WHO MAKES BETTER BOSSES?
MEN OR WOMEN
READ THE DEBATE ON MEN AND WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE
PAGES 8-9

WHO MAKES BETTER BOSSES?
MEN OR WOMEN

Page 5
Be a Leader
looks into how forgiveness can ensure a more effective and productive work environment

Top 10
dishes out tips on how to be an inspiring and motivational leader

Women & Careers
makes the case for supporting women participation at work
ROSHAN SAYS

WOMEN MAKE A WONDERFUL DIFFERENCE

In most parts of the world during the 19th century, women were not expected to earn their own living. Women seldom had jobs let alone careers. In fact, most professions refused entry to women. At that point in time, it was virtually impossible for women to become doctors, engineers, architects, accountants or bankers.

Women were allowed to be teachers though. In 1861, over 72% of teachers were women, but teaching was a low status job and was also very poorly paid.

After a long struggle, the medical profession allowed women to become doctors. Even so, by 1900 there were only 200 women doctors. In fact, it was a huge struggle to convince the world that women would make great doctors. In 1869, Sophia Jex-Blake wrote a booklet, Medicine as a Profession for Women, where she attempted to answer some of the objections made against women becoming doctors.

It was not until 1910 that women were allowed to become accountants and bankers. However, there were still no women diplomats, barristers or judges. This varied slightly from country to country but overall, women throughout history were not given much opportunity to truly fulfill their talent and potential.

But that has changed this past century. Today, women have clearly displayed they are as good or better than men in virtually all professions. In fact, every year, there are more women who graduate from universities compared with men. And women are a growing force in the workforce. According to data from Forbes Women acquired over the past 30 years, women’s median income has increased 63% and today more than one-third of working wives earn more than their husbands. And so, today’s issue is dedicated to the amazing impact women are making on our workplace.

We are truly blessed to have women in our workplace today as they have made it a much better place with their high bonding and inter-personal presence. In our center spread piece, the team from TalentCorp, in partnership with our team at Leaderonomics, explore the paradox of why Malaysian women in the workplace are different from other developing countries. In most developing countries, women do leave the workplace when they first have children but they quickly re-join the workforce after a number of years. In Malaysia, the data shows otherwise. You can read the details of that exclusive on pages 8 and 9.

We will also explore some of the issues faced by women in their careers. Data still shows that women continue earning only 82 cents for every dollar earned by men. We explore why this is so and what women need to do to change this dynamic. The rest of the pullout is filled with great career advice for women (and men) including tips to help you grow your career. So, enjoy yourself as we did in pulling this career guide for you. To all the women out there who are making such a wonderful impact in their workplace, I wish to express my sincere thanks for bringing love, joy, grace, humility, kindness, and care and for showing us the importance of treasuring relationships. We men can truly learn numerous lessons from the women. I have been blessed by many women throughout my career and my sincere hope is that women continue to change the office and workplace from a brutal, ruthless space to a place of joy.

Best wishes to all of you and your careers! Go on and make a difference in everything you do.

Warm regards,
Roshan Thiran
Editor, myStarjob & CEO, Leaderonomics

"Men are truly blessed to have women in the workplace."
Senior executive director of Sunway Education Group found herself destined for bigger things in her career. Education. Being a new institution, Lee says while a person’s basic importance of respect and the spirit of teamwork will stay solidly with us because we stay strong teamwork and camaraderie of allies rather than your CV.”

Lee is a picture of bliss and happiness when relating about her accomplished career in education.
Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison before he was freed. In spite of his long incarceration, Mandela stayed true to his cause. His relentless pursuit of the vision of an Apartheid-free and united South Africa, saw his dream finally realised.

Great leaders have inspiring visions and persistently focus on achieving their goals. Aung San Suu Kyi, Bill Gates, and Henry Ford concentrated their efforts on dreams of a better tomorrow — Freeing Myanmar, changing the world through software and making cars affordable for everyone.

Leaders are not born. These leaders are not that much different to the rest of us. It is their single-minded approach and passion towards their vision of a better tomorrow that sets them apart.

Be A Leader.
**THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS:**

**A KEY TO HIGH PERFORMANCE LEADERSHIP**

By GEORGE KOHLRIESE

MAGINE what your life would be like if someone murdered one of your immediate family members. What if it was your son or daughter? Think about the anger and bitterness you would feel towards that person. Surely it would consume both your personal and professional life. Would you ever be able to move on?

Hopeless, none of you reading this has endured such a tragedy. But surely all of us have dealt with profound feelings of betrayal, injustice, and loss of an important expectation whether on the job or at home. Do you let such occurrences consume you or hold you hostage? Or are you able to go through the recovery and grieving process so that you defeat and overcome the adversity as quickly as possible, not vice versa? No person better personifies this than Azim Khamisa, a former investment banker who tragically lost his only son to gang violence. His story encapsulates how one can learn to forgive and to ultimately find peace again in all areas of life.

**AZIM KHAMISA’S STORY**

On Jan 21, 1995, Azim Khamisa's 20-year-old son Tariq was shot and killed by four youth gang members. Tony Hicks, 14, pointed a gun and with a single shot took the life of Tariq. Azim had been away on business and refused to deliver a pizza without first being paid. It was a long process, but ultimately Azim chose not to seek revenge over the loss of his son. Instead he chose forgiveness and peace. “I took a different response to this tragedy,” Azim told an audience at IMD's High Performance Leadership programme. “I saw Tariq as a victim of the 14-year-old, and I saw the 14-year-old as a victim of society. Both were victims at opposite ends of a gun.”

