meant he was the type that wanted time to think. He liked to process.

By demanding an immediate answer, I put him on the defensive, which meant he went with the safe choice – saying no.

So I tried a different approach.

"I have an idea that I think makes sense," I said.

"But I feel sure there are things I'm missing. If I run it by you, could you think about it for a day or two and then tell me what you think?"

He loved that approach. One, it showed I valued his wisdom and experience. Two, it showed I didn't just want him to agree – I genuinely wanted his opinion.

And, most importantly, it gave him time to process my idea.

Teach your children not to push for instant agreement if someone's personality style makes that unlikely.

And teach them not to ask for thought and reflection if their audience loves to make quick decisions and move on.

5 Teach them not to be afraid to be (appropriately) 'unprofessional'

Cursing for no reason is just cursing. But say a team needs to immediately pull together. Tossing in an occasional – and heartfelt – curse word can actually help instil a sense of urgency because it shows you care.

In short, teach your children to be themselves. Authenticity is always more persuasive.

If they feel strongly enough to want to slip in a mild curse word, they should feel free (in the right setting, of course).

Research shows they're likely to be a little more persuasive.

6 Teach them to focus on describing positive outcomes

While it's tempting to use scare tactics, positive-outcome statements tend to be more persuasive.

Researchers hypothesise that most people respond negatively to feeling bullied into changing a behaviour.

So, if your children are trying to create a change, tell them to focus on sharing the positives of that change. They want to take their audience to a better place, not tell their audience what to avoid.

7 Teach them to share the good and the bad

According to University of Illinois professor Daniel O'Keefe, sharing an opposing viewpoint or two is more persuasive than sticking solely to your argument.

Why? Very few ideas or proposals are perfect. Your audience knows that. They know there are other perspectives and potential outcomes.

So teach your children to meet objections head on.

Tell them to talk about the things their audience may already be considering.

Teach them to discuss potential negatives and show how they will mitigate or overcome those problems.

Teach your children to talk about the other side of the argument – and then do their best to show why they're still right.

8 Teach them to not just say they're right

Persuasive people understand how to frame and deliver their message but, most importantly, they embrace the fact that the message is what matters most.

Teach your children to be clear, concise, and to the point.

Teach them to win the day because their data, reasoning, and conclusions are beyond reproach.

What's true for your children applies to all of us – the art of persuasion should simply be the icing on an undeniably logical cake.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Jeff Haden is a speaker, ghostwriter and author of *The Motivation Myth: How Highly Successful People Really Set Themselves Up to Win*. To engage with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

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MENTOR TO OTHERS: Willingness to guide others that want my help – genuinely interested in the betterment of others around me. This is part of Leaderonomics' *Science of Building Leaders*, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

The Importance Of Compassion In Leadership

By **NAZ BEHESHTI**
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ARTICLES and keynotes about the importance of empathy and compassion are common in the business world of late. These qualities are universally acknowledged to be essential in building a winning organisational culture.

However, you will never see compassionate leadership in popular lists of the leadership styles one can aspire to. Why is that?

Most of those lists have evolved from the Situational Leadership Model developed by Ken Blanchard and Paul Hersey. Their premise is that no single leadership style works all the time.

Depending on the situation, you might need to focus on a directing, coaching, supporting or delegating leadership style.

A supporting leadership style could involve compassion, but in this model, it refers to providing employees with the right tools to get the job done.

Some would argue that coaching should also involve compassion, but there are plenty of notable coaches who would not be described as compassionate.

Compassion as a competitive advantage

One of the leading voices in support of the importance of compassion in business is LinkedIn CEO, Jeff Weiner, who describes himself as a practitioner of compassionate management.

He said it took him a while to appreciate the importance of compassion, and he credits the Dalai Lama's book, *The Art of Happiness*, for this insight.

In today's frantic business world, one marked by limited attention spans and the constant threat of disruptive change, efficiency is seen as a cardinal virtue. It is easy to dismiss getting bogged down in the messy world of emotions as a distraction.

