



Leaderonomics

The Science of Building Leaders



The Building Blocks of Leadership

Learning
from those
whom we teach

THIS month, we celebrate the 'builders of leaders' among us – those who provide the building blocks for great leadership by giving selflessly to others and imparting their wisdom to the younger generation, in hopes of building a better future for the nation. This aspect is a significant part of our *Science of Building Leaders* framework, for what use is knowledge if it is not shared?

It is said that in learning you will teach, and in teaching you will learn – and as any parent would tell you, this certainly holds true. Oh, the lessons you'll learn when you raise and teach another human being! In this issue, Rupa Sivanoli shares how being a mother has helped her become a better person and a better leader in the workplace, while Qhairyl Iyzuan shares his own realisations about leadership since becoming a father.

Peter Cook writes about how teachers can act as thought leaders in this age of information when all the information in the world is easily available to their students. This involves understanding the wide range of learning styles and intelligences, and customising lessons to best suit the students' needs.

Read about some of the 'building blocks' needed to be a great leader, for example: emotional intelligence, humility, authenticity, empathy, self-awareness, creativity and innovation. How should you present yourself when the limelight is everywhere, thanks to social media? How do you establish rapport with your audience and pump up their energy when you speak?

Understand the concept of change through adaptive leadership, which is about making small changes that can create a huge impact, and check out the infographic on how to better manage your time. All this and more await you in this issue.

What is your favourite teaching experience in which you also learnt a whole lot about yourself and the way the world works? We would love to hear from you, so share it with us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

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Lessons from the Inventor of the World Wide Web

What Tim Berners-Lee's selflessness can teach us about leadership

By **ROSHAN THIRAN**

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"The fact that we're all connected, the fact that we've got this information space – does change the parameters. It changes the way people live and work. It changes things for good and for bad. But I think, in general, it's clear that most bad things come from misunderstanding, and communication is generally the way to resolve misunderstandings – and the Web's a form of communications – so it generally should be good."

– **Tim Berners-Lee**

THE English computer scientist and maverick mathematician Alan Turing once said, "Those who can imagine anything, can create the impossible." Turing – who was central to breaking the complex Enigma code machine used by the Germans during the Second World War – conceptualised "a single machine which can be turned to any well-defined task by being supplied with the appropriate programme".

His work in computer science and mathematics laid the groundwork for the devices we now take for granted, such as our laptops and smartphones. Through his imagination, Turing helped "create the impossible" and later, another scientist would build on Turing's groundwork and create something that would truly change the world.

In 1955 – the year after Turing's death – Tim Berners-Lee was born in London to Conway Berners-Lee and Mary Lee Woods, who both worked on the first commercial computer in the 1950s.

As a student, Berners-Lee attended Oxford University where he obtained a first-class degree in physics. In 1980, he was employed as an independent contractor at CERN – the European Organisation for Nuclear Research – in Switzerland, and it was here that his work would give birth to the World Wide Web and the Internet.

In 1989, Berners-Lee spotted an opportunity to expand on CERN's existing internet system and make it easier for information to be shared across a much wider area.

On the Internet's creation he said, "Creating the web was really an act of desperation, because the situation without it was very difficult when I was working at CERN later. Most of the technology involved in the web, like the hypertext, like the internet, multiform text objects, had all been designed already. I just had to put them together."

His rather humble explanation of proposing and building an information management system on Mar 12, 1989, and then of implementing the first successful communication between a server and a hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP) client via the Internet a few months later, summarises this amazing human being.

The selfless inventor

In a remarkable demonstration of altruistic leadership, Berners-Lee started the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). The consortium comprises organisations and other members who work on recommendations and standards to improve the Internet.

Ultimately, the inventor of the World Wide Web allowed his idea to be utilised for free, with the W3C basing its standards on royalty-free technology so that it could be used by anyone.

This was a remarkable act of selflessness for two reasons: firstly, many people are unaware of the name Tim Berners-Lee, even though almost half the world's population (3.2bil people) connect to the Web every day.

How many of us could say that we would forfeit the obvious fame that would've come if we'd created the Web and pursued our own interests?



Secondly, although his current estimated worth is over USD50mil, had Berners-Lee pursued the path of self-interest and retained control of the World Wide Web, he would certainly have been a multi-billionaire by now. He would also have stood a good chance of becoming a trillionaire, as well as one of the world's most powerful people.

While many leaders often talk about benefiting the world and giving to society, there's perhaps been no more generous offering in recent history than what Berners-Lee has given to us.

Rather than bring driven by self-interest, the inventor of the Web has insisted that his focus wasn't on seeking fame or fortune – even the creation of the Web itself wasn't the main driver.

As Berners-Lee puts it, "The most exciting thing was not the technology but the community and spirit of people getting together." Such a vision has brought an untold amount of benefit to the world, and it just goes to show how a relatively simple idea (figuring out a way to improve shared communication) can develop into a genuine game-changer for billions of people.

So, what are some quick lessons of leadership we can learn from this great man?

1 Leaders serve

Berners-Lee reminded me that leadership is service. Leaders are here not to be served but to serve. He gave everything he had – his fame and potential billions or trillions – to ensure humanity had a way to communicate better with each other.

How about us? Are we leading through service? Are we giving the best of what we are and do so that others can benefit and gain? Mother Teresa, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and numerous others gave the best of their lives in service of others. Shouldn't we do the same?

2 Fame or money should never drive us – our vision should

With Berners-Lee, he could have opted to pursue fame or fortune, but he never did. His vision of a better world drove his actions to ensure the World Wide Web was free for everyone to access.

When we are motivated by wealth, fame or other external stimuli, there is a high chance of making leadership choices that benefit only ourselves. Keep our focus on our vision and make sure the vision involves helping others.

3 Leadership is humility

Many leaders forget that being a leader is painful and humbling. We lead to serve. We lead not for ourselves but to help others. We lead and fall, and take responsibility for issues and mistakes. A leader needs to humble him or herself constantly.

4 Leaders give

One of the most important lessons I have learnt from great leaders is that they are constantly giving. They give their time to impart insights they have accumulated over the years. They give us their passion which inspires us. They give of their lives to make a difference in the world. Giving is a key element that we should all embrace. Keep giving!

Through his leadership and his generosity, Berners-Lee's creation has opened the world to us all, making it possible to do almost anything online, from browsing information and news to running a full-fledged business from the comfort of our own homes.

His act of humility and service was caught by Queen Elizabeth II who knighted him in 2004 for his pioneering work in giving us the Web. He was also named by *Time Magazine* as the 100 Most Important People of the 20th Century (and I bet many of us didn't know him or his name before this article!)

Thanks to a man whom most people have never heard of, countless lives have been enriched and empowered – all due to one of history's most significant inventions being given freely to everyone to use as they wish.

There's no greater example of giving than the one set by Berners-Lee, and it's one that invites leaders to reflect on how much we give back to society.

After all, when we give back, everyone benefits as communities and societies become stronger and more stable, resulting in higher standards of living and opportunity for everyone – not least of all the most vulnerable among us.

Did You Know?

The parents of Sir Tim Berners-Lee worked on the first commercially-built, general-purpose computer, the Ferranti Mark 1, which was first used in Feb 1951 at the University of Manchester.

Why is this interesting? A lot of our research in *Science of Building Leaders* have uncovered the importance of parenting and character (which is primarily driven by parents and teachers in a child's formative years). Tim's parents had a strong influence on his character and interest in technology which drove him to do what he did years later.



Roshan Thiran is the founder and CEO of the Leaderonomics Group and is constantly amazed by the numerous leadership lessons he derives from everyone, including the founder of the Web. As a little boy, Roshan constantly read biographies of great achievers and leaders, and he now 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.

Looking to Make a Career Switch?

Here's how to launch and finance a new career

By **SHIV NANDA**

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THE days when your first career was always your last are long gone past. People today are re-entering the workforce or reinventing themselves to prepare for a career switch because they expect a promising second inning.

If you are contemplating a second career, you may have one or multiple reasons:

- You may not be thrilled with your current job and want to try something different
- You may be a stay-at-home mum trying to get back into work life
- You may be a retiree trying to have an income stream in retirement
- You may have been bitten by an entrepreneurship bug

Whatever your reasons for a professional sequel may be, your second debut is not going to be as smooth as you expect it to be. You may experience two types of fears – not being able to fit in and not being able to have enough money to make the career switch.

To overcome your fears, you must face them. Before you face them, you need to be prepared. This article is all about being prepared for the second launch of your career.

Let's talk about how you can manage your fears to make a smart career switch.

Fear of not being able to fit in

If you are not sure whether you are prepared to take on the challenges that come with taking on a new career, go through these tips.

1 Find the right fit

Starting a second career is a big decision and shouldn't be taken lightly. So, before you decide to make the career transition, make sure you're choosing a career that is a good fit for your interests, skills and schedule. Consider doing what inspires you and gives you purpose, and then look at potential career options in those areas.

2 Keep your expectations in check

When starting a second career, it can be easy to expect things to be exactly the same as when you left. You'll face the hard truth that things are not the same and many of the best practices you knew are now obsolete.

Research current trends and technology in your target industry to have a better understanding of what's happening around and quickly climb the learning curve.

3 Brush up on skills

You may have to update or refresh your skills. Consider enrolling in a certificate programme and take advantage of online classes or refresher training to update your skills.

4 Make professional connections

With your goal to switch to a different career, your professional connections and networking skills will come in handy. Fortunately for you, in this time and age, networking isn't difficult. One of the best ways to make professional connections is by creating an account on professional networking sites and joining the groups that are relevant to your new career.

Attend conferences and job events or fairs. The more people you have in your network, the better your chances are of having a dream career.

Fear of not having enough money to go after a second career

Financing a career switch is a giant task. It's a big decision to make because it will affect every aspect of your life.

It's okay to be concerned about money because you have responsibilities – a mortgage perhaps, or a family, and all those bills to pay. Take some time to weigh your financial options.

These tips might help.

1 Build your savings

Try to build a fund that will keep you safe while you make changes to your career,

such as:

- Figure out what you want to do next
- Launch a business
- Retrain or upskill for a new industry, or undergo career advancing courses

Savings help you balance a lot of responsibilities that can't be adjusted.

2 Look at financing options

If your savings are not enough or if you don't want to pull money from your savings, financing options are abundant and readily available to help you.


If you want to start a business, you can keep your savings intact by taking advantage of a business loan.

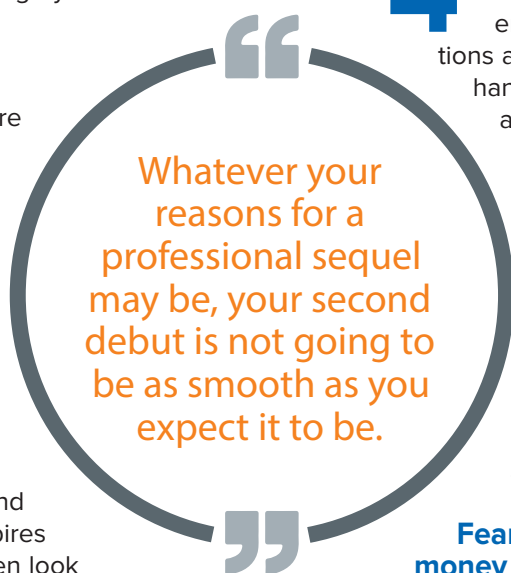
If you want to upskill yourself or study further, a personal loan for education or an education loan can work beautifully to finance your career change.

Final thoughts

Having said that, embarking on a new career can be an anxious time for anyone. While it is incredibly beneficial to your professional and personal life, it doesn't come without risks. Accept that.

Addressing your fears and being prepared to face them head on is what's going to give you the confidence to venture out in the uncharted territory of a new career.

 Shiv Nanda is a financial analyst who currently lives in Bangalore (refusing to acknowledge the name change) and works with MoneyTap. Shiv is a true finance geek, and his friends love that. They always rely on him for advice on their investment choices, budgeting skills, personal financial matters, and when they want to get a loan. Get in touch with him by emailing editor@leaderonomics.com.



Thank you!

We have successfully raised **RM609,639**,
122% of our minimum funding target!

We would like to express our thanks to all our investors who have supported us in this crowdfunding campaign.

Find out more at bit.ly/ldrigitalecf or email info@leaderonomics.com.

Can You Energise the Crowd?

3 methods for speakers to increase the energy in the room

By **RAJU MANDHYAN**
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THE sight of any large audience can give the heebie-jeebies to the best of public and professional speakers. To get nervous is normal. To be in awe of the energy pulsating from crowds is also normal.

There are however, across the world, a handful of speakers who know how to manage and motivate large groups by using the energy that emanates out of these crowds. These brilliant speakers are conversant with the science and psychology of large groups and have mastered a few techniques to tame and entertain the beast.

Here are three of my ideas and the science behind them.

1 Get them to stand up and smile

Time: 1-3 minutes

Politely request everyone to first stand up, look around the crowd, smile, and make eye contact and wave at people they are acquainted with or just met. This will create a stir and you'll hear a very gentle murmur swoosh across the hall, and in less than 60 seconds they'll make do to sit or turn towards you, the speaker.

At this point, add: "Now there might have been someone in the crowd that you wanted to smile at but did not out of courtesy. Why don't you stay standing and give them a special wave, or if you are really brave, send them a flying kiss!"

Now, whether all participate in this or not, a wave of giggles, chuckles and comments will sweep the room and the energy levels will go up. Whether you succeed with the technique or not, you **will** have achieved your purpose of breaking the ice and warming up the audience to you and to the interaction.

The science behind it: The psychology and the state of mind of a large crowd are quite nebulous. Individual states of mind in such large audiences sway from the extremely shy, cautious and self-conscious to bold, loud and sometimes brash. The pendulum swings rapidly between these two extremes.