Azim shares that as a member of society, he too felt responsible for the bullet that took the life of his son. Even more stunning, he reached out to Tony’s grandfather Pies Felix, who had custody of Tony at the time of the murder, with a hand of compassion and forgiveness. Together the two men from completely different backgrounds founded The Tariq Khamisa Foundation that is helping to bring attention to teen violence worldwide and is teaching peace and forgiveness as a means to conflict resolution. Azim has spoken with Tony on multiple occasions and upon his release from prison, Tony will have a job at the foundation.

Azim was able to forgive Tony in order to move through the grieving process and ultimately find joy again. He says: “Forgiveness is something you do for yourself. If I did not forgive Tony I would be very angry at him and if I am angry who does it hurt? Myself.”

**HOW DOES FORGIVENESS RELATE TO HIGH PERFORMANCE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP?**

How does this connect to your daily professional activities? We rarely speak about forgiveness in an organisational or professional context. However, to understand effective high performing leadership you have to be cognisant of the many people in organisations who are suffering from emotional pain inflicted by others for whatever reasons and to various degrees. There are many breach of trust cases which people do not let go of. Instead, they hold on to resentment. How do you deal with unwarranted criticism and backstabbing attempts on the job? How do you overcome betrayal, jealousy, rejection, disrespect, disappointments and the long list of possible negative work-related experiences?

In addition, how do you deal with disappointments and letdowns in your personal life? As work and home are interconnected, it should come as no surprise that most individuals who are satisfied in their personal life perform better on the job. On the other hand, a major upheaval in one’s personal life often leads to a sense of dissatisfaction and under-performance at work.

Effective leaders must be at peace with themselves and the events in their lives past and present. Everyone, especially leaders, must make attachments, create bonds and go through separation and grief to recovery and return to the full joy of work and life. You can deny it or you can deal with it. There are eight stages of grief—denial; protest and anger; sadness, missing or longing; fear about what will happen next; mental and emotional acceptance; forming new attachments or renewing a bond, forgiveness; and finally finding full gratitude and joy again.

Of these, forgiveness can be one of the hardest and at the same time the deepest healing experiences. Forgiveness means to literally be able to give again. In other words, it means that we use our energy to be able to “give for” and to go back out to others. People who are not able to forgive tend to become victims or persecutors. They are unhappy, cynical, negative, over defensive and they suffer. In effect they become “hostages” or “take others hostage.” The victim and the victim-turned persecutor tend not to be able to experience real joy, genuine love or full gratitude. If you look at the cycle of grieving, you will see that forgiveness is the fundamental stage to experience gratitude and the joy of life again.

If Azim could forgive someone for the murder of his only son, surely all of us too can work towards resolving conflicts and overcome adversities to unleash in ourselves the energy and power to lead more effectively. As a result of his actions, Azim has been recognised with a number of prominent awards, including The Search for Common Ground International Award (acknowledged alongside Desmond Tutu and Ted Koppel) and the National Crime Victims Special Community Service Award presented by former US President Bill Clinton and former Attorney General Janet Reno. Perhaps you may not gain such high-profile recognition but surely, like Azim, you can use the power of forgiveness to reach new heights as a leader and at the same time be a model for others to learn this very important emotional intelligence skill.

Professor Kohlrieser is author of Hostage at the Table: How Leaders Can Overcome Conflict, Influence Others, and Raise Performance (Jossey-Bass, Warren Bennis Series), an international best-selling book translated into 12 languages. The book was awarded Best Leadership Book in France and Best Management Book in Germany.
TOP 10 WAYS
FOR LEADERS TO BE INSPIRING AND MOTIVATIONAL

1. LEAD BY EXAMPLE
People watch what you do more than they listen to what you say. A productive team needs a productive leader. It is important that your employees see you putting in as much energy as them – if not more. Be excited by new challenges, show real enthusiasm, and demonstrate your love for the job.

2. GIVE EMPLOYEES THE SPACE TO GROW
Encourage your members to do their best and encourage them to learn new skills. Show them how you can help them meet their goals while achieving the organisation’s goals. Create a partnership with each employee.

3. PROVIDE A SENSE OF WORK OWNERSHIP
Give employees a sense of ownership in their work and work environment. This can be symbolic (business cards for all employees, whether they need them or not) and literal (give employees the opportunity to take full ownership of projects – acknowledge their accomplishments and guide them when they face difficulties).

4. SPEAK, BUT DON’T FORGET TO LISTEN
Show your employees that you value input and collaboration. This applies to your team members and peers - show them you respect them and include your peers.

5. BE VULNERABLE
Be willing to share more than just your successes; share your failures too. Others will relate to you when they recognise that they’re not the only ones with challenges. As a leader, showing that you are human with your own set of flaws will likely enable you to garner more respect from your followers.

6. SHARE FROM YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES
As a leader, you have more to share than you realise. Share the rich experiences of your life and your wisdom from your unique point of view. You may be the only one who can touch someone with your inspiring message.

7. GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT
Everyone goes through tough times. When you support people and encourage them through these times, you’ll be inspiring them to see the best in themselves and in the situation.

8. RUN A ‘NO POINTING FINGERS’ CULTURE
When something goes wrong, don’t blame the person inconsiderately. Analyse the reasons that caused the issue in the first place. If you are always pointing the finger, employees will feel tense, which can restrict initiative and innovation. Even if a serious offence takes place, use it as an opportunity to review your recruitment process. It may be that you are not asking the right questions at interviews.

9. TREAT EVERYONE AS AN INDIVIDUAL
Respect that different incentives motivate different people in different ways. Get to know each member of your staff and show that you understand them by being flexible to their personal situations.

10. CARE ABOUT OTHERS
No one is going to take a special interest in you or care about what you have to say until they know how much you care. Ask questions. Take a genuine interest in people.

