Sassy at work

Take meticulous care in choosing your work attire, as it goes a long way in bringing your career to the next level. We share insights on how choosing the right office wear can portray a dynamic and successful character in a woman.

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TRUST UNLOCKS GROWTH

writes Roshan Thiran in Be A Leader

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PLUS POINTS OF BEING AN INTERN

Esther Foo shares her internship experience

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CLIMB YOURSELF TO SUCCESS through these 12 simple steps

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READ ON FOR MORE.

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LEARNING NEVER ENDS

A NUMBER of years ago, a “futurist” confidently predicted that by the end of the decade, universities would be irrelevant and that corporations would control the entire educational system. In his view most education would be delivered through the web in small five to ten minute chunks that would be easily digested via our computers.

Most people in the audience seemed to nod their heads in agreement and amazement. Many do believe that education will all move to the web and universities will ultimately go away. We have already seen some semblance of this with the effect Khan Academy has with teaching kids Mathematics and Science via the web (refer to our cover story on pages 7-9). However, whether e-learning truly becomes the dominant learning channel remains to be seen.

Eleven years ago, I was tasked with creating the e-learning content and infrastructure for my organisation. I spent numerous hours trying to understand online learning and how to ensure the benefit of online learning was optimised for my organisation. Some of the benefits I uncovered included the following:

- Learn from the comfort of your own home - One of the greatest things about online learning is that you can learn anywhere.
- Avoid schedule conflicts - Online learning is extremely flexible, allowing students to learn when they want.
- Focused learning – Online learning accommodates multiple learning styles and mediums. Learners can also skip over material that is already understood and focus on areas where learning is needed.

- Learn at your own pace – Online learning enables you to learn at your own pace. There is no need to keep pace with the smart-alecks in your class or be bored waiting for the slow-coaches.
- Vastly less expensive – Online learning comes at a fraction of cost of physical learning.

In spite of these benefits, there is a rather slow take-up rate for online learning. Part of the issue is that we love to learn with others. Part of the learning process is the contextualisation of learning.

And this happens best with students and others. However, online learning today has evolved significantly to address some of the perils of e-learning of the past. In today’s issue, we explore how you can differentiate yourself and grow and prepare yourself for the workplace through TalentCorp’s amazing new online learning portal “Ready4Work.” We also share numerous other resources you can leverage to help you in growing and developing your career.

Learning never ends. When I was in university, I met a 94-year-old Canadian man who spent a number of years in Malaysia. He had just spent his last 30 years (since retirement) working in Africa, learning the language and continuing to inspire the children there. At 94, he was taking a short summer vacation in the United States and was planning to return to various parts of Africa to continue to learn and then teach. And he spoke and moved around the room like an energetic 30-year old. I was put to shame by his endless energy while he mentioned numerous times to me, “We never stop learning. The moment we stop learning, we die.”

And so, we hope this issue of the career guide inspires you to keep learning and also provides you the tools and resources to learn, earn and do. Leverage the various online learning sites and we do hope you continue to learn and grow weekly with our career guide.

As always, you can download our amazing Top 10 and other videos from www.mystarjob.com and we wish you all the best in your career journey! Have fun learning!

Warm regards,
Roshan Thiran
Editor, myStarjob.com & CEO, Leaderonomics
GUTSY WAITER-TURNED MOTIVATION TRAINER

MICHAEL LOSIER’S METTLE IS HIS POSITIVE DISPOSITION AND INTEREST IN HELPING OTHERS

By ANGIE NG
angie@thestar.com.my

H is ability to communicate with people and point out their behav-
ioral barriers to success is key to Michael Losier’s success as a
renowned author of self-help books, motivation trainer and speaker.

Despite his inherent talent and success, it was not all a bed of roses for the author of The Law of Attraction and The Law of Connection books in his younger days.

As an overweight boy growing up in his hometown of Saint John, New Brunswick in Canada, Losier had to avoid bullies and “tricky” situations during his formative years.

The biggest bullying environment was at school; and it can be rather tough. One has to be alert and stay out of trouble, “he reminisces during an interview with myStarjob.com during a recent trip to Kuala Lumpur.

He learned that maintaining a positive disposition helped him tremendously and has been harnessing that attribute ever since.

The 50-year-old Losier attributed his positive attitude to the Neuro Linguistic Programming training he received. His strong interpersonal, supporting and motivating skills must also have helped.

The need to stay out of trouble and be in the right situation could have provided the “initial spark” that ignited Losier’s interest to become a self-improvement coach. He was, however, not aware of this until much later after taking on a number of jobs.

Losier’s first job was being a waiter in a restaurant when he was 20.

He stayed on the job for three years and was happy to learn that he had the propensity to do and achieve much bigger things in life.

Being in the frontline of the restaurant process chain, the fresh-faced lad was able to observe first hand the whole process of how things were being done at the restaurant and what could be done to improve them.

This was because Losier was a keen observer and had a genuine interest in thinking up solutions to improve things.

“Although the restaurant was well-organised, it was not well-managed. I saw the opportunity to improve on things and steered myself to speak up to the boss and offered my ideas to him.

“I was happy that my ideas were accepted and implemented. The process flow at the restaurant soon improved and its business flourished,” Losier recalls animatedly.

INHERENT TALENT

Encouraged by his success, Losier knew that his true calling was to help others identify the shortcomings and help them to make the necessary changes required to make a “turnaround” in their lives.

He also realised that he should harness and leverage on his “eye for details” and his ability to design ideas for process improvement at the corporate and personal levels.

This explains why he jumped on the opportu-
tunity to set up his own company – Michael Losier Enterprises Inc. – in 2000 to venture into personal improvement coaching and to work on his self-help books and trainings.

It took three years of research work to publish his first self-help book, Law of Attraction, which was released in 2003. Since its release, the book has sold 1.3 million copies worldwide in 28 languages.

His second book, Law of Connection, was released in 2009.

Losier also keeps busy with speaking engagements for the public and corporate clients, seminars, as well as product development and management work.

His books are easy to follow guides on how to send out the right vibes to attract the right result and response to a situation.

Losier stressed that he did not invent the law of attraction or the law of connection which are natural laws, “just like the law of gravity that exist naturally.”

“I merely found a way to put them into an easy to follow self-help guide for the people to apply them,” he shares.

So what makes him venture into writing self-help books and become a motivation trainer?

Losier says he is motivated by the need to coach people to live a “rich, fulfilled and delicious life.”

“I know what fulfills me - getting attention, the opportunity to influence people in a positive way, intimacy, and enjoying my freedom in life and career. It is important to do what you love. My enduring moment is when I can come up with a good idea and use it to help others improve themselves. By making others feel better, I also benefit in the process as I also feel better,” he adds.

HERALDING CHANGE

He advises young people to be passionate about life and not be afraid to make the necessary changes to seek fulfillment in their life and career.

It was in Kuala Lumpur in 2008, that he met his team of people who supported his annual visits to Malaysia. The Law of Attraction Centre in the country hosts Losier annually.

He ends his annual tour with his three-day certification programme where he offers training for others to teach the Law of Attraction, Michael Losier-style.

He has certified over 100 people in Malaysia and Singapore (331 worldwide in 13 countries).

In 2009, Losier caught the attention of American talk show queen Oprah Winfrey who interviewed him four times on her Oprah & Friends Radio Show. Shortly after the four interviews were aired, he was offered a one-year contract to host his own radio show. He eagerly agreed to the offer and has since gained a loyal following of people who enjoyed his teaching style.

Since January 2011, Losier has been busy writing his third book – Fulfillment Needs.

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You will be put to the test in a simulated setting to manage a dynamic company. A variety of business and leadership exercises, including rigorous coaching will be provided throughout the programme. Highly experienced consultants will lead intensive group discussions that will push you to break idle barriers. Emphasis will also be placed on the creation of winning and innovative teams that are proficient at executing strategy in order to deliver effective business results. This and so much more because you deserve to be at the forefront of your industry.

THE REWARDS OF PARTICIPATION:
• Business strategy formulation and execution expertise
• Effective and efficient decision-making skills
• Discernment of customer needs and competitor dynamics
• Business acumen skills in variance analysis, cash generation, return on assets, and profitable growth
• Profound understanding of strategy, innovation, and sustainability
• Innovative and critical thinking that allow practical forecasting and risk mitigation
• A stronger, united team sharing the same goal and mission
• Understanding of personal strengths and a focus on potential areas of improvement
• Committed plan for personal leadership development

THE EXPERTS:

Carlo Peratoner has over 15 years of experience in finance, sales and marketing, engineering, management and information technology and is co-owner and partner of TRI Corporation. He was also founder and owner of Client Relationship Systems, Inc.

Gerry Mattia is a consultant with TRI Corporation and founder of Mattla & Associates, Inc. She is a member of GE’s Global Leadership Training Center in NY and specializes in Leadership & Team Development and creative Management Training.

Roshan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics. He was previously Director of Global Talent Management with Johnson & Johnson and was also with GE for more than 12 years. Roshan has won numerous awards, including a usatalent HRT award and the Malaysia HR Leader Award.

Eric Lau is the executive director of Leaderonomics. He has extensive experience in leadership development and strategic brand building in multi-national companies such as Unisys and Unilever. He was previously part of the training faculty at Dale Carnegie Training.

WHAT DID THE PAST PARTICIPANTS SAY ABOUT THE SIMULATION?

“The simulation was very real and exciting. I felt it was like an on-the-job training more than anything else. Coming from a non-financial background did not make me feel ‘out of the league.’”

Siti Hajar Mohd Dahlan
Head of Talent
MALAKOFF CORP. BERHAD

“The fast paced group-breakout sessions, which were the major part of the program, are very challenging and it certainly helped enhance teamwork and quick-thinking skills. I most definitely benefited professionally from this unique program.”

Terrence Raj
Manages HR & Administration
THE STAR

“I have seen the most hardened skeptics become absolutely engrossed in the simulation experience, and the change in their energy levels, business acumen, and subsequent productivity have been consistently remarkable.”

Steve Kerr
Executive Director, JWMI Chancellor University
and former CLO, GE and Goldman Sachs
JACK WELCH MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

“TRI Corp. enabled us to take a much more strategic view toward executive talent management – what its key issues and challenges are. More importantly, they helped us solve our pain.”

Kevin Wilde
Chief learning officer
GENERAL MILLS

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ADVANCING YOUR LEADING EDGE

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myStarjob.com, Saturday 10 November 2012

4
By ROSHAN THIRAN
roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

FEW years ago, Audrey, our youth camp leader, was faced with a dilemma. A campsite vendor had under-charged her for a recent camp. At the same time, she was under tremendous pressure to make ends meet for the camp. What did she do? She informed the vendor of the mistake. The vendor was pleasantly surprised and soon a strong bond of trust developed. I was extremely proud of Audrey’s action. She’s a great role model for our kids.

With this small act, trust was enabled, resulting in lower prices and flexible arrangements for future camps.

Trust relationships are vital to the success of business. Trust is under-rated in most businesses and taken for granted by many. We follow leaders because we trust them and believe they will take us to greater heights. When we interview, we tend to hire people we trust. We use products only if we trust them. And the best companies in the world use trust to grow their businesses. Rock band Radiohead released its last album online, trusting fans to decide on the price for the album, and generated more revenue than all its previous releases.

Research by the Institute of Business Ethics found that companies displaying a “clear commitment to ethical conduct” almost invariably outperformed companies that did not display integrity and trust. Its director, Philippa Black, concludes that trust and integrity has been proven to pay off in financial returns for companies.

Trust is essential to building enduring connections with employees, suppliers, customers, and the communities in which we do business.

A recent study showed that trust is significantly related to sales, profits, and future business and is a source of competitive advantage. The study also concluded that “the ability of a general manager to earn higher trust from his or her employees likely creates a competitive advantage for a firm over its rivals.”

We see numerous examples of how trust drives productivity. Years ago, Ford, which had more than 500 employees working in its accounts payable department, decided to benchmark against Mazda.

To its surprise, Ford found that Mazda had only five employees in payables. Yes, you read that right—FIVE. Ford had 500 vs Mazda’s five. How did Mazda do it? The answer, you guessed it—TRUST!

In Ford, the account payable folks had to match the purchase order, receiving reports and supplier invoices. If there was a mismatch, there was significant rework. In Mazda, there was no paperwork at all. Mazda trusted its suppliers and did not bother processing invoices. When goods arrived from suppliers, Mazda built their cars. Once a car was built, it automatically transferred funds to the suppliers. Mazda had no invoicing or processing, but paid with trust, saving significant costs.

Trust is a key element in business, as it is in relationships and politics. In fact, trust actually lowers the risk of malpractice among US doctors. Malcolm Gladwell in his book “ Blink”, uncovers that “the risk of being sued for malpractice is very little to do with how many mistakes a doctor makes. Analyses of malpractice lawsuits show that there are highly-skilled doctors who get sued a lot and doctors who make many mistakes but never get sued.” Apparently, people only sue doctors they don’t like or trust. They don’t sue doctors with errors whom they trust or like. In fact, in some hospitals today, doctors are encouraged to apologise when they make mistakes, trusting patients to forgive them. And statistics have shown that in such hospitals, malpractice suits have dwindled.

On the flip side, lack of trust destroys entire industries as the world’s recent financial market’s collapse attests. Credit stopped flowing due to trust issues. Big banks refused to lend to each other because they didn’t trust each other’s ability to repay.

Trust is like a vase; once it is broken, even if you fix it, the vase will never be the same again.

So, even if you have the best products in the world, if you lose trust in your service or product, you will soon not have a business.

Numerous companies try to create trust by PR stunts and building corporate social responsibility, but fail to understand that trust is not an event-based action. It takes years to build trust, and seconds to destroy it.

If trust is so important, what precisely is trust? How can it be achieved and sustained?

According to Dr Duane Twy, “We all think we know what trust is from our own experience, but we don’t know much about how to improve it. Why? I believe it is because we have been taught to look at trust as if it were a single entity.”

Dr Twy is right. Trust is not a single act. Aristotle, the great philosopher, best described trust in his “Rhetoric.” He suggested that trust, which he called Ethos (the trust of a speaker to a listener), had three parts. First was the intelligence of the speaker (correctness of opinions, or competence), secondly the character of the speaker (reliability, integrity), and finally, the goodwill of the speaker (favourable intentions towards the listener).

In Layman’s terms, leaders and managers today need to build trust by the integrity of their character and finally their sincerity towards their employees.

In other words, a leader cannot fake town-hall meetings and occasional round-tables with employees and expect them to trust his or her leadership. Trust has to be earned. Having a title doesn’t guarantee you the trust of your subordinates. Trust is built on a daily basis. It is the employees’ perceptions of your ability, honesty, and sincerity.

But how do we begin this process of building trust? I personally believe the best way to build trust is to extend it to others. I know a Ramli burger stall owner who decided to allow his customers to take whatever change from his counter. He was able to serve them faster, but more importantly, his customers hardly cheated him because they felt honourable to be trusted by him. Trust begets trust.

Netflix, the world’s top DVD rental company, trusts its employees to take whatever vacation they feel they need. Many companies trust their employees to have “flexi” working hours, and research has shown that in most cases these employees work longer hours than those that do not adopt “flexi” hours.

Finally, trust begins when a leader role models the qualities of trust and filters it down throughout the company. This drives others to follow suit and soon a culture of trust emanates across the entire organisation. Trust is a powerful tool as it forms the foundation for effective communication, employee retention, motivation and contribution of discretionary energy—the extra effort that people voluntarily invest in work.

Yes, you can still get things done without trust when you are the boss by ordering people to do things. But you run the risk of getting the salute and not the heart, gaining compliance and not the commitment. Trust has to be earned. And when you get it, the rewards that come from it make you a leader on a different platform. As George McDonald puts it, “to be trusted is a greater compliment than to be loved.”

Roshan Thiran hopes that trust begins to be practiced and embraced in businesses. To learn more ways to build trust in your organisation, contact the team at Leaderonomics at people@leaderonomics.com

CHARACTERISTICS OF LEADERS WHO INSPIRE TRUST

According to Stephen Covey, the primary job of any leader is to inspire trust. Trust, he believes, is the confidence born of two dimensions: character and competence. Character includes your integrity, motive, and intent with people. Competence includes your capabilities, skills, results, and track record. Both dimensions are vital. According to Covey, he has identified 13 common behaviours of trusted leaders around the world that build trust.

THEY ARE:
1. Talk straight
2. Demonstrate respect
3. Create transparency
4. Right wrongs
5. Show loyalty
6. Deliver results
7. Get better
8. Confront reality
9. Clarify expectations
10. Practise accountability
11. Listen first
12. Keep commitments
13. Extend trust

Covey stresses that the 13 behaviours identified always need to be balanced by each other (e.g. talk straight needs to be balanced by demonstrate respect) and that any behaviour pushed to the extreme can become a weakness. So, keep practising these behaviours and ensure you are a role model of trust in your organisation.
Ways to embrace workplace change

1. BRING ON THE “ZEN”
When faced with the prospect of massive workplace change, your first impulse may be to go into a spin of reactive activity. However, there is a lot of value to taking some time to “sit quietly” and take stock of the situation wholistically—to consider all perspectives. In the realm of language learning, there’s a stage called the silent period: Adults may try to avoid learning anything new, but if you take a kid and plop her in Paris for a spell, she’ll naturally clam up for a few months. When she opens her mouth, her French will have flowered. Making sense of a major change is a lot like that. You need to allow yourself a quiet contemplation period before you can blossom.

2. PAMPER YOURSELF
When familiar workplace routines suddenly dissolve, it can seem as if all your supports are gone. You may even have a sense that you are in free fall. It’s crucial, while absorbing the shock of the new, to make yourself feel well taken care of. Give yourself a well-deserved break, let off some steam. Say “no” to non-essential tasks if it is an option.

3. IGNORE YOUR INNER REPTILE
There’s a part of the human mind that is often referred to as the “lizard brain,” because it existed in even the earliest land animals. The lizard brain is concerned with survival; it likes the tried and true, so it’s likely to pipe up right now, flooding you with adrenalinewarnings of “danger!”as you veer off course. This was a handy tool to the watering hole. It may have led to an encounter with a predator. But in the modern world it’s like a non-essential task that has been weighing you down that you can finally move on.

4. SILENCE YOUR INNER GENIUS
It helps not to be too smart, more often than not: smart people don’t like having their minds changed. Generally to learn and adapt to something new, it involves changing your mind about something so if you’re so smart that you can’t rethink your positions, all your IQ points won’t do you much good when your all things familiar in workplace life are turned upside down.

5. BRING ON THE “BLUR”
Cultivate your “I don’t know” attitude; it works to assume you don’t know anything and in that way you stand a chance to see the impending workplace change with a fresh perspective. This is a great way to approach change—as an opportunity to start anew, to consider all possibilities. Ask naive, wide-eyed questions of anyone who is doing anything you might be interested in trying. Listen seriously to arguments you might once have dismissed. This is why newcomers to an organisation tend to do better in embracing workplace change.

6. RIDE THE ROLLERCOASTER
Try taking on new tasks, activities assigned to you, even if it seems scary or makes you feel uncomfortable. Why? Because this is a chance to explore what it is that you really like. Catch yourself off-guard and see what happens. You never know; the experience may be elating and terrifying and show that you want to lead a more creative life.

7. BE SCEPTICAL OF COMMON WISDOM
It’s dangerous to live in the aggregate, especially when you’re trying to figure out your next move. One year, everyone knows you have to develop a full array of skills to be successful at the workplace, then the next year they say focus on building only selected skills, especially the ones that you have a natural aptitude for. So, it’s best to go with what you know best given all the facts and decide for yourself your ability to take on new things.

8. LEARN TO LIVE WITH UNCERTAINTY
There is a false reality that in the workplace eventually things will go back to being “normal”. There is no such thing, it’s really about your acceptance of the “new normal”: if you look back critically on the past—the workplace has changed significantly and so have you. So when faced with change at the initial stage do bear in mind that—rather than feeling the pit of your stomach does not signal that you’re doing something wrong, only that you’re trying something new.

9. SAY “REALLY?” A LOT
When you start to turn this sudden shift in your professional life to your advantage, you might shake up a lot of people, especially those who aren’t happy with the change in question. To them, your efforts to move forward and support the change may feel like a glaring searchlight that needs to be switched off. To their descriptions of the terrible fates that will surely befall you if you dive headlong into a new life, respond with “really?” and a big smile. In a Malaysian context “you sure or not?” also works.

10. SHED YOUR OLD SKIN
Discard physical clutter, tired ideas, old routines and do so fully—no “safety-nets.” Accepting change and looking at others who have successfully embraced workplace change only when you have cast off what has been weighing you down that you can finally move on.

To view out Top 10 video, visit www.leaderonomics.tv/top10

To out Top 10 video, visit www.leaderonomics.tv/top10
GET READY 4 WORK
E-LEARNING CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE

WHAT IS AVAILABLE FOR YOU?

There are various types of on-line learning courses, available both locally and internationally, catering to a wide range of needs.

COURSEERA (WWW.COURSEERA.ORG)

COURSEERA is a social entrepreneurship company that partners with top universities around the world to offer on-line courses to anyone free of charge! Their technology enables the best professors to teach multitudes of students simultaneously.

COURSEERA hopes to give everyone access to the world-class education that has so far been available only to a selected few. They offer courses on a wide range of topics, spanning the humanities, medicine, biology, social sciences, mathematics, business, computer science, and many others. So far, they are affiliated to more than 30 universities worldwide and offer more than 200 courses. Co-founder Daphne Koller says that enrollment has reached 1.35 million. At this stage students are not awarded a degree on completion, but COURSEERA is working towards offering a certification of sorts.

COURSEERA wants to empower people with education that will improve their lives, the lives of their families, and the communities they live in.

YOUR HOME TUTORIAL SYSTEM (WWW.WITV.TV.COM.MY)

This organisation focuses on material that is especially produced based on the Education Ministry’s syllabus for Primary and Secondary school students. The iTTV system was designed to enhance the learning experience of all primary and secondary school students. They aim to deliver high-quality educational programmes that help students to reach their academic goals.

They offer the following:

Comprehensive tuition methods that will improve students’ learning curve and knowledge via various tutorial modules.

Home-based tutoring – Rain or shine, parents or guardians can monitor activities and foster family values in the secure environment of home.

Flexible learning time management – Students can plan their after-school learning schedule. They can balance school work with participation in extra-curricular activities like music, art, and sports.

Safer learning environment – Making education and learning fun and simple thus cultivating and developing family values.

Develop learning abilities – Interactive lessons with iTTV tutors help students to apply knowledge and skills in problem-solving and decision-making. Progress can be monitored via revision tests.

Lesson mapping – Structural overview of a full-year’s lessons helps parents/students to plan study schedules. This applies also to those who sign up later in the academic year. The overview also helps students to catch up on previous lessons.

Cost saving plan – No more additional fees for different subjects, transportation costs, and time spent travelling between home and tuition classes.

IS ON-LINE LEARNING FOR YOU?

What are your lifestyle preferences when it comes to school?

Online students have virtual classrooms that don’t include a desk, chalkboard, or professor standing in front of them. On-campus students go to a specific location to learn alongside other students and listen to their professor present information in person. It is important to ask yourself if you are the type of person who is going to miss interacting with classmates. Would you rather be by yourself and learning independently? In online classes, you won’t be able to debate relevant issues during an in-class discussion, but you might reply to another student’s post on a discussion board. While you would likely ask your professor questions during an on-campus class, if you are an online student you would send him an e-mail or instant message.

What are your lifestyle preferences when it comes to school?

Online students have the flexibility to incorporate their education into already established schedules that may include obligations such as work and family. On-campus students’ schedules tend to revolve around university and campus life. All other activities need to be planned around lecture times. You need to understand if you are the type of person who needs the freedom to complete tasks in their own time, or are you the type that requires a place where you can focus solely on your studies.

ADVANTAGES OF ON-LINE LEARNING.

- Students share perspectives
- Students experience a sense of equality
- Student-centric teaching approaches that accommodate different learning styles
- Provide opportunities for exploration on a global scale
- Providing 24/7 accessibility to course materials
- Remove reliance on physical attendance
- Utilise time efficiently
- Lower costs
- Flexible study time and in completing assignments
- Balance a job and class
- Avoid adverse weather conditions or traffic jams

THE Khan Academy is an organisation on a mission. They are a “not-for-profit” company with the goal of changing education for the better by providing free world-class on-line education to anyone anywhere.

All of the site’s resources are available to anyone. Content is delivered through YouTube with the aid of videos. It doesn’t matter if you are a student, teacher, being home-schooled, a principal or an adult returning to the classroom after 20 years. The academy’s materials and resources are available to everyone free of charge.

Currently, the academy’s library of videos covers K-12 mathematics, science topics such as biology, chemistry, and physics, and even reaches into the humanities with a genuine plethora of perspectives that are brought into the virtual classroom. The range and diversity of perspectives that are brought into the virtual classroom are more diverse than in any other method of learning.

Of course, all university courses will have some international dimension to their demographics. However, the barriers of restrictive visa regulations and higher costs mean that, in reality, physically attending a course at an overseas university is becoming increasingly unattainable for many local students.

Without a doubt, there are features of attending university that distance learning courses will never be able to emulate. There are many students who say they learn as much from chatting with lecturers or other students during the tea breaks as they do from the lectures.

If the benefits of higher education rest on the personal connections that students aspire to make, then we must ask ourselves, what experiences are of value? If, however, students are looking to be part of seminars with people with a genuine plethora of life experiences, a distance learning course can offer this extra element.

Taking classes online is a popular way for working professionals to have the chance to earn a degree at their own pace. People who take online classes usually are looking for career advancement, career changes, or just want to finish a degree programme they started at another college. In addition, there are many individuals, who want to engage in self-improve-ment, and up-skilling programmes to improve their career opportunities, or simply enhance their learning. There are hundreds of online programmes and online schools to choose from, making it easier than ever before for prospective students to find the right one.
2. GET THAT JOB

The step-by-step guide to help you get your act together for that dream job!

3. SKILLS BOOSTER

Lucky you! You get to access in-house training modules and materials from Malaysia’s top corporations at Ready4Work. Get the inside scoop on what companies expect from job applicants and the quality training relevant for young graduates! This is the real deal!

4. REALITY 101

There is a lot to be gained from those who have been there, done that, and gone before! We provide real-life stories and useful tips from individuals who have gone through the whole experience from job hunting to charting a successful career. Their stories should help prep you for what to expect and how to overcome possible challenges along the way.

5. GET INVOLVED

Get involved – join activities provided by industries and leading companies to equip you with knowledge and prepare you for the world of work.

6. WHAT DO SKILLS COMPANIES LOOK FOR IN FRESHGRADUATES?

Companies today understand that cultivating and retaining top talent is a competitive world will have a positive impact on this firm. While headhunters are changing continuously, this trend is not going to stop. As young graduates are becoming increasingly diverse with various life experiences and job roles available to graduates from various subjects and disciplines, you are advised to tailor your job applications as well as your CVs and cover letters. Self-confidence is key, but you must also remember to optimise your skills and experience to match the job requirements.

1. MalaySIanS’

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2. Get that Job

The step-by-step guide to help you get your act together for that dream job!

3. SKILLS BOOSTER

Lucky you! You get to access in-house training modules and materials from Malaysia’s top corporations at Ready4Work. Get the inside scoop on what companies expect from job applicants and the quality training relevant for young graduates! This is the real deal!

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By ESTHER FOO
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

Hitting the red button on the phone and gently putting it down. My hands were still cold and clammy as I let out a sigh. The first phone call was over and I had survived. It hadn’t been that bad after all. I’ve read horror stories from people who waited for my second day on the job as an intern at Leaderonomics, a social enterprise. After a day of getting to know the company and the projects that I would be involved in, over the next 30 weeks, my team’s manager decided that I would have to start making phone calls. I was to telephone various organizations and talk to them about our upcoming project called “Do Good Volunteer.” This is a portal that serves to link motivated students with the interns who are willing to lend a hand.

Well, I have to say that I’m quite an introvert and speaking is really not my thing. I did not think that I was up to the challenge of making calls to strangers. “Having said this,” I gave it a shot anyway. It wasn’t easy making the first call. I hid in a small room and reluctantly punched the numbers on the dial. But hey! I did it. After a while, the conversation got easier and the next thing I knew, I was doing the calls without a hint of hesitation. It’s really amazing how an initial leap followed by practice can erase your fears. From that moment on, I found myself being a better advocate and speaking with more confidence because I had the balls to make mistakes. It’s always the hardest part of embracing a challenge. Persevere, because you will find out that you gain more experience and confidence. That is all. Who would ever have thought that I would be given the chance to write an article for a newspaper as an intern? I am the same top-ranking major who had just completed her first year. “Who was going to appreciate my opinions?” How very presumptuous of me to think that anyone would listen to a writer, when my boss approached me to write an article for The Star? I found myself merely agreeing to his request. “Ah! Did I just do that?” But it was a decision that I did not regret. It opened doors for me to explore the world of media and in particular, the newspaper industry.

Plus, I even got to do a mini photo shoot. What was even more exciting was the fact that every article was accompanied by a photo and I had the opportunity to attend meetings with the ‘big bosses’. The onething that I absolutely loved about the internship was the opportunity to attend meetings with the ‘big bosses’. I found myself turning crimson red and I was paralysed with shock, but I pulled myself together. From that moment on, I found myself being a better advocate and speaking with more confidence because I had the balls to make mistakes.

I was paralysed with shock, but I pulled myself together as I was led into a room. For the next 30 minutes, I doubt whether I really knew what I was talking about. There were too many things going on in my mind. I was constantly worried about what I was saying. I am an engineer by trade and I put on my ‘poker face’ and told myself not to panic. After a while, I realised that I was out of questions so I decided to bring the lady into the office to meet the rest of the staff. As she greeted some of the people, she said, “Hey! We’ve met!” I sensed that something funny was going on and suddenly, they produced a photo of the girl. Across the face of the picture were embossed the words ‘WANTED’.

The next thing I remembered was the great big red ‘GOTCHA’ stamp on the picture. I found myself turning crimson red and I couldn’t stop myself from laughing. I had just been pranked! The worst of all was that in the midst of all these chaos, I hadn’t even noticed the shining light of the camera sitting quietly in the corner of the room. My prank was also caught on video. Beside the look of horror etched on my face, everything turned out well. We all had a few laughs and I knew it was the start of a great friendship.

I joined Leaderonomics after I had completed my part-time internship. My boss approached me to write an article for The Star. I found myself merely agreeing to his request. “Ah! Did I just do that?” But it was a decision that I did not regret. It opened doors for me to explore the world of media and in particular, the newspaper industry.

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I joined Leaderonomics after I had completed my part-time internship. The thing that I most appreciated about the internship was the opportunity to attend meetings with the ‘big bosses’. It was even more exciting was the fact that every article was accompanied by a photo and I had the opportunity to attend meetings with the ‘big bosses’. The first-time intimidations were soon worn off and I really enjoyed attending the meetings. The main thing that I really loved about the internship was that no one treated me like an intern. I was welcomed and I was one of them. Tons and tons of opportunities were laid out before me. All I had to do was make the call on whether to take on or shy away from it. I’m glad that I made the right choices.

Internships are really not what you think. It is not about photocopying documents and making coffee. I did learn how to work the photocopy machine though. Internships are much more than that. It’s about gaining real world experience that is not available or taught in classrooms, as well as increase your sphere of influence through networking. Of significant importance is the fact that you will make yourself much more employable! In fact, a recent study by Gardner, Chow and Hurst, revealed that more than 90% of direct-from-college hires will go to those with internship experience on their resume! Lastly and perhaps most importantly, you will begin to develop your own identity by discovering yourself and explore your interests. Although my dream has never been to work in the corporate world, the knowledge and skills that I have acquired from being an intern at Leaderonomics will surely guide me through whatever path that I choose to take in the future.

What is there to lose? Small opportunities present themselves throughout life. Keep an open mind, seize them and make the best of these situations. You never know what you’ll get until you try. You are not too young and have not been an intern and they are asking for an interview. Do apply for one today.

By SIMON SINEK
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

In 1975, a young director with no big film credits under his belt set out to make a horror film. Steven Spielberg wanted his film filled with violent and gory shark attacks. He wanted us to watch as this massive animal, built to kill, attacked its unsuspecting prey. But there was a problem. The mechanical sharks that were supposed to play a starring role in the film were rarely working as expected. As much as the young director wanted graphic shark attacks, he couldn’t have them.

We have a false belief that innovation happens with lots of money and resources. In fact, the opposite is true. It is a lack of resources and money, it is after something goes wrong that we are able to truly innovate – to truly imagine something could work. This is why large companies rarely produce truly innovative products – because they think they have the money and resources to build anything they want.

The problem is, the things they want aren’t innovative because they weren’t hindered or forced to find new ways. Small businesses, in comparison, are where big ideas happen. Slim on money and resources, they figure out how to make something work with what they have. Then big businesses buy small businesses for their big ideas. To be clear, Spielberg was also a student of film. Without his mechanical shark, he was able to defer to his knowledge of the techniques that Alfred Hitchcock used in his movies to build suspense – foreshoding music, simple details and a view from behind the door. The suspense, Spielberg knew, happened in our imaginations, not in front of our eyes. Though he knew this, he didn’t need to tap that knowledge until he had to. And that’s where having less produces more. There are plenty of smart people in large companies who don’t tap their brilliance because they don’t need to. They have all the resources they need. Smart entrepreneurs, in contrast, have no choice but to rely on their smarts and that’s why they can run innovation circles around large companies every single day.

Innovation is not born from the dream, innovation is born from the struggle. Innovation at its core, is not simply about building the future; innovation is about solving problems in the present. And the best innovations, just like the shark in Jaws, are often something we don’t even know is there.
For decades, economists have been busy developing elegant and complex theories on how markets work. These theories often form the various economic ideologies that are assumed to represent modern day reality. Alan Greenspan, the former chairman of the US Federal Reserve, is quoted in this book as saying, “To exist, you need an ideology which is more than a set of opinions; it is a well-developed and all-encompassing way of thinking about the world.”

But even Greenspan concedes flaws in the free market ideology which he earnestly believes to be the critical functioning structure that defines how modern economy works. This flaw has manifested itself as the gigantic monster that nearly devoured the entire world economy. When interrogated by Congress in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Greenspan admitted failure of the financial market to perform as efficiently as a market economy, one of the tenets of Free Market ideology, predicted it would.

Greenspan is not the only one to whom the collapse of mortgage and real estate markets was a rude awakening. Many economists, who disregarded all signs of an overheating US housing market, were also caught off-guard by the sudden financial meltdown. Their ignorance, along with Greenspan’s alleged passivity in tightening regulation in the financial market, and the recent collapse of the real estate and stock markets. These economists are called utopians – those who believe that society always gets better. When individual greed and reckless traders is left untrammelled to pursue their self-interest.

Written bluntly by John Cassidy, a renowned financial writer, this book aims to consign Friedman’s flawed utopian economics into history books and purport a new economic framework for the 21st century. By presenting improvements in your knowledge and overall understanding of the entire world economy. When interrogated by Congress in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Greenspan admitted that his followers in modern financial markets, Friedman was fully aware of the dangers of an unleveraged financial system. To him, however, the best way to stabilise the financial sector and the entire economy was by expanding or contracting money supply, so as to stabilise the market and applauded the introduction of financial derivatives. Both of these are said to be factors that contributed to the chaos of the recent financial crisis. Friedman’s doctrines, was well-known for his emphasis on the importance of monetary policy. Former US president Ronald Reagan, a believer of Friedman’s doctrines, was well-known for his emphasis on the importance of monetary policy. Former US president Ronald Reagan, a believer of Friedman’s doctrines, was well-known for his emphasis on the importance of monetary policy.

In the end, the efforts of unearthing equilibrium will not be made in vain. Friedman was fully aware of the dangers of an unleveraged financial system. To him, however, the best way to stabilise the financial sector and the entire economy was by expanding or contracting money supply, so as to stabilise the market and applauded the introduction of financial derivatives. Both of these are said to be factors that contributed to the chaos of the recent financial crisis. Friedman’s doctrines, was well-known for his emphasis on the importance of monetary policy. Former US president Ronald Reagan, a believer of Friedman’s doctrines, was well-known for his emphasis on the importance of monetary policy.

In the world of economics, few names loom larger than Milton Friedman. But influential as his works may be, Friedman was in fact a utopian in the sense that he did not believe in regulating or guiding government intervention in markets. In choosing between capitalism and communism, Friedman was quoted as saying, “The great threat to economic freedom is the concentration of government power. The scope of government may be big, but Friedman was in fact a utopian in the sense that he did not believe in regulating or guiding government intervention in markets. In choosing between capitalism and communism, Friedman was quoted as saying, “The great threat to economic freedom is the concentration of government power. The scope of government may be big, but Friedman was in fact a utopian in the sense that he did not believe in regulating or guiding government is inevitable and only mathematics and statistics can explain the unfathomability of economic calamities.

The first breakthrough was made in the early 1950s by Kenneth Arrow, an American economist who rigorously proved with his mathematical models that at equilibrium prices, the market would deploy the economy's resources in such a way that it would be impossible to make a single person better off without making another person worse off. But deepening Arrow’s above statement is agonising, let alone understanding which school of thought they belong. Depending on the era they were espoused and to which school of thought they belong. Depending on the era they were espoused and to which school of thought they belong. Depending on the era they were espoused and to which school of thought they belong.

Esoteric as it may seem, economics does have important and practical wisdom that is worthy of study. If economics seems mystifying, it is this book aims to demystify it. It is by no means the work of an economist. This book does more than just pointing fingers at greedy bankers and regulators. It provides an even more important lesson. But, as finance and stock markets became more intuitive – stock prices reflect fundamental values of a company as well as any new information concerning or affecting the company. Prediction of price trend, therefore, will not work and market is truly efficient in that new piece of information is processed. This theory was widely studied and made widely popular by the Random Walk Theory pioneered by a French mathematician called Louis Bachelier. In theory, Random Walk Theory is equivalent to the coin-fassing game – prediction of market trend is as good as tossing a coin because stock prices and other speculative assets wander about aimlessly like an inebriated person. It was Burton G. Malkiel, a Princeton economist, who popularised this theory by bringing it to the masses with his each was carried out with the aim to allow more money to be loaned and more goods to be sold? Free market ideology had been advocated even before the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was also a contributing factor to the collapse of Communism. It had got to be the pillar of modern economic framework for the 21st century. Hence, formalisation of free market ideology was inevitable and only mathematics and statistics could legitimise it as an applied theory. The first breakthrough was made in the early 1950s by Kenneth Arrow, an American economist, who rigorously proved with his mathematical models that at equilibrium prices, the market would deploy the economy’s resources in such a way that it would be impossible to make a single person better off without making another person worse off. But deepening Arrow’s above statement is agonising, let alone understanding which school of thought they belong. Depending on the era they were espoused and to which school of thought they belong. Depending on the era they were espoused and to which school of thought they belong. Depending on the era they were espoused and to which school of thought they belong.

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Utopian economics is a dangerous weakness – it assumes satisfaction of a lot of ideal conditions and disregards existence of greed, stupidity, ignorance, anomalies and herd behaviors, all of which were common plagues in the 21st century. Friedman’s doctrines, was well-known for his emphasis on the importance of monetary policy. Former US president Ronald Reagan, a believer of Friedman’s doctrines, was well-known for his emphasis on the importance of monetary policy.

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Where can I make a difference?

The experiences I had in my career were that employees tend to expect the company to provide their careers and then blame the company if not doing enough. But wait a minute – have the employees done enough to deserve to get ahead? Here are some tips to help you advance in your career:

1. **YOU NEED TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

   Though companies are expected to treat their employees well, they are not charitable organisations. You were employed for a specific contribution to work and paid to deliver results. As much as employees endeavour to do – that deliver expected results. To make a difference, you need to deliver more than work on time "to boot." Ask yourself:
   - Where can I make a difference?
   - Where can I add value?
   - What can I do differently?
   - How can I impact the organisation and people in positive ways?

Only when you’ve come up with positive prospective answers that will not only impress you, but also your boss, can you move on to step two.

2. **INTERVIEW YOURSELF**

   Find this technique powerful for self-realisation. We may believe it’s our right to progress, but we forget that the choice of a promotion lies to work and paid to deliver results. As such, employees have to improve on if you are to take another step up the ladder. But hey... Why am I still here? What do they have that I don’t? What am I missing?

   Once you grasp this concept, you’re ready to start thinking for yourself and what you’re truly worth, which at this stage should be far in excess of what you were before.

3. **YOUR NAME IS YOUR BRAND**

   Consider your name your “brand”, and like all brands, it conjures opinions, impressions and expectations from others. Names and brands will trigger perceptions in our minds (eg, Mahatma Gandhi, Hugo Boss, etc), so too will your name trigger perceptions about who you are, or might aspire to be. These images, rightly or wrongly, will be what others perceive of you, and judge you upon. Do a “personal brand evaluation” occasionally, and “refresh and re-launch” as needed. If you feel that your “brand image” in the mind of your brand needs to be better polished, re-evaluate your personal behaviour (words and deeds), change, and “re-launch” your behaviour, hence your brand image, to create a more positive impression. So long as you realise it’s never too late to make a change or is ever too early to impress, you’re ready to move on to the next step.

4. **SHOW TOMORROW’S TALENTS, TODAY!**

   Too often we think: “Give me the promotion, and I’ll show you what I can do…” Not smart. Career progression is based upon others knowing what you can do now and believing what you can do next (or the potential of succeeding to the next level). Demonstrate as many times as possible the work and qualities that you can do and offer tomorrow, TODAY.

**LEARN FROM WINNERS AND FAILURES**

   Learn from successful leaders - people and brands. What people do and don’t do, and how product brands are managed and nurtured, will give you important tips on how you might manage yourself – in effect, your “do’s and don’ts.” Success is assured by demonstrating positive qualities, values and a positive image. Also learn from your failures, and from those of others (people and products) who fail as well. Failures are valuable lessons for us to avoid and adapt from, and are platforms for us to Win from. Learn, improve and move on. Before you know it, your winning mentality will start to set you apart from your peers; don’t get too cocky yet, though, there’s still plenty of work to be done.

**FORM AND SUBSTANCE MATTER**

   “Form” AND “Substance” are important as first impressions more than count. Form plays an important role in presenting yourself positively – dress sense, posture, articulateness, confidence, etc. Beyond image however, substance is important – the ability and capability to execute and deliver results, results that are both expected and unexpected. Without “Form” and “Substance”, getting the right people behind you will be next to impossible, and let’s face it, there’s only so much you, or anyone can do on his or her own, therefore, step seven is meaningless without step eight and vice versa.

**NETWORK**

   You need others to know who you are, what you can do and also for the support they can offer. Make an effort to introduce yourself and network at meetings and functions