When you as a speaker invite the shy and self-conscious mode of the audience to turn towards the bold and the brash, you are crossing the lines of modesty and protocol, and offering fun and humour.

In all fun and humour lies a minor violation of limits. It is what we, individually, call 'letting our hair down'. That is fun and it warms up your audience for you.

2 Get them to say "Oh, yeah!"

Time: 3-5 minutes

Have them respond to your close-ended questions and have them commit to the fact that when you make a fist and punch it into the sky, their answer must always be a resounding "Oh, yeah!"

Start with something simple like, "Are you happy to be here?" and they'll all go "Oh, yeah!"

Follow through with questions such as:

- Do you want to have more fun? "Oh, yeah!"
- Do you like eating chocolate? "Oh, yeah!"
- Don't we all just love George Bush? "Oh, yeah!"
- Is the chairman of the board wearing pink boxer shorts? "Oh, yeah!"
- Aren't we all just plain crazy? "Oh, yeah!"

Of course, it is important to be aware of the solemnity of the occasion and the kind of culture that exists in that group. Add and be creative with questions relevant to your audience.



The science behind it: The science behind this is also pretty simple and almost the same as the one behind the first technique. It is just that now you as a speaker are the maestro and the cheerleader. Do remember to pump up your energy levels and state before you do this. It must all not just appear to be tongue-in-cheek, but really be so.

Play it politely, stretch your limits just a bit, and make sure that your humour is benign and targeted at large icons, not individuals.

3 Get them to list their other options

Time: 5-7 minutes

Have them stand up, move away just a bit and go meet three new people, and have them ask these new acquaintances, "What better thing would you be doing if you were not attending this event?" This will get people opening up, laughing and sharing their other life options for the day. Manage this physical movement and activity quickly if your audience is really large because

people love talking to each other, especially about what is on the top of their minds, and this can take up time.

For smaller audiences, where you have time, you may for a laugh, want someone to share their 'other options' with the crowd.

The science behind: Exactly that: People love talking to each other and opening up about what is currently on their minds. People always like to have a second and third opinion on the choices they have made about their daily activities, and being able to talk about it to new acquaintances in an atmosphere of safety and control makes it all the more fun and easy.

Also, when you begin to speak, these new acquaintances will exchange glances of approval and nods about your presentation and help you sustain an atmosphere of camaraderie and interactive learning.

In closing

Archimedes is claimed to have once said to King Hieron of Syracuse, "Give me a lever long enough, a place on which to stand and I shall move the earth."



A good public speaker knows what excites and moves large audiences. All he or she needs is a little leverage to get the action and the learning going. Public speaking is a powerful discipline and you, as a leader, can move mountains when you master the finer nuances of the science behind it.



Raju Mandhyan is an author, speaker and coach at Inner Sun. His deep passion and gift for motivating and inspiring people automatically drew him into the profession of coaching and developing others. He consults with large business heads and business owners, and provides executive and cross-cultural coaching to expatriate and global leaders. To engage with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

Raju Mandhyan will be speaking at the **Malaysia Leadership Summit 2019: Connect, Collaborate, Contribute** on **July 11, 2019**. To find out more and register for the event, head to bit.ly/mls_2019. Tickets for this event are HRDF claimable.

The Value of Emotional Intelligence in Strong Leadership

By **LISA STEPHENSON**
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THERE has never been a greater need for strong leadership as there is now. Leading with strength and authenticity, attracting the right talent to work in your business, having a healthy workplace culture and achieving strong financial growth, can all be attributed to the emotional intelligence of those sitting in leadership roles.

Champion of emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman recommended to the world that the ability to manage one's own emotions and those of others was more important than a person's intellect. According to research from Harvard Business School, emotional intelligence – commonly referred to as emotional quotient (EQ) – is twice as important as intellectual ability (IQ).

Historically, the corporate world has heavily valued IQ, measuring it thoroughly before appointing people to positions of influence. Being 'smart' was a direct reflection of your ability to do business.

In more recent times, we have generally acknowledged that this thinking does not equate to building successful relationships. We've seen organisations invest in teaching their teams to have courageous conversations and provide quality feedback, to take time to initiate activities that build the self-awareness of those who are responsible for the development of people. But have we really understood what is possible if we truly value EQ in our leaders?

The true value of EQ

Words such as 'authenticity' and 'collaboration' are constantly used when we refer to expectations of our leaders today; they both require an ability to deeply understand the experience a person creates for others.

On the surface this creates conversation around what we mean by personal brand, but more strategically, this is a true ability to work robustly and respectfully with others. We want to report to people who are emotionally healthy and resilient.

We admire leaders who are confident in their ability to navigate conflict and say sorry if they get it wrong. We want those setting the strategy to tell the truth and bring optimism to the room. People want leaders who are strong in their values, beliefs and life experience.

My experience as a success coach tells me that these attributes equate to trust, and we can't have strong leadership without it. In fact, this may be more important than inspiration.

The time for change has come

Patty McCord helped create the high performing workplace culture that now exists at Netflix. In her best-selling book, *Powerful*, she essentially tells us that traditional approaches to leading people through performance appraisals and bonuses don't work.

Certainly, we are not all working in Silicon Valley but what people need and want from leaders is global. This is not about what some might call soft skills. Sure,

listening and rapport building matter. Resolving conflict and negotiating are seen on most of our CVs. Being likeable does count. But what we are really talking about here is not soft. It's critical. It's essential.

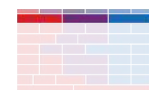
In conclusion

The challenge for small businesses and global organisations alike is to move at pace and to do it with innovation, while tapping into the potential of the people who are doing the work!

Leaders need to leverage both their instincts and intuition. If your current role or the team you are leading want to be successful, then investing in building EQ bench strength is possibly the most important investment you will make.



Lisa Stephenson is a global success coach, author of Read Me First, and founding director of Lisa Stephenson Consulting. To connect with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.



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

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For more info and to register, go to bit.ly/mls_2019 or scan the **QR code** above.





What Men Can Learn from Women

By **REBECCA SHAMBAUGH**
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IN one of my posts on LinkedIn, I shared some strategies on how organisations can engage men in advancing more women into leadership positions.

With that general background in mind – about the important role that men can play in helping boards and executive teams achieve more gender-balanced leadership – let's shift our attention now to considering why men and organisations should care about women's leadership.

The primary reasons are, first, men want to be part of successful organisations, and second, organisations need to be competitive to succeed. Simply put, research has proven that a balanced leadership team leads to better business outcomes.

Top-performing organisations recognise the value of having women on their executive teams in addition to a wider spectrum of diverse thinking, styles, and backgrounds. This is true from a business perspective as well as a leadership advantage.

While the research suggests multiple factors such as social experiences may be behind the unique attributes in leadership styles that are sometimes seen between men and women, the bottom line is that understanding these diverse skill sets can help managers leverage the best of their full teams – including their female talent.

The strongest leadership teams combine skill sets where a focus on collaboration by some leaders complements a drive for closure and results by other leaders.

With that in mind, let's look at a SHAMBAUGH study which examined what men thought were the five most beneficial things they learnt from their female colleagues. While these benefits are certainly not exclusively 'female traits', the research provides important feedback for organisations about areas where men need that women bring a lot to the table. Here they are:

1 How to be a better listener

Listening has become vital for 21st-century leadership, and curiosity is key to effective listening.

In one of my interviews, I spoke with a male leader in a venture capital firm who told me: "Listening is one of the most important leadership traits for being successful in today's business environment since we don't have much margin for error. We win or lose by truly understanding and delivering what the customer is looking for."

This male leader also shared that – while certainly not true for all men – listening can be difficult for many men. In this leader's case, he learnt the importance of listening from a female mentor: "One of the things she taught me was how effective listening skills can be in helping you better understand how all the different pieces and events fit together."

"Asking the right questions, listening to both the content and the feelings of responses, and then questioning in greater depth is a critical leadership skill for all of us."



2 How to be empathetic

Current workforce trends have created the need for a more empathetic approach to leadership. Yet having empathy with others and helping people develop empathy in their daily interactions can be undervalued attributes in many organisations.

This is unfortunate since a Hay Consulting study indicated that this 'coaching' style of leadership was one of the two most powerful styles, along with being visionary. The study also found that women had a greater capacity than men to demonstrate this coaching style based on their emotional quotient.

A sense of self-awareness can allow men or women to empathise with others more easily. Developing this skill can allow you to understand not only what is being said, but also what someone really means. This helps to build trusting relationships, which positively impacts both employee satisfaction and job performance.

3 How to foster better communication and collaboration

Organisations globally are evolving from a hierarchical command-and-control model to a more matrixed structure that directly impacts leadership roles, responsibilities, and styles.

Many leaders today have discovered that in order to foster employee engagement and commitment, you need to actively involve them in problem-solving, decision-making, and innovation activities.

With organisations shifting to a flatter, more integrated structure, a facilitative style that emphasises communication and collaboration can lead to better results.

While it's certainly not true in all cases and is not strictly gender-based – there is always a balance on this spectrum – many women tend to be more facilitative in their leadership style and thus, excel at leading in a matrixed environment.

While men may tend to use a more positional authority to get results when leading their team, women may

use the style of engaging others by facilitation of their ideas, input, and the way they provide direction.

The strongest leadership teams combine skill sets where a focus on collaboration by some leaders complements a drive for closure and results by other leaders.

4 How to think more holistically

The response I had from a number of male executives actually surprised me as I thought in some cases men became frustrated when women wanted to look at the bigger picture or consider all the options.

But the executives we surveyed recognised that considering a broader perspective often leads to better solutions and avoidance of potential problems.

They also believed that having a more holistic and integrated perspective is an important leadership strength as clients today are looking for a more complete end-to-end solution.

By using a more integrated approach, you can examine the requirements and connect the dots differently to provide what customers in any industry really need i.e. a more 'complete solution' thinking.

5 How to trust your intuition

Frankly, when we asked about this in our interview process, we had to define what we meant by 'intuition'. We defined intuition as 'knowing with no evidence'. It's what we refer to as our gut feeling, which a growing body of research suggests is surprisingly reliable.

One executive in the study shared the example of receiving a list of concerns and requests from a client. His reaction was to knock off the list and assume that the client would be fine as a result.

However, his account manager thought that the list was indicative of a larger issue with the client – she said that it just didn't 'feel right'. She convinced him to travel out to see the client to determine what the people there were really concerned about, and as a result, he learnt that there was a serious customer confidence issue.

Following the account manager's intuition led to strengthening the company's relationship with the client.

The lesson is that leaders can't always rely on their own thinking but need to embrace and tap into the full spectrum of leadership thinking within their team.

This is the core of integrated leadership and represents the direction that we all need to go in order to achieve the results of which we are collectively capable.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Rebecca Shambaugh is an internationally recognised leadership expert, author, and keynote speaker. She is the president of SHAMBAUGH, a global leadership development organisation and founder of Women In Leadership and Learning (WILL). She has coached and advised over a hundred leaders and executives and has enhanced their overall level of excellence in many areas. To get in touch with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Are You a Procrastinator?

How brain science can help leaders procrastinate less

By **DR EUGENE YJ TEE** and **DR CHOY TSEE LENG**
editor@leaderonomics.com

YOU arrive at your office on a Monday morning ahead of your colleagues. Deciding to get a head start to the workweek, you come in at least an hour earlier than usual, and start on that financial report you held off last week.

Then there's that difficult client you need to ring up today. Let's not forget that backlog of emails flagged for follow-up last Friday evening. You leaf through your contact cards for the client's phone number, but given the disorganised mess your business card folder is in, you decide to start on that financial report instead.

You see numbers with lots of decimal points. Now you remember why you put that report on hold. Well, clearing emails shouldn't be too difficult – an easy task to start the workweek, you think. You log on only to see 50 new emails added to your backlog of previously-flagged messages.

That difficult client has also sent you an email marked 'urgent' and judging from the preview of that message, he doesn't sound too happy. It's not even the start of your official hours yet, and you are already yearning for the weekend to come sooner.

Your colleague comes in a short while later and you think, well, it wouldn't hurt to ask about her weekend. You join her for coffee. You've effectively made the situation worse for yourself, and deep down you know it.

You really should have started on one of those tasks. It's already half past 10 in the morning, and you feel guilty for not having accomplished anything despite clocking in early.

We all do it!

At some point in life, most of us have procrastinated – generally defined as putting off an undesirable task despite knowing the negative implications. Procrastination affects between 20 and 25 per cent of adults worldwide.

In a local study published in the *Malaysian Psychology Journal* in 2016, 22 out of a sample of 310 students reported they almost never procrastinate but 92.9 per cent acknowledged to procrastinating in study-related activities. Of course, there may be good reasons to leave certain tasks for later. The problem arises when procrastination tempts you to repeatedly do so.

If you are in a leadership position, you may have procrastinated over a series of important decisions. Indeed, leaders often procrastinate about important decisions – that proposed merger, who to hire for a senior management position, important budgeting consideration, and other things – that make up a leader's portfolio.

Leaders need to make those important calls, and yet, they too, are prone to putting off all the tasks they need to complete before a decision is made.

When leaders procrastinate, the delay often results in poor, sometimes even damaging outcomes to the organisation. Procrastination limits a leader's ability to be proactive – to develop the necessary foresight for making tomorrow's decisions today.

To a leader, time is a sunk cost; how well the leader uses his time determines the quality of the decisions made. Procrastination is a thief of the leader's time.

Procrastination is rife in all spheres of our work and personal lives, but it can be overcome. Some interesting insights on how to do so come from neuroscience – the study of the nervous system, and how it influences our thoughts and behaviours.