Compassion need not slow you down. In fact, it can have the opposite effect.

"The long-term value of a company is based on the speed and quality of its decision-making," Weiner says. He credits the compassionate ethos of LinkedIn with its ability to 'make important decisions in minutes or hours that some companies debate for months'.

Compassion engenders trust, which in turn facilitates ease of communication and decision-making. Cultivating compassion in your company is an upfront investment that pays off handsomely in the long run.

Google's Project Aristotle

Google loves data. They also recognise the critical value of teamwork.

A few years ago, they embarked on an ambitious internal study to try to decode the secret to great teams. (The name of the project is a tribute to Aristotle's quote that 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.)



At first, Google was at a loss to explain what makes for great teams. A breakthrough came when they began to consider the idea of psychological safety, a concept first developed by Amy Edmondson of the Harvard Business School.

Although they were able to capture some of their insights in charts and graphs – they are Google after all – Project Aristotle ultimately concluded that what separates great teams from the rest of the pack are simple human qualities. These qualities are enshrined in a team's group norms, its unwritten rules of conduct.

Google found that compassion and empathy facilitate teamwork by encouraging risk-taking and making it easy for everyone to have their say. Trust may be a difficult quality to quantify, but it clearly contributes to the bottom line.

Compassionate leadership starts at the top

It is impossible to create a culture of compassion unless CEOs and top executives take the lead.

They must not only model compassion in their own behaviour, but also deliberately and mindfully cultivate

the group norms that make compassion and empathy a reality and not just words in a mission or values statement.

An organisational culture with compassion at its core is marked by several key qualities:

- **Risk-taking:** You cannot soar in a competitive environment if you are not willing to be bold and take big risks. A culture of compassion and trust serves as a safety net that allows for high-wire risk-taking and breakthrough innovation.
- **Conversational turn-taking:** This is a critical indicator of group psychological safety. In teams bound by trust, conversation is never dominated by the same people every time. The baton is passed freely around the room, generously and without ego, allowing each voice to be heard.
- **Vulnerability and authenticity:** Sometimes we make a false distinction between work and the rest of our lives. We feel we need to adopt a work face that is apart from our true self. Great teams transcend those barriers and allow people to bring their whole self with all its richness and complication into the workplace. Being authentic and vulnerable cultivates deeper and more meaningful connection.

To sum it up

We must move beyond the outdated notion that compassion is somehow soft.

Evolved business leaders realise that superior organisational culture comes down to qualities that cannot be quantified, but whose importance cannot be overestimated.

The role of compassionate leadership is one we should eagerly and unapologetically embrace.



Naz Beheshti is an executive wellness coach and consultant, and the founder of Prananz Inc. She empowers leaders to tap into their highest potential for creativity, vitality, and success through mindset and behaviour change. To connect with her, send an email to editor@leaderonomics.com.



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



Big picture thinking is one of the nine pillars of workplace compassion. It's the ability to keep the bigger vision of successful leadership without getting caught up in negative dialogues and excuses that rise with challenges at work. Check out how you can think in a broader perspective here: bit.ly/IJbigpicture



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Shift Your Mindset

Simple changes to help your leadership evolve

By JESSICA THIEFELS
editor@leaderonomics.com

A great leader is always evolving, taking cues from employees, themselves, and the world around them to improve and grow. This active evolution in leadership is even more important now than ever before, which Drea Zigarmi explains in a recent article on *Chief Learning Officer*, a multimedia publication focused on the importance, benefits and advancements of a properly trained workforce.

"Today's leader cannot afford to operate with a default style of leadership. They need to be more intentional about how they lead, moment by moment, remaining flexible and in tune with the various phases the people they are attempting to influence are going through in pursuit of their key objectives."

Mindset is an important area of growth for leaders because it affects how they interact with others, how they define success, and how they manage setbacks. This year, take a look at your mindset and consider how you can shift to become a better leader.

From fixed mindset to growth mindset

Leaders with a fixed mindset believe that we are all born with the talents we have, but worse, that those talents should come naturally – they don't need to be improved or worked on.

