



Leaderonomics

The Science of Building Leaders

Motivation

and Encouragement

Sustaining the spark that
keeps you going



Editor's Note

MOTIVATION is the desire to act and move towards a goal. It is what makes you leap out of bed in the morning, eager to start your day, instead of hit that 'snooze' button over and over again.

It is the foundation for all that we do as humans, and is the crucial element in setting and achieving your goals; without it you would not be compelled to put yourself out in the world to compete with others.

Motivation can be extrinsic, where we are driven to reach a goal by tangible, outside forces such as monetary rewards and other incentives. It can also be intrinsic, which is the internal push to work hard simply because it satisfies you.

Both types of motivation are important and play a role in our daily lives – from our jobs to our personal relationships.

The question is: are you aware of what motivates you? Understanding the reason behind your efforts and engaging in activities that feed this motivation will enhance your growth as an individual and allow you to realise your biggest dreams.

Motivation is a large part of our *Science of Building Leaders* framework, and many of the articles in this issue tie back to it. We share some

tips for seeing your goals through even as you get bogged down along the way – these include creating a ritual, learning to question yourself, and having an accountability partner.

How can entrepreneurs keep up their enthusiasm as they try to scale their businesses? Are you so driven to succeed that you're actually doing yourself more harm than good? Is your feedback likely to generate optimal or suboptimal motivation in others?

Read about how a good support team can help you perform at your best and the things that passionate people do differently – all this and more this month.

What's one thing that keeps you going when the going gets tough?

Let us know by writing to editor@leaderonomics.com. We would love to hear from you.

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By ROSHAN THIRAN

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A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials. – Seneca

Of all the schools of philosophy, Stoicism is the one we tend to look to for insights into how we can grow and progress towards self-mastery. Stoicism is the ancient Greek philosophy that teaches the importance of self-control and mental strength in dealing with life's uncertainties and challenges. It has seen a revival in recent years, particularly as the world of business strives to define what it means, exactly, to be a good leader.

Perhaps the most famous among the Stoic philosophers is Seneca the Younger (4BC–AD65). Seneca embodied (and was well aware of) the messy complexities that make up our human nature. Despite his flaws, his teachings encourage us to live a moral life of meaning and to avoid being overly seduced by our desires and attachments.

Seneca was a well-known Roman writer and educator, who, upon returning to Rome after a decade of being exiled, became the tutor for the young Nero, who would go on to become one of history's most notorious leaders. (He would eventually order Seneca to take his own life, believing that he was part of a plot to kill him.)

Nero was not the first person to attempt to kill Seneca. Seneca had become a great orator, philosopher, and dramatist with great public speaking skills and a brilliance that was not matched by many, and when Caligula became the emperor of Rome in AD37, he tried to have Seneca killed as he was extremely jealous of Seneca's quick intelligence.

Fortunately for Seneca, Caligula was assassinated, and Seneca went on to be Nero's tutor. So, why did Seneca cause so much loathing amongst the elite?

Seneca and Stoicism

The philosopher taught that our place in the world – and everything we possess – is subject to change, and therefore, much of life is outside our own control. Rather than take a nihilistic view of life (which views life as having no ultimate moral purpose or meaning), Seneca believed that we should accept the things we can't change with dignified resolve and be sure to learn whatever lessons our experiences teach us, and make full use of these lessons in the areas we are able to control.

In life, we are often swayed by our emotions, passions and desires, and try to run away or distract ourselves from any difficulties that we encounter. While we can't always choose what happens to us in life, we do have a say over how we respond. As another famous Stoic, Marcus Aurelius observed, "You have power over your mind – not outside events. Realise this, and you will find strength."

Seneca's life was never a bed of roses – he was forced to kill himself by his own student. Rome's ruling factions continuously criticised his work and much of his efforts. He ended up being banished for a number of years and even had to give away his fortune, although he was always attempting to do good and bring insight to the Roman Empire.

Yet, in spite of all these misfortunes, he knew that there were things he could control and some areas he just could not control. He didn't lose too much sleep worrying about areas that were not controllable, but instead focused on areas that he could influence and impact.

The same thing can be applied to the workplace. There are many contextual situations which we can't control, yet we worry and spent endless energy and effort on these areas.

5 Lessons from Seneca the Stoic Philosopher



Forget these 'uncontrollable' areas such as the economy, the price of fuel, and other areas that we have to learn to accept. Rather, focus on the many areas we can influence and control, including how to influence our return on luck.

Being a victim

For some people, however, life can turn them into victims as they struggle to deal with tough moments that inevitably arise. The Stoics remind us that we are not passive observers in life – we have responsibilities to ourselves and others, and more importantly, the ability to make choices.

One of the choices we have is when we find ourselves faced with a challenge. We can either give up in the face of adversity, believing that we don't have what it takes to overcome our situation, or we can meet our challenges head-on and make the best out of a tough situation.

If we are inclined to give up, sooner or later we'll surely come to regret the opportunities we missed out on because we feared speaking up, taking a risk, or believing in ourselves. In *Letters from a Stoic*, Seneca advised, "It is not that we have so little time but that we lose so much. The life we receive is not short but we make it so; we are not ill provided but use what we have wastefully."

Many successful leaders and entrepreneurs today make great use of the teachings of Seneca, with the realisation that leadership requires a lot of mental strength, perseverance and sacrifice, as well as the ability to adapt to the uncertainties we face.

More importantly, life is about action. As Seneca said, "While we are postponing, life speeds by." He understood almost 2000 years ago that the world kept moving and great leaders didn't postpone action, but kept moving forward.

As I think about Seneca's words, there are so many lessons to be learnt from what he had to share. Here are five key lessons that I feel are particularly useful, whether they are applied to our personal or professional lives:

1 Find yourself a mentor

Seneca believed that we should learn from people whom we admire and look up to. He wrote, "Choose someone whose way of life as well as words, and whose very face as mirroring the character that lies behind it, have won your approval. Be always pointing him out to yourself either as your guardian or as your model. There is a need, in my view, for someone as a standard against which our characters can measure themselves. Without a ruler to do it against you won't make crooked straight."

2 Don't equate your self-worth with material success

Under the service of Nero, Seneca became extremely wealthy – but he was never a slave to his material wealth and was able to make use of it without being seduced by it. In his own words, "For the wise man does not consider himself unworthy of any gifts from Fortune's hands: he does not love wealth but he would rather have it; he does not admit into his heart but into his home; and what wealth is his he does not reject but keeps, wishing it to supply greater scope for him to practice his virtue."

3 Don't let your ego rule you – know your flaws

Particularly for those in leadership roles, it's easy to believe that we're always doing a great job – few people feel comfortable in telling leaders otherwise. However, the bigger the ego becomes, the more our progress and growth are hindered.

As Seneca observed, "We agree with those who call us best and wisest, although we know they often utter many falsehoods: we indulge ourselves so greatly that we want to be praised for a virtue which is the opposite of our behaviour. A man hears himself called 'most merciful' while he is inflicting torture. So it follows that we don't want to change because we believe we are already excellent."

4 Spend time reflecting and teaching others

Seneca writes in *Letters from a Stoic*: "Retire into yourself as much as possible. Associate with people who are likely to improve you. Welcome those whom you are capable of improving. The process is a mutual one. People learn as they teach."

There is power in personal reflection and in teaching others. We know from a lot of leadership theories that teaching others is one of the best ways to learn. Seneca understood the power of coaching, training and teaching others.

5 Speak less, but ensure that it is of high quality

"What is required is not a lot of words, but effectual ones," Seneca writes in *Letters from a Stoic*. I learnt this same lesson from the great consultant Ram Charan when I met him a number of years ago – he said we need to listen more but when we speak, we need to speak concisely, with power and wisdom; every word should be of high quality.



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 pages.

Accomplish Your Biggest Dreams

10 tips to help you stay motivated

By **CAROLYNE NJOGU**
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WHAT do you do when you cannot seem to motivate yourself to do what you know you must?

It appears that some people are good at focusing on a target more than others. Whether nature or nurture is the reason behind this, the truth is that staying motivated on a consistent basis requires effort and time.

Motivation – the drive or determination to get yourself to do what you know must get done even when you do not feel like it – is hard for many of us. However, it is something that humans have wrestled with since the caveman days.

Our ancestors were motivated by the need for basic necessities to survive. Today, the same needs still compel us to get out there, but if you desire to reach your potential or attain any lofty goals, you will need to be motivated on a whole new level.

This brings me to share 10 tips to help you stay motivated:

1 Set clear goals

Clarity is golden, and is critical if you want to get from point A to point B. Therefore, decide on a specific goal to pursue. Whether you are an individual or an organisation, you want to set big hairy audacious goals, or what management guru Jim Collins calls BHAG (pronounced bee-hag).

In his book, *Built To Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, he notes that companies with BHAG are more successful than those that don't have them. He adds that, "A true BHAG is clear and compelling, serves as a unifying focal point of effort, and acts as a clear catalyst for the team spirit."

The same is true on an individual level. BHAG sparks your childlike imaginations and invokes your creative genius to achieve the impossible – because they are big enough to challenge you to rise to your highest levels of performance.

2 Know your 'why'

Your goals must be meaningful to you if you are going to realise them. Having a sense of purpose ignites your true passion from within.

Passion does not wane when the going gets tough, but rather ignites your being with creative energy that brings out your best recourses especially in the hardest of times.

Think of how passion influences scientists, the likes of whom go on to win the Nobel Peace Prize after spending scores of years in research to discover a breakthrough.

To this end, one online journal writer notes, "As academics, they aren't doing this for the money. They are doing it because they live and breathe it. Without that passion, the long hours and the inevitable, repeated failures wouldn't be bearable."

3 Break down your goals into small, winnable milestones

To reach your dreams, you will need to break down your overall goal into small goals that are attainable in the short term. By targeting these small goals one after the other, you create short-term wins that build up your momentum over time.

Small wins help you feel like you are accomplishing something – remember, reaching your big goals is a marathon and not a sprint.

4 Have a ritual

Having a fixed set of activities cues your brain so you are motivated to take the right action towards your goals on a consistent basis.

According to Charlse Duhigg, the author of *The Power of Habit*, "Habits form when the cue leads to a ritual. Rituals manifest as an automatic behaviour that



you engage in after the cue that then leads you to experience the reward of having taken the action."

5 The art of questioning self

If you find yourself drained and uninspired, remember that the best answers are always within you. Ask yourself intelligent questions and unravel a hidden motivation to get you charged up again. Tony Robbins asserts that, "If you ask yourself intelligent questions, you'll get intelligent answers."

6 Do not focus on what you cannot control

Beware that once you set out to achieve your goal, all kind of challenges – or what Steven Pressfield calls resistance – will surface. Your challenge is to ignore the noise – those things that are not in your control – while managing what's within your control.

7 Be accountable

Having an accountability partner who keeps you aligned with your thoughts, words and actions is quite helpful.

A study by the Association for Talent Development (ATD) on accountability found that you have a 65 per cent rate of completing a goal if you commit to someone. And if you have specific accountability appointments with a person you've committed to, you will increase your chance of success by up to 95 per cent.

8 Measure your progress

It is said that what you don't measure does not grow. To know exactly where you are, set some time for review – daily and weekly – towards progress. This will inspire you to keep on keeping on and uncover obstacles that may not be so obvious.

9 Be consistent

Take actions towards your goals consistently. Note that Rome was not built in a day, meaning that if you keep doing what you know must be done, then it's only a matter of time before you reach your tipping point and voilà! Goal attained!

10 Reward yourself

The brain responds to either pain or pleasure, which is why rewarding yourself upon achieving a goal can yield positive effects, lead-



ing to new neural pathways that result in feeling great. However, do note that not all rewards are created equal – some rewards have adverse effects that are counterproductive.

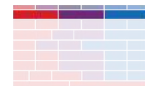
In conclusion

Staying motivated demands you to be very clear on what you want, and have mastery over yourself if you want to achieve your goals. This is a challenge for many of us, but if you follow through on these tips, you'll thank yourself for it.

Remember that as you advance in pursuit of your dreams, you'll get bogged down every once in a while, but you must keep your focus on the goal at all costs.



Carolyn is the founding principal at VPF Strategies and helps professionals and organisations gain clarity around building better brands for better results. She is a speaker, the author of *Being Grounded: 21 Days To Come Alive* and *Love Your Life*, and a contributing writer for various publications. To connect with her, email editor@leaderonomics.com.



