

# ARE YOU REALISTIC OR IDEALISTIC?

## USING YOUR HEAD AND HEART TO SUCCEED AS AN ENTREPRENEUR

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A few weeks ago, we organised one of the biggest SME CEO conferences in the country that gathered almost 350 chief executive officers (CEOs). I met so many great leaders and great businesses. Many of these CEOs had similar ways of achieving their goals.

If you were to describe your approach to working towards set goals, would you say you were realistic in how you go about achieving your ambitions, or do you come at them from the perspective of the visionary or idealist?

Recently, I received a message from a young professional who has been considering taking "a leap of faith" and starting her own business for some time now. Having spent a little too long thinking through the necessary considerations, the reason for her procrastination dawned on her after reading my article on lessons from American businessman and motivational speaker Chris Gardner.

In her message, she writes: "Being in a good job, I feel I need to be realistic enough about the requirements of starting out on my own. At the same time, I picture in my mind all the possibilities that can come from taking a leap of faith. I've been torn between my realism and idealism, not knowing which one to follow. But your article made me realise that I don't have to choose. I can be realistic and idealistic at the same time."

The young woman also reminded me about my formula for success:

*Vision (to have it in your mind where you want to be) + Healthy realism (move forward from where you are - not from where you hope to be) + 3Ps (Planning- Passion-Perseverance).*

Whenever I speak to young people who ask me about career progression or starting out on their own, the one piece of advice I usually give is, "Always be aware of where you are at: this helps to keep you grounded; but don't forget to dream about the possibilities. This is

what gives you the motivation to keep going and bring them to life."

Whether it's something physical, emotional, spiritual, or a combination, we may need to be realistic in our goals for meaningful change to happen. The first step is getting started!" — Dana Arcuri

In any walk of life, particularly in professional development, there's the temptation to look at one approach as being superior to another. Is it better to be realistic, cautious and measured? Or should we be idealistic, take risks, and throw caution to the wind?

Actually, both of these approaches – when used in a timely manner – work together to provide everything an entrepreneur needs to succeed in today's world.

Taking the example of the procrastinating entrepreneur-in-waiting, it's sensible that she is aware of her situation and circumstances. It would be reckless if she were to simply give up a good job and try to create a new venture without having much of an idea of what needs to be done and how.

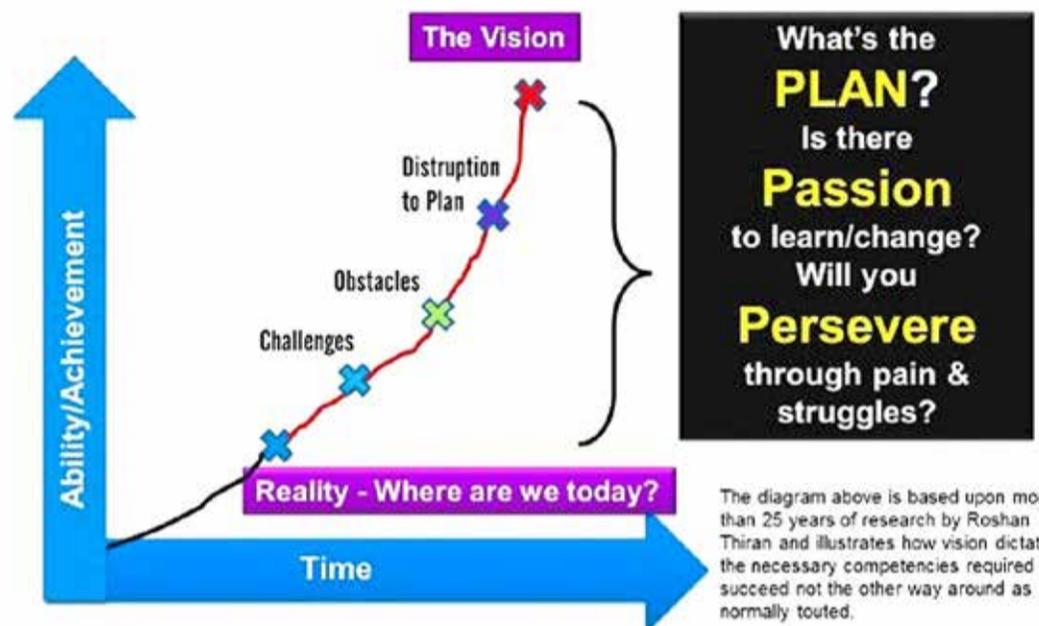
On the other hand, allowing her realistic side too much free rein is holding her back from breathing life into her ideas. If we wait for the right moment, we will forever be waiting; if we need everything to be just right, we will never start. Instead, we suffer from analysis paralysis and never begin our journey. The most difficult step is to start.

"Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly." — Langston Hughes

This is where having the courage to dream comes into play. Chris Gardner always had a healthy sense of realism: he always knew exactly where he was at, and he knew the kind of effort that was needed to take him out of his hardship and struggle.

But Gardner also had a dream, a vision of who he wanted to be and where he wanted to go. It was this dream that helped him to stay motivated. When we don't dream and fail to imagine possibilities, we won't get very far. Our vision is the magnetic force that pulls us on

## The Essence of Leadership



The diagram above illustrates the simplicity of leadership yet showcases the complexity required to make your vision a reality. Pic: Leaderonomics

the path towards success. Our realism is what helps us navigate through the obstacles along the way.

It's about striking a balance between the two. If we fixated on realism, the chances are that we'll come up with a million reasons why the obstacles shouldn't be challenged in the first place. On the other hand, if we spend too much time dreaming, then we're likely to miss the obstacles that will trip us up. The way to succeed is by being excited about our dreams and grounded enough to do what it takes to transform those dreams into reality.

### MY MODEL OF LEADERSHIP

In fact, I believe leadership is also just that: Vision + Reality + 3Ps (Planning – Passion – Perseverance). For the past few years, I have disagreed with many leadership gurus that tout a formula for effective leadership.

Many claim a specific seven-step

process to be a great leader but I believe every person's leadership plans and process will differ, simply because each of us have a different vision and different starting points (the current point of reality).

MINDSET refers to the way people think, feel and act towards any situation they face. Organisations that do not address mindset problems will be part of the 80% that fail in their change efforts and risk losing talented employees along the way. Learn to be agile and help your staff adapt to changes in structure, processes and results by assessing their skills, thinking patterns and resilience. At the same time, let us help you gauge your company's engagement level to enhance cooperation and teamwork. E-mail [training@leaderonomics.com](mailto:training@leaderonomics.com) to consult our subject matter experts.

■ Roshan Thiran is the CEO of Leaderonomics - a social enterprise working to transform lives through leadership development and nurturing potential. Connect with Roshan on Facebook for more insights into business, personal development, and leadership.



As a CEO, part of your challenge is to be able to scale and continually grow your business. Many CEOs struggle to reinvent themselves at different phases of their leadership journey and this translates to an inability to grow their own businesses and organisations. CEOs face these significant challenges with little support or people to talk to about their struggles and pains.

In 2016, Leaderonomics, together with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), pioneered the Leadership Dojo programme specifically designed for CEOs to learn from CEOs, senior CEO mentors and from global leaders who have succeeded in their respective journeys.



If you are looking to scale your business to the next level or grow your individual competencies, this programme is perfect for you. Register your interest today at [bit.ly/LDojinterest](http://bit.ly/LDojinterest) or scan the following QR Code. The first 10 CEOs to express their interest will be invited to an exclusive networking dinner with Leaderonomics CEO Roshan Thiran on 13 June 2017.