This means, "failure is deemed as an event which calls into question their true intelligence, resulting in these individuals experiencing significant struggles with setbacks or mistakes," suggests Purpose Linked Consulting chief operating officer (COO) Alaina Love.

As a leader, you need to be the example; if a simple setback sends you reeling into self-doubt, you'll struggle to empower your team to take chances and make mistakes themselves. Yet taking chances is at the heart of any successful business.

"What I didn't realise then but live by now, is that risk-taking is essential in leadership. Taking risks involves moving forward despite fear and/or uncertainty. Until you experience discomfort, real growth and development do not exist," says Perfect Time SHP LLC chief executive officer (CEO) Dr Sharon H. Porter.

That's why having a growth mindset as a leader sets you, your team, and the business up for success.

From my goals to our goals

There's a certain amount of pride you have as a leader. It may even be what has gotten you to where you are today: a top-performing, successful manager or executive in a great company.

Yet, when you keep everything on your plate so you can prove that you can handle it all, something else happens: you're also the last one standing when something fails. Not to mention, your team is anything but engaged because they don't feel connected to the projects they're working on.

As you switch from a 'my goals to our goals' mindset, there's one framework to consider: servant leadership.

Reflections from a Reluctant Servant Leader explains that traditional leaders often crave this command and control 'barking, yelling, pointing fingers and telling everyone around you what to do'. Because of this, when things go wrong, no one is there to take the fall with you; you've made all the decisions, without input from anyone else.

As a servant leader who shares in the same goals with his or her employees, you share in both the wins and the losses together. Reflections from a Reluctant Servant Leader continues, "When you're a servant leader, the people around you are happy to share in the blame. They feel some responsibility for any failure to succeed or perform, and they're only too happy to speak with optimism about their plans to recover, to create a new or better solution."

Make the change: Set a meeting at the start of every month or quarter to run through team goals as a group. This is an easy way to start shifting your mindset from mine to ours. Better yet, encourage the team to share feedback on goals or add more to the list – prioritising together truly makes the goals feel like theirs.

From sage on the stage to guide on the side

These terms are often used in the education world about how to best lead a classroom of students, but they can both be applied to leadership in the business world as well. The idea is simple: rather than teaching to your students (employees), use your knowledge and experience to guide them to the answers.

In business, this allows you to develop better employees; ones who are self-sufficient and empowered to do their job well. Rather than barking orders, you let the employee figure it out, using their own strengths to be successful. The key to this is making yourself available to be the guide; when employees need your assistance, you're there to help them along.

Make the change: There are a number of ways to become a guide and Partners in Leadership recommend a few ideas that you can use to cultivate this attitude company-wide: Provide mentorship wherever possible, incorporate feedback, and encourage peer coaching.

From decision-maker to discussion-facilitator

How often do you have discussions about on-going projects with your employees? Rather than simply asking for a status update or handing out an assignment, do you have a discussion about the progress or their thoughts on the assignment at hand?

The Center for Management and Organization Effectiveness says that asking for status updates rather than having a discussion is often where leaders go wrong.

"Another mistake that many business leaders make is not allowing for open, timely dialogue that travels up and down the organisation. Communication often

“
Make the change:
Start an initiative or
policy within your team
or the organisation – call it
something like 'Figure Out the
Failures', where everyone makes
a point to dive into the 'failure'
or mistake and find out why it
happened and how to improve
in the future. This goes for you
as much as it does for
your employees.”

comes only from the top down, leaving lower-level employees powerless to influence their work environment. Establishing better communication practices can help your employees feel empowered to grow and contribute to the big picture."

Similar to the idea of being a guide rather than a 'sage', going from decision-maker to discussion-facilitator puts your employees in the driver's seat. Empowered employees are more engaged, and therefore more effective, making this a critical mindset shift.