MOTIVATION Understanding what motivates me to do well and feeding this motivation will enhance my growth. 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.



Staying Motivated as You Build Your Business

By **ALAN MANLY**
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THE thrill of establishing a start-up is much like the thrill of a new relationship. It's new, exciting and everyone involved is highly motivated and interested – at least for the first six months or so.

Whilst this is too short a time to measure business success, it is long enough for founders and supporters to start to wonder about the viability of their new venture.

The initial surge of sales, often from opening specials or pre-launch sales has, by now, been exhausted. New sales are hard work because one new start-up rarely expand the market. Rather, it disrupts the incumbents who will make changes to address the disruption.

In doing so, they slow down the new-comer's success. The start-up's ability to work through this challenging period relies on the energy of a highly motivated team. Maintaining that motivation is the magic of many successful start-ups.

Here are a few steps to help you and your team stay motivated as you grow.

Revisit your business plan

If the enthusiasm starts to wane, start by revisiting the document that holds your vision and purpose. Your business plan explains why your start-up exists, and why it should continue to exist. It will remind you of the viability of the venture and help put any doubts to rest.

Read it and celebrate how far you have come since it was written. Assess what has changed in the market and what was just plain wrong. Look for opportunities that can be exploited now that the business is up and running.

Rewrite the introduction

The introduction of the business plan for a start-up is intended to entice entrepreneurs, investors and supporters to get on board. It aims to inspire all who read it – but down the track, its once-sound assumptions can often be exposed as glaring errors.

Solid leadership skills are required to honestly review the introduction and massage the ideas to fit the new-found realities that have become apparent over the last six months. Managed carefully, this is a great motivational opportunity.

Reassess the market

When you identified your target market in the business plan, it was all about being in tune with the market at the time the start-up launched. Tales abound of famous companies that initially missed the market. Few products and services end up selling exclusively to the market they were originally targeted at.

Your expected customers may not materialise while others will appear seemingly out of nowhere. The last six months will have equipped you and your team with an understanding of the market that few others would enjoy. Use it before they catch on.

Is your unique sales proposition still working?

This is an interesting and surprisingly common point of discussion for start-ups. How can it be that a unique idea is not only not working, but no one even seems to understand its advantages?

The 'unique' bit is often a dash of wishful thinking merged with a great idea. But maintaining its clever uniqueness, and convincing others of it, requires as much hard work as any other selling proposition.

Sometimes, with horror, you might discover the unique sales proposition is not unique at all – just a bit

different. That's okay, if you acknowledge it and adjust your sales proposition accordingly.

Cashflow, cashflow, cashflow

There are only three things that matter in business and they're particularly true of start-ups. The first is cashflow, the second is cashflow and – lucky last – cashflow. And not just any cashflow. Positive cashflow is the lifeblood of a successful business.

You must address how the company is going to accomplish it. While it's not a glamorous-sounding goal, it is a huge motivator for you and your team as it allows you to keep building. Achieve it, and you'll keep the dream alive.

In conclusion

Staying motivated as you build your start-up can be just as challenging as establishing the business in the first place. Once the initial thrill fades, the demand for business acumen kicks in.

When in doubt, take heart from one of history's greatest entrepreneurs and inventors, Thomas Edison, who said: "Many of life's failures are people who did not realise how close they were to success when they gave up."



Alan Manly is the founder and CEO of Group Colleges Australia, one of Australia's largest private education institutions, and recently launched the private MBA school, Universal Business School Sydney. From a high school dropout to successful entrepreneur, Alan is a true disrupter in the private education space. He is the author of two books, *The Unlikely Entrepreneur* and *When There Are Too Many Lawyers There Is No Justice*. To connect with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

MOTIVATION Understanding what motivates me to do well and feeding this motivation will enhance my growth. 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.

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Are You Too Driven to Succeed?

By **PETER ECONOMY**
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PEOPLE who consistently go above and beyond when they're on the job are usually the ones who are extraordinarily motivated. They're engaged in their work, and they get tremendous satisfaction from contributing to the success of their business, its positive impact on the customers who buy their products, and the communities in which they work.

But while there is much to be said for going above and beyond to provide your co-workers and customers with your very best, if we don't take time to find a balance in our lives – to rest and recharge our batteries from time to time – then the outcome to us and to those around us can turn quite negative.

In fact, if we are too driven, this can actually become an obstacle that stands in the way of our success.

So, how can you tell if you are being too driven in your work?

Here are three signs that your extreme motivation may actually be putting your personal health and well-being – both physical and mental – at risk:

1 You have very little time to rest and relax

Many of us think we can fit everything into our busy work and personal life – with room for more. As a result, we may bite off more than we can chew.

If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed more often than usual, it may be that your drive for success is actually leading you toward a life of long-term anxiety.

Not only that, when you put your work and goals before all else in your life, you may put off the restorative vacation or much-needed time away from the



office that enables you to rest and recharge. Remember: taking time off from work is not a sign of weakness – it can actually help you succeed in the long run.

2 You're constantly comparing yourself to others

When we have mentors and successful co-workers and bosses we look up to, it is tempting to want to copy everything they do in order to reach their level of accomplishment.

You may even consistently keep your eye on what your peers are doing, just to make sure you're staying a step or two ahead of them.

However, focusing on others and not on yourself can damage your own self-esteem and happiness.

Always remember to concentrate on doing your own personal best, lest you fall victim to jealousy or envy.

3 You find yourself compromising your values


What are you willing to do to get to the top? If you find yourself answering, "Anything and everything", then you may need to take a step back and reassess where you're at in your career and in your life.

Pause and get clear on what your goals are, and what you are and are not willing to do. Cross off those things you are not willing to do from your list.

Stating these things to yourself out loud can prevent any unnecessary and corrupt moral compromises.

Ambition, willpower, and drive are not always bad things to have, but always be cautious and make sure they are not doing you more harm than good.

■ This article was previously published in print.

 Peter Economy has written more than 80 books on a variety of business and leadership topics. To connect with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

COMPETITION Competition is everywhere in our lives, and our attitude towards it will allow us to succeed, or hold us back. Understanding how we respond to competition and the reasons behind this response, and intentionally looking into how to correct certain parts of this reaction will allow us to propel our development even further. 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.

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Demonstrating Authority at Work

3 ways for women to assert power

By **DORIE CLARK**

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MANY female professionals have experienced it: colleagues ignoring their suggestions until a man in the room says the same thing, to universal acclaim. Or being mistaken for someone's assistant, when you're the senior leader in the room. Or being 'mansplained' to, despite having the most knowledge or experience about the subject at hand.

How can female executives stand their ground and claim their true authority, without resorting to braggadocio and looking like a self-promotional jerk? It's a subject I tackle directly in my LinkedIn Learning course, *Body Language for Women*.

Indeed, we can often do the heavy lifting of self-promotion much more effectively with our bodies, rather than through the words we use.

Announcing to the room that "I'm in charge here!" can look desperate but carrying yourself with the poise and confidence of a leader can accomplish the same thing without ever having to say a word.

Here are three easy ways in which female executives and entrepreneurs can distinguish themselves and convey their true power:

1 Consider taking up more space

Our body language sends messages about power, dominance and status. While individuals vary, in general, men tend to signal dominance by taking up space in some way – whether it's sprawling their papers out on a conference table or spreading their legs or their arms.

Women more commonly do the opposite, according to researcher Carol Kinsey Goman. They tend to shrink, to condense; elbows in, legs demurely crossed, papers neat.

That's what's culturally expected – but because of the link from your body to your emotions, it puts us at a disadvantage. Men's expansive behaviour creates a feedback loop that makes them even more confident, while our contraction makes us less confident.

So, it's worth thinking about how we take up space in the world, because it also shapes us from the inside out.

2 Make sure to project your voice

At a very basic level, if people can't hear you, they can't respond to – or appreciate – your ideas. And yet, most of us can probably think of a talented colleague, usually female, whose voice is so soft that it's almost impossible to hear her across the



Make a point of standing with your weight evenly balanced, about hip-width apart. This is the default stance in most sports, because – even if shoved – you're in the strongest stance possible and are less likely to topple.

conference table.

Sometimes this is a shyness issue, where you might feel embarrassed or like you're going to be judged. If that's the case, start by practising in safe situations, like a low-stakes meeting, or even in group outings with your friends at first.

Sometimes the issue with projecting is physical. Some people say they literally don't know how to project their voice enough to be heard. If that's the case, hiring an acting coach or a voice coach is an incredibly useful investment in your career.

It's unfortunate but true that people are too busy to ask you for the 14th time to speak up; it's your responsibility to make yourself heard.

3 Focus on your stance

I teach executive communication courses at a university and consult for corporate clients on effective presentation techniques, and this issue is one of the most frequent. When people get nervous, their

tendency is often to sway back-and-forth, or to shift their weight onto one foot, giving them an off-kilter appearance.

The tendency to sway or shift your weight affects both men and women. But, because women are already culturally perceived as less powerful, they can benefit more from a strong stance that conveys confidence and authority.

Instead, make a point of standing with your weight evenly balanced, about hip-width apart. This is the default stance in most sports, because – even if shoved – you're in the strongest stance possible and are less likely to topple. The body is a master of metaphor and the message you're physically conveying is the same: you telegraph confidence and efficacy to others.

By following these three simple tips, you can easily convey your true power and authority to others, and make sure your ideas are heard.



Dorie Clark is the author of the book *Entrepreneurial You*. Her past books include *Reinventing You* and *Stand Out*, which was named the #1 Leadership Book of 2015 by Inc. magazine. A former presidential campaign spokeswoman, she teaches at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. To connect with Dorie, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

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Beyond the Salad Bar

Building a psychologically-healthy workforce

By **EVELYN TEH**
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THE basic tenets of leading a healthy life revolves around getting enough sleep, staying well-hydrated, intake of balanced nutrients and a stable psychological state.

Given that we spend an average of eight hours in the workplace and probably an average of two hours preparing for transition to the workplace, it seems only sensible to extrapolate the concept of health and well-being to the workplace.

Health in the workplace has been constantly addressed at various levels:

1. At a societal policy level, the Luxembourg Declaration on Workplace Health Promotion in the European Union 1997 focuses on integrating efforts of employers, employees and society to improve well-being and health at work. The declaration covers a set of principles incorporating the work environment, organisational-wide participation and personal development that can be adopted into the organisation's occupational health and safety services. The main tenet is that a holistic and structurally-managed focus on health promotes better health consequences in the workplace.
2. At an organisational level, McKinsey's Organisational Health Index is a framework covering nine dimensions that reflect the health of the organisation as a whole, particularly in relation to health's impact on organisational performance. Some key dimensions such as accountability, leadership and motivation has been shown to be areas of key practices that can protect the health of the organisation, leading it to exceptional performance.
3. At an individual level, workplace health may involve concepts such as hazard reduction, positive relationships, civil behaviour and psychological safety which looks at different aspects of human beings that have an impact on the health of individuals.

Incidentally, this is the focus of the current article, particularly on creating a psychologically-healthy workplace – one that goes beyond the salad bar.

While an optimised reward system affords employees the basic needs of life (i.e. food), we need to go beyond providing in-office nutrients such as the now-famous Google salad bar and focus on building a healthy psychological state.

On top of societal policies and the organisational framework, I believe the human-to-human relationship in an organisation is a key determinant of individual health and the building blocks of workplace health.

No amount of policies and key practices can be sustained if people in the organisation are not accountable

for sustaining their health.

How can people be accountable for their health and that of others within the organisation? Five key aspects come to mind: inspiration, clarity, support, challenge and contract.

1 Inspiration

As children, dreaming comes naturally. Having a bigger purpose in life has been shown to motivate people, which in turn has a positive impact on well-being.

Studies on inspiration have shown that people who feel inspired are more optimistic, have higher self-esteem and perceive themselves to be more competent.

An organisation that is capable of bringing inspiration to their employees leads to better identification with their employees on a personal level.

Not only does this assist in aligning employees' purpose to one that is relevant to the organisation, it also allows the alignment to form in a healthy environment.

This is in stark contrast to an organisation which imposes its vision and mission where compliance may happen; yet, employees do not feel empowered.

Not having something to strive for results in a cogs-in-a-wheel environment where employees lack the ambition to be better. This often leads to lower psychological well-being such as boredom and a feeling of helplessness.

Tip 1: Rethink the organisation's vision and mission; what is the story that is beyond bottom lines? People often identify better with stories that focus on the greater good.