The neuroscience of procrastination

Neuroscience studies the brain, but its interdisciplinary nature offers revealing perspectives to many fields. Our brains are wired to integrate, predict and automate – each experience leaves a neural footprint, so future responses to similar events would be faster and more efficient.



This outcome was advantageous to our ancestors, where rapid reactions increased survival. The primitive hindbrain, an older part of our brain, drives this process to develop habits.

Newer regions of the brain – like the forebrain – enlarged and became dominant as we evolved, and when instinctive behaviour became more purposeful. This shift was necessary to adapt to modern, complex settings, where voluntary deliberation is more beneficial than instinctive drives.

The pre-frontal cortex of the forebrain is key in this voluntary process, in charge of decision-making, organising, and inhibiting inappropriate behaviour. It is this same region that matures in our mid-twenties, accounting for the decline in reckless and impulsive behaviours when we come of age.

How is all this related to procrastination?

In the past, the instinctive system promoted survival through immediate drive satisfaction with minimal consideration of its consequences. However, this system can clash with modern circumstances and the voluntary system.

Procrastination occurs when we succumb to instant urge gratification (e.g. having coffee instead of working on that report) despite knowing the consequences (e.g. not having the report in time for management's review).

In short, the instinctive system overrides the voluntary system, even when it is disadvantageous to do so. Current neuroimaging research shows that procrastination occurs when various pre-frontal regions of the brain fail in regulating impulsivity.

You can control it

Interestingly, selectively stimulating another part of the brain – the medial frontal areas, actually lowers the likelihood of procrastinating. What this all means is that while it is tempting to conclude that the brains of the procrastinators 'made them do it', the reality remains that we are ultimately still in control of our actions.

While the instinctive and voluntary systems can be at odds, they are not mutually exclusive, nor is it always detrimental to give in to our instincts. As such, one way to overcome procrastination is by strategically delaying gratification rather than suppressing or giving in to it. At no point are procrastinators oblivious of the negative repercussions of procrastination, reflecting awareness and choice over their actions.

One study showed that while procrastination, poor self-control and goal management share similar genes,

this genetic overlap may not directly cause procrastination. If anything, it leads to procrastination via interaction with environmental factors.

Put simply, procrastination can still be managed despite having a neural or genetic susceptibility to it – especially if we become more aware of how our environments trigger our tendencies to procrastinate.

In conclusion

Knowing why we procrastinate can help in its management. This can include reframing or breaking timelines into manageable chunks, maintaining mini rewards at regular intervals to stay motivated, removing or minimising distracting situations, or having procrastinators work closely with disciplined peers to stay on track.

For work cultures where procrastination is deeply entrenched, researchers have suggested major systemic 'rebooting' (e.g. changing key performance indicators or assessment formats), so that employees are forced to abandon their habitual routines and start again on a fresh slate. In doing so, the voluntary system takes precedence and the instinctive system is reset.

In this regard, our brains are like car engines in that they drive procrastination tendencies. The drive itself can be impacted by engine malfunctions, weather and road conditions. If all else fails, the engine can be recalibrated or restarted.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Dr Eugene YJ Tee is a senior lecturer at the Department of Psychology, HELP University. His research interests include emotions and leadership. Eugene's second favourite way to procrastinate at work is to have water cooler conversations about the newest neuroscience research findings. His first? Cat videos.



Dr Choy Tsee Leng is a neuroscientist and former lecturer at the Department of Psychology, HELP University. Her research interests encompass consciousness, emotion, music, and brain injury. She tends to procrastinate in search of, or in the presence of, pint-sized snacks and desserts.

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Brain-Training Games: Yay or Nay?

By **ADELINE TAY**

editor@leaderonomics.com

ONCE upon a time, people believed that brain development stops at a certain stage before it starts deteriorating. People also believed that one cannot teach an old dog new tricks.

Fortunately, with the discovery of the plasticity of the human brain in neuroscience, we now know that a person's brain is constantly changing through the exposure to new experiences and stimuli.

This is great news indeed, especially for senior citizens. Since our cognitive functions can be developed, many researchers have conducted studies to investigate how certain activities or games can be used as tools to give our brains a boost.

Following this, there has been a noticeable increase in the hype for brain-training games, and this is what we will be looking at today.

Brain-training industry: the hype

The brain-training industry is massive. According to a study by SharpBrains as reported by *Forbes*, the market for brain health software alone grew from USD600mil (RM2.1bil) in annual revenues in 2009 to more than USD1bil in 2012. Furthermore, it was forecast that this market will continue to grow to reach USD4bil to USD10bil by 2020.

In view of the hype (and profit) that the brain-training industry has generated, many companies jumped on the bandwagon and use the term 'brain training' to try and sell programmes that have not been proven to work and that have no benefits for the brain.

With yearly subscriptions of up to USD120, organisations from the brain-training industry claim to develop brain games that promise to improve memory, processing speed, problem-solving, and even, in some cases, the ability to avert or delay Alzheimer's disease.

With the attention that the brain-training industry is getting from making such claims, the Stanford Center on Longevity and the Berlin Max Planck Institute for Human Development gathered a group of nearly 70 researchers, comprising many of the world's leading cognitive psychologists and neuroscientists, to address some of the claims made.

Brain-training industry: the fall

Many brain-training companies typically describe their games as 'based on neuroscience', 'backed by solid scientific research', or 'proven to work' to attract consumers. More likely than not, if you scratch the surface and dig deeper, there is no real scientific evidence to back these claims.

It has been found that such cited research are often loosely interpreted and whose results are over-generalised to fit the 'scientific claims' of the company, and to the games they sell.

Scientific studies should be independent, repeatable, and presented officially in scientific peer-reviewed journals.

What happens is that in most brain-training studies, researchers usually measure improvement in cognitive skills such as memory based on a single independent task, rather than a range of tasks that represent a broad ability.

A clear line needs to be drawn between improvements on a particular task and improvements in general cognitive ability – both of which suggest two very different things. This is the part where most people are being misled.

Many brain-training companies blur the lines between these two distinctions, and generalise the findings of such research towards their favour.

Regardless of whether such results were misinterpreted or exaggerated as part of the marketing strategy, many consumers are led to believe that improving on a specific game will positively impact their cognitive abilities and capability in life.

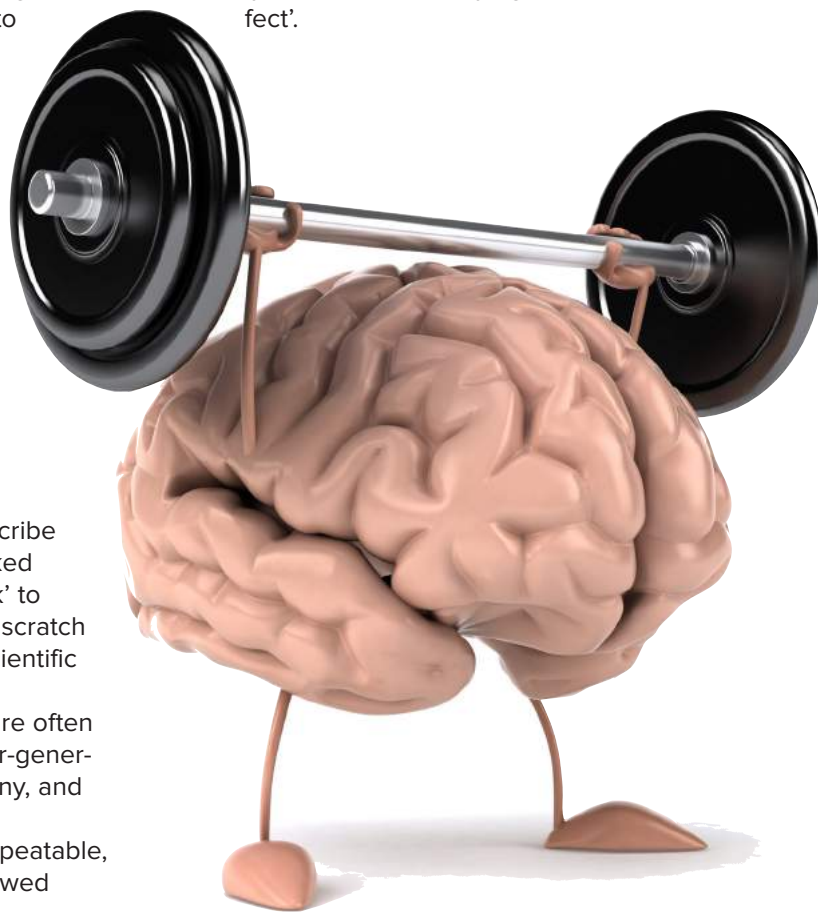
Therefore, please take note that the consensus among neuroscientific and cognitive researchers is that this is not so.

Conclusion

While brain-training games are fun and engaging, there is insufficient scientific evidence at this point in time to indicate that they significantly improve one's memory, intelligence, problem solving, or other higher-order cognitive abilities.

What the researchers did find is that people who play brain-training games do get better at those games, i.e. the more you play the game, the better you'll get at it.

However, this is pretty much not a surprise as this only proves the old saying of 'practice makes perfect'.



Having said that, if you love playing these brain games, I'm not suggesting you to stop. I'm merely informing you not to expect too much from it, aside from being able to 'travel into an alternate dimension' where you are the protagonist of that world, or 'speed up time' as you realised that a few hours have passed before you know it.

To end on a happier note, check out some tips, supported and validated by numerous scientific research studies, on how you can increase your cognitive performance!

Performance enhancement tips for the brain:

1 Eliminate multitasking

Based on research, our brain can only do one thing at a time.

When we constantly shift attention from one activity to another (including entertaining every Facebook or WhatsApp alert from our smartphones), we are actually making it harder for our brains to focus.

While multitasking may make us feel more efficient, it actually overloads the brain, making it less efficient; not to mention causing an increase in stress levels.

2 Unplug

In today's society where technology has been integrated into every aspect of our daily lives, studies have shown that temporarily unplugging oneself from technology – even for just 30 minutes daily – can improve brain health.

A number of studies have concluded that overuse of smartphones, tablets and other electronics can jeopardise our ability to process information deeply.

So instead of moving from screen to screen, app to app and responding to every WhatsApp alert, learn to turn off your phone and find a quiet place to complete a task.

3 Exercise

Time and time again, researchers have reported that physical exercise helps your brain to stay sharp. Physical exercise increases oxygen to your brain, reduces the risk for disorders that lead to memory loss, and has shown to have positive benefits for the hippocampus (i.e. a brain structure that is important for learning and memory).

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

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The Evolving Role of Teachers

Shifting from information brokers to learning facilitators

By **PETER COOK**
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YOUNG minds have inherent plasticity, which makes them receptive to learning from every experience. It also means they are capable of being moulded by mentors. This demands that all those involved – parents, relatives, friends, teachers, and so on – provide ethical leadership to help young people become their best.

In this article I look at how teachers can act as thought leaders in the information age, when all the information in the world is available at their fingertips, requiring teachers to shift from being information brokers to learning facilitators.

The information or fourth industrial age presents particular challenges for all of us. According to eminent neuroscientist and musician Dr Daniel Levitin, each of us absorbed some 94GB of data on a daily basis in 2015. This is more than most people acquired in a lifetime in 1800.

Under such an analysis, the goal of teaching and learning is no longer about filling children's minds with more data. Instead, it questions the very nature of intelligence. Teachers must help children 'swim with information' rather than 'drown in data'.

They must also help them apply critical thinking skills to complex issues, separating the wood from the trees. It is also about equipping children to be lifelong learners in an age when the half-life of careers is in steep decline.

Never before have we needed so much to become learning individuals, learning organisations and learning societies; a deep dive into some of the questions raised by the information age can be found in the book *Brain Based Enterprises*.

In my own case, I had the good fortune to learn from some great teachers, both early in life and when acting as a school governor for a primary school. I also had the privilege of offering accelerated learning events to teachers on 'learning to learn' and helping children achieve more in exams in a voluntary capacity.

I was honoured to be invited to contribute to a book on education and creativity by Professor Sir Ken Robinson, presenter of the most-watched TED Talk of all-time, *Are Schools Killing Creativity?*

We met at Warwick University for lunch at a time when Ken had just written his ground-breaking book on education called *All Our Futures*.

The essence of his book was that creativity in education was a core skill across all subjects and that it could not and should not be confined to the art department, nor should it be reduced to incorporation via a 'creativity week' – it should be embedded into the very culture of education and learning.

In the age of ubiquitous information on demand, it is certainly true that the simple absorption of facts via memory tricks is going to be insufficient to guarantee success in life.

The real job facing young people now is how to turn vast swathes of data into valuable information, knowledge and wisdom (see the data-wisdom triangle in Figure 1). Dealing with the information age therefore requires creativity, discipline, critical thinking and learning to learn as core skills.

The role of a creative leader is not to have all the ideas; it's to create a culture where everyone can have ideas and feel that they're valued. – Professor Sir Ken Robinson

'Learnacy'

The primary role of teachers in the fourth industrial age is to develop a thirst for learning, or what I call 'learnacy'. The meta



skills of being able to learn from theory, experience, reflection and pragmatism are just as important in a constantly changing environment as the learning of subject-specific knowledge and skills.

If you can learn from any situation, you are equipped for life and whatever challenges life throws at you. I foresee the need for more T-shaped people – people with functional knowledge, skills and experience in a discipline; meta skills in terms of collaborating with others in other fields; and being able to work with concepts outside of their own speciality areas.

Creativity in learning

Teachers increasingly need to find ways to reach all their protégés. Howard Gardner's concept of multiple intelligences (refer to Table 1 on page 11) is relevant here, in so far as great teachers are fluent in reaching students across a wide range of learning styles and intelligences.