Make the change: When holding your monthly or quarterly goal meetings, make time for brainstorming and discussion. This is the perfect time to open communication, hear feedback, ideas, and wins and losses, all of which will affect how goals are handled in the coming weeks or months.

Make a mindset shift this year

If you're dedicated to being a leader, you must also be dedicated to shifting your mindset towards one that will make everyone most effective and empowered. Consider where your tactics could be shifted to drive growth within your team, yourself, and the business as a whole.



Jessica Thiefels is the founder and CEO of Jessica Thiefels Consulting, a content marketing agency. She has been writing for more than 10 years and has been featured in top publications such as *Forbes*, *Entrepreneur* and *Fast Company*. She also regularly contributes to *Virgin*, *Business Insider*, *Glassdoor*, *Score.org* and more. Get in touch with her by emailing editor@leaderonomics.com.



When most people hear the word 'change', they either say 'yeah, yeah, change is the new norm... blah, blah, blah' or they roll their eyes at the 'how we all need to change' rhetoric they are about to hear. Let's explore the reasons people resist change on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/CCresistingchange



There's a fine line between confidence and arrogance, but it's a line that effective leaders dare not cross if they want to be a leader worth following. Check out this article to learn more: bit.ly/confidenceorarrogance

DRIVE CHANGE: Ability to take the initiative and overcome obstacles in order to drive yourself and your team successfully through a change initiative. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

7 Non-Verbal Cues That Ooze Confidence



By **TAMARA JAYNE**
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WHETHER for work or interview, these cues are good to master to exude confidence in your conversations or presentations.

1 Have a firm handshake

It shows confidence and conveys that you are genuine. A limp handshake implies half-heartedness and disinterest towards the person you are shaking hands with.

2 Maintain balanced eye contact

If you're anxious about looking at someone in the eye, focus on their nose or between their eyes. They won't be able to tell that you are not making eye contact because you're still looking at them.

However, too much eye contact can seem intimidating. Communication experts recommend intervals of eye contact lasting four to five seconds.

3 Lean

When you lean your body slightly towards the person, you show that you are actively listening to what he or she has to say. When you angle your body away from the speaker, it can imply that you don't care about the situation or conversation.

4 Smile

A genuine smile speaks a thousand words. But be careful not to fake it because it is easy to spot a fake smile.

5 Be attentive to tone

A person's tone of voice can change the whole meaning of a sentence. "I am happy to do that for you," can be heard as genuine joy or utter displeasure depending on the tone you use.



6 Be mindful of personal space

How close or how far you stand from the other person can also convey a message. Moving too close to someone can be an invasion of personal space and may make the other person feel uncomfortable.

An appropriate distance for conversation would be if you are able to stretch out your arm and shake the other person's hand.

7 Take extra care of your appearance

Choice of colour, hairstyle, and clothing, can convey different messages.

Experts advise you to do your homework and dress appropriately for a job interview because first impressions do play a role.

For example, a person's attire for an interview with a fashion magazine company will differ from that of a law firm.

Dressing appropriately for the particular job shows your prospective employers that you are serious about it.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Tamara is a former assistant editor and writer at Leaderonomics. She loves thought-provoking conversations over cups of tea. If she is not writing, you might find her hiking up a mountain in search of a new waterfall to explore.



Dressing appropriately for the particular job shows your prospective employers that you are serious about it.

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Living In The Moment

Basing your choices on the here and now

By RIDDHI PARIKH MEHTA
editor@leaderonomics.com

OUR careers span over several decades; our lives even beyond that. As a young five, 10 or 15-year-old, we may have had our choices made for us. And as we progress through our teenage years and enter into adulthood, we begin making our own choices.

How do you make choices?

My mantra is to 'live in the moment'. However, this didn't come naturally to me.

As far as decision-making processes go, you name it, I've done it. In the past, I would take a sheet of white paper and a Sharpie (sometimes even multiple colours) to make my list of pros and cons. Familiar?

Then, I 'advanced' to doing scenario planning – the really elaborate ones with different colours and Post-It notes. I kept trying out various other techniques; however, the outcome of those evaluations lacked soul.