2 Clarity

The question that may arise next is that organisations often have the greatest story; yet, employees feel more burdened than inspired by the story as it is too far-fetched.

After all, it is one thing to have a story that one can identify with, it is another thing to have a story that cannot be internalised. This is often the case of a lack of clarity.

According to Gallup, one of the top 12 reasons that results in disengagement among individuals in an organisation is not having clarity in something even as simple as their role.

We all know that our role in the organisation contributes to the organisation's vision, mission and story. So, when there is lack of clarity, it becomes difficult to internalise and this can cause significant levels of stress.

This is akin to driving on a road without a divider; we know where we want to go but we are frustrated trying to get to our destination because we do not know if we are on the right road.

Constantly stressed-out employees are definitely not the way to workplace health and well-being.



Tip 2: How can an organisation bring clarity to its employees especially in an era of uncertainty? Consider what is dynamic vs what is anchored and ensure this is communicated to employees.

3 Support

On top of communicating with clarity; another tangible way of enabling better well-being in an organisation is to provide support.

There are various ways an organisation can provide this – even basic things such as giving them resources that enable their work performance or ensuring that people are in the right role where they can leverage their strengths.

Designing roles intentionally and selecting the right people for best fit has been shown to benefit the organisation in terms of productivity and presenteeism.

The added benefit is that the organisation also has employees achieving organisational targets while maintaining a healthy, productive climate.

In addition to these basic methods, a stretch target for organisations to continually build psychologically healthy employees is by seeing employees as individual human beings.

There is continuing effort in the field of organisational psychology to humanise organisations and what this simply means is to see each employee as a whole – personally and professionally.

Again, it is rather impossible to see the employee as entirely separate in and out of work.

Leaders who are present with their employees and care for them holistically often see a more motivated and committed workforce as a consequence.

Tip 3: What support systems are built into the organisation, and are these support systems relevant with what is actually needed? Have quick conversations with employees and note if support is a concern that is being addressed.

4 Challenge

Of course, it is easy to give everything to employees in the name of support; yet, the organisation may feel taken advantage of when employees do not reciprocate as expected.

Are you looking to understand yourself better?

Find out how you can assess your strengths and weaknesses at bit.ly/personalitycheck



Contradictory to the common notion that support is in opposition with challenge, providing challenges can complement the provision of support and is often best when done in combination.

As humans, a support system provides a safety base for growth but challenges propel one to grow beyond what is comfortable.

Vygotsky's concept of the 'zone of optimal learning' reminds us that the best way for anyone to learn and grow is to be in that sweet spot of being challenged slightly beyond current abilities.

What this means for employees in terms of well-being is that they are being trusted in their potential, and that the organisation believes in them.

Achieving one's potential not only results in a healthy self-worth, within an organisational context it also results in feeling valued and more willing to commit to performance.

Tip 4: Are employees within the zone of optimal learning? Performance reviews and management systems can be designed to capture both current performance and areas of aspiration.

5 Contract

No, we are not referring to the official work contract – that may contribute to the clarity but contract here refers to the psychological contract between the organisation and employees.

Denise Rousseau describes psychological contract as beliefs, perceptions and informal obligations between employer and employee.

This can differ across employees as the subconscious expectations and understanding for each individual is different. What this points to, in our effort to build a healthy workforce, is to honour the psychological contract with authenticity and respect.

This may mean that promises are not made off the bat, and situations are presented as realistically as possible, without withholding information.

While it is easier to frame situations in ways that benefit the organisation, in an era where information is easily obtained, this often misfires. Moreover, there is always the age-old grapevine in any organisation.

Contradictory information breeds mistrust and anxiety which reduces the psychological well-being of an organisation, but authenticity gives space and autonomy for employees to decide.

Being given choices is often key in building autonomy and one's notion of worth.

Tip 5: Listen to the grapevine and influencers within the organisation; what are the corridor conversations pointing to? While there will always be whining and complaining, when conversations are contradictory to what is being said in the open, it is wise to check in.

Concluding thoughts

Organisational well-being can be a huge concept, but not necessarily an impossible task. It can be addressed at various levels and across different facets.

This article focuses on the psychological facet at an individual level where the act may be small but the impact widespread.

For each of us are individuals, and don't we want a healthy workplace we can belong to?

■ *This article was previously published in print.*



Evelyn is a former member of the talent acceleration programme (TAP) team in Leaderonomics. To engage with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

What about the employee?

FOR all it's worth, psychological well-being in an organisation cannot be the sole responsibility of the employer in creating the right ecosystem.

Employees often benefit from taking proactive steps not only in responding to the employer's efforts but also in preceding these efforts.

For example, organisations often communicate the concept of openness to high-potentials in their organisation to take the active step of making changes.

Unfortunately, this often comes from a higher level which results in the lack of operationalisation.

A case study

However, in one organisation where we executed talent development solutions, the talent who responded to the call to make a change found herself stuck with standard operating procedures and rigid political mindsets.

Her proactive action was to then deviate from usual reporting lines and approach the decision makers directly to propose her idea of automation.

Not only was it received well, it also impacted

her and her team's performance as it significantly reduced errors and time taken to fix mistakes.

Agility and innovation

Rebellion? Maybe to some extent. Agile and innovative? Definitely.

When she shared her story with me, it was obvious that she had a new sense of confidence and self-esteem, having proactively created a pathway that aligned with organisational needs and her personal needs.

She rose to the challenge despite ambiguous clarity and support, creating positive results and boosting her psychological well-being.

Start giving

Thus, for employees, it is worthwhile to remember that giving starts with ourselves and it is something to be reciprocated if we want a positive upward spiral.

Rather than discounting the minimal effort of the organisation to build a healthy workplace, fire up this minimal effort. Do the uncommon thing – give!

Refreshing Your Mind and Soul Through Solitude

By **AMITA V. RAJPAL**

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WE live in a world where we are engulfed by perspectives, opinions and arguments every single day from every single person we meet. These are akin to colourful darts coming from all angles.

We are either like a sponge that absorbs them, or like glass, which they bounce off. We process them; sometimes they bruise us, sometimes they make us happy.

But most of the time, they form a layer on our souls and we subconsciously harbour them. We do not tackle them.

Then comes the scariest truth – we lack time and energy to deal with them, and very gradually we start losing connection with ourselves.

Every morning we bathe and wear fresh clothes in order to freshen up. We spend time sipping our warm cup of coffee which we love a tad too much, but do we do anything at all to refresh our minds? The answer is no.

Our souls require due attention too. There are various reasons to do so, such as addressing feelings of being stuck in certain lifestyle, being powerless, or having a deep urge to disentangle ourselves from the burdens of others, or those of our own doing.

Soup for your soul

Here's what we can do: allot 10 minutes – only 10 – daily to cleanse our soul from within. Listed below are the steps you can follow in order to achieve the desired state of mind for a joyful day.

1. Secure a cosy corner, one that is as quiet as possible.

2. Have a piece of paper to pen down your thoughts (optional).

3. Allow the magic to flow! Welcome each and every thought that comes and see it through the mind's window like waves in the ocean. These thoughts can be good, bad or ugly – there's no judgement here.

However, try not to dwell on the thoughts. This is the most challenging part of this exercise, because it is the most natural human tendency to keep dwelling on certain thoughts. Pen down those sticky thoughts which are hindering the free thoughts to fly like butterflies in a beautiful breeze.

Remember that these free thoughts are like magic – they are happiness, love, strength and dreams. However, they get nibbled by the sticky thoughts, and we need to disconnect them from each other.

Once the sticky thoughts are penned down, we need to address them by asking these questions:

- Can we change the situation?
- Can we develop the courage to ignore the matter?
- Can we eradicate the issue altogether?

If the answer is 'no', then we need to accept it as it is. In each and every way, let these shackles go.

If you can achieve this, your mind, body and soul will smile. That's the power of solitude. The inner connection that our bodies crave for will naturally start the journey.

Happiness comes from peace of mind, peace in the heart and peace of soul. We need to allow ourselves that pleasure.

That pleasure is hidden in the soup of your body, through solitude.

The ultimate solution is some **solitude soup** for your **soul**.



Amita is a freelance writer who doesn't just write – through her writing, she delivers messages, hones pitches and adds value.

She has 15 years of experience in the financial sector and has covered diverse topics ranging from finance to tourism to art. To engage with her, send us an email at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Embracing the Digital Age

Move up or move out

By **RAYMOND DEVADASS**
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IN early 2018, I was asked by an industry association to chair its annual flagship conference and to co-chair another industry forum in Iskandar Puteri, Johor.

As the organising team and I sat down to deliberate on a theme, we discussed at length the wide variation in how aggressively organisations are embracing the digital age.

It became apparent that whilst early adopters have been swift to build-up talent bases and explore disruptive opportunities, many more organisations are just beginning to conduct small-scale experiments or simply, paralysed by fear.

In the past, technology played a supportive role in the business and industrial worlds. These days, humans are fast playing that supportive role as disruptive technologies like automation have turned the tables.

We are well into the Third Industrial Revolution where industrial and business processes are less manpower-intensive and more tech-centric.

In recent times, automation has become inevitable for successful companies because advancements in technology are fast making non-automated systems liabilities.

As such, companies now employ automation technology in different departments: human resources, information technology, operations, sales, finance, legal and marketing. Various tasks, ranging from stocking shelves to basic bookkeeping, research and the simplest of 'HR' duties, can all be easily automated.

Indeed, the automation of physical effort, workflows and other processes is an unstoppable development that cuts across geographical regions and industry. It could be likened to a wave that you either ride or get knocked over by.

Digital leaders: Facing the new normal

It is a given that automation will help companies thrive in this digital age. CA Technologies and Enterprise Management Associates (EMA) released a report in the last quarter of 2018 which suggests that automation is fast becoming the core of many industrial and business processes.

According to the report, automated businesses recorded increased productivity and revenue. Yet, a large number of enterprises are yet to exploit its potential, probably because of the costs involved.

Then there is also the narrative that automation will displace humans, rendering them redundant and unemployable. Both positions are valid. Automation involves risks.

Since it doesn't guarantee 100 per cent success,

companies may not recoup their investments in automation technologies. And a lot of automated jobs may lead to downsizing; automation is a risk worth taking now.

In September 2018, McKinsey & Company conducted a global survey where more than half of the large company respondents reported that automation enhanced their operations by increasing efficiency and reducing operational costs.

This suggests that although the initial cost of implementing automation technologies may be high, in the long run it becomes cost effective. And while automation may upend business models and lead to some downsizing, it can reinvent workplace dynamics.

Employing machines and electronic software to execute menial, redundant tasks, increases efficiency as it allows the staff to focus on those activities that require soft skills while saving time, costs and effort.

Automation also reduces the errors associated with manual processes which, when coupled with increased efficiency and reduction in costs, can result in the company surpassing hitherto known levels of productivity and revenue generation.

Little wonder, companies like Yotel, Spread, Amazon and Quiet Logistics (amongst others) – who have embraced disruptive technology as the new normal, and successfully incorporated automation into their business processes – are leaders in their niches.

Companies that avoid or postpone automation in favour of non-automated systems stand the risk of being outpaced and left behind by those that take the risks and embrace automation.

People first: A new mantra for the digital age

Digitalisation has revolutionised the corporate world and the way businesses are run. In his 2019 annual lecture on blockchain, Ethereum and decentralisation, Andrew Keys claimed that transformative developments in technology, economics and geopolitics are aligning to initiate what is known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This phase of human evolution is characterised by an amalgam of technologies that engages the physical, digital and probably biological spheres of man's existence.

Automated businesses will boast of enhanced processes that will make their operations free from the complexities and challenges that bedevilled them in the past. Advancements such as intelligent automation will improve the synergy between man and machine, resulting in the opening of new vistas and markets.

Soon, old business models and systems will have to adapt or change completely in order to align with the changes in the corporate landscape.

Yet all of these will not be possible without the



human factor. In almost all spheres of existence, cultural change is central to transformation. This phenomenon also applies to the corporate world.

As more companies gradually embrace the idea of automated processes, people will have to put at the centre of the transformation drive.

This is because businesses are actually owned and run by people, so despite the gains of automation and the need to ride the waves of disruptive technology, without putting people, their culture and their idiosyncrasies into consideration, a company's attempt at digital transformation may not be successful.

A cultural shift is central to adopting and implementing automation or any other disruptive technology. By this we mean a paradigmatic shift from the way things used to be done; one which aligns with the new realities that attends the digital age.