Did you know that our Top 10 lists are in video form too? Check out www.leaderonomics.tv/top10
**Do Women Make Better Managers Than Men?**

**A Controversial Debate Explored from the Perspectives of Each Gender**

By Debbie Pozzobon and Imran Hashim

**SHE SAID**

Debbie Pozzobon is SHE. She believes that creating diversity and ensuring equal opportunities in the workplace and labour market at large, is a sound business practice that will establish a robust platform for the growth and success of Malaysian businesses. Debbie can be reached at debbie.pozzobon@leaderonomics.com

"Research by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman that comprised a study they did of 7,280 leaders in 2011 looked at leaders that were employed in a variety of positions – from very senior management to individual contributors. In the study, they asked others to rate the leaders in 16 leadership competencies. According to the data, they found that women out-scored men in all but one of the 16 competencies. In fact, in 12 of the 16 areas women were better by a significant margin. They build better teams; they're more liked and respected as managers; they tend to be able to combine intuitive and logical thinking more seamlessly; they're more aware of the implications of the their own and others' actions; and they think more accurately about the resources needed to accomplish a given outcome."

"Men tend to focus on where they want to take their careers. They dedicate time to developing relationships that will support their success. They broaden the scope of their jobs to include work outside of their job descriptions. They clearly show their superiors that they have the capacity and capability to do more. A 2010 Kauffmann Foundation study of women and men entrepreneurs found that women put far more emphasis on previous experience as a component of success than men. Women often feel they must be over-qualified to succeed. I think this is a key part of the why men see their careers take off."
The low labour force participation rate of women can be considered a form of brain drain. Whilst the pipeline of talent emerging from universities is prominently women, many are not retained in the workforce. Compounded with other ecosystems that are poor with Malaysia or those we are to emulate, Malaysia’s labour market is less competitive to attract and retain women, including facing a return after a career break. The leakage of talent is also reflected in terms of leavers, whence women account for more than 50% of entry level professionals, but only make up about 10% of CEOs and board members. Malaysia has embarked on a journey to strive for a developed nation. It is challenging in retaining, given the precious few nations that have been able to transform from middle-income to high-income. What more, if Malaysia is not able to leverage on its entire stock of human capital and optimally engage women into the workforce, this is contributing to the success of such nations and organisations. Hence, it should no longer be the case of questioning why governments, flexibly works and supporting women participation at work but to focus on how and what we can do.

This article is brought to you by:
TalentCorp MALAYSIA

**THE WOMEN AGENDA**

**STRONG PIPELINE OF WOMEN TALENT**

Women are an increasingly important constituent to the pool of Malaysian talent. Over the decade, enrolment of women in universities has increased, so much so that not only did they outnumber men but in a number of public universities, it has become a ratio of two women to every man. This rising participation pattern is an achievement for Malaysia. However, the question is whether we are optimising on this increasingly significant asset.

Per centage of enrolment is up by 20% by women.

![Image](image1)

**THE CASE FOR WOMEN AT WORK**

By JOHAN MERICAN

The agenda of supporting women at the workplace is often viewed as a form of welfare or social consideration. With this perspective, employers have equated having women-friendly policies as a form of corporate social responsibility—a way for an employer to look good or caring. Women-friendly policies also result in employers enhancing the working environment for women, it is not good enough. Because as long as it is seen as an ability to work, it will not be good enough. Because as long as it is seen as welfare or social consideration.

Women at the workplace is an increasingly important asset.

However, the question is then whether the workforce after marriage, women tend not to return to work. This rising participation ratio of two women to every man. This rising participation pattern is an achievement for Malaysia. However, the question is whether we are optimising on this increasingly significant asset.

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**THE WAY FORWARD**

Malaysia needs the best talent to achieve its national ambitions. If it is able to leverage on the full strengths of its women talent, women are an increasingly important source of talent and very, doubtless notable successful individual women leaders. Malaysia at the macro-level is under-representing this talent pool. Furthermore, as Malaysia’s experience suggests, diversity and equity does not naturally emerge, even when there is an economic and business case for it. What more, there may even be successful women questioning the need for a women agenda, we must accept that there are greater expectations especially in society on the responsibilities of women to the familial institution. Best practices elsewhere, especially in the developed world and leading multinationals, in the space of flexible working arrangements have supported greater retention of women (and men) in the workforce, thus contributing to the success of such nations and organisations. Hence, it should no longer be the case of questioning why governments, flexibly works and supporting women participation at work but to focus on how and what we can do.

![Image](image5)

**Women board directors: A comparison of economic results**

Women Board Directors (WBD), Strong Financial Performance at Fortune 500 Companies Align

Losses along the corporate pipeline

Women drop-out rate across various countries in Asia

**Endnotes**

1. WBD outperform those companies with the most WBD

2. There was no significant difference in ROE between companies with the most WBD and those with the least WBD

3. Source: McKinsey proprietary database, 2011; government publications; literature search

4. Losses along the corporate pipeline

5. University graduates

6. Diploma

7. Public

8. Private

9. Co-owned

**Appendix 1**

Gender Composition of Students in Institutions of Higher Learning

**Appendix 2**

Female Workforce Participation in Malaysia

**Appendix 3**

Low Labour Force Participation Rate

**Appendix 4**

Women drop-out rate across various countries in Asia

**Appendix 5**

Catalogue’s recent research continues to confirm the link between women board numbers and financial performance

**Women board directors: A comparison of economic results**

Women Board Directors (WBD), Strong Financial Performance at Fortune 500 Companies Align

McKinsey showed that companies with more than 25% women in decision-making positions outperformed companies without such diversity, across various metrics for business and financial performance. Women in leadership positions are important for Malaysia, particularly in knowledge industries. The results of various studies suggest that diversity is an advantage given it offers a better exchange of ideas and different perspectives, which help promote not only innovations but enhance risk management. Beyond the corporate level, leveraging on women’s talent is also critical for the space of flexible working arrangements. There was no significant difference in ROE between companies with the most WBD and those with the least WBD

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![Image](image11)
Can Women Have It All?