A case of multiple intelligences

J.S. Bach is one of the greatest composers of all time. His main achievement was the synthesis and development of late Baroque, with the tunefulness and popular appeal of his material.

He drew upon the harmonic and formal frameworks of German, French, Italian and English music, while building his own identity – he used a mathematical precision in his music.

In other words, Bach was an 'all-round learner' using both musical and logical intelligences in his work. Through advances in neuroscience in recent times, we are beginning to understand the basis for what Bach did naturally back then.

World-class opera singer Renée Fleming now explores the nexus between neuroscience and music as a means of engaging our brains and helping us learn, via her academic connections.

This example (click here) may not be from high opera, but it offers a practical insight into the use of music to help children embrace learning across many functional disciplines. Music reaches our emotional core and this has been long recognised by people such as the philosopher Immanuel Kant (and Madonna).

Music makes the people come together.
– Madonna

The importance of critical thinking

The unrelenting torrent of data that rains on us daily means that we can become overwhelmed. In this current world where fake news is rampant, it is more important than ever before for people to have mastery over the data-wisdom continuum. In this context, teachers need to encourage their students to think critically so that young people can:

- Separate fact from fiction
- Understand the big picture and the small details
- Distinguish what's important from what's background
- Differentiate what's important from what's merely urgent
- See patterns and trends in complex information

This is especially important if we are to resolve 'wicked problems' that the world faces, such as climate change, poverty, an end to our disposable society, and so on.

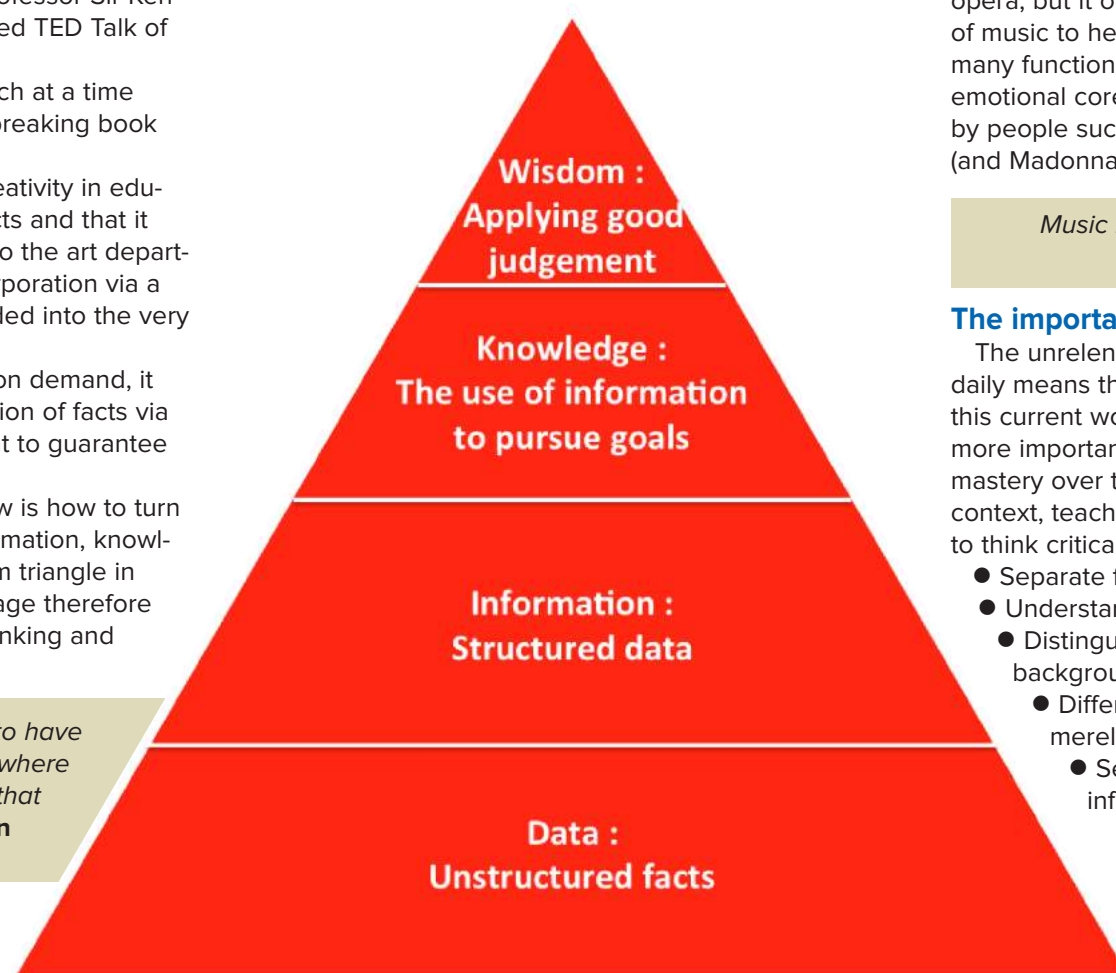



Figure 1: The data-wisdom triangle



What can teachers do to lead learning in the information age?

- Facilitate students’ abilities and motivations in becoming lifelong learners
- Encourage them to use multiple intelligences to intensify their learning
- Encourage students to make wise decisions via critical thinking, so that they swim with information rather than drown in data
- Shift from information brokers (IQ) towards helping students master emotional and spiritual intelligences (EQ and SQ)

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INTELLIGENCE	DESCRIPTION
Musical, rhythmic and harmonic	People with good musical intelligence can often sing, play instruments, and compose music. They may have sensitivity to rhythm. <i>* I know many great guitar players who have little sensitivity to rhythm (have you ever known a musician who cannot dance?), although great bass players always have good sensitivity to rhythm.</i>
Visual-spatial	Visual-spatial people demonstrate good hand-eye coordination and have the ability to visualise things in three dimensions. Many artists and designers possess visual-spatial intelligence.
Verbal-linguistic	Verbal-linguistic types are typically good at reading, writing, telling stories and memorising facts. When combined with musical intelligence, such people can make good songwriters.
Logical-mathematical	Logical-mathematical people are good at performing abstractions, reasoning, numbers and critical thinking. Accountants and financial specialists are classic professions that need people with such skills.
Bodily-kinaesthetic	Bodily-kinaesthetic people are good at handling themselves and objects skilfully. They may also have good timing, goal orientation associated with physical tasks, along with the ability to focus their energy.
Interpersonal	People with good interpersonal intelligence are sensitive to others’ moods, feelings, temperaments, motivations, and often good at working in teams – part of what Klaus Schwab calls emotional intelligence in <i>The Fourth Industrial Revolution</i> . This is essentially a skill of reading the world around you. Arguably, emotional intelligence (EQ) and spiritual intelligence (SQ) will become more important than IQ in the information age.
Intrapersonal	People with good intrapersonal intelligence have a deep understanding of the self – what one’s strengths or weaknesses are, what makes one unique, being able to predict one’s own reactions or emotions. This is essentially having mastery of your inner world and perhaps equates to what Peter Senge called personal mastery in <i>The Fifth Discipline</i> .
Naturalistic	Gardner said that if he were to rewrite <i>Frames of Mind</i> , he would probably add the intelligence of the naturalist. This, to me, seems to be the recognition of a systemic thinking intelligence, of how things connect as part of a system.
Existential	Gardner did not commit to a spiritual intelligence, but suggested that an ‘existential’ intelligence may be a useful construct. These last two elements relate to what Schwab calls ‘inspired’, or what I call ‘soul’.

Table 1: The nine intelligences

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The *Game of Thrones*

What this drama series can teach fans about leadership

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

IT'S the show that had everyone gripped as the saga that is the *Game of Thrones* recently came to a conclusion. In the eighth season, key characters fight it out to rule the Seven Kingdoms – but who will win in the end?

For fans who have yet to watch the final season, have no fear – there are no spoilers in this article (unlike Ned Stark, I'm cautious enough to keep my head).

The *Game of Thrones* series is a powerfully-layered tale of loyalty, legacy, ambition, and betrayal. It's also replete with examples of strong leadership that has kept some unlikely characters in the game, while others who lacked certain leadership qualities were felled by the sword of their enemies.

The series centres on the medieval, fictional land of Westeros, where ruthless brutality, violence and betrayal rule the way, so thankfully it has no bearing on how we conduct ourselves and interact with others in the real world.

That said, *Game of Thrones* resonates with us precisely because we can recognise aspects of human nature that are inherent in our modern world. The politics, manoeuvring, alliances, friendships, networks, and ambition all have their role in our real world, and each of us approach achieving our ambitions in different ways.

The makings of a great leader

One of the reasons I love to watch *Game of Thrones* is down to the development of the characters. How often does our initial glimpse of someone turn out to be considerably skewed? We say that first impressions count, but they often fail to add up to what reality shows.

Certainly, people have been swayed by slick and charming leaders who seem to have good intentions and yet turn out to serve their own interests. On the other hand, it can be the quiet, thoughtful, reluctant leaders who have the best interests of their people at heart and ultimately show themselves to be the ones worthy of the status.

While there are several characters to choose from that offer key leadership lessons, I chose to focus mainly on Tywin Lannister and his son, Tyrion. The dynamic between the two characters is such that there are so many traits and characteristics they share and yet, there is so much that sets them apart – not least of all their motives and intentions.

So, what can *Game of Thrones* teach leaders in our real world? The answer is "quite a lot", and here are four to get you started:

1 Listen to the views of those around you

As a leader, it's a seductive idea that you don't need guidance – but wise leaders are those who realise several perspectives see more than a single one. In conversation with his grandson, Tommen, Tywin Lannister quizzes the young king on what it means to be a great leader.

Tommen eventually realises that wisdom is a key quality to effective leadership. But how can one so young develop the wisdom required of a great leader?

His grandfather advises: "A wise king knows what he knows and what he doesn't. You're young. A wise young king listens to his counsellors and heeds their advice until he comes of age. And the wisest kings continue to listen to them long afterwards."

2 Be aware of your prejudices

When it comes to promoting people, there's a good chance that many leaders will have regrets of promotions they gave to people they liked (but were less competent) over people with whom they had some conflict or disagreement (but were talented).



Tywin Lannister is one of the shrewdest characters in *Game of Thrones*, but when it comes to his son, Tyrion, he is blinded by his dislike of him to recognise his brilliance.

For all Tyrion's flaws, which includes (in his father's eyes) being a dwarf, the realm was at its strongest when Tyrion enjoyed a brief spell as acting Hand of the King. Ultimately though, Tywin's prejudice of his son would lead to the downfall of his legacy.

As leaders, we have to be aware of our prejudices: do our decisions – especially concerning people – serve the greater good in the long term, or do they simply serve our short-term interests?

3 Forget comparing yourself to others – make who you are your strength

Tyrion Lannister is small, physically-speaking, but he is a giant intellect and one of the

best behind-the-scenes strategists in all the Seven Kingdoms. While some might worry about their weaknesses and shortcomings, successful leadership demands that we recognise, hone, and play to what makes us unique.

No one has every leadership quality, and it wastes a lot of valuable time if we try to be the perfect all-rounder. As Tyrion puts it, "Never forget what you are, for surely the world will not. Make it your strength. Then it can never be your weakness. Armour yourself in it, and it will never be used to hurt you."

4 Build up a network that's wide and varied

Coming back to Tyrion's sharp insights, on the importance of networking he says, "I try to know as many people as I can. You never know which one you'll need." In business – or in any walk of life – the more people you know, the better your chances are of achieving your goals and ambitions.

Regardless of any leader's success, it's never achieved alone, and those who cultivate several relationships with people who bring different talents together tend to get much further ahead than those who keep a small circle of acquaintances.



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.

The Leaderonomics.com team says...

We know that many people aren't happy about how the series ended, but we'd like to hear what you thought of the long-awaited conclusion to this series. Write in to us at editor@leaderonomics.com but try to keep it spoiler-free, because our managing editor has yet to watch the final season. She plans to binge-watch it soon though, because there are lots of spoilers everywhere and she's getting tired of trying to evade them all.

The Leaderonomics Show



MAHESH BABU
CEO of Mahindra Electric

'AT THAT TIME, IT WAS A DIFFICULT DECISION'.

- Mahesh Babu

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

Leaving Your Mark Behind

We can all do great things in our own way

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

OF the most effective leaders, it's those who have had real experience in their field as they rose through the ranks. It makes sense – leaders who have worked in their industry often know best how to lead their people.

One such leader is Mahesh Babu, the current chief executive officer (CEO) at Mahindra Electric – a leader in the electric vehicle space – who describes himself as a car enthusiast at heart.

Having been with the Indian company based in Bangalore for 20 years, Mahesh has worked in the design and development of engine and vehicle platforms and witnessed the shifts in trends over the past two decades, helping his team and company to adapt and thrive.

In his appearance on a special episode of *The Leaderonomics Show* held in Bangalore, Mahesh discussed his passion for engineering with host Roshan Thiran, and talked about his dreams to scale electric mobility in his native India.

Talking about stepping into the CEO position at Mahindra Electric, Mahesh believes that leaders coming into a new role do better when they leave old assumptions and approaches at the door. Instead, he advocates tapping into our child-like curiosity.

Mahesh said, "I think the curiosity of a child, when you come to a new business, is all about observation. When you look at a child, they will be very curious in observing what's happening before they act.

"When we become an adult, we think that we know it all and so we start acting before we look at what's happening. So, my observation and curiosity are very high when I take a new role, and then I can start developing various points."

The key to great leadership

Roshan and Mahesh also talked about the importance of humility in leadership, and having the awareness that there's always something to learn from the

people you lead.

Mahesh believes that humility is part of the learning process, which can take young leaders especially from being know-it-alls to recognising through experience that humility is often key to great leadership and lasting success.