Although corporate culture is key as it involves an organisational change in perception and mode of operation, cultural change at the individual level is just as important. Humans will be the ones to implement these changes. Their willingness to change is also important to the transformation drive.

New ways of doing things represent a threat to older, more comfortable ways. Hence an approach that factors the need to change for both staff and clients is imperative.

In as much as automation is the future, it is most likely to be successful when people are at the heart of its incorporation.

Taking the leap: Capturing the power of digitalisation

Larger firms have the advantage of a significant pool of resources which enables them to drive their operations. However, thanks to strengths of automation technology, start-ups are now able to execute and scale up business operations with minimal resources.

They are able to offer competition since they can establish industry standards, save time and increase efficiency while optimising human capital. Thus, automation helps them to thrive as it enables them to do more with less.

With the imminent changes in the corporate landscape, newer vistas will be opened. Start-ups are at an advantage since they are able to adjust to change faster than larger firms mostly due to the bureaucratic bottlenecks that abound in large companies. The changes in the landscape will open doors to more tech-centric tasks and less manpower-intensive tasks.

Digital skills and other soft skills which cannot be automated will be in high demand. As people's roles gradually evolve from the menial to the mental, start-ups which are able to leverage on disruptive technologies will be better positioned to make the most of what the future holds.

Future of work: Cyberspace meets the real world

Industry 4.0 focuses on digitalising the economy and society via a transcending of limits and the subsequent cross-sectional dissemination of information and knowledge.





In the immediate future, digitalisation will further breach barriers and boundaries until the point when there is an interface of the cyberspace and the real world.

This seamlessness will result in a state where there is such an abundance of data that human mental processes will be so grossly inadequate that artificial intelligence (AI) will have an elevated status in the scheme of things.

A lot of processes in business, technology and the social space will be run by AI. That is the future of mankind. Some experts call this phase of man's evolution the Fifth Industrial Revolution. Others who believe it originated in Japan call it Society 5.0.

Society 5.0 has been defined as a human-centred society that balances economic advancements with the resolution of social problems by a system that highly integrates cyberspace and physical space.

Regardless of its nomenclature, mankind will live in a super smart society where objects in the real world will be enhanced by and combined with information, resulting in what is known as cyber physical systems (CPS).

This nexus of increased computing power, myriad data and the potential for higher levels of analysis which AI possesses will change the dynamics of technology, business and indeed all ramifications of human existence. At this point, automation will be imperative as it will be the only means to stay afloat in an ocean of disruptive technologies.

The future is now

Some manual processes are indispensable. This is probably the reason for the variation in the adoption and leveraging of automation by organisations across industries. A lot of organisations still haven't fully appreciated the potential of automation, regardless of the glaring testimonials that abound.

How late can it get for the non-automated organisation? I suppose the truth is that it is never too late. But I believe organisations should not procrastinate to join the automation train, else risk being outpaced and left behind.

Technology is so fast-paced these days that it's scary and cutting-edge technologies are so quickly supplanted by improved versions that it is difficult to stay in line with the current trends. What was cutting edge a while ago becomes outdated quite quickly.

It is therefore imperative for organisations to focus on the outcomes they desire as they join the automation journey, rather than on the outputs from technology. This way it can be managed realistically and more effectively.



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Does Your Feedback Motivate?

Here's how to do it more effectively

By **SUSAN FOWLER**

editor@leaderonomics.com

DOES giving feedback cause you to toss and turn at night, procrastinate on delivering it, disappoint you when it doesn't make a difference, or frustrate you because it instigates an argument?

No matter what your role, you are probably in a position multiple times a day to give people feedback about their past or current behaviour – with the hope of motivating their future behaviour.

If providing feedback is part of your job or something you do in your personal life almost daily, why is it so challenging?

Here are some tips that can help you overcome your insomnia, procrastination, disappointment, or frustration – at least when it comes to feedback!

Realise that feedback is always motivating, but not necessarily as you intended

Consider two examples of typical feedback.

Example 1:

"Sara, I am proud of you for getting this report done ahead of time. It makes my life so much easier. I hope you can continue to be this timely with deadlines in the future."

Example 2:

"Sara, I am disappointed in you for being late with this report. It made life difficult not just for me – but for others, too. I need you to get these reports in on time in the future."

Both statements are examples of personalised feedback – information steeped with your judgment. Both are risky.

In Example 1, praising Sara for her work risks having Sara embrace the feedback for the wrong reason – to please you.

In Example 2, expressing disappointment in Sara may prompt her to change her behaviour in the future, but also for the wrong reason – to avoid guilt, shame, or fear of not meeting your expectations.

In both cases, you risk Sara developing an external need for your praise. Without your ongoing validation, research shows Sara may stop submitting reports on time since her reason for doing it, her reward for acting, has been removed.

Personalised feedback includes evaluative phrases such as:

- I am so proud of you.
- You make me happy when...
- You are amazing (wonderful, terrific, the bomb).
- I don't know what I'd do without you.
- You sure didn't disappoint me when you...
- You suck (failed, screwed up).
- You disappointed me when...
- I am so disappointed in you.

Remember why you provide feedback in the first place: to develop an individual's competence and commitment on a meaningful goal and to facilitate high-quality, sustained performance.

Giving personalised feedback puts these outcomes at risk.

There is real science behind effective feedback

Neuroscience demonstrates how praising stimulates the reward centre of our brain. Motivation science has well documented the eroding effect of tangible rewards on productivity, creativity, innovation, and sustained effort.

Intangible rewards (such as praising) tie to people's need for status, power, and image, and have the same eroding effect.

In Example 2, pointing out a person's unacceptable behaviour by cloaking it in your disappointment can lead to an imposed motivational outlook.

Motivation science has shown that people working from this suboptimal outlook to avoid feelings of



guilt, shame, or fear are more prone to emotional and physical stress. As a result, they are less creative in the short-term and less productive in the long-term.

Ironically, your well-intentioned praise or expression of disappointment is likely to erode people's sense of autonomy. They may become more dependent on your opinion of their effort, outcomes, and self-worth than on their own judgment.

If Sara finds value or joy in preparing reports and delivering them on time, what is the purpose of praising her? She might even question why you feel the need to praise her, finding it irritating, inauthentic, or manipulative.

However, the biggest risk is that your praise could cause her to shift her attention from her real and optimal reasons to perform to suboptimal reasons: to please you or avoid disappointing you.

Don't confuse personalised feedback with expressions of gratitude

Personalised feedback is risky, but you should never shy away from genuinely expressing your thanks. Communicating your gratitude is powerful.

"Sara, I'd like to express my gratitude for the effort you made on these reports. Getting them in earlier than the deadline gave me the ability to focus on something else that was creating a lot of stress. Thank you."

What is the difference between expressing gratitude and giving personalised feedback? **Intention.**

Your expression of gratitude is not intended to change or reinforce people's future behaviour. Your statement of thanks is not an attempt to develop their competence or sense of responsibility, nor are you looking for a guarantee they will keep up their efforts in the future. When you express gratitude, it is based on your need, not theirs.

Your gratitude, delivered candidly and authentically, without ulterior motives or expectations of future behaviour, gives people the choice to continue acting wisely, deepens their sense of contribution and connection, and validates their competence.

Your feedback motivates

Remember, your feedback is always motivating. The question is whether your feedback is more likely to generate optimal or suboptimal motivation.

If people are optimally motivated, through their values, sense of purpose, or an inherent motivation to perform above expected standards, they don't need your praise.

If they need corrective feedback, your disapproval will usually result in suboptimal motivation. The science of motivation provides alternatives.

■ *This article was previously published in print.*



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By **SANDY CLARKE**
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"I thought I was pretty good at teaching myself – until I read Tara Westover's memoir *Educated*. Her ability to learn on her own blows mine right out of the water."

THOSE are the words of Microsoft co-founder, Bill Gates, who wrote about one of the hottest autobiographies to hit book shelves in a long time.

Writing on his website, www.gatesnotes.com, the life-long learner was so impressed by Tara Westover's book that he invited her to talk about her unusual upbringing and the challenges she faced, from educating herself to gaining her Ph.D. at Cambridge.

The incredible story of Westover goes beyond the usual tale of 'overcoming the odds'. Born the youngest of seven siblings into a Mormon family with extreme religious and political views, Westover's zealot father spent much of his time lecturing the family and preparing them for the End of Days.

As a man who believed that conventional education was nothing more than the government's attempt to brainwash the population, his children were home-schooled – although this amounted to little more than religious teachings and speeches.

Even severe injuries were treated with the mother's herbal remedies (referred to as 'God's pharmacy' by the father). The head of the family – suspected of suffering from bipolar disorder – justified his extreme behaviour by convincing himself he was protecting his family from the malignant influence of the so-called Illuminati.

Educated tells the story of a young woman that is all at once heart-breaking, inspiring, unbelievable, and empowering. As she finally managed to liberate herself from the strict confines of the sparse home in the shadow of a mountain, Westover's foray into education left her feeling out-of-place, depressed, and inadequate.

She was exposed to a world where everyday behaviours were viewed as sins by her overpowering father, and the spotlight shone on her ignorance when, in history class, she asked what the Holocaust was, to the astonishment of everyone in the room.

Nevertheless, her thirst for learning and her innate talent was enough to have prominent professors encourage Westover to further her education, which led to fellowships at Cambridge, then Harvard, and then back to Cambridge to complete her doctoral studies in history.

There is so much contained within Westover's story that provides a rich and in-depth look at how so much in life can go against us, and yet, if ever there was a story to show how much we're each capable of, *Educated* sets the standard.

Here are four lessons I took from reading this amazing story:

1 Your voice is powerful – if you have the courage to use it

As Westover writes, "My life was narrated for me by others. Their voices were forceful, emphatic, absolute. It had never occurred to me that my voice might be as strong as theirs."

So often, we yield to the opinions and expectations of others to the extent where our own potential becomes stifled.

Educated

Lessons from Tara Westover's memoir



How often do we seek validation and approval from others, without giving consideration to the idea that we are capable and talented enough to shape our own path?

When we lose ourselves to the opinion of others, we suffocate the greatness that lies within each of us.

2 To see what you're capable of, push beyond your limits

Describing her struggles with reading complex works, Westover recognised that the struggle was pushing her in the right direction. "The skill I was learning was a crucial one, the patience to read things I could not yet understand."

Mostly, we stick to what we know, which is great for our ego, but terrible for our growth. When we try something new or take on an unfamiliar challenge, we are literally informing ourselves through proactive learning.

Even if we don't get it at first, the unconscious connections we make provide us with a strong foundation of critical thinking and the ability to view problems from different perspectives. As a result, this gives us a clear edge over those who remain in their comfort zones.

3 Never be afraid of uncertainty – it can be your greatest guide

Westover writes: "To admit uncertainty is to admit to weakness, to powerlessness, and to believe in yourself despite both. It is a frailty, but in this frailty there is a strength: the conviction to live in your own mind, and not in someone else's."

The noted physicist, Richard Feynman, believed that "nobody ever figures out what life is all about, and it

doesn't matter. Explore the world." One of the most brilliant minds in science insisted that to live in uncertainty was not only powerful, it's also the most realistic way to live.

By embracing the Socratic ideal that "we know nothing", it inspires us to be curious about everything – and it's the people who can separate themselves from the herd that tend to breathe life into ideas that change the world.

4 We all have our critics – walk your own path anyway

"Guilt is the fear of one's own wretchedness. It has nothing to do with other people." Westover's memoir is peppered with expressions of guilt and inadequacy that stemmed from her upbringing which dictated that a woman's place was in the kitchen and her main ambition was motherhood.

Although far from being at fault, Westover nevertheless felt guilty for having her own ambitions and later pursuing opportunities beyond her family's wishes.

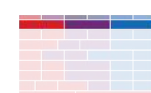
Sometimes, we have to make sacrifices in order to free ourselves from the shackles that bind us. There will always be critics, and nothing can change that.