Women have never had it so good, or so it is claimed. There are women holding the highest positions in the country whether in public or private sector and in education outperforming the men. And yet, whilst there are notable individual women leaders, the highest ranks in most fields remain predominantly male. If this sounds like Malaysia, well the same is felt even in the US.

Can women have it all? On the issue of whether women can have a great career balance with family, there has been an interesting debate in the US.

In terms of headlines, it has been positioned as one hand, Sheryl Sandberg, effectively saying, “Yes, we can”. On the other hand, Anne Marie Slaughter, ironically previously with the Obama administration, saying “No, we can’t”.

The debate is of course more nuanced than that. Sheryl Sandberg, COO and Board member of Facebook has become an icon for having it all. Whilst bemoaning there being too few women corporate leaders, she provides the recipe to ‘having it all’ by women, first, having a husband to equitably share the work at home; second, not underestimating their abilities and third, not dumbing down their ambitions for fear of not being able to balance career and family.

On the other hand, Anne Marie Slaughter after two years as the first woman director of policy planning at the State Department, a foreign-policy dream job, she chose to return to her job as professor at Princeton University. In “Why Women Still Can’t Have it All”, she describes how despite having a very supportive husband, her role at the State Department injected total immersion, with a workweek that started 4am on a Monday morning and ended late on Friday, which was inconsistent with the needs of her two teen-age boys.

To put it in context, possibly not many men would have managed that workweek, plus with the work flexibility as an academic, Slaughter continues to have a very demanding career at Princeton, with a full teaching load and regularly writing and speaking as an authority on foreign policy.

Whilst the debate rages on, one can sympathise with both positions. Sandberg’s message to young women is not to ‘lean back’ but to be ambitious. At the same time, Slaughter is saying to women not to beat themselves up if they can’t pull off certain career roles, because some jobs are inconsistent with balancing family. Where both are aligned is the role of family and employers to enable women to pursue their career ambitions. Even in the US, society and employers need to change.

The question where we are in Malaysia, in terms of having a supportive family environment in addition to employers to facilitate top women talent to realise their potential. We have our share of successes, for example women occupying more than 30% of decision-making roles in public sector with towering personalities like the central bank governor. Despite a number of corporate women leaders, the macro statistics in Malaysia remain low, with women accounting for only 5% of CEOs. Can we really claim Malaysia is sufficiently conducive for top women talent to have it all?

Talent Wanita Portal

The Talent Wanita portal was developed as a result of collaborative efforts between the Department of Women Development in the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and TalentCorp. While Malaysia aims to fully optimise the pool of women talent by attracting those who are on career break to return to the workforce, we are cognizant that many women face the challenge of having to juggle their personal commitments and work responsibilities.

Hence, the Talent Wanita portal seeks to connect women with job opportunities with flexible working arrangements, in addition to providing more information on companies which provide support facilities that would enable them to manage their day-to-day responsibilities.

Companies like PwC, Ernst & Young, IBM, Dell, GE, MIMOS and Agilent are already on the list of participating companies. The Talent Wanita portal highlights the following features:

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Women seeking flexibility in work arrangements (flexible or compressed work hours, telecommuting, etc.) or companies providing support facilities (child care centre/nursery, transit house, etc.) can register and search for suitable jobs.

Do you recall being envious of your family or friends who could take time-off to run personal errands or work shorter hours during the week or even work from home to take care of their children or family members? How is it that these lucky people can find their dream jobs? With Talent Wanita, you can be on your way to landing these dream jobs too.

Interested companies which provide flexible work arrangements or support facilities may contact the Department of Women Development or TalentCorp.

TREASURE TROVE

Talent Treasure is a sharing platform among participating companies featuring articles and stories of successful women role-models, particularly in terms of how they manage their personal commitments and work responsibilities, and companies that have implemented flexible work arrangements or support facilities in-house to attract and retain women in the workforce.

If you need help and support for your career break, please visit www.talentwanita.my to find out more about how to list your job vacancies on this portal.

Top 5 Reasons to Check-out Talent Wanita

1. Free posting of job advertisements that highlight the flexible working arrangements (FWA) and support facilities provided.
2. Enjoy double tax deduction on training expenses incurred when you hire women on career break (terms and conditions apply).
3. Learn and adopt best and proven practices in attracting and retaining women in the workforce.
4. Position your company as a supportive and attractive employer in the eyes of women.
5. Get to know successful women personalities and learn how they managed to strike work-life balance.
PASSION SEARCH

JOURNEY WITH ROSHAN THIRAN AS HE STRUGGLED TO FIND HIS PASSIONS AFTER SPM

By ROSHAN THIRAN
roshan.thiran@gmail.com

For most of us, the final SPM paper took marked the end of secondary school education, a turning point in our life. It marked the beginning of numerous decisions we had to make and trying to figure out what to do in our area of life. My story after SPM is filled with joy and fun moments coupled with anguish, confusion, fear and frustration. My moments of joy and happiness began the moment I completed the last SPM paper. The moment my SPM results were released, my world turned upside down. Well, to be fair, I was somewhat frustrated after my SPM exams as I was the only person from my school batch who didn’t have a girlfriend, while all my friends used to lug around their new-found “love of their lives” every time we met up. But that never bothered me too much as I was involving myself in many wonderful things including starting a business, helping in youth camps and working for a non-governmental organisation. And I felt so powerful and resolved to “change the world”. Then my SPM results came out. And my world changed suddenly. The funny thing was I really did well for my SPM. I was not surprised as I somehow knew I would do well but my relatives and friends were probably extremely surprised as they wondered when I found out the time to study as I spent most of my secondary school life playing football and trying to “change the world”. But study I did when my friends were out looking for girlfriends or wasting their time looking for their (“trophies”). Nevertheless, having no complicated matters. I decided that deep down I did not want to study in a local university and wanted to get a scholarship. So, together with all my friends, we started applying for every scholarship under the sun. One by one, my friends, most of whom had poorer results than myself, received scholarships to various universities. I went for interview after interview, but nothing came about.