While these techniques were hugely helpful, and I still use them; I eventually realised that there was no one technique which could decide for me which choice to make.

Embrace the present

Upon reflection, it dawned on me that how well or poorly I had lived in my current moment, helped me make a choice of my liking. How fast I moved, or how stuck I stayed was about how well I embraced my current moment.

It's succinctly captured while I was in conversation with Mudit Mathur, global leader at Johnson & Johnson Limited:

"The fastest that you can move is by being in the moment. The speed of flow comes from being in the moment. One can either be stuck in the past or wait for the future, both are in action. Being in the past or thinking of the future, are both positions we hold in our head. These are stationary positions. Being in the moment and acting is the fastest route because you actually make progress."

Here are two examples of how I choose to live in the moment and how it shapes my choices:

Extra time: As a consultant, your job is to budget time for each project. However, there are times when a confirmed project gets cancelled.

Choice dilemma: Get angry, upset, brood, or live in the moment? My goal is to live in the moment, so I use that unexpected extra time to either undertake an e-learning course, meet friends whom I haven't seen in a long time, indulge in a spa, or if I am extremely lucky, then a spe-



If I live my life as per my choices, I won't ever blame anyone else if something goes wrong. Also, I will know for sure that I did all that I wanted to and that I have lived life on my terms (even whims) and that for me, is a life lived with full gusto.

– Quote from *Jab We Met*

cial dinner date with my husband.

If I have pending work like writing, client meetings, mentoring, etc. then, these could also be fitted into this extra time. It's a win!

Difficult client: Difficult clients come with the territory. The assignment is wonderful, the opportunity to learn and contribute is immense. However, the client is either disorganised, not committed to the purpose, or may compromise on commitments made.

Choice dilemma: To take the business or not to take it? I decided to connect the dilemma to my personal values.

The outcome: if it's a value conflict then don't take the business. If it's a style difference (less organised, too much last-minute decisions etc.) then take it on. By connecting a dilemma or decision to my values, which I live out every moment; I keep moving forward.

In conclusion

When we make our choices by living in the moment and based on our beliefs, we become the outcome of

our choices. We hold no regrets, but learn from our lessons. It's another way to keep moving forward.

This quote from *Jab We Met*, starring Kareena Kapoor sums it up best:

As we begin a new year and make new beginnings, make your choices based on what is presented to you at the moment.



Riddhi Parikh Mehta has over 15 years experience in various business roles including talent management, human resources, sales and business development. She is a director of Leaderonomics India, helping organisations develop their leaders as well as support the growth of leaders of all ages across India. She is a trainer, facilitator and leadership development specialist who is passionate about building leaders at every level. To engage with Riddhi, send us an email at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Communication Lessons From The Mahabharata

By ADIL MALIA
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I am re-reading the *Mahabharata* through the three volumes of the Amar Chitra Katha gifted to me by an extremely bright young friend, one whom I am mentoring.

Interestingly, I believe that the basic principles for effective communication were actually laid out in the crucial conversation between Rishi Krishna-Dwaipayana (Ved Vyasa) and Ganesha – The Remover Of Obstacles, who was appointed as the scribe by Brahma the creator, to write the *Mahabharata*.

As the story goes, Vyasa pays obeisance to Ganesha as he invites him to be the scribe of the poem he's composed.

However, Lord Ganesha acquiesces to be the scribe as ordained by Brahma, on one condition he would write down the story only if Ved Vyasa narrated it without pausing. If he paused at any

moment, Ganesha would stop writing and walk away from the project.

Vyasa agrees, but lays down a counter condition in return Ganesha would not inscribe any narrative until he fully understood and had total clarity of the meaning of what he wrote.

With these two agreed conditions, the writing of the longest recorded poem in the world began. The epic poem – *Mahabharata* – has 220,000 verses, 100,000 slokas (couplets) and 1.8 million words.