That said, we can choose to emancipate ourselves from our guilt, doubts and fear that hold us back from

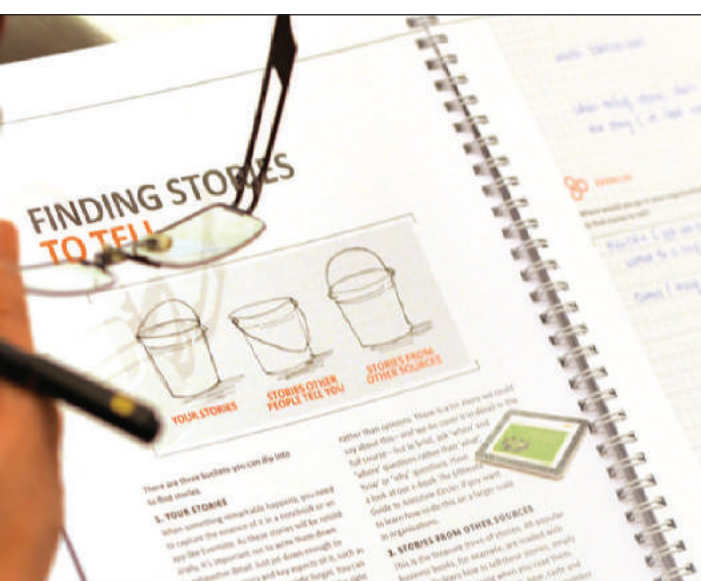
unleashing the possibilities that we can create once we give ourselves permission to do so.



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 emailing editor@leaderonomics.com.



CRITICAL SUCCESS STORIES Identifying and reflecting on success stories can lead to lessons learnt for the future. Take some time to do so. 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/SOBLP1 to find out more.



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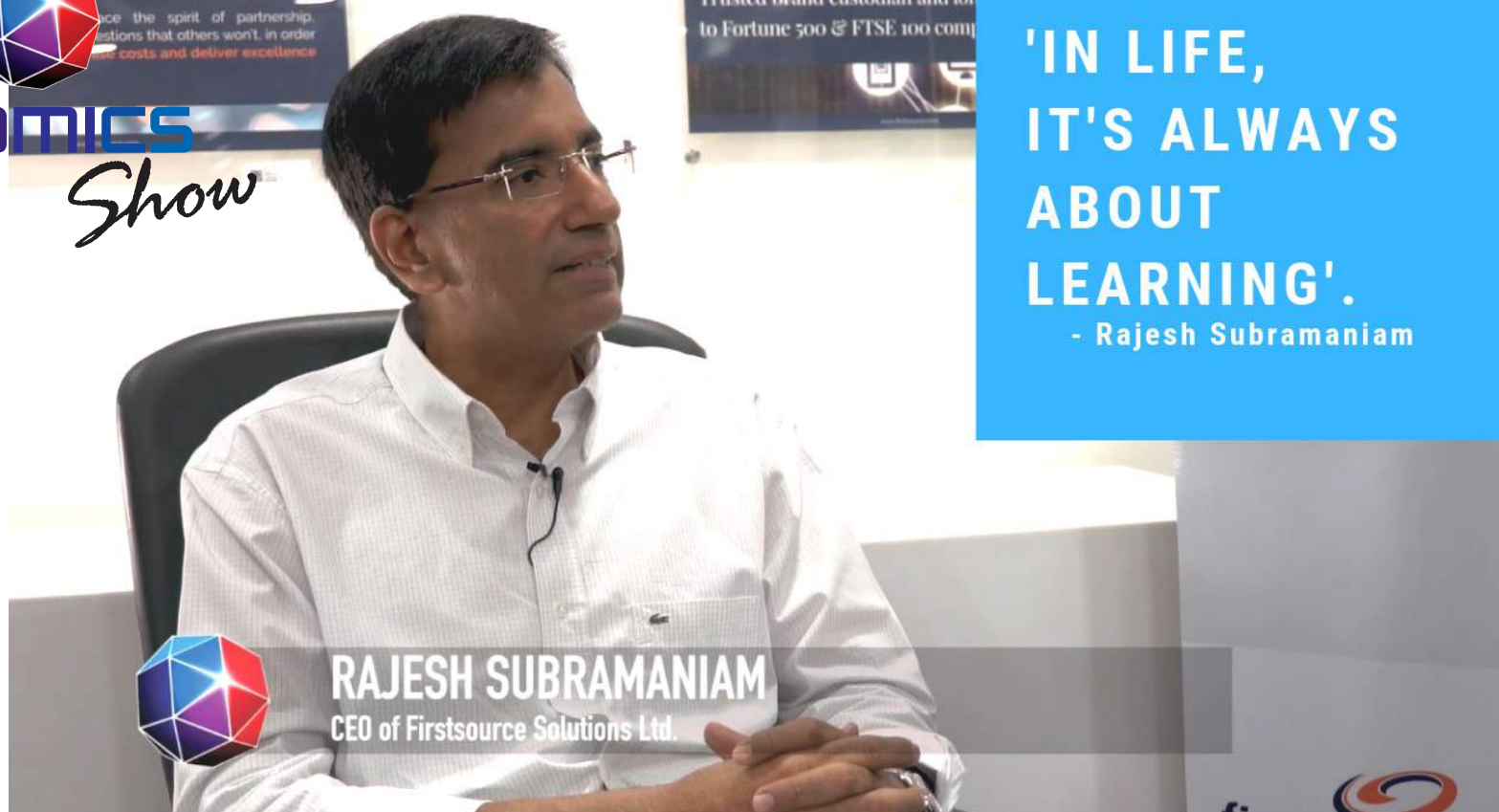
The Leaderonomics Show



...the spirit of partnership.
...ations that others won't. in order
... costs and deliver excellence

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'IN LIFE,
IT'S ALWAYS
ABOUT
LEARNING'.
- Rajesh Subramaniam



RAJESH SUBRAMANIAM
CEO of Firstsource Solutions Ltd.



This video is available at bit.ly/LDRindiaTLS. For more The Leaderonomics Show videos, head to bit.ly/TheLDRShow.

By **SANDY CLARKE**

editor@leaderonomics.com

IN many ways, Rajesh Subramaniam is a leader whose story runs parallel to the professional life of the late Steve Jobs.

Like the Apple co-founder, Rajesh was a founder of India-based firm Firstsource Solutions in 2001, where he remained until 2008. During his first stint, he had been the head of strategy and corporate development until he became the chief financial officer.

In 2012, he returned to the business process outsourcing provider as its chief executive officer (CEO), helping to transform the company from a debt-riddled outfit to a multimillion-dollar organisation.

As a quiet and thoughtful leader, Rajesh revealed on his appearance of *The Leaderonomics Show* that he had been keeping tabs on his old company even after he'd left.

He told host Roshan Thiran that he was always passionate about Firstsource (he was its first registered employee in 2001), and he was determined to unleash the potential of the organisation's people and turn around the company's fortunes.

Although Firstsource had stable financial backing, Rajesh insists that, in the company's early days, the key element that would unlock future successes boiled down to how the team paid attention to the mistakes that were made.

He said, "In the early days we made so many mistakes. The good thing in life is, once you know there is a problem and you can fix it, you learn from mistakes. So, the evolution of making mistakes, correcting them, and making new mistakes...I think that whole learning process helped us to make a very solid company.

"The advantage of making these mistakes was that we had a very solid backer. Sometimes when you make mistakes, you run out of capital, but even when you have the capital backing that can forgive the mistakes that you make, it is how you learn from those mistakes that determine how you push forward."

People are the heartbeat of your business

When asked about his leadership style, Rajesh revealed a philosophy centred on developing his people. While that's an idea that all leaders pay lip-service to,

Through the Ups and Downs of Business

What's important is that you learn from mistakes

the Firstsource CEO is clearly passionate about investing in the growth of his people.

He said, "The beauty of human psychology is that your people all want to solve problems. Someone whose mind is idle gets bored; it reflects in the mediocrity of their performance and they become disengaged. So, it's about solving problems, empowering people, and getting them to take bold decisions. I can't make all the decisions, so it's important to have that core team of people there to help move your company forward."

To build a successful enterprise, some leaders might think that it's a case of 'the more the merrier' when it comes to hiring talent. However, in Rajesh's view, it's not about the number of people you have that counts – it's the quality of the team around you and what they can achieve when they pull together.

Talking about the initial struggles Firstsource faced, he said, "Attrition was a concern in the early days, and that was due to burn-out rates within a high-stress job with unnatural shifts. But coming out of the commodities segment, where it becomes repetitive and monotonous, and then moving up the value chain where people's minds become active makes a difference.

"Have we cracked the code? No. Are we on the journey? Absolutely. Today, it's no longer about the number of people we employ but about the outcomes that we drive. In 2012, we had 33,000 people; now, we have 19,000 and are operating at a higher revenue.

"So, the game is not about adding people; the game is about knowing how you leverage your human capital in delivering superior outcomes."

Advice for new leaders

The fascinating leadership insights from the First-

source CEO were capped off with some sage advice directed towards young leaders looking to make their mark.

Echoing the sentiments of the great Renaissance master, Leonardo da Vinci, Rajesh called on new leaders not to wait for things to happen, but to go out there and make things happen. He also offered a message that was delivered by the late Steve Jobs: as a leader in your organisation, it pays to not be the smartest person in the room.

He said, "You need a lot of nervous energy around yourself and want to solve big problems. You want to make a big impact and you want to feel good about it. Money, position, power...all those things will follow.

"The fundamental thing is to identify problems and solve them effectively in a way that makes a deep impact. It's to have that feeling that, when you wake up in the morning, you want to solve problems and get ahead in life.

"Also, surround yourself with people smarter than you. If you have people around you who are not smarter than you, then you become the bottom line, because they then wait for you to tell them what to do, rather than using their skills and knowledge to really push towards your shared objectives."



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 emailing editor@leaderonomics.com.

**LEADERSHIP NUGGETS**

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The Power of Words

How to use them to your advantage

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

HUMANS apparently developed language initially as a means to gossip – it allowed us to warn each other of people who would serve against our interests and those of the community.

Storytelling runs through the fabric of humanity; it's what distinguishes us as a species. Our capacity to not only think, but to know that we are thinking, has provided us with powerful imaginations that have seen us produce the world's most incredible innovations, as well as deliver its darkest hours.

The power of language, of storytelling, is so vast that it's impossible to measure. Doubtless, we will all have read some books or watched a play or a movie that has moved us beyond the words that make them up.

Histories are created, worlds are made, philosophies and ideologies are sculpted, great love is sparked, and intense hatred fuelled, all due to the way in which words are built on top of each other.

Words influence outcomes

Scott Friedman, certified speaking professional and former president of the National Speakers Association, is a highly sought-after motivational speaker who knows the power of language and the psychological shifts words can create.

In the world of business, Friedman believes that the words we use to define what we do can mean all the difference between celebration and dread.

An example he uses during his appearance on Leaderonomics' *Leadership Nuggets* series is a word anyone who has ever worked on a project before will be intimately familiar with: *deadline*.

For Friedman – a multiple author of books focusing on engagement – the word 'deadline' creates a sense of foreboding, "I don't want to achieve any objective with the word 'dead' in it!" Instead, he encourages us

to use a substitute term: *finish line*.

As Friedman explains: "Finish line implies that when you get to the end, there's going to be some kind of celebration. The next time you hear the word 'deadline' or are about to say it yourself, turn it into 'finish line' and see if it feels a little different. And then, take responsibility when you do get there to acknowledge your success. Celebrate – have some fun with it."

Even a simple tweak in word use can have a profound effect on the outcome of a situation. When asked to justify a raise in their allowance, young people might shift from, "I did the dishes last week" to "I did the dishes *through the whole of* last week" in order to eke out a little more sympathy from their parents.

Be mindful of what you say

Similarly, in leadership, feedback on ideas can be positively received if leaders swap their 'but' with an 'and'.

Consider the following two sentences:

- "I get where you're going with your suggestion, *but* we just don't have time for it now."
- "I get where you're going with your suggestion, *and* we can certainly look into it further at some point..."

In the first sentence, using 'but' slams the door shut on any further discussion, while the second sentence uses 'and' to leave the suggestion open for a future revisit.

The leader might have no intention of revisiting; however, the way in which the feedback is delivered – thanks to just one word – makes all the difference to how it comes across.

The power of language can also be seen in sales. How many times have you received a cold call or an unsolicited sales pitch that looks to box you in almost immediately?

It doesn't feel good at all, does it? When the sales-

person finally gets to their question, "Are you interested?" it gives you the chance to politely refuse and carry on with your day.

However, walking away becomes much harder when a slight change in the language invokes your moral values. Let's look at another couple of sentences:

- "Are you *interested* in donating to the children's charity?"
- "Are you *willing* to donate to the children's charity?"

While the first sentence enquires about your level of interest in helping out, the second sentence really puts you on the spot.