I soon realized that I was a hopeless interviewee. I tended to “tell the truth” during the interviews and that was apparently not what interviewers wanted to hear – especially on my fine act of balancing “changing the world”, sports and studies. And as the weeks ticked away, nothing happened. I then had to face the inevitable: I had to go for Form 6!

I could not believe it. I saw all my friends flying off to some exotic country (for me, everything outside Malaysia seemed exotic!) or going to some private college. But I had to go back to the Methodist Boys School in Kuala Lumpur (MBS) and be part of the Form 6 class. The only consolation I had was that in Form 6 there were girls in the class (unlike the previous five years) so there was some hope of filling up the “lack of a girlfriend” void (which was further perpetuated by my friends now breaking up with their first girlfriends and having their second and third girlfriends!).

So, off to Form 6 I trudged but my heart and mind were jealous thinking about how “lucky” my friends were while I was such a poor “victim”. But thankfully, this sad state of being a “victim” didn’t last long. My headmaster, coupled with reminders from my former football coach at MBS Mohktar Dahran, reinforced that one should never be taken victim by circumstances. Bad things (in my case being stuck in MBS) happened to everyone but our reaction to these circumstances defined great leaders. Watching Mohktar as he battled the deadly disease that eventually took his life convinced me that I needed to take charge of my life and not be taken victim to conditions surrounding me. So, with this new resolve, I decided to dedicate the next few months of my life to getting out of Malaysia somehow. And so I worked tirelessly day and night getting university application forms, doing up my “resume” and writing passionate letters to various universities about why they needed to enrol me and pay for my education, food and lodging. I think I personally sent letters to more than 1,000 universities all over the world.

Surprisingly, I got answers from many of the big universities. Harvard, Princeton and Georgetown invited me to enrol but only offered paltry scholarships. So, I kept tirelessly applying to other universities.

Finally, a university in Connecticut sent me a letter to accept me with a full scholarship covering everything from food, lodging, tuition and the works. All I had to do was fly there. I still remember the letter I received on Dec 18, 1992. By Jan 3, 1993, I was on a plane (where I met my future wife on board), ready to start school in Connecticut. My perseverance and diligence had paid off and I was off to start my new adventure in this “exotic” new place in New England.

When I arrived at the University of Bridgeport, I met the president of the university (apparently I was one of the first students given this full scholarship) and then off I went to see my student adviser. His first question was: “Why are you at this university?”

He showed me that he knew about the fact that I had gained entrance to a few other “better” universities. I answered that question with ease.

Then he posed a second question “So what do you want to study?”

I was stumped. I had no idea what I wanted to study or what career I wanted to pursue. I looked at my student adviser, Professor Greenspan, and asked him a question instead. “Tell me Professor, what is the easiest course out there?” I can’t imagine how many interviews I had to endure to find a professor whom I can ask such a question.

“MBA is the easiest course out there,” he replied.

I looked back at him and said “OK, I’ll do that then!”

And that settled it. I was going to study business (A few days later I realised that Prof Greenspan was the business professor!).

After studying business and even after graduating and getting a job at General Electric, I still had no idea what I wanted to do. My first boss decided that I was not good with details so he insisted I look on finance roles for the first part of my career at GE to improve. Somehow, I became a chief financial officer at GE. But even then, I struggled to decide if that was what I really wanted to do.

Finally, after my seventh different role at GE, I figured out my passion and what truly inspired me.

As I talk to young people from all over the world, a clear pattern emerges. Like me, many young Malaysians similarly struggle after SPM. Like me, many do not know where to study or what to study, what jobs to embark on, and how to make career choices. The end of SPM is an important landmark.

For many, it may be going for Form 6 or A-Levels and then deciding on their careers. For others, they may be forced to decide earlier. Yet, we all struggle with this decision as we know not what excites us or what makes us passionate. Finding out what makes you tick and what energises you is the key to life after SPM.

So, my encouragement to you is not to worry. Try different routes. Took me years to find my passion but when I did, I didn’t look back. Looking back, I would not change my path. Each experience I had, good and bad, helped to develop me. And all these experiences helped me find out what I didn’t want to do and what I was truly passionate about. So, don’t fret. Keep exploring and keep experiencing and you will surely find your passion in life.
Chronic stress produces sustained high levels of cortisol in your brain. A result, your hippocampus shrinks as a result. Your brain is unable to produce new neurons. Your memory starts to worsen and you can’t concentrate as well. NoNe of this is good thiiNg! You engage in what I call meta-cognition. Is it any wonder we’re stressed?! If you are constantly critical of co-workers, your spouse, the kids, bad drivers, and strangers... guess what? Too much stress is bad for your health.

“success is a skill anyone can learn.” He hopes his bulletin will help you obtain success. To interact with Terry, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

DDO much stress is bad for your brain. Stress normally comes and goes. Like the tides, fears and anxieties subside shortly after their onset. But what happens when they don’t? Neuroscience points to four things:

- Your hippocampus shrinks as a result.
- Your brain is unable to produce new neurons.
- Your memory starts to worsen and you can’t concentrate as well.

NONE OF THIS IS A GOOD THING!

Here is an idea that may help keep your stress at a healthy level. Cut someone else some slack! Many of us in our hurried, harried world are too quick to criticise, and find faults with others. Like most thinking patterns, this is born of your habits. Pay attention to your habits. Pay attention to your thinking.