When asked what advice Mahesh would give to entrepreneurs of start-up companies, he said that belief is a vital resource in any leader's toolbox. He insisted that half the battle is won through self-belief and the ability to inspire others to share in your vision.

"For example, I believe that Mahindra Electric is the future of electric mobility. If I believe this, I will keep making believers within the organisation and outside.

"I strongly believe that the technology itself has no value unless it changes the lives of people. Mahindra Electric is going to change the way that people move around, but will also impact the lives of many people."

As a leader who is passionate about creating a lasting legacy and leaving a mark on the lives of India's people, Mahesh believes that leaders should place their focus on a bigger purpose and what kind of meaning they and others can find in the solutions they are striving to create within communities and the wider society.

He added, "Most of the time, we get consumers to buy our products without understanding the purpose. So, if you know the purpose and belief, I think it will drive your actions."

When asked what advice he would give to budding entrepreneurs, Mahesh said that, while setting goals can be important, we can often become distracted by them if we focus too much on goal-setting.

Finding your passion

He said, "The most important thing is, if we are able to have an option to work in the area we're passionate in then we are lucky. What I learnt in life is, if you're doing something in life that you're not passionate about, then you have to develop a passion for it and then the outcome will become so big that everyone will start believing in it and embrace it."

It's an important point in any level of our working lives: while some people are lucky to find their passion and use that within their working lives, others can develop their passion within their role and create a huge difference for themselves and their organisation.

Often, passion is found in the most unexpected places, and it comes down to how we approach what we're doing and see the value in how it affects other people's lives.

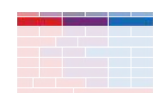
Ultimately, for Mahesh, what we do in our professional lives should see our focus placed on what we do for others: how we can help our communities and countries, and develop sustainable products and services that benefit us all.

For anyone who might think that they don't have what it takes to make a difference to the world around them, Mahesh cites his own story as an example to show that we can all do great things in our own way.

He said, "If a humble backbencher like me can end up being a CEO, then anyone can do it if they can develop the passion and wisdom to come into that space."



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.



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

The Leaderonomics Show



Watch this video at bit.ly/TLSMarkLaudi. For more The Leaderonomics Show videos, check out our playlist on YouTube: bit.ly/TheLDRShow.

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

As someone whose excitement for communication was sparked in school, Mark Laudi has come a long way from being a journalist-broadcaster to helping leaders in Asia grow and develop.

You could say that Laudi – born in South Africa – is a citizen of the world, having spent three years living in South Africa, then seven in Germany, 15 years in Australia, 10 in Malaysia, and 20 living in Singapore, where he's currently based.

As a professional, Laudi – who is the chief executive officer and founder of Hong Bao Media – has spent his life cultivating communication skills, which he put to good use during his time as an anchor-man for CNBC before going on to establishing his media consultancy and training firm.

These days, the newsman-cum-entrepreneur works with his team to help leaders in Asia hone their media, presenting and communication skills. At the heart of leadership, Laudi insists that self-belief is the foundation upon which all other leadership qualities are built.

Appearing on *The Leaderonomics Show* with host Roshan Thiran, he said, "If you don't believe in yourself, then you can't really expect anyone else to. Particularly in times of crisis, it's important for people to have somebody to look up to.

"In order to overcome those issues, leaders have to lead. While that sounds obvious, what does that translate into? It translates into the actions you take, the things you say and the way you project yourself."

Leadership within Asian countries

Having lived and worked within the Western culture, Laudi knows all too well that the Western ideal, when it comes to leadership and communication, can overshadow the incredible leadership on display within Asian countries. So, how can the balance be redressed to highlight the strengths of Asian leadership?

"We really have a lot of work to do to build up the leaders of tomorrow," said Laudi. "Why is it, for example, when you turn the pages of *Forbes* or *Harvard Business Review* that we see a predominance of Western leaders?

"You might say that they're just out there more; however, our contention is that there's no reason why Asian leaders shouldn't be featured alongside the likes of Tim Cook, Steve Jobs, and Mark Zuckerberg."

Are You Presenting Yourself Effectively?

How to stand out and connect with your audience

Addressing cultural differences, Roshan observed that Asian leaders tend to shy away from the limelight and, therefore, fail to take advantage of the opportunity it presents. But as Laudi pointed out, "we're all in the limelight these days, it's simply a matter of how willing you are to take control of it and reap the rewards."

He added, "Let's say you're speaking at a conference or a town hall meeting – that presentation is likely to be recorded. And the chances are that the cameras aren't just projecting your image on stage; they're also likely to be broadcast on Facebook Live.

"Even with internal communications, you might think 'It's just between us', but what's the bet that at least one member of staff is audio recording your presentation and another is taking photos of your slides?

"So, the limelight is everywhere. That awareness that you're 'always on' will carry on in your behaviour even when no one is watching. As management theory says, the true grit of a leader is one who behaves in private just as they do in the limelight."

What qualities help a leader stand out?

So, when it comes to good leadership, what are the qualities that can help an effective leader stand out in a field of leaders desperately trying to make an impact? For Laudi, it boils down to two key qualities: authenticity and empathy.

He said, "Authenticity is about what you see is what you get. In other words, there's no veneer, no persona that people put on. They are in public as they are in private. Similarly, in terms of the empathy, leaders don't just talk *at* people, they also spend a lot of time listening and they can relate to the problems that their staff or customers bring to them.

"So, this love for communications not only impacts how they're seen in the media or on social media, but

also how they interact with customers and hire staff. Are they able to attract talent?

"The business outcomes for leaders when they communicate are four-fold: being able to brand yourself well; being able to retain talent; building trust in your audience; and lastly, it just makes good business sense to project yourself as being open, innovative, and willing to be challenged."

Establishing rapport

That all sounds like great advice, but there's one question left to be answered: when we address an audience during a presentation, how can we cultivate and effectively deploy authenticity and empathy?

As Laudi explained to Roshan, it comes down to making sincere connections with whoever's in front of you, which will help to quickly establish rapport.

He said, "Feel what it's like to be a member of the audience – meet the audience beforehand. When you are about to go on stage to give your presentation, it becomes easy to be authentic because you're already among friends.

"Being strong enough and believing in yourself even as you talk about your weaknesses just makes you stronger. Because if everything is (presented) rosy, people are not going to believe that in a post-fact, fake news world where authenticity and empathy are so important."



Sandy Clarke is a former managing editor at Leaderonomics. Prior to moving to Malaysia, he spent over 10 years working in journalism and PR. He has seen many times the amazing effects that coaching and training can have on helping leaders to present themselves well and deliver effective communications. To engage with Sandy, email editor@leaderonomics.com.



Four Innovation Leadership Skills to Master

By **EVETTE CORDY**
editor@leaderonomics.com

THE future of work is changing. According to McKinsey, around half of the job tasks that people currently perform have the potential to be automated by technology. What kind of work will be left for humans to do?

To thrive in an increasingly complex and unpredictable new world, leaders will require the necessary skills of the future. To lead growth agendas, what matters most is not leaders' intellectual intelligence or confidence in what they know, but how they deal with what they don't know.

It is also about how leaders are courageous and inspire their teams to seek creative ways of commercialising solutions. It is this innovation leadership that will give companies a competitive advantage in the face of continuous disruptive change.

Innovation agendas often fail not because of a lack of process or tools, but because people lack the skills required for innovation leadership. Do your leaders have the necessary skills for the future? Here are four that will turbo-charge your organisation's innovation efforts:

1 Handling ambiguity

Ambiguity is all around us.

We don't know what we don't know, yet we like to know, because it helps us to feel more comfortable and in control. Leaders' need for certainty can kill innovation. It reduces the ability of leaders to let go of the known and make space for new, unknown insights and ideas.

Imagine you are in a leadership team meeting and someone asks how the latest innovation project is going. All heads turn to the leader, waiting for their response. They don't know yet – it is too early, they haven't even defined the right problem to solve – yet they feel compelled to respond. Leaders need permission to say, "I don't know yet, but we are learning a lot."

Leaders who can hold space for ambiguity and continue to inspire their teams in the face of increasing complexity are those most likely to create a pathway to breakthrough thinking. Sit with ambiguity and plan to 'not know' for a bit longer.

2 A curious mindset

Leaders should spend less time in the office and more time walking in their customers' shoes, spend time discovering customers' hopes, fears

and values, and viewing the world through their eyes. Notice what delights them, and observe their irritations, frustrations and pain points.

Leaders who curiously observe what customers say, what they do, and seek to understand what deeply matters to them will find the most valuable problems to solve and in doing so, will create more meaningful solutions for customers.

By creating such an environment of curiosity, leaders can inspire employees to ask questions, to learn, and to seek problems and solutions. Employees are more open to discovering new things, leading to richer insights and platforms for problem finding, and ultimately innovation.

Here are five questions leaders can encourage their employees to ask regularly:

- Why?
- How might we...?
- What if...?
- Why not?
- What did you learn?

3 Creatively fit

Creativity is critical for breakthrough thinking and innovation, and scientific research has shown that creativity can be cultivated.

The more often leaders approach challenges flexibly and imaginatively, the easier it will become to generate original ideas.

Research has suggested that people who are good at creative thinking are also good at seeing connections and generating more original ideas. So, by training our leaders' abilities to see connections, we can boost their ability to think creatively.

Thinking of alternative uses for an object is a simple activity to train leaders' minds to make new connections and in turn, boost their creative thinking. It exercises your mind by stretching beyond the obvious uses, to imagine an object outside of its usual context.

Pick a random object, such as a paper clip. Now, take precisely three minutes writing down as many alternative uses as you can. Challenge yourself to come up with more than 20 ideas in three minutes.

4 Being brave

Most of us spend 99 per cent of our work-day playing it safe, following the rules, processes and protocols. Structure and order are there for a good reason, and any deviation from the norm can

be viewed as negative, risky or dangerous to the integrity of the organisation.

Imagine you are in a leadership meeting and hold a strong view on which ideas should be prioritised based on the rigorous customer-led process your team has been through to develop and prioritise the ideas, completely disagreeing with what has been decided. Yet you sit there and nod your head in agreement.

In most cases, conformity is the norm. Leaders do not choose to agree with others because their perception has altered – they go along with it because they do not want to stand out. Many leaders fear failure, being wrong, looking silly or feeling embarrassed at work. This happens often and is costly to innovation efforts.

Leaders need to embrace risk-taking, challenge the status quo, and bravely speak up and dissent.

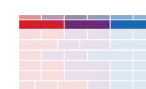
A challenge for you

Are you ready for innovation to thrive in your organisation?

These four leadership skills should be practised and mastered alongside a robust innovation process to enhance your innovation efforts. Consider incorporating them into leaders' job descriptions and KPIs to encourage and reward such behaviours. Keep in mind, these are not one-off activities – to get skilled they require repeated effort and discipline.



Evette Cordy is an innovation expert, registered psychologist and the chief investigator and co-founder at Agents of Spring. She uses curiosity and creativity to help organisations to create human-centred products and services and facilitate new ways of thinking. Evette is the author of Cultivating Curiosity: How to unearth your most valuable problem to inspire growth. Curious to find out more? Email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.



DEVELOPING BASIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES There is a big range of competencies that fall under this.

Some key ones are decision making, driving change, bonding with others, attention to quality and excellence. Developing these and many more is a process that takes significant time and refining over the years. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLP1 to find out more.



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By **MARCUS LIM**
 editor@leaderonomics.com

BY the time you finish reading this article, you may fall into one of two categories. The first one holding the opinion that these are useful ideas and that maybe you could try out some of them.

Or, the second one with the opinion that these are interesting ideas but they are probably not practical and you might not test them out.

If you belong to the second category, then you may have won this war by giving your justifications, but would have lost the war on nurturing creativity.

Until and unless you decide to belong to the first group, you would then have unconsciously decided to agree on the possibilities these ideas hold, and place yourself in a better state to explore the opportunities ahead.

The creative mindset

To have a creative mindset, you would have to agree and believe that creativity is for everyone, therefore, it's not a matter of genetic ability.

Unless you are referring to artistic creativity, which refers to the idea of being able to create music, art or dance.

Everyone in this world is capable of creativity and innovation as long as they have the freedom and opportunity to exercise them.

The logic for adopting the belief that creativity and innovation is for everyone – given the freedom and opportunity to do so – simply allows us to see the possibilities of an idea that can come from anyone.

In most cases, we tend to see the impracticalities of an idea from a younger person.

And so, the first step to nurturing creativity and innovation is to stop for a moment, change our filters and see the possibilities that our youths see when they think of an idea. How do we do this?

There are a few language patterns in which we can adopt to begin practising this mindset. The first and simplest one would be to say “Great idea! Tell me more!”

In most cases, the first thought is to ask if the idea is practical. The sad truth is that most of us choose to focus on how the idea will not work, instead of how the idea *could* work.

By replying “Great idea! Tell me more!” you are not only encouraging the person, you are also telling yourself to wait and listen for the possibilities.

Another useful language pattern is to replace the word ‘but’ with ‘and’. The word ‘but’ is a creativity killer. The statement that comes after ‘but’ removes the significance of the idea before it, while the word ‘and’ pairs it together and helps the person see things from different perspectives.

Consider these examples, “I like your idea, but if we look at it from a different perspective...” versus

Nurturing Creativity

How to develop the ability to innovate from a young age

“I like your idea and if we look at it from a different perspective...” See the difference? The former is exclusive while the latter is inclusive.

Stop brainstorming

Traditionally, it is believed that brainstorming is a great idea generator. However, as people use it more, they began to realise that it is also a great idea assassination tool.

What usually happens in a brainstorming session is that the individual that is the most outspoken, confident and extroverted usually runs the show while people who are more inward-thinking and introverted usually keep a low profile.