You can be uninterested in helping out a charity – it doesn't feel so bad, you will help out next time. But the idea that you're *unwilling* to help those poor children in need is more likely to have you reaching for your wallet, lest you be seen on the same level as a Disney villain.

Concluding thoughts

We've examined just a few simple examples of how effective language can be – it's easy to see how word-smiths with insights into human psychology principles can use nuanced storytelling to nudge us towards doing their bidding, whether it be a politician, boss, or advertiser.

Of course, the way we use language can have an enormous effect without us even realising it – all the more reason to be careful of what we choose to tell ourselves, and how we interact with others.



Sandy is a huge fan of clever word play, and prefers when the power of language is used to make others laugh. P.G. Wodehouse once wrote, "An apple a day, if well aimed, keeps the doctor away." What words would you consider removing from your everyday vocabulary? Let us know at editor@leaderonomics.com.

By KAREN GATELY
editor@leaderonomics.com

REFLECT for a moment on the effectiveness of your organisation's approach to rewarding and recognising employees.

How are culture, engagement and performance impacted? Do leaders successfully influence capability and behaviour through the thanks they give and rewards they provide?

Do financial and non-financial rewards inspire discretionary effort and impact upon the standards achieved by individuals and teams?

Why do these programmes fail?

If you're struggling to extract optimal value for your reward and recognition efforts, you're far from alone. All too often, organisations fail to leverage the full benefits of the investment they make in reward and recognition programmes.

At the heart of the issue are two key factors:

- lack of effective coaching from managers
- poor design or application of reward programmes

The simple reality is, when leaders actively coach their people, they are more likely to be 'tuned in' to each individual on their team; that is, how they are thinking, feeling, learning and ultimately performing.

When leaders adopt a coaching approach, they are entirely more likely to communicate both constructive feedback and praise.

Incentive schemes or recognition programmes typically fail due to a lack of alignment between the decisions made and the outcomes needed.

Take, for example, bonus programmes that fail to reinforce cultural expectations or incentive schemes that discourage collaboration and team success.

It doesn't take long, working in human resources, to come across the highly-paid 'technical expert' who earns large bonuses despite poor behaviour that impacts the rest of the team.

The rewards of getting it right

Getting reward and recognition right matters for reasons beyond spending money wisely.

Of course, success should be measured by the return on your investment in bonuses and other financial rewards.

What matters more, however, is the impact reward and recognition (done well) can have on the performance of your business.

The bottom line is that people are more likely to strive to achieve the standards required of them, and beyond, if they believe they are fairly recognised and rewarded.

When people don't feel fairly treated, it's highly unlikely that they'll invest the full strength of their potential in getting the job done.

A research done by Gallup spanning four million employees worldwide presents compelling evidence of the link between reward and recognition, and organisational performance.

Benefits cited include improved individual productivity, increased engagement among colleagues, and staff retention. In addition to that, higher loyalty and satisfaction scores from customers, better safety records and fewer accidents on the job were also reported.

It's not all about the money

While financial rewards unquestionably play a role in inspiring a sense of personal value and commitment, far more important are the words of gratitude people need to hear, and the acts of generosity they value.

McKinsey & Company research shows that non-financial incentives are more powerful influencers of behaviour than money. When people are satisfied with their salaries, non-financial rewards are more effective in building long-term employee engagement.

Appreciate Your People

Make it memorable by being creative

Customise and personalise

Making reward and recognition programmes work requires a creative approach.

While there are strategies or initiatives that will work across the board, far more powerful are those tailored to your workforce.

Look for opportunities to tailor rewards to each individual or team. Adding a personal touch can have a long-lasting impact on the extent to which rewards are truly valued.

Keep in mind that the primary objective of rewarding and recognising people is to influence how they feel and in turn, behave. To do that, you need to adopt an approach that works for them.

Armed with a little understanding of each individual, far more meaningful and impactful rewards can be provided.

Make lasting impressions

While many organisations provide standard rewards or forms of recognition, people often appreciate the effort invested and personal nature of the reward more than the value of the gift itself.

Encourage leaders to think laterally about what their team may value and look for ways to accommodate these. For example, tickets to a certain event, or a book about a topic the individual is interested in, are far more likely to be memorable than a standard reward that everyone else gets too.

While a certificate of achievement or trophy may well be appreciated in some instances, rewards that demonstrate thoughtfulness are more likely to be valued.

Opportunities to attend courses or conferences, time off to pursue personal interests, gift cards or vouchers for products or services the individual needs, and support services that help people balance work and life are just some of the many ways in which a tailored approach can be taken.



Karen Gately, a founder of HR Consultancy Ryan Gately, is a leadership and people-management specialist. Karen works with leaders and HR teams to drive business results through the talent and energy of people. She is the author of The People Manager's Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Getting the Best From People (Wiley) and The Corporate Dojo: Driving Extraordinary Results Through Spirited People. To connect with Karen, email editor@leaderonomics.com.





3 Life Lessons That Dance Taught Me

By **THIVYAA PARI**
editor@leaderonomics.com

HAVE you ever watched a dance performance and felt mesmerised by the sheer beauty and grace of the art form? A skilled dancer makes it seem effortless – so much that no one realises the hard work that goes into a *single* performance.

While it remains a side passion for many, there are many dance enthusiasts who have successfully transformed their passion into a profession – like Malaysia's legendary choreographer, Indian classical dancer and founder of Sutra Dance Theatre, Datuk Ramli Ibrahim.

I began my training as a *Bharatanatyam* dancer seven years ago. As my passion intensified, I decided to enrol myself in professional dance training, but little did I know that my journey as a young dancer would see many challenges. However, with these challenges came some of the greatest lessons I have learnt in my young life.

We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit. – Aristotle

1 Perseverance

The initial training period for a dancer who lacks physical fitness can be a nightmare. It is a tough process; and a dancer's fixation on attaining perfection can make them grow weary – even demotivated. We're left feeling like we're never good enough, but this is why we need perseverance.

Never compromise on the effort you put in and stay consistent in your efforts regardless of your level of skill. A great dancer is one who always believes in their own capabilities and pushes their own limits. In time, you see the fruits of your labour.

Learning dance is also a practice in willpower, and once we hone that, we can weather much of life's ups-and-downs.

2 Self-acceptance

Rushing through a fast-paced world, we often forget to stop and reflect on our lives – and we forget to love and appreciate who we are and



what we do. However, dance is more than doing what we like; it is about making a connection between our passion and life.

As a creative curriculum, dance requires deep theoretical understanding. Experimenting with different perspectives of dance contributes to our knowledge of the art form and shapes our personal views. We get to express ourselves through dance, and it is where we create a sense of individuality within a collective through experience and practice.

Dance has allowed me to accept and love myself for who I am. After spending all these years dancing, I have found strength by recognising and embracing my flaws, and confronting my fears. All because I threw myself into dance.

So, here's my suggestion. Take a break from all that you've been doing. Just breathe and find things you appreciate about yourself. Reflect. Take some time to discover your passion and interests.

3 Calmness

The dance instructor guides you, not with his words, but through the pulses of a song – your body moves to interpret the music that plays. Mirrors surround you, so you can observe your own

movements and self.

Dance teaches us to appreciate silence – dancers learn to talk less and listen more. Traditional dances such as *Bharatanatyam* are often worshipped as a spiritual art form, and the mental preparation for a *Bharatanatyam* dancer is such that the mind must be free from all worldly thoughts so that we can embrace the present moment.

Through dance, I learnt to calm my mind, focus and look into myself. Thus, making that connection between my mind and heart.

Life holds new meaning when we learn to observe and reason with things that happen around us with mindfulness. When times are hard, be mindful. Drown out the noise and take it in – it's all life experience.

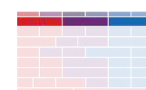
Final thoughts

Be it a hobby or a profession, dance is a never-ending process of learning. *Bharatanatyam*, ballet, hip-hop or even street jazz, it all leads back to one common lesson: perfection is unattainable. We keep travelling down a path that tests us and demands that we grow – and we all have it in us to be great and love ourselves. That has been my experience through this art form.

So, why walk this path when you can dance?



Thivyaa Pari is a passionate young dancer who lives by her motto, 'art heals'. She believes that dance is a healing therapy which promotes positive mental health and aims to contribute to society by raising awareness on mental health through her dancing. To connect with her, email editor@leaderonomics.com.



PERFORMANCE CHARACTER What sets a person apart and earmarks them for success. These are the traits that take us the extra mile, and includes 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/SOBLP1 to find out more.



By **PREMA JAYABALAN**
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CHILDREN are curious beings. They question, explore, and wonder when they learn. From the moment of birth, people are drawn to new things. When we are curious about something, we will want to explore it. And while exploring it, we discover.

Children are born with a rage to learn. They want to learn about everything and they want to learn about it right now. Children naturally think that learning is great. However, they spend the first six years of life being told that learning is not the greatest thing in life. Playing is. But isn't playing the best form of learning?

By turning the light switch on and off, over and over again, the toddler learns about cause and effect. By pouring water into different-shaped containers, the three-year-old is learning the concepts of mass and volume.

In eating, a child experiences the sweetness of chocolate, the sourness of lemon, the heat of hot drinks, and the cold of ice.

Learning cycle

If a child continues to be curious, he will always explore and discover. The pre-schooler finds tadpoles in a tiny pool of mud on the playground. This discovery excites him. When he experiences the fun in discovery, he will want to repeat his exploration of the pond.

Each day, he and his classmates will return to explore. The tadpoles grow legs. The children learn that tadpoles become frogs – an example of a biological process. Mastery – in this case, figuring out that tadpoles become frogs – leads to confidence.

Confidence increases the desire to act on curiosity – to explore, discover, and learn. “Can we bring tadpoles into class for everyone to see? How do other animals grow? Why don't puppies lose their tails?”

This interesting cycle of learning is fuelled by curiosity and the joy that comes from discovery and mastery.

Sharing is caring

What is most pleasing about discovery and mastery is sharing it with others. (“Teacher, come here! Look, tadpoles!”)

We are social beings. The most positive reinforcement comes from admiration, comments and support from someone we love and respect.

The teacher smiles, claps, and comments, “Wow, look at all these tadpoles! You are our little science geniuses!”

This rewarding gesture causes a surge of pleasure

Nurturing Curiosity

The key to children's development

and pride that can sustain the child through new challenges and frustrations. Approval can help build confidence and self-esteem.

So later in the day when this child is struggling with mathematics, rather than bumming his esteem by thinking, “I'm dumb, I don't understand,” he will think, “I don't get this, but I will because I'm the one who found out about tadpoles.”

Constricting curiosity

For many children, curiosity fades away. As the saying goes, curiosity dimmed is a future denied. Our potential – body, mind and soul – is expressed through our experiences.

And the less-curious child will make fewer friends, join fewer social networks, read fewer books, and take fewer hikes. When he/she joins the workforce in the future, they may well be one of those who don't interact well with others.

Lack of inclination to be curious and fear of asking questions can result in lack of confidence as an adult. There are three common ways adults constrict or dampen the fascinating exploration of the curious child.

1. Absence

The presence of a caring, interested adult provides two things essential for maximum exploration: a sense of safety to discover new things and the ability and space to share the discovery and get acknowledged for it.

2. Disapproval

“Don't touch this. Don't climb that. Don't shout at him. Don't break it. Don't. Don't. Don't. Don't.” Children sense and respond to our attitudes. If we convey a message of disgust at the mud on their shoes and the slime on their hands, their love to discover tadpoles will fade away.

3. Fear

Fear kills curiosity. When a child is afraid, he will not like anything new. He will seek the familiar and stay in his comfort zone, not leave and explore new territories.

Children impacted by war, natural disasters, family distress, or violence all have their curiosity diminished.

Let them blossom

Be aware of individual differences in children's styles of curiosity. Some explore only with their minds, others in physical ways – smelling, touching, tasting, and climbing.

To some extent, these differences are related to the variety of temperaments. Some children are timid; others are very comfortable with physical exploration. However, even the timid child will be curious; just that he may require more encouragement to leave safe and familiar situations.

Curiosity often leads to mess than mastery, but it's how we handle the mess that helps encourage further exploration and development. All we have to do is redefine failure. When the five-year-old is learning to jump rope and he trips a thousand times, it is not failing repeatedly – it is determination.