I was startled to read recently that 50% of the population never engages in meta-cognition. Is it any wonder we’re stressed? If you are, do this: constantly criticise co-workers, your spouse, the kids, bad drivers, and strangers... guess what...you teach yourself to be critical of yourself? Stress is the result.

See if you can catch a glimpse of yourself in this letter. It has been reprinted for many decades in newspapers and publications all around the world. Oddly enough even in college student newspapers. It is fine and true – like your enormous heart, which showed itself in your handwriting.

As I came up the road I saw you, down on your knees playing marbles. There were holes in your socks. I humiliated you in front of your friends by marching you ahead of me to the house. Socks a father!

At the top of the stairs I saw you, coming to kiss me goodnight in spite of everything. Son, I’m here kneeling by your bed, ashamed. You wouldn’t understand any of this if I told you about it. But tomorrow I’ll be a real daddy. I’ll be your chum, suffer when you suffer, and laugh when you laugh. I’ll bite my tongue when influential words come. I’ll keep saying, “He’s nothing but a little boy – a little boy!”

I’m afraid I visualised you as a man. But looking at you now, crumpled and weary in your bed, I see you’re only a little boy. Yesterday you were in your mother’s arms. I’ve asked too much, too much.

Of others and ourselves. Most people I know up close need a break. The funny thing is... when you give someone a break... someone else gets a break... YOU! The best way to lower your own stress is to lower someone else’s. When you make a positive and sustained effort to praise more and criticise less, you have developed one of the most powerful and healthy habits of mind. This is good for your brain.

Next week, I will tell you what the leading business consultant on the planet says is the No.1 business and personal skill that you can have. Nineteen seminars tell me they are terrible at it. And they have never done anything about it! This is about to change!

RemembeR: “You are a genius.”

Terry Small’s philosophy is simple: “Success is a skill anyone can learn.” He hopes his bulletin will help you obtain success. To interact with Terry, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

SPECIAL CLASSES OF 2012

Malakoff Corp Senior Leadership Development Programme (Sルド) graduates in celebration mood after going through 10 months of being pushed beyond their comfort zone with Malakoff CEO Zainal Abidin Binti. This intense MBA-like programme forces Malakoff talent to dig deep and execute rigorously in five projects, challenging simulations and boundary-breaking activities.
The more it is tilted the other way, is a big question, and the answer can I balance my life better?” This is what we ask ourselves, “How can I work further away from the family. Emails, mobile phones and instant messages, are a necessary part of their jobs. The 24 hours in a day seem insufficient. New technologies such as the long hours away from the family. Unfavourable economic conditions do not help either and “long hours” could be long hours. All these contribute to tilt the balance further away from the family. The more it is tilted the other way, the more we ask ourselves, “How can I balance my life better?” This is a big question, and the answer will be different from one person to another, as everyone is in a varying situation. However, the steps to finding the answer can be similar.

1. Understand the root cause
   Whenever the question of work-life balance arises during my interactions with clients, I usually probe deeper to understand their situation better. This is when the real scenario is revealed. In one case, a mother complained that her erratic work schedule as a medical officer had robbed her of many precious family moments. In another case, a father reported that working long hours had prevented him from spending time with his daughter. Other root causes besides an “erratic schedule” and “long hours” could be long commutes, unplanned overtime, understaffing or inefficient operations.

2. Prioritise quality time
   Child and family experts generally agree that the quality of the time spent together delivers many more benefits than quantity alone. This should give us some comfort that it’s not the quantity but the quality that counts. While working on improving our work-life balance, working parents must ensure that the limited time spent with their kids does amount to something memorable and productive. Avoid the urge to nag, scold and criticise. Instead, deliver messages in a more positive and loving manner.

3. Identify your roles – use the “five fingers” rule
   In genuine cases when the time spent away from family is far greater than desired, then we must ask an equally tough question, “Is this what we want, and are we happy with it?” Let us use a tipping scale as an analogy. Ideally, many people want their scale to stay perfectly balanced all the time. However, upon a closer look, this may not possible. We all have many roles to play. These include us being employees, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, social workers, leaders and team players. These roles are all important. Problems happen when we focus on one and neglect the others.

4. Make tough choices
   Bryan Dyson, the former CEO of Coca-Cola also had a similar view. He once said that life is like a game of juggling five balls up in the air. They are Work, Family, Health, Friends and Spirit. We must keep all these balls in the air. We will soon discover that “work” is a rubber ball, when we accidently drop it, it will bounce back. However, the other four are made of glass – if we drop them, they can leave a scratch, chip or even break. They would never be the same.

FINDING THAT ELUSIVE BALANCE

By ZAID MOHAMAD
zaid@smartparents.com.my

NE of the typical responses parents give when discussing work-life balance is, “What balance?” It’s not really a question, but rather a cynical answer to reflect their feelings that finding such balance is next to impossible these days. Many have given up and begun to accept that the long hours away from the family are a necessary part of their jobs. The 24 hours in a day seem insufficient. New technologies such as emails, mobile phones and instant messaging are supposed to simplify our work, but the opposite has happened. We are now expected to be reachable at any time, including during family time. Unfavourable economic conditions do not help either -- less people are doing more work because employers need to cut cost.

All these contribute to tilt the balance further away from the family. The more it is tilted the other way, aseveryone is ina varying situation. However, a closer look, this may not possible. We all have many roles to play. These include us being employees, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, social workers, leaders and team players. These roles are all important. Problems happen when we focus on one and neglect the others.

By ZAID MOHAMAD
zaid@smartparents.com.my

ElusivEBalancE
Finding ThaT

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND THE ROOT CAUSE
Whenever the question of work-life balance arises during my interactions with clients, I usually probe deeper to understand their situation better. This is when the real scenario is revealed. In one case, a mother complained that her erratic work schedule as a medical officer had robbed her of many precious family moments. In another case, a father reported that working long hours had prevented him from spending time with his daughter. Other root causes besides an “erratic schedule” and “long hours” could be long commutes, unplanned overtime, understaffing or inefficient operations.