The irony is that individuals who are introverted tend to develop more practical and sustainable ideas as compared to extroverted people, as the latter require conversations to figure out a better idea.

They just cannot think silently. So, what you see in brainstorming sessions is usually a competition of who has better persuasion skills rather than who has the better idea.

Instead, try ‘brain-swarming’, which is to force everyone to return to their spaces, think and write out a few ideas to solve the current issue.

That way, everyone’s ideas get heard, and instead of spending hours debating on ideas, you can now choose a couple of ideas which stand out the most from a pool of 10–20 ideas.

Encourage side projects

Side projects help develop creativity and innovation. For example, Google allocates specific number of hours for its employees to work on a project they want to do.

So, what then is the difference between encouraging side projects and assigning side projects?

The answer is simple, one is a side project that the person wants and has ownership of, and the other is a side project the person felt ‘tricked’ into doing and has little ownership of.

Some of us may believe that ideas from young people need input and that our role is to ‘add value’ to what they have already created.

The downside to this phenomenon is that when you add too much value, you also reduce the ownership and commitment of that person to his/her project.

Often, we feel the need to communicate that:

- we are already aware of these ideas
- we know a better way of doing things

What happens is that while the value of the side project may increase by five per cent, the commitment and ownership will be reduced by 50 per cent, simply because now the side project is yours and not theirs.

This is a fine line between coaching and hijacking. Before providing comments, ask yourself, “Does the value of my comment outweigh the loss of commitment and ownership?” and “Is this comment aligned with the vision the person has for the side project, or am I putting in mine?”

Diverse exposure

Finally, creativity and innovation tend to also come from putting two separate and irrelevant ideas together and creating a new one. It is useful to suggest to youths to talk to certain individuals who can assist them in their journey of creativity and innovation.

Send them to various workshops and forums for exposure and to allow them to hear other people’s ideas. You will never know what might spark the next idea in their young minds.

Encourage them to take up skills and knowledge that seem totally irrelevant to what they are doing, and help them see the relevance by connecting cross-functional skill sets to what they are aspiring to achieve.

That way, we may be able to create a generation that is idea-seeking, creative and innovative.

Concluding thoughts

Creativity can be nurtured from a young age. The logic is, as you practise and encourage it, you will find more creative ways to nurture those young minds.

Begin by encouraging side projects amongst the youth by brain-swarming a current issue.

Stay open to the possibilities of their otherwise crazy ideas and send them out to challenging opportunities to develop their cross-functional skill sets.

In time, you will realise that nurturing creativity and innovation in youth is actually nurturing creativity and innovation in yourself.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Marcus Lim is excited by new ideas, concepts and challenges. Being a practitioner of the art of movement, parkour, he believes in building confidence and self-awareness through physical representations and movements of the body. Get in touch with him at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Raising Multilingual Children

Make the most out of a linguistically-diverse environment

By **CINDY YAP**

editor@leaderonomics.com

BEING a polyglot child wouldn't come as a surprise if you had spent your formative years in Malaysia – a melting pot of culture, race and religion, and richly diverse in languages.

With the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, being made compulsory in government schools, and English being given more attention in the government education system, as well as the languages and dialects of different ethnic groups, it is quite common to hear a Malay taxi driver in Penang asking “*Lu ai ki to lok?*” (Where do you want to go?) or the Indian stall owner in Johor Bahru greeting you with “*Ni hao ma?*” (How are you?)

Contrary to some common myths surrounding multilingualism, there is nothing to lose and everything to gain by arming oneself with more than one language.

There are over 7,000 languages spoken in the world today; the top three are: Mandarin with 882 million speakers; Spanish with 325 million, and English with between 312 and 380 million speakers.

With these numbers, being multilingual definitely opens up a world of opportunities.

Tips to encourage multilingualism

1 Timing

The earlier a child starts, the easier it is for both parents and child, as the child's brain absorption is akin to a sponge during his/her early years.

According to Christina Bosemark, the founder of the Multilingual Children's Association in the United States, using modern technology, researchers recently found that a baby knows important things about language even before birth and gains fundamental verbal skills long before he utters his first word.

“This construction of the brain's language chip continues, but at an ever-slowning rate till early teens when the child's special abilities are completely gone,” Bosemark states.

“Learning a second language is easier for children under 10, and even easier for children under five,” says Barbara Zurer Pearson, author of *Raising a Bilingual Child*.

The optimal time seems to be from birth to three years, where his mind is still open and flexible. The next best time will be between four and seven years, because they can still process multiple languages on parallel paths. It's not too late if the child is above seven, as the third best time is from eight till puberty.

2 Family consensus

Among parents and the main caregivers, there should be a unanimous decision and amicable agreement on who speaks what to the child, and that all parties endeavour to stick to it.

It is essential for everyone to be on the same page in order to maximise the benefits to the child.

3 Be realistic

According to Bosemark, it is possible to successfully introduce as many as four languages simultaneously to a child, provided you can offer enough exposure and create the need for each language for at least the first five years of the child's life.

She suggests that a child needs to be exposed to a language 30 per cent of his/her waking time to actively speak it.

4 Immersion

A good way to introduce a second language is through immersing yourself and your little ones in it.

Going through an immersion environment entails you to listen, absorb and speak that language.

This approach requires the language to be the medi-



um of instruction as well as the object of instruction, enabling language learners to pick up the language in a more natural environment.

For instance, teaching the child a subject (e.g. mathematics, science, music, etc) in a second language or continued exposure through books, movies, music and videos help the child develop an understanding and acceptance of that language.

In the Malaysian context, non-Mandarin speaking parents may opt to enrol their child in a Chinese primary school to immerse him/her in a Chinese-speaking environment.

5 Build a support system

Get support from like-minded parents in order to exchange and share both your doubts and your triumphs.

You may also wish to set play dates with other children fluent in the targeted language in order to provide your child with the opportunity to hear, speak and interact in that language.

6 Persevere

It is important to keep a positive attitude towards the learning and use of a second language. It's a long-term commitment and there will

be ups and downs, especially during the initial years and if your child doesn't speak multiple languages as quickly or adeptly as his/her peers.

When doubt sneaks in, keep pressing on and focus instead on the development of the child's brain. Always encourage and praise the child for his/her effort in speaking up or attempting to use the second language to express himself/herself.

Dispelling the common myths and scepticism on multilingualism

Multilingualism delays language acquisition

In the past, bilingualism was considered the culprit in problems with language development, but research indicates that bilingualism does not cause delays in either speech or language acquisition.

Even when a child has already been diagnosed with any form of speech delay, raising the child in a bilingual environment won't delay his/her speech.

Multilingualism creates confusion

“There doesn't seem to be any limit to the number of sounds a human mind can store at a young age,” explains Francois Thibaut, director of The Language Workshop for Children in New York City.

“Children have an innate ability to tell one language from another. From just days after birth, all infants can tell the difference between many languages,” says Pearson.

“At that young age, infants generally still have trouble telling two very similar languages apart. But by about six months of age, they can do that,” she assures.

Therefore, parents should not be worried about introducing new words of a second language as the child learns to speak a primary language. Rest assured the child has the capacity to pick up more than one language simultaneously.

Raising a multilingual child is certainly an immensely rewarding experience, and besides, having the next generation of multilingual children in Malaysia may be the solution to the social integration that we desperately seek.



Cindy Yap is a corporate professional who believes in seeking new ways to learn in this journey of life. To engage with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

8 Things Motherhood Taught Me About Leadership

By **RUPA SIVANOLI**

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BECOMING a mother 19 years ago completely changed my world. I was neither prepared nor felt capable for what was in store for me.

Having my daughter, Shriya turned out to be the best thing in my life as I was forced to acquire and apply life lessons and competencies that I may have otherwise missed out on.

Upon closer reflection, a significant number of these learnings hold the same value for me as I lead others in the workplace as well.

Being a working mother in a demanding field of people development and management consulting, I am always on the lookout for ideas and insights to make my life easier.

Here are some of the things I have discovered along the way that may be useful to others.

1 How to eat a humble pie

Every mother knows you can never say never, because as soon as you do, whatever it is you said you would never do, invariably happens. Whether it's inadvertently using swear words while driving my young daughter to school, or being caught out in a white lie, I learnt pretty early on to tolerate regular servings of humble pie.

And as a result of being 'there' time and time again, I've developed a lot of empathy for those around me struggling to live up to values they hold dear.

In managing others, we are all striving to demonstrate the right values, but there are times we falter and need to cut each other some slack.

2 It's not about me

Of course, I need to take care of myself and look into my needs but being a mother is really about putting my child first.

There's this sentiment floating around that warns women they will lose themselves to motherhood. They're right! But the woman I found as a result of losing myself to motherhood is someone I like much better. Making sacrifices of self for another human being is not a bad thing.

As managers, most times it's about the team standing out and receiving the credit rather than the individual.

3 It's not a competition, it's a commitment to improvement

Motherhood is not about who makes the best chocolate cake for canteen day, or who can help with costume design and choreography for concert day, or who has the contact details for the best Bahasa Malaysia tuition teacher, or who can lobby the *guru besar* (school principal) for better exposure for her child.

Sometimes the environment your child is in can trigger such behaviours. Especially, if you see other mothers 'get ahead' in the game by doing some of these things.

Personally, I gave up the battle for 'Mother of the Universe' a long time ago. Save your mental and physical energy for things that really matter and that is within your control, like a good long talk with your teenager or an evening at the playground with your toddler.

Sometimes at work, others play the political game and curry favours to gain mileage but at the end of the day, if you remain focused on your team's needs, you can't really go wrong.

4 I can't control others

Yes, I brought her into this world, but I didn't really create her. She is her own person on her path to discovering herself. It's become increasingly clear to me that I am not supposed to control or manipulate my daughter to do what I want her to do.



My role is to facilitate her growth process to become who she is meant to be by her own definition of what fulfils her, even if that's totally different from what I had originally imagined!

As leaders, each of our team members bring unique strengths and abilities to the table and our role is to observe and harness it and align it to their own ambitions. The more we attempt to lay out the path, the less they grow as individuals.

5 It's better to laugh than cry (or scream)

Motherhood has got to be the world's most aggravating and frustrating job at times. The relentless nature of the work can drive a person to tears. Laugh instead. What other job can make you wonder about that odd smell and result in you finding another person's vomit stains on your nice office clothes?

In today's world where work is unrelenting and ever changing, sometimes the best way to cope is having some perspective and seeing the humour in things that don't always turn out as expected.

6 This too shall pass

There are so many stages of motherhood, and they all have their challenges and blessings. When I'm in the middle of a particularly tough one, I try to remember that it is just that (a stage) and that today is not forever.

On the flip side, it's more important to stop and savour the beautiful moments for the exact same reason: because today is not forever.

At work, when things get particularly challenging and I'm kept awake at night due to my inability to see a solution, I just tell myself that in time it will be okay and this too, shall pass and inevitably it does. I sleep a lot better now.

7 The best things in life really are free

Forget about exotic vacations, roadshow-like birthday parties and designer wear for your child. Smiles, cuddles, companionship, conversation, a sense of belonging, a reason to get up, the satisfaction of watching another person grow under your care. These are the best things of motherhood, and they are all free. Free!

The same goes for nurturing team relationships. It's

the lunch time conversations, banter, humour, teasing and learnings that we make from one another that fill us as human beings. Well okay, the big bonuses help too, but at the end of the day, we all like to come to work where we are interacting with each other as friends.

8 Happy people are free to be themselves

Of course, I appreciate structure and order in my home as much as the next person, but I've learnt that when our family is really doing what families do best, our house can be quite noisy and messy and that's okay.

These are just temporary circumstances that allow us to be natural and open with each other.

Similarly, at work sometimes things can get off script and plans don't always pan out as intended. The idea is to remain true to the purpose and adapt as we go along. It's about finding the balance between moving forward and being happy.

Bringing it together

Motherhood has also given me the ability to focus and be fearless in going after what I want. Nine years ago, I wrote an email after reading an article in *The Star* written by Leaderonomics chief executive officer Roshan Thiran about leaving a legacy.

I am where I am today because of it. The old me would not have had the guts to be so bold, but I felt the need to build a better Malaysia for my daughter.

With motherhood and leading others, for me the joy is in the journey. You'll never do anything so hard and yet so gratifying.

The greatest work any of us will ever do will be within the walls of our homes and our workspace. The idea is to make it worthwhile so that we can be proud of the impact we have made.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Rupa Sivanoli leads the Talent Accelerator Programmes (TAP) team at Leaderonomics. She believes in transforming the nation to create a better future for the next generation. If you'd like to share your thoughts on nation building with us, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

By QHAIRYL IYZUAN

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I could safely say I witnessed a miracle when our newborn came into my life. It was a moment that changed our lives forever.

Well, probably not literally or as dramatically as it sounds, but her presence surely made a big difference as we had a third (very delicate) person crashing into the lives of two love birds who just got married.

I still scroll through my phone for pictures of that very special day in the labour room. I still remember her baby smell, her soft, tender skin and the odd wrinkles on her hands and tiny fingers. Every moment of tending to her, watching her feed, sleep – the whole works – seemed so magical.

All the magical feelings seem to have dissipated by the time my newborn, Lily, was one year and seven months old.

We are all creatures of habit and coping with work and family demands turned me into a ruthless robotic dad.

It was tough to adapt at first but sacrifices had to be made. I had to let go of some 'me-time' and date nights with my wife. Life eventually taught me how to accept my responsibilities and helped me place those chores on an autopilot mode.

The novelty feeling that I had in the beginning was now gone. Yes, I enjoyed learning how to change diapers initially, but soon a full diaper made me squirm, especially when my wife was not around. I will spare you the other details but read on to learn how fatherhood made me the man I am today.