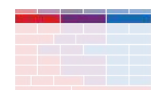
Use your attention and acknowledgment to reinforce the exploring child. When exploration in the classroom is disruptive or inappropriate, teach the child when and where to do that kind of exploration, for example: “Let's play with water outside.”

Mark Twain once said, “I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.” If we let them, children can reintroduce us to the world. When we truly allow a child to share his discoveries with us, we experience the joys of rediscovery – and in doing so, learn ourselves.

In the quest to produce an innovative and productive workforce in the future, it is imperative for parents to start cultivating curiosity in children at a young age.



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



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By **RIDDHI PARIKH MEHTA**
editor@leaderonomics.com

MANY of us are leaders in business and parents in our personal lives. Parenting is similar to leading. In both cases, someone is looking up to us for guidance and direction. There are various leadership theories, one of which is servant leadership.

According to Robert K. Greenleaf, “The servant-leader is servant first...It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first.”

The ancient Indian scriptures also define servant leadership; in the 4th century BC, Chanakya wrote in his book *Arthashastra*: “The king shall consider as good, not what pleases himself but what pleases his subjects. The king is a paid servant and enjoys the resources of the state together with the people.”

The key element of both quotes above is for the leader ‘to serve’ as pleased by the follower. As parents, how can we apply the same principle ‘to serve’ as it is pleased by our child, and not according to what pleases us?

While I may believe that learning to count numbers is appropriate at the age of five, my son clearly prefers to play with his Lego bricks. In the overzealous era where we as parents want to do all (and more) for our children, we forget that children just want to be children.

Hence, if Chanakya’s Niti (doctrine) or Greenleaf’s theory were to be applied to parenting, the ‘servant parenthood’ characteristics would look like this:

1 Listen and empathise

Each time we listen to our children, we instil confidence in them and show that we respect them. We also let them lead, while being guided or supported by us.

We must empathise with them even if they are still little at five or seven years old, and even more so when they are teenagers – parents of teenagers will assure us that it is the teenage years that demand the highest level of empathy. Empathise with them to let their spirits come alive.

2 Heal

One of the most powerful impact that a parent can have is to heal. A bruised knee, a broken heart, tears because of a lost pet or poor grades; we as parents have the power to make the broken pieces whole once again.

Parenting: A Form of Servant Leadership

3 Awareness and persuasion

While lots of time and money is spent to make children aware of the world, making them self-aware of their strengths and aspirations is a key input that parents can provide.

So, does serving mean we do not direct the child towards making the right choices? Well, no. A parent will need to establish boundaries and teach right from wrong.

This, however, is done through connection and not coercion. At home, screen time is severely restricted for my son, and he complains about it. The only way for me to convince him to go with it is to help him understand the joy of playing, running, reading and drawing instead of using gadgets.

Well, I do err several times each week, but I then try harder to connect and not enforce.

4 Conceptualisation and foresight

We must enable children to create great visions for themselves through their own imagination. We don’t make them soccer champions because we wish to make them one.

Rather, we use our maturity and life experiences to leverage the lessons of the past, understand our children’s current circumstances, and prepare them for future consequences. This is an intuitive process based on our understanding of our children.

5 Stewardship

We are trustees (not owners) of our children, and only while they are young. As trustees, my husband and I guide our son to become a good human being. I tell myself each day, I am destined to parent this child as one of my roles on earth. But on some days, I forget to listen to myself, so I tell myself again.

6 Commitment to growth

Parenting is as much a journey for us as it is for our child. The two of us can move like companions: we be the guide, and the child is the one who takes the actions. With this companionship, growth is inevitable.

7 Build communities

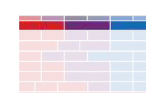
Lastly, as parents we feel pure love in our hearts. This love can be shared among a larger community. A ‘servant parent’ has the power to build a beautiful community by teaching the right values to their children and volunteering for the right cause by themselves.

Lao-Tzu, an ancient Chinese philosopher wrote about servant leadership in the 5th century BC: “The highest type of ruler is one of whose existence the people are barely aware... The Sage is self-effacing and scanty of words. When his task is accomplished and things have been completed, all the people say, ‘We ourselves have achieved it!’”

Let’s let our children lead. Let our leadership not be restricted to boardrooms alone. Remember, we are developing leaders in our homes too.



Riddhi has over 15 years of 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 connect with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.



SENSE OF WHAT LEADERSHIP IS FOR SELF Understanding my personal leadership style, what leadership means in my own context and circumstances, and what works for me. **BUILDERS OF COMMUNITIES OF LOVE** Ability to get others to follow us on a mission or journey, and set the right foundations so that they can take it forward on their own if need be. These are 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/SOBLP1 to find out more.

Are You Being a Killjoy?

Youngsters should play for the sake of fun

By **JITENDRA JOSHI**

editor@leaderonomics.com

FEW things bring more happiness than the sight of a happy, bubbly child. And I got to see one recently when I was visiting a friend's place. While we both were engrossed in our talks, a little figure dashed into the house.

It was my friend's eight-year-old son, Amit, back home after a game of football with his colony friends. With a mischievous smile plastered on his face, a twinkle in his eyes and a happy spring in his feet, I could literally see the excitement of the game bursting from his body.

Just as he was frolicking towards me, his father asked him, "*Toh, aaj jeeta ki haara?*" ("Did you win or lose?")

That sentence stung Amit so badly that I could clearly see his excitement level, his eagerness to talk about the game and the joy in his eyes come crashing down in a second!

Halfway toward me, he hung his head down in shame, shook his head and quietly retreated into his room. What a heart-wrenching sight it was.

His father had not even realised what a grave crime he had just committed. I use the word 'crime' because his father had killed something: his son's happiness.

Winning or losing the game was surely the last thing on Amit's mind. He had gone out to play with his friends because he loved to – because it was fun.

Why can't we parents just leave it at that?

Being a part of an amateur sports management company, I interact with several sports parents on a regular basis and I have noticed this behaviour among many of them. Being a parent myself, it has propelled me to share my views on this.

So, what are we doing wrong?

While this might not be a definitive list of parental traits when it comes to dealing with children and their sports habits, it does address some of the critical aspects where parents go wrong and how it could be addressed.

She plays for fun, and that's okay

Who doesn't remember the sports day celebrations when they were in school? For me, it was a day filled with excitement, running around and just having fun. Things haven't changed.

Children, even today, love sports day. And the reason is because they associate sports with fun. But what used to be pure fun for children is no longer the same.

Leave alone big events like sports day; these days many parents create such a brouhaha even when their children are playing an innocent game of gully cricket with their friends.

We start over-intellectualising and seeing our child's games or love for any particular sport with a competitive lens, and even worse, start forcing (sometimes unknowingly) the child to do the same.

The moment we bring competition into the picture, a child's perception about playing games or sports starts changing. The pressure of competition kills the joy of playing and the child starts dreading it.

In this rat race to become 'the superstar mum and dad', we have become extremely calculative and allow our child to play only if we foresee some advantage from it. That mindset needs to change. Let them play just for fun.

Sports is a great teacher

A playground is a school in itself. It teaches the child those skills which will be essential and beneficial for her as they grow up and start facing the challenges of the real world.

Unfortunately, an alarming 60 per cent of parents feel that only studies matter, and playing is a waste of time. We say things like "He's always playing", "When will she study?" or "*Khel ke kya seekhega?*" ("What will you learn from playing?")



That last crucial over whether he bowls or bats or fields is when he learns to handle stress. In sports one quickly learns to focus on the next play and not the end-result.

When he loses a game (and that will happen often), he learns to exercise self-control. It is a critical skill to learn 'how to lose'. It's okay to feel upset after losing but **not okay** to act in that anger.

When the child is part of a team, he quickly understands he must play a role in the team and the importance of teamwork.

Building character through sports

Doesn't every parent want their child to grow up with solid values and strong virtues? We lecture them, tell them stories, go out of our way – just to inculcate good values in them.

We fail to see, that one tool that can do the job most effectively – which is already a very dear part of the child's life – is sports. Let me share an incident that got me to believe that playing sports gives us the mammoth opportunity to teach moral values to our kids.

I happened to be in Hyderabad in 2016 during my 11-year-old niece's school sports day. Like most parents in the stadium, I along with my sister and brother-in-law were happily cheering for the young ones while they were jumping in sacks or running with lemon-in-spoon. Next was my niece Sreeja's running race.

The whistle blew and the girls flew. Just a few seconds into the race, we saw one of the girls fall on the track with a sprained ankle, writhing in pain.

While the remaining girls kept running faster, Sreeja stopped and ran back towards her injured friend, helped her up and took her to the ground where there was help available. That was the moment – it blew us all away!

In fact, everyone in the stadium forgot about the race winner and started clapping for Sreeja and her selfless act.

A parent walked up to my sister and told her, "Your daughter has such good values." Tears of joy welled up in my sister's eyes. It was indeed a moment of pride for both the parents.

I wanted to know how she managed to instil such a great virtue of kindness into that little soul, to which she later told me about the match-day policy that she along with her husband had formed.

First, after every match, irrespective of the result, the ritual would be to go out and celebrate. It would be like a family pizza party day. With this policy, the parents have smartly taught the child that winning or losing are

just a part of life. Victory and defeat, both should be embraced with a smile.

Second, on the way back home from any sports competition or match – whether she has won or lost – the conversation on the journey back home would not revolve around the game.

That would be the time when she and my brother-in-law spoke to their daughter about what they loved about her behaviour during the game, how proud they were when she went and shook hands with the opponent team, how happy they were to see her touch her coach's feet after the win.

That was the golden time frame when their child was most receptive and they used it effectively to inculcate great values in her. Sreeja's noble gesture during the race was a result of all those non-preachy talks on good values that her parents had had with her all along.

Therefore, if we stop or reprimand our child from playing, we are not only slowing his or her natural learning process but also missing the opportunity to teach them important life values.

Instead, we as parents need to use sports as the tool with which we teach our children the most important virtues of life, which will stay with them for a lifetime.

Are you a killjoy parent? Jitendra has more insights for parents – check out bit.ly/killjoy-parents to read the rest of the article.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Jitendra is the co-founder and director of SportzConsult, a sports management company based in Mumbai. To engage with him, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

MORAL CHARACTER These are character traits that are deemed to make an individual a 'good' human being. Understanding our values and our strengths in the character traits related to them will enable us to learn how to lead ourselves first, how to lead our teams, and ultimately, how to lead organisations. This includes integrity, generosity, sportsmanship, justice and gratitude. 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/SOBLP1 to find out more.

Who Is Cheering You On?

By **MANOJ MENON**
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Imagine this:

You are running a marathon. You have just crossed the 41KM mark of the 42.1KM distance of a full marathon. If you run at my pace, you have done about four hours of running in the Malaysian heat.

You are completely exhausted and almost crawling your way to the finish line. You start seeing a sizeable crowd cheering for you as you approach the finish line; you also spot your family and friends on the side-lines screaming out loud with unbelievable enthusiasm.

A new rush of blood and energy is inexplicably now available to you. You muster all your strength, gather pace, and cross the finish line in glory.



team that can propel each one of us to perform our very best in our careers and personal lives. Here are some guidelines to help orchestrate this in a meaningful way:

1. Assemble a support team consisting of friends, family, mentors and clients. The larger the team, the better it is. We could also just use our existing networks on social media. For most of us, it is best to create a private group, rather than engage with all who are on our social media.

2. Communicate your ambition and goals to them. Take their feedback to help in building these goals, and be as clear as possible with measures of success. We do this quite well in the formative years of our life when we announce our goals regarding our education, so why not do this now?

3. Share your progress on these goals – both your successes and failings – to your support team. They will be the biggest anchor for you in tough times. You may share it individually or do this in small groups.

4. Celebrate your successes with them. You could use this four-step process for any goal: to find a new job, run a marathon, become a better listener, or even lose weight.

In 2018, I embarked on the biggest challenge and transformation of my life. I somehow mustered the courage to leave behind a fabulous company and career that gave me immense learning for almost 21 years.

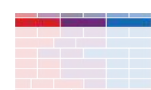
As I embarked on this new journey, I am fortunate enough to have an incredible support team of friends and family – all cheering me along. Thank you to each and every one of you in my support team.

We will all run our own life marathons, and we will all run at different paces. But the support team can ensure we get the best of what is possible in each one of us.

I hope this inspires you to start building and communicating your vision, purpose and aspirations with your support team in the years to come.



Manoj is a technology analyst, keynote speaker and management consultant who has a keen interest in future trends and business model innovation. He is passionate about working with people, organisations, and the wider community to help them achieve their potential and make a difference. To engage with him, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.