STEP 2: PRIORITISE QUALITY TIME
Child and family experts generally agree that the quality of the time spent together delivers many more benefits than quantity alone. This should give us some comfort that it’s not the quantity but the quality that counts. While working on improving our work-life balance, working parents must ensure that the limited time spent with their kids does amount to something memorable and productive. Avoid the urge to nag, scold and criticise. Instead, deliver messages in a more positive and loving manner.

I would recommend one more thing -- instead of leaving it to chance, we must proactively plan for these quality times to happen as regularly as possible.

STEP 3: IDENTIFY YOUR ROLES – USE THE “FIVE FINGERS” RULE
In genuine cases when the time spent away from family is far greater than desired, then we must ask an equally tough question, “Is this what we want, and are we happy with it?” Let us use a tipping scale as an analogy. Ideally, many people want their scale to stay perfectly balanced all the time. However, upon a closer look, this may not possible. We all have many roles to play. These include us being employees, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, social workers, leaders and team players. These roles are all important. Problems happen when we focus on one and neglect the others.

My wise former senior leader firmly believes that a person can only assume five roles at a time. He called it the “five-finger” rule. He said that if we try to do more, a few things could happen. Firstly, we could compromise on the delivered quality of each role. Secondly, we could find ourselves to be extremely busy. And thirdly, stress and burnout could crop up, affecting not only our relationships with others but also our health.

Therefore, we must ensure that our five-fingers rule includes only things that matter to us and the ones that make the biggest difference. As for me, these include being a father, a husband, an employee, a social worker and a writer. That leaves little time for other things like watching television, regular nights out with friends or an all-day golfing or fishing trip. However, if you are an avid golfer or angler, there is nothing wrong with that. All you need to do is to ensure that it is part of your role, and be aware that something else will have to give way.

STEP 4: MAKE TOUGH CHOICES
Bryan Dyson, the former CEO of Coca-Cola also had a similar view. He once said that life is like a game of juggling five balls up in the air. They are Work, Family, Health, Friends and Spirit. We must keep all these balls in the air. We will soon discover that “work” is a rubber ball, when we accidentally drop it, it will bounce back. However, the other four are made of glass – if we drop them, they can leave a scratch, chip or even break. They would never be the same.

It is a tough job juggling too many roles and still coming out feeling like we had done a good job. Let us take a deep look at all of them. Which are the must-haves? Which is the most important? Which is just taking up our time without giving anything beneficial in return? Make that tough call to drop those that are not important to us and our family. If we choose not to, at least we know what the effects are on our family.

With our limited time, we must ensure that every minute counts. Understand what robs our time and act accordingly. Schedule quality time so that we don’t miss any more priceless moments with the family. Last but not least, cut down our roles to a more manageable juggling level. We will then have a better chance to tilt the scale back to where we want for the sake of our loved ones.

Zaaid Mohamad is a Certified Parental Coach and the bestselling author of Smart Parents, Brighter Kids and Smart Parents, Richer Kids. Log on to www.SmartParents.com.my or write to him at zaaid@smart-parents.com.my
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**STUART DEAN, CEO ASEAN, GE GLOBAL GROWTH AND OPERATIONS SAYS:**

“**GENDER** diversity ranks among the top priorities of some of the best global companies today but I must qualify this by emphasising that women professionals are making their mark in the business world purely on merit. We have some of the best women talent in GE across the more than 130 locations in which we operate in. In Malaysia, 46% of our workforce comprises women with 25% of these at professional level and senior management. Women leaders are just as driven and results orientated as their male peers. In some cases, do even better.

We have found the setting up of our GE Women’s Network a great platform for enabling GE women across the countries we work in to engage with one another and enhance their professional development. It is also an avenue for us to grow, attract and retain successful women leaders. Our emphasis on work-life balance and flexibility to work from home has been a strong factor in retaining our women workforce.

Retention of best talent amongst women in the workforce is an area that has shown to have direct bearing on a company’s productivity and profitability. Challenges for the corporate sector include looking at ways to develop a work environment that encourages best women talent to continue to remain in the workforce and still have quality time at home with their families. HR policies that look into embracing gender diversity and helping women realise their full leadership potential are critical in the process of engaging women to feel they are valued, respected and an asset to the company.”

**JENNY OOI, SENIOR DIRECTOR HR, AGILENT TECHNOLOGIES – MALAYSIA, THAILAND & VIETNAM SAYS:**

“Agilent believes in providing a ‘workplace of choice’ environment for all. With a culture that supports work life balance, we provide employees with the flexibility to attend to life’s needs as a father, mother, husband, wife, son or daughter while still being able to contribute at work. This is especially appreciated by mothers – who now do not have to make the hard choice of staying at work or home.

With flexible working hours and state-of-the-art tools and applications such as web meetings and smart phones, we make it efficient and seamless for our employees to work from home. We also provide facilities at the plant such as a fully-equipped mini mart, a mother’s room for breastfeeding mums, dedicated car parks for pregnant employees, and also an in-house clinic with a full-day attend ance by a female doctor.

**THE RESULT:** At the senior management level, four out of seven vice-presidents and three out of five senior directors are women. We also enjoy high employee engagement and commitment coupled with a low attrition rate.”

“As a mother of two young children, Agilent’s culture, policies and facilities have provided me with the peace of mind knowing that I could take time off to attend to my children if the need arises. In addition, I truly appreciate the flexibility of working from home thanks to the state-of-the-art technology and not to mention the convenience of just swinging by the mini mart before heading home. While most people are blessed with an understanding spouse, I’m blessed with both an understanding spouse and employer!”