Despite the sheer magnitude of this poem, the deep meaning of the *Mahabharata* has been so effectively relayed from generation to generation in a such a succinct and lucid manner, purely because of these two communication principles:

- brevity and preciseness
- total clarity and understanding

Most familial, social, and corporate conflicts, in my experience, are generally outcomes of these two counts:

1. Communications being long-winded, muddled, not precise and thus incohesive; and
2. Things inscribed without understanding the deep meaning, exact intent, and clear implications of the narrative, on purpose or unintentionally

A closing thought

As I pondered on this, I just thought of sharing my reflection with my friends refreshing revisions of the forgotten lessons for effectiveness and success from the *Mahabharata*.

Who says coaches don't need to learn? Who says reverse mentoring does not work? Thanks to my young friend, I count myself lucky to have both.



Adil Malia is the CEO and managing partner of the FiRM. He has worked with various companies such as Godrej, GE, Al-Futtaim, Coca-Cola and Essar in India and overseas. To connect with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

By **DR MATTHEW CHODKOWSKI**
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If you've ever clicked on an article promising to reveal the 'Top Ten Traits Of Great Leaders', you're not alone.

When most people think of leadership, they typically focus on the traits, behaviours, or styles of great leaders – 245 million results on Google can't be wrong, or can they?

The focus on traits and behaviours is an example of the traditional, also known as industrial, concept of leadership. But 100 years of leadership research shows that we cannot understand leadership or learn to become an effective leader simply by concentrating on these elements.

Leadership is much more than what leaders do and the situations in which leaders find themselves in.

What is industrial leadership?

This is where the post-industrial paradigm of leadership comes in.

Leadership theories of the 20th century reveal a fundamentally flawed understanding of leadership that is hierarchical, managerial, male-dominated and leader-centric. Leadership in the 21st century took a new twist when Joseph C. Rost, author of the book, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* confronted and criticised the field of leadership studies.

The industrial leadership concept, based on 20th-century values, beliefs and assumptions has its roots in bureaucratic management, behavioural psychology, and classical linear relationships.

Rost argued that traditional 20th-century leadership researchers were obsessed with the peripheries of leadership: traits, personality and style, and were seemingly unconcerned with the essence of leadership.

Rost instead defines leadership as a foundation or

Leadership In The 21st Century

The post-industrial paradigm

relationship: "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes."

Time for a change

Empirical research demonstrates that to change the way you lead, you must first change the way you think about leading.

The post-industrial paradigm acknowledges the relational nature of leadership and helps us see that leadership is a social and cultural phenomenon. The post-industrial paradigm differs from the traditional leadership theories in that it focuses on mindsets, not models and it concerns itself with the leader's consciousness, not competence.

The relationship between thoughts and actions has increasingly attracted attention in recent years in the field of neuroscience. Researchers contend that leader behaviour is strongly influenced by underlying assumptions and an implicit mental model of leadership. Studies show there is a strong connection between how leaders think and how they behave.

Based on the 20th-century leadership paradigm, if an individual leader is active, followers are passive. If leaders are dominant, followers are subordinate. When leaders take control, followers submit.

By contrast, Rost invites us to reimagine leadership as a process wherein leaders and collaborators influ-

ence one another to initiate significant change based on their mutual purposes and develop mutually beneficial relationships.

This idea leads to the realisation that leaders and collaborators are interactive, interdependent, and interchangeable – in fact, leaders and collaborators both practise leadership.

The contemporary post-industrial approach to leader development gets below the surface of an individual's personality, style and behaviour. It focuses instead on the person's deep underlying assumptions, beliefs and motives – the thoughts that determine and drive their behaviours.

So, becoming a great leader is less about Google's Top 10 traits and more about reassessing how you think about leadership.



Terry and Matt are co-founders and directors of the Institute for Postindustrial Leadership at the University of Indianapolis. The Institute is committed to advancing the understanding and practice of these post-industrial leadership principles, developing leaders and collaborators, and building leadership cultures and communities while empowering them to address their wants and needs in a post-industrial 21st century society. To connect with the authors, send an email to us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

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