SECURE BASE Having someone you can rely on and turn to when in doubt or trouble makes you a more secure individual and confident to try different things. This can be a trusted friend, colleague, manager, peer, or someone in your family. Equally, you may also be a secure base for others around you. 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.

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What Motivates People to be **Honest** in Business?

By **KHOR HUI MIN**

editor@leaderonomics.com

SOME people regard the end goal of business as making profit, and the more the better. This is not a wrong perception, but profit is not and should not be the only end goal a business strives towards.

According to Adelaide Lancaster, in her article on Forbes.com, many entrepreneurs started out working for others, but were scarred by their experience of working in companies that required them to compromise their beliefs.

In the end, they set up their own companies because they wanted to work in an environment aligned with their own values. They hope to create a business that prioritises a high standard of behaviour while also keeping a healthy bottom line.

Honesty is the best policy

Honesty is not only taught in school to encourage students to grow up to become good citizens, but it actually makes perfect business sense to promote this value in the organisation.

Encouraging employees to practise good values, not only towards customers but with each other, is good for morale and relationships among colleagues.

However, leadership must also walk the talk by leading through example.

Being known as a company that values and upholds honesty is good for the company's image and attracts customers who believe in these values.

Motivating factors

In his TEDx talk in Zurich, economist Alexander Wagner talks about what motivates people to be honest in business. He found it troubling that one in seven large corporations commits fraud each year.

Although the statistics came from a United States (US) study on US companies, he believed that it should be no different in Europe. On the other hand, there are six out of seven companies that remain honest, despite all temptations to start engaging in fraud.

Wagner has conducted research for the past 10 years together with scientists, economists, financial economists, neuroscientists, ethicists, lawyers and others to try to understand what makes humans tick and how to address the issue of fraud in companies.

They found that people are motivated by certain intrinsic values.



"In our research, we looked at the idea that people have so-called 'protected' values. A protected value is not just any value. A protected value is a value where you're willing to pay a price to uphold that value. You're willing to pay a price to withstand the temptation to give in," says Wagner.

The consequence is you feel better that you earn money in a way that is consistent with your values.

"We can actually measure these protected values by a survey measure. We found that people who have a set of protected values that's one standard deviation above the average will discount money they receive by lying by about 25 per cent.

"That means a dollar received when lying is worth only 75 cents to them, without any incentives you put in place for them to behave honestly. It's their

intrinsic motivation," he adds.

Wagner also explains that there are two very different visions in the business world. On one hand, you can use benefits and incentives to get people to behave honestly and the way you want them to.

On the other hand, you can select and recruit people who have the values and the desirable characteristics and competencies that go in line with your organisation.

Which method do you prefer?



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



Image vs Authenticity

What does the world see in you?

By **LEE HWAI TAH**
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AS leaders and people who carry a certain weight of authority, we may constantly face this dichotomous (or so it seems) dilemma: which 'self' do we project to the world, our image or our authentic self?

Our image is the face (or faces) we wear for people around us to see – the self that we consciously project to the world. Our authentic self is the true essence within, the inner man or woman – who we really are, especially when no one is looking.

When people find out that our image (who people see) is very different from our authentic self (who we really are), things can get pretty embarrassing, to say the least.

It's not surprising that many leaders and famous people (think politicians, heroes, celebrities) painstakingly craft an ideal image for the public eye. It seems that their true selves have not caught up with the images that the public idolises!

“Do I look great?”

When you care too much about how you look to others and focus on getting their approval and acceptance, you are guided by your image rather than your authentic self.

You present yourself as more than who you are – you misrepresent your personas, values, beliefs and other information to gain favour.

There's absolutely nothing wrong with desiring to project a great image for the world to see. It's important to bring your best self to win in the marketplace and for the world to like you.

However, when your image is totally disconnected from your authentic self, you have to constantly keep 'shining' and improving your image, for fear of what truth others may discover! It's very tiring to live this way.

I've seen and known some leaders who operate very much in their image persona, and I could feel the pressure that's imposed (mostly by themselves) on them. As they are not in touch with their true selves, you don't feel the authenticity in their words and actions; shaky grounding and little trust, devoid of power.

Your image and your authentic self do not have to be in conflict. Your image can be based on your authenticity instead of the masks you try to put on.

How do you see yourself?

When we think about our true selves, most of us inevitably would first see the faults, black spots and the ugliness.

We instantly recall the criticisms and negative remarks that have been thrown at us, especially in our early years, even from people who are dear to us like our parents, family members and teachers.

Most of us grew up in a society that catches us when we're doing something wrong rather than when we're doing something right. Those well-intended 'corrections' affects us more than the little praises that we occasionally get. Inevitably, all that influences and shapes how we see ourselves.

The truth

Here's the truth. You do not know who you really are. You do not know the true extent of your capability, the real size of your capacity and how surprisingly beautiful your true essence is on the inside.

It's true that you have your weaknesses and flaws – we're only human. And it's precisely our humanity and vulnerability that make us beautiful and real.

People are drawn to your real story, not a made-up fairy tale. People get connected with you when your authentic self shows up. They get put off by some inflated image. People can identify with your vulnerability, and get inspired by what you can do in spite of that.

A perfect Superman who doesn't get affected by Kryptonite won't make a very compelling story, would it?

Your authentic self

Criticism cannot affect or hurt our authentic self. You may think it can, but you're merely operating at the 'image' level – you care more about how good you look rather than expressing your real self to the world.

The value of your authentic self is innate, completely unaffected by criticisms. You can, however, be informed by what those criticisms are trying to tell you, so you can bring more value to the world.

I would encourage you to explore some of these questions on your own:

- Do you want to look good or to make a difference?
- When was the last time you let your guard down? Was it fine?
- How comfortable are you in 'your own skin'?
- Would you feel happier if you achieve great success through a fabricated image and celebrate with many raving fans, or if you achieve some success through your authentic self and celebrate with the circle of people who accept you for who you are?
- How can your image be more of who you really are?
- What benefits can you gain by allowing the world to see and connect with your vulnerability?
- What would it look like if you're totally unaffected by criticism, and allow your true self to express itself in the world?

Yes, imagine what that would look like...

■ This article was previously published in print.



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By DR TRAVIS BRADBERRY
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Passion is the genesis of genius. – Galileo

DO you have enough passion in your life? Passion is the difference between playing the piano and being a pianist; it's who you are, not just what you do. Passion makes you leap out of bed in the morning, eager to start your day.

Dr Arielle Bonneville-Roussy at the University of Quebec has studied passion more than anyone, and he asserts that passion is self-defining. According to Vallerand, "Passion is a strong inclination towards a self-defining activity that people love, that they consider important, and in which they devote significant amounts of time and energy."

It's important to note that passion doesn't require expertise – although there is a correlation, it's not a given. Vallerand and two other researchers studied 187 musicians and found that those who focused on perfecting their performance – what Vallerand calls 'mastery' – developed a higher level of expertise than those who focused on merely being better than other musicians. If passion defines you, it makes sense that your personal best will be about you and no one else.

So, what does passion look and feel like? A great way to understand passion is to consider how passionate people differ from everybody else.

1 Passionate people are obsessed

Put simply, passionate people are obsessed with their muse, and I don't mean that in an unhealthy obsessive compulsive sort of way. I'm talking about a positive, healthy obsession, the kind that inspired the quote, "Do what you love, and you'll never work a day in your life."

No matter what else is going on, their thoughts keep returning to their passion. Not because they feel burdened and pressured by it, but because they're just so dang excited about it. They're obsessed with their muse because it inspires them and makes them happy.

2 They don't waste time

You won't find passionate people wandering around a park all afternoon playing Pokemon Go. They don't have time to be bothered with things that don't matter or things that just kill time. They devote every minute available to their passion, and it's not a sacrifice, because there's nothing else they'd rather be doing.

3 They're optimistic

Passionate people are always focused on what can be rather than what is. They're always chasing their next goal with the unwavering belief that they'll achieve it. You know how it feels when you're looking forward to a really special event? Passionate people feel like that every day.

4 They're early risers

Passionate people are far too eager to dive into their days to sleep in. It's not that they don't like to sleep; they'd just much rather be pursuing their passion. When the rooster crows, their minds are flooded with ideas and excitement for the day ahead.

9 Things Passionate People Do Differently



5 They're willing to take big risks

How much you want something is reflected in how much you're willing to risk. Nobody is going to lay it all on the line for something they're only mildly interested in. Passionate people, on the other hand, are willing to risk it all.

6 They only have one speed – full tilt

Passionate people don't do anything half-heartedly. If they're going, they're going full tilt until they cross the finish line or crash. If they're relaxed and still, they're relaxed and still. There's no in between.

7 They talk about their passions all the time

Again, we're talking about people whose passions are inseparable from who they are, and you couldn't form much of a relationship with them if they couldn't be real about who they are, right? It's not that they don't understand that you don't share their obsession; they just can't help themselves. If they acted differently, they'd be playing a role rather than being authentic.

8 They're highly excitable

You know those people who probably wouldn't get excited if an alien spaceship landed in their front yard? Yeah, that's not how pas-


sionate people operate. It's not that they're never calm, or even bored. It's just that it takes less to get them excited, so they get excited more frequently and stay excited longer.

One theory is that they devote their energy to just one or two things, so they make more progress, and that momentum fuels their excitement.

9 They're all about their work

Passionate people don't worry about work-life balance. Their work is who they are, and there's no separating the two. It's what they breathe, live, and eat, so there's no such thing as leaving it at the office. Asking them to do that is tantamount to asking them to deny who they are. And they're okay with that because there's nothing else they'd rather be doing.

Now that you know what separates passionate people from everybody else, do you think you have enough passion in your life?

 Dr Travis Bradberry is the co-author of Emotional Intelligence 2.0 and the co-founder of TalentSmart®, the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training, serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. To engage with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

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By **DONNA McGEORGE**
editor@leaderonomics.com

ACCORDING to an article by DMR, a company that looks at social media statistics and trends, the average user gets around 121 emails per day, with only 10 per cent requiring a considered response.

In addition, a study by the University of Glasgow found that email is used correctly to leverage time zones or answer a well-defined question only 20 per cent of the time. Yet, email is usually the first task of the workday. This is the most productive time and it is being squandered.

For the majority of people, their peak alertness is at 10am and their best coordination is at around 2.30pm. This is best explained by the work of Michael Smolensky and Lynne Lambert, published in their book *The Body Clock Guide to Better Health*, which shows that our body clock has a natural rhythm.

These results are consistent with most research findings, a lot of which employ the Morning Eveningness Questionnaire, developed by James A. Horne and Olov Östberg in 1976. Its main purpose is to measure whether a person's circadian rhythm produces peak alertness in the morning, evening or in between.

While the results vary from study to study, in a normal population only 10 to 21 per cent of people can survive on minimal sleep and working late into the early morning. Tasks that require attention and focus are best done in the morning (what is deemed 'real work'), and repetitive tasks (such as email) are best done in the afternoon.

In a 2016 study titled *Diurnal Variations in Executives' and Analysts' Behaviour: Evidence from Conference Calls*, researchers found that CEOs who had meetings about earnings with analysts and shareholders were more likely to be upbeat and positive in the mornings. The tone grew more negative as the day progressed.

This was an alarming finding, as much of an organ-

isation's value could be determined by how those conversations went.

The number of decisions people make throughout the day compounds this further. One study by Cornell University showed that people make around 200 decisions each day about food alone. This helps explain the exhaustion that is felt by leaders when they have to make large calls such as approve a USD1.5mil budget late in the afternoon.

Leaders need good knowledge, experience and the ability to make sound judgements. If they are not making good decisions, then they are putting their career at risk.

This is the reason why Barack Obama only wore blue or grey suits while he was the President of the United States – to save energy for the world's most pressing and important decisions.

In his book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman describes the brain as having two systems. One moves quickly and makes snap judgements. It also doesn't require much energy.

The other, which is slower, takes deeper thinking and uses a lot of energy. People feel tired or 'brain dead' if they have been using the second system a lot.

The amount of brainpower a task will require should dictate someone's day, not email. Tasks that require deep thinking, concentration and focus (high intensity) are best in the morning, while email should be left for after lunch.

Try it tomorrow and see.



Donna McGeorge is a workplace consultant and author of *The First 2 Hours*. Get in touch with her at editor@leaderonomics.com.

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