It is easier when all you have to do is provide, but in this day and age, where both parents have to work, it is not fair for us to expect our spouse – in my case, my wife – to manage all the washing, cleaning, teaching and caring.

Having a newborn is like a chance to paint on an empty canvas. The first point of contact for a baby is the mother and the father. Both parents are equally responsible for providing love and support for the child.

Although feeding a newborn may be out of the equation for me, I realised that men can play a huge role in raising a child by being the pillar of strength to their spouse. One of the best gifts a father can give the child is a safe, harmonious and loving family.

I am not going to dive into my journey or responsibilities of fatherhood but I am going to share my experiences of being a young father and three valuable lessons my toddler had taught me.

1 Never procrastinate

As a young father, the first thing I learnt is how important it is to get my act together and get things done. There is no such thing as waiting for the right time. Growing up, one can never escape from 'mastering' the art of procrastination.

I was caught in the habit even at work – delaying tasks, avoiding complicated projects until the very last minute and going through the chaos of completing the backlogs.

Now that I have a child, I can't afford to procrastinate because when work starts piling up, I have to stay back to deal with it and miss the opportunity – and quality time – to be with my daughter.

I realised procrastinating when you have a young child is like delaying your diaper duties. When it's full, it gets nasty. The repercussions of it – think along the lines of soiled diapers leaving a stain on your carpet or sofa – can be quite troublesome.

Knowing when and how to plan your tasks ahead makes you more organised as the days go by. I am not a professional planner or an organised person to say the least, but putting in some effort to improve on my planning skills will get me there somehow.

I am confident that by the time my daughter turns 10, I would have mastered the art of planning for myself and her future.

2 Troubleshoot immediately

Next, I realised that I can actually learn anything in a jiffy.

There is no formal training or certification to be a dad – from soothing a wailing baby to taking care of them when they are unwell – tasks that seemed impossible yesterday can be sorted easily today because of the

Leadership Lessons from My Baby Daughter



The author and his daughter, Lily.

love for your child. You tend to learn what is needed for the job along the way.

When I feel like complaining about sleepless nights, I think about friends who have it worse. For instance, a good friend's child has leukaemia and I don't know where he draws the strength and ability to handle his child, family members and work.

That's life. At the workplace, some people have a tougher journey but remain composed while others may seem to have it easy but can easily lose control. Everyone's journey is unique. Experience them in a way that makes the most sense to you.

Sometimes, skills that are needed to manage a crisis – big or small – need to be self-taught. I suppose we may not get it right on the first few tries but you will eventually become good at managing issues on your own.

I'll give you a good example: When communication between you and your toddler is limited to a wail, pout or other bodily gestures, you automatically troubleshoot and have a checklist in your mind.

As soon as I hear my daughter wailing, I have to either check her diaper, her stomach, her mouth, her temperature or just hold her to find out what would calm her down.

If you are a leader and there is a crisis at your workplace, you will have to take immediate measures to find the root cause of the problem and mend it.

At times, no one can teach you how to do these things. You will just have to observe and learn how to pacify yourself and others when there is a need.

3 Eliminate the distractors

I thought by providing her with a comfortable home, quality food and clothing, my child will be contented but by the time she was six months old, she developed another need: to play. She needed quality interaction on a daily basis to 'survive'.

There was a need to hold, talk and entertain her until she's tired – and she can have what seems to be a never-ending supply of energy. This was a huge challenge for me, as it dawned on me that I no longer have 'me-time'.

I had to give up my evening routines – a game of football, the usual hangout sessions to watch ESPN with my buddies and spending time reading things online. I also didn't have the luxury of time to hit the gym so I resorted to home workouts.

I had to be efficient with the way I managed my time, eliminating activities that took my attention away from my main priorities.

To put things into a professional perspective, when we assume new leadership roles (or even as established leaders), we may find ourselves overwhelmed with responsibilities and we will have to eliminate – or deprioritise – activities that distract us from our main tasks.

On top of all these, we should also enhance our emotional quotient (EQ) to manage ourselves and our staff or team members in the process.

In a nutshell

As parents, we tend to focus on fulfilling the financial and educational needs of our children. But remember that we also have the responsibility of instilling the right values in them, and I am saying that this can be achieved through our own behaviour.

Just take things such as appreciating family time, helping others, showing compassion to your elders and observing common courtesy for example. I have to walk the talk before I can expect or teach my child to practise these things.

Raising a value-driven all-rounder is not an easy task but it's not impossible either. Translate the values that you want your child to imbibe into your own lives and practise them first in all instances, even at our workplace, and when these values become your foundation, it's easier to model them for your children.

The same applies to our workplace. Model the right values, character and even working style that will help your team or business achieve the intended goals. When leaders walk the talk, they are setting a progressive culture in place for the rest to follow suit.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Qhairyl (better known as Q) is currently a growth partner in Leaderonomics' corporate services division. A ninja daddy, he trains his children at night and helps out at Leaderonomics youth camps when he has time to spare. To find out more about these camps, email youth@leaderonomics.com. Have similar stories to share or unique lessons that your children have taught you? Share your thoughts with us by writing to editor@leaderonomics.com.

By **DR IMMANUAL JOSEPH**
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WHEN I was 10 years old, I hurt a friend. I did something that was against my school's rules at that time. Fearing corporal punishment, I framed a friend who had nothing to do with my mischief. This friend had been nice to me all through our school years. She claimed her innocence, but the teacher believed me.

She was caned in front of the class (yes, this was 1980s India where corporal punishment was normal). Thanks to me, my friend was punished for something that she did not do.

When the initial rush was over, I felt guilty. But I was afraid to talk to my friend after that incident. I tactfully avoided her for the remaining two months of school. Then 5th grade was over, I moved to a different school and so did she. I never saw her after that.

That was more than three decades ago. I still remember that incident vividly. Thinking about my cowardice always made me wince, so I avoided thinking about it. But the memory still came up now and then, and when it did, it hurt. This was not my only negative memory.

There were others: some more recent, some more poignant. When these memories came calling, I felt like Jacob Marley, the dead business partner of Ebenezer Scrooge from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

In the story, Marley is portrayed as a ghost, forever doomed to wander the earth, lugging chains that bind him to his past misdeeds of greed and selfishness. Like Marley, dragging negative memories inside me weighed me down. Whenever I struggled with my negative experiences, I felt inauthentic.

After all, I am a compassion teacher and coach. I teach self-compassion and forgiveness. Inauthenticity made me feel guilty, which derailed my self-compassion journey.

It sticks like Velcro

The human brain has a bias for negativity. When good things happen, we feel good. When bad things happen we feel bad. But the bad feelings last much longer than the good feelings; we have Velcro brains. Negative experiences have the right type of hooks to stick to brain Velcro, and they don't come off easily.

However, there is an evolutionary advantage to remembering negative experiences. The antelope in the savannah, who saw one of his group being killed, found it advantageous to remember the incident so it could survive the lion's hunt. Most of the lions in our current life are long dead, but our brains do not know the difference between real and dead lions.

Negative memories create guilt, anger, fear. So they initiate the same survival response – inflammatory chemicals fill our bodies, we lose sleep, cell cycles go out of whack. There is disease, there is suffering.

I decided to face my negative memories face to face. I had been avoiding them, sweeping under the proverbial rug. But I knew, that to fully manifest as the change-maker that I am called to be, I had to first work with my own messiness.

So, I created my 'Let Go' box.

Reflect, then let go

The next time a negative memory came calling, I wrote it down. When I had a bit of time, I sat down to reflect on it. Instead of running away from the memory,

The 'Let Go' Box

How to let go of negative memories

I tried to relive it. I wrote down all that came up on paper. I was not writing for anyone but me, so it did not matter that my words were misspelt and the sentences were flawed.

As I relived my experiences, judgments showed up. But I reminded myself that these memories are from my past, and like a movie that has already been created, I can do nothing more than be an observer. The past is only a lens through which I see my present.

So I observed my failings, my fears, my missteps, and tried to keep my emotions out of the picture. After all, how many times can one cry over the climax of *The Titanic*?

I reminded myself that I was not perfect when I made those mistakes, that I will never be perfect, and that no one else who is human is perfect and immune to making mistakes. And I reminded myself that is okay. The world is still beautiful with its imperfections.

As I released myself from the expectation of perfection, I felt peace. I remembered that all of my experiences, good and bad, have influenced my journey in many unacknowledged ways.

When I felt I had given the incidents their due recognition, I ended by thanking the universe for the way this experience has changed and moulded me. I made a conscious decision to not be chained to my past actions. I assured myself that it was okay to let go. And I did.

It was not easy – some of the memories were very bitter. But facing them became a symbolic act of self-forgiveness. I felt the peace of knowing that I had given the memories their due reflection and honour. The scariest of monsters lose their scariness when you look into their eyes; so it is with negative experiences.

When we look at negative memories without fear or judgment, and honour their role in our lives, we essentially take away their emotional sway over us.

Every one of these 'reflection sessions' would end with me neatly folding up my reflection paper and putting it into my 'Let Go' box, and every time I accumu-

lated seven of these papers, I put them together and burnt them up. As they turned to ashes, I felt a sense of closure. The ashes of these papers, I added to my garden soil as a symbol of new beginnings.

Final thoughts

Not all negative memories have been addressed in my life. This is work in progress. **I am** work in progress. The beautiful thing is, my 'Let Go' box has freed up so much mental space and energy inside me.

We do not realise how much load we carry until we choose to set them down. As for those difficult memories, I still remember all events vividly. But I have no more emotional content for them. They happened. They have found closure. There are no wounds to heal. Nothing to sweep under the rug.

All that negative emotional content went up in flames and plants have grown where those ashes were buried. I have only the current reality to live and be. I am no longer Jacob Marley.

I am free.



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SELF-AWARENESS AND IDENTITY

FORMATION The ability to understand one's own strengths, aspirations, limitations, wants and needs, and distinguish them or group them with others. 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.

Are you looking to understand yourself better?

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

By EVELYN TEH
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A quick look at the Malaysian Labour Law (Employment Act 1955) shows that we are entitled to at least eight days of annual leave for each continuous block of 12 months with an employer.

So, imagine my surprise when I was reading up Netflix's 'policy' on annual leave, summed up by the following sentence – "We don't track hours per day or per week, so why are we tracking days of vacation per year?"

Wait, people can take holidays as they see fit? No way! But it happens, at Netflix at least.

This was enforced as part of its talent management framework where everyone at Netflix is allowed to take leave so long as the employee follows certain guidelines (i.e. informing human resources should he or she take 30 continuous days off).

Yet it is still a high-performing organisation, evident by its soaring stock options, millions of new customers and market supremacy.

Naturally, the question that follows is, how did Netflix reinvent itself following multiple issues (such as the controversial 60 per cent increase in subscriber price back in July 2011) and with such 'disruptive' policies?

Today's economic environment

'Fast-changing', 'agile', and 'unpredictable' are common terms we love to use in describing the economic environment today.

When it comes to organisational challenges, this form of environment proves to be more perplexing for those of us trying to solve these issues.

And if we agree on these premises, then I think we can all agree that we would need leadership that can help the organisation thrive in this unique environment.

Welcome to the concept of adaptive leadership; a concept thought and refined by renowned Professor Ronald Heifetz from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

While there are many definitions of adaptive leadership, the core understanding is as simple as this: mobilising people for a set of creative experiments whose goal is to ensure the organisation thrives.

Principles of adaptive leadership

1 Adaptive change is not overhauling the organisation's DNA

When Heifetz conceptualised adaptive leadership, he based it on our theory of biological adaptation, similar to how slight changes in our gene makeup contribute to evolutionary differences.

This is in direct opposition to the concept of change propagated in organisations as 'transformational', which seems to imply grandiose shifts and overhauling history without respecting the accumulated wisdom that forms the current culture.

Change through adaptive leadership can be compared with the concept of tinkering, where mobilising small changes can lead to great impact.

Thus, it's key that in times of change, an adaptive leader addresses the difficult task of choosing which part of their cultural DNA to keep, and which to discard.

How do you define change? What has been your experience in instilling change within your organisation, and what struggles follow this effort?

2 Technical versus adaptive problems

There are two broad-based categories of problems to solve in this world: technical and adaptive problems (there can be grey areas, but let's keep it simple for now).

Technical problems have an obvious solution. For example, when a manager is unable to attend a meeting, the likely solution is to get his assistant to represent him.

It becomes an adaptive problem however, if this same manager is constantly absent whenever his or her presence is required at a meeting.

Now, the solution is no longer as simple as replacing the manager with an assistant because we may have

Adaptive Leadership

The key to thriving in today's business world



a deeper problem, which can range anything from the manager's personality to company policies encouraging such behaviour.

The point is, adaptive problems do not have one obvious solution and it becomes stressful for managers when they try applying a technical solution to the adaptive problem.

I am guessing the assistant manager will not be very happy if he or she was obliged to cover up for the manager all the time.

If you observe the current issues in your organisation both through empathy and as a detached third party, what is the nature of these problems – technical or adaptive?

3 Solutions can be found within the collective organisation

Solutions don't necessarily reside with the leader, or who we give authority to. It is so easy to expect a person in authority to provide a quick magic bullet remedy that restores any situation to its optimal equilibrium just because we assume they are experts.

Moreover, as people in positions of authority ourselves, it is common to feel both the external obligation and internal pressure to be that person who is the solve-it-all.

However, adaptive leaders seek beyond themselves in solving adaptive problems; they are more likely to shift the responsibility of solution generation to the collective intelligence (i.e. their team or even the whole organisation).

An adaptive leader is open to the learning function as a guide who challenges common expectations, discloses threats to people at an optimal level, manages resistance and then sustains everyone through the heat of generating solutions.

Who solves the problems in your organisation, especially those you identified as adaptive problems? Are there resources of collective intelligence you have yet to leverage on?

Remember the story about Netflix? Netflix chief executive officer Reed Hastings and then-chief talent officer Patty McCord were extremely focused on building Netflix as a high-performing organisation, hence their talent management approaches were aligned for this one goal.

Netflix has always positioned itself as an organisation with an innovative pursuit to change how we consume filmed entertainment.

Yet, as McCord shared in her article on *Harvard Business Review*, the expectation was for her to default to standard operating procedures which were far removed from innovativeness.

Thus, when Netflix met challenges in obtaining

initial public offering (IPO) and subsequently had layoffs and operated with less than the optimal number of employees, the duo realised there needed to be a change in the way they run the organisation.

What keeps the story interesting is that these ideas of change did not originate from a 12-hour brainstorming session between Hastings and McCord. Instead, McCord credited two Netflix employees in inspiring this disruptive direction.

One was an engineer who used to manage a team but realised that he was better off as a lone performer than with underperforming colleagues.

The other was a book keeper who had to be given a severance package as her functions were no longer applicable to Netflix's organisational direction.

From these two cases, Netflix drew the conclusion that a high-performing environment is key to success. It decided that it needed to let go of people who were no longer a fit, yet grant them a severance package worthy of their past contributions.

These findings formed the foundations of Netflix's talent management approach.

What was seemingly disruptive (i.e. granting the autonomy to take vacation, allowing employees to benchmark themselves with peer organisations) actually resembles the process of adaptive change.

Hastings and McCord realised that bringing their organisation to the next level was an adaptive problem which required them to look beyond their scope of authority for solutions – through people who made up this collective.


Plus, they might have taken the other direction of usual talent management practices, but the change was still based upon the organisational value of being innovative; this was no revamping of DNA.

So, the question that follows for organisational leaders is, would you lead adaptive change, which could mean going against the grain of best practices?

In conclusion

Perhaps you can consider using the three aforementioned concepts as a starting point to instil adaptive change.

And if adaptive leadership sounds like a familiar concept re-bottled, maybe it is because 3,000 years ago, we have had such success stories when King Saul succeeded in solving an adaptive problem (Goliath) with an adaptive solution (David). As the saying goes, it is only impossible, until it is done.

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

5 Misconceptions About Your Voice

By **CYNTHIA ZHAI**
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AS leaders, your voice plays a big role in making first impressions. From doing business calls to presenting a proposal in front of your stakeholders, you need to ensure that your voice is heard clearly.

What are some of the misconceptions we have when it comes to our vocal power? Vocal coach Cynthia Zhai addresses these fallacies.

1 My voice cannot be changed

In a way, it is correct. Your voice is who you are and reflects you physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

It is like your fingerprint and uniquely yours. Your voice can't be changed; neither can you sound like others.

It sounds sad. However, your voice can be improved in your own way. Most people, maybe including you, are not producing their sound in a proper way.

They have too much tension in them which is restricting their voice production; they may also have other concerns that are holding them back from producing a richer sound.

If you could release all those tensions or concerns and learn the correct way to produce your voice, you will hear a better sound and you are going to love it.

The fact is: you have a richer, fuller and more confident voice inside. Are you willing to discover and develop it?

2 A good voice means a deeper voice

A good voice is not necessarily a deeper voice. You might have seen much online information, like how to develop a deeper voice, or how to sound deeper. However, these are misleading.

To develop a good voice is not about going deeper. In fact, if you press your voice down to a lower end on purpose, you won't feel comfortable and it won't last long.

To develop your good voice is about finding a fuller and richer sound in you – a sound that is expressed freely and full of resonance and harmony.

3 Speaking is just using my mouth or throat

Your voice is not just tripping up from your throat and coming through your mouth. Your voice connects with every part of you and reflects who you are.

When you speak, all your vocal organs are engaged and vibrating. Make full use of them, activate your whole body and you will produce a powerful sound.

4 To increase my volume, I have to shout

Shouting is your pitch going up, which could potentially hurt your vocal folds and other people's ears. Increasing your volume refers to the change in the amount of your sound.

Volume and pitch are two different things. Most people cannot differentiate them clearly.

To better help you understand the difference, think about this: When you turn up the volume of your iPod while listening to a song, does the singer's pitch also go up? Of course not.

To increase your volume in the correct way, you must utilise your diaphragm to support your breathing, and use your pelvic muscle.

By increasing your volume correctly, you won't harm anyone else's ears, and you also will sound more serious.

5 Voice training means to sound good

Voice training is more about opening up yourself, both mentally and physically. It's about helping you speak with your whole body, not just with your mouth or your throat.

Those elements that will make you sound good, e.g. inflections and rhythm, are like the decorations around the main dish. What will happen to them if your main dish tastes terrible?

In conclusion

You have a better sound inside of you. Work with it, use it to its full capacity, and you will discover the power of your voice, be it to influence others or to transform yourself.



DO you find it a challenge to assert yourself, either in a professional setting or in your personal life?

Asserting yourself means that you stand up for your own rights and defend your own boundaries while respecting others; and you express your opinions, needs, and feelings without hurting others. I love this interpretation about assertiveness: to disagree without being disagreeable.

To assert yourself indicates your level of self-esteem and self-assurance. Lack of assertiveness can affect your career prospects and quality of life. When you are assertive, you communicate more effectively and earn more respect.

Assertiveness is a very critical skill in communication. Within 0.36 seconds, you will find more than 14 million Google results on how to be assertive – think before you speak, don't apologise if it's not warranted, remember it is okay to say 'no' – to name a few.

Yet for years, none of them worked for me! I didn't achieve any breakthrough on assertiveness until I did my own voice study.

In practicality, we do relate voices with personality traits, e.g. a deep voice comes across as credible, trustworthy, and authoritative; while a soft voice comes across as friendly, warm, or unsure.

Develop an assertive voice

How does an assertive voice sound like? Confident, grounded, and self-assured. To sound that way, you

Harnessing the Power of Your Voice

need to know what makes an assertive voice.

When I first thought about developing my voice, part of me was doubtful while the other part of me thought: "Why not make some changes and see the results?"

I discovered my optimum pitch, developed resonance and applied cadence in my voice. The more I developed them, the more amazed I was looking at its transformation. Not only did I tap the potential in my voice, I also tapped into the realisation I had in my mind.

By sounding more assertive, I realised that we do have our own desires, feelings, and opinions. Therefore, we should stand up for our own rights and defend our personal boundaries.

The changes prompted me to reflect on why it really worked, and I finally figured it out. You see, changes happen in two ways:

- Change the internal (your mind) and then the external (your behaviours/body) will follow; or
- Change the external (your behaviour/body), and the internal (your mind) will ultimately change.

In essence, changing either your mind or your behaviour/body will influence the other.

That is exactly how yoga works. We practise the

external (our body, e.g. different postures) to discover and change the internal (our mind). As one of the foremost yoga teachers, Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar (better known as B. K. S. Iyengar) pointed out in his book, *Light on Life*: "It is through the alignment of my body that I discovered the alignment of my mind."

Your turn

Are you assertive enough? Are you still struggling to be more assertive? Are you disappointed with all your attempts to be more assertive?

Why not reverse the process by making external changes before anything else? Sometimes the results might come even faster than making internal changes first.

All the best!

■ These articles were previously published in print.



Cynthia is a voice and speech coach, trainer and speaker, based in Singapore. She helps you discover your full voice that is authentic, confident and authoritative. She also helps organisations on voice and presentation skills training. Email us at info@leaderonomics.com to learn how to speak in public effectively.

17 Effective Ways for Entrepreneurs to Manage Their Time



1 Have a positive approach
When faced with heavy workload, don't worry too much. As an entrepreneur, believe in yourself and proceed with a well-devised plan.



2 Set goals
Setting goals for yourself can instil a sense of purpose. Ensure that all your tasks are addressed in a timely manner.



3 Be organised
When you have a pile of work, you need to get organised. Make necessary things available within your reach and work methodically.



4 Schedule everything
Because there's so much to do within so little time, stick to a daily schedule. Avoid remembering information that can be documented instead.



5 Prioritise your tasks
Sit back, relax and perform the work according to urgency. Once you have listed your tasks, set priorities based on the information you already have.



6 Focus on the task at hand
Staying focused is essential for executing each task accurately. Stay away from all distractions and pay heed to a single task at hand.

7 Delegate to the experts
You should be using your time on the most critical aspects of the business. Make the most of your delegation process to save crucial time.



8 Perform a time audit
It's important to take a note of the time spent on each task. Through this, you'll get a better idea of how to get things done more swiftly.



9 Analyse the processes more closely
Entrepreneurs should analyse situations and identify important issues. A proper evaluation of the working process can bring the best results for any business.



10 Face difficult tasks at your peak
Try to identify when you remain the most proactive. Perform harder tasks in those moments to avoid any delay.



11 Reconnect with your 'why'
Make sure you are pursuing goals by going in the right direction. Periodically ask yourself whether your efforts are aligned with the objective.



12 Make better initial decisions
In the initial stage, strategic planning is critical to business success. Evaluate the process and work accordingly to utilise your time properly.



13 Get an early start
Start your workday earlier and become more productive. Assign tasks to each session of the day and get things done within the specified time.



14 Reduce distractions
Don't let distractions waste your valuable time! Avoid any unnecessary interference to gain control over your work schedule.



15 Eliminate the non-essential
Identify unimportant things that can kill your vital time. Focus only on essential aspects to avail better results for your business.



16 Take time to pause and think
Entrepreneurs often tend to be on a constant 'go-mode' and rarely take time to clear their heads. Find some downtime to nourish your creative ideas.



17 It's all about mind management
Productivity is more about mind management than time management. If you work methodically, eventually things will get done within the stipulated time.

TIME seems to be the only element in the world that cannot be retrieved once it is lost. It is also a fair gift given to all of us. No matter how rich or how poor we are, from blue collar workers to senior managers of big or small organisations, we all have 24 hours in a day to spare – no more, no less.

How is it that we often complain of not having enough time to do other tasks in our to-do list, despite all the technology purportedly developed to help us save time and increase our productivity?

Basically, time management is a skill that we can develop over time with constant discipline and consistency. It will include the following:

- planning and organising
- setting goals and objectives
- delegation of responsibilities
- setting deadlines
- prioritising activities according to their importance
- right allocation of time to the right task

For all the struggling start-up leaders out there, these tips may be for you.

Recreated based on the original infographic by Arpita Kundu on MyTasker. Write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com and share some of your personal experiences in tackling the clock.

By **WENDY BORN**
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GREAT leaders should talk less to influence more. The saying that actions speak louder than words have never been more accurate for the ability to influence, impress and inspire. Through an intimate understanding of one's own behaviour comes a powerful tool for leaders.

In Daniel Goleman's article *The Well-Focused Leader*, he maintains that a leader's focus of attention directs and guides the attention of who he leads. A shift in focus then to that which is controllable – namely one's own behaviours – may well change the dynamic of how leaders manage and maintain relationships.

The link between EQ and effective leadership

The ability to be aware of and control the expression of emotions within interpersonal relationships is known as emotional intelligence (EQ). As such, understanding the influence that behaviour has on others is an attribute of EQ. There is much written about the linkages between EQ and leadership effectiveness.

Andrea Owens, for the *Harvard Business Review* outlines how EQ leads to increases in productivity, motivation and engagement. Further, Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence* covers the value of EQ for fostering good social interactions and helping to empathise more through better understanding of the situations of others.

And the *Harvard Business Review* study of 84 United States companies on the attributes of compassion and forgiveness held by the chief executive (CEO), found companies whose CEO has these characteristics outperformed their peers by almost 500 per cent.

The brain on autopilot

Yet, EQ is in disproportionate levels across the leadership population, with human physiology the major cause. According to *The Neuroscience of Leadership* (Rock & Schwartz), the brain is wired to act on autopilot as much as possible, hence behaviour derived from

experiences, education, parental influence, values and beliefs become 'built in'.

The brain tries to conserve as much energy as possible and looks to create habits to minimise energy and think less. When a behavioural habit forms, it is sent to the subconscious, making it an automated behaviour.

When leaders only work on autopilot, it takes conscious effort to be self-aware of their behaviour. In today's time-poor world, autopilot rules.

But when leaders have a thorough understanding of their behaviour and how it contributes to the circumstances and impact on those they lead, and the subsequent flow-on effect to things like culture, their influence is increased.

The power of reflection

Becoming self-aware through regular reflection can build awareness of subconscious behaviour as well as have a broader positive impact.

Meier, Cho and Dumani (2015) in the *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, found that "work reflection was associated with an increase in affective well-being, with regard to both positive and negative moods".

In addition, research on productivity conducted by Stefano, Gino, Pisano and Staats for Harvard Business School, found that a mere 15 minutes of reflection each day can increase performance by 23 per cent.

The downside of reflection is that it can be confronting, as it involves looking at behaviours that may not always be positive. It means at times having to admit that flaws are present, which is uncomfortable and cause feelings of vulnerability.

In Jennifer Porter's article, *Why you should make*

time for self-reflection (even if you hate doing it) for *Harvard Business Review*, she concludes that leaders often don't understand the process, don't like the process, don't like the results, have an over-bias towards action rather than thinking, and can't see a good return on investment from reflection.

In conclusion

However, taking the time to reflect on behaviour and the impact it has on others provides an opportunity to create meaning, and from meaning comes learning.

Self-awareness through reflection must be part of the daily routine and a recurrent leadership activity to provide a continual loop of improvement.

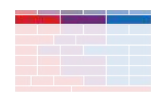
In doing so leaders can set a positive example, increase well-being and boost productivity, all without saying a word.



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SELF-AWARENESS AND IDENTITY

FORMATION

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