**SALIKA SUKSUWAN, GM, HEAD OF RECRUITMENT, HUMAN CAPITAL, PWC SAYS:**

“Good corporate leaders will understand that it makes business sense to have our talents working flexibly not just at all. Many business leaders prefer not to provide flexible working arrangements due to a perceived lack of commitment. However, the forward thinking ones will realise that the strong contributors may strive even harder to deliver good work when time is of the essence. These talents tend to be more committed to the organisation in appreciation of the opportunity given to them to continue working.

There’s no cookie cutter approach to this issue. What’s fairly certain is that employers must truly believe that women are valuable well past their becoming wives and mothers. And they must also have a sincere desire to retain and develop their top women talent. Only then can they take steps to address this, in ways that work for both employers and employees.

**THE RESULT:** Representation of women at the entry and leadership level in PwC is strong. An example is the recent appointment of Pauline Ho as Assurance Leader.”

“From a personal perspective, we manage our time more efficiently when we have limited time in the office. Just like water, we must not to waste it when there is limited supply.”

Jenny and Salika are advocates of flexible working arrangements (fwa) who also practice fwa.

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**HEAD OF RECRUITMENT, Pwc SAYS:**

“From a personal perspective, we manage our time more efficiently when we have limited time in the office. Just like water, we must not to waste it when there is limited supply.”
My boss was pleasant when I first joined and often told me that I was one of her best staff. However, after two years working with her, I find that she picks on every small mistake that I make. She confronted me a few times regarding some minor issues. She often says that she receives complaints from “the team” regarding me. She sometimes says that she is becoming more and more disapproving of me and that I am learning a lot. At the same time, my boss seems like I am learning a lot. At the same time, my boss seems to be becoming more and more disapproving of me and that I am learning a lot.

Asperated Evie

DEAR EVIE,

Your dilemma is not unusual. Research suggests that the top reason for a person leaving a job is not money or opportunities but a difficult boss. There is no shortage of opportunities for talent and you should not worry about not being able to find new opportunities when the current economic situation remains strong and robust. The dilemma for you arises because you really like your job and you are learning a lot. You really need to decide for yourself how sustainable it is for you to continue to work there with such a relationship with your boss. Given you have only been working there for two years, you will need to determine how much longer the job will contribute to your learning and career development. In the meantime, you will need to develop means to manage your boss. Take it upon yourself as a challenging project. It will be a useful skill to hone especially when given the balance of probability it will not be the last situation of having frictions with a superior. Despite being close with your colleagues, do not completely discount the possibility of backstabbing. The office environment can be a brutal jungle requiring resilience and astute survival skills!

Johan Merican

WHAT YOU FACE IS NOT UNCOMMON AND IS EXPERIENCED BY MANY PEOPLE IN VARIOUS ORGANISATIONS. THERE COULD POSSIBLY BE A FEW REASONS FOR THIS, THE MOST COMMON BEING LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR SUPERIOR. IT IS EASY TO DELIVER GOOD NEWS BUT WHEN IT COMES TO CONFRONTATION OR DELIVERING BAD ONES, PEOPLE TEND TO SHY AWAY OR DELAY THEM. THIS IS ESPECIALLY SO WHEN IT INVOLVES WORK AND PERFORMANCE, AND MANY MANAGERS THESE DAYS FACE CHALLENGES INCOMMUNICATION.

In most organisations, there is a performance management system which governs the process of performance evaluation from the identification of key goals, objectives or key performance indicators to the evaluation of the performance at the completion of the cycle. While this process may be in place, the failure is typically in the creation of the key goals at the outset of the performance cycle, and the periodic review (which most companies schedule at the mid-point of the cycle) of the performance in relation to the goals which have been set. The responsibility in ensuring that the review session is held should be bilateral, i.e. the manager must schedule and prepare for the session, and staff should prepare and follow up for a review session, so that the performance of the staff can be discussed in an objective and transparent manner.

Many times this periodic review is not held, and this may also be compounded by the fact that key goals are not discussed and agreed upon at the outset of the performance cycle, which makes the review almost impossible.

Going back to your question, let’s not jump into conclusions. What I suggest is for you to initiate the conversation with your superior so that you get clarification on your performance and behaviour in the execution of your job. Ask for her feedback on improvements you can make so that you can perform better. Find the right time, opportunity and conducive conditions to approach her and seek her assessment on how you are performing. After two years of working with her I am sure she has a good understanding of your performance and attributes. Seek constructively the areas in which you need improvement and share with her how you feel about your job and the company so that she is aware that you are pleased with your job and you are learning a lot from it. Express and thereafter exhibit the fact that you desire to learn even more and to improve yourself. Human beings in general are forgiving and if you open up I am sure she will do the same, even if it is a tough pill to swallow as it may be the first time that both of you are having such a conversation.

Bani Zainal

I’ve received so many complaints from “the team” about you lately...

THE INTOLERABLE BOSS

WE HAVE FOUR EXPERTS ON CAREER MANAGEMENT, HR AND OFFICE ISSUES WHO WILL ADDRESS YOUR QUESTIONS WEEKLY. WE REFER TO THEM AS CAREENNOMERS—EXPERTS IN CAREER MATTERS WHO WILL HELP YOU IN YOUR CAREER JOURNEY. SO IF YOU HAVE ANY BURNING QUESTIONS TO ASK, SEND IT TO DEARCAREENNOMERS@LEADERONOMICS.COM AND WE WILL GET THE PANEL TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS.
Coming up in next Saturday’s issue . . .

IS BANKING BORING?

Angie Ng speaks to Gatehouse Bank Plc CEO Richard Thomas about his banking career in My First Job

Top 10 dishes out tips to deliver great presentations at work

Terry Small shares 4 simple steps to remembering people’s names in Brain Bulletin

Lily Norfeshah Mohd Shah tells her story of perseverance in What’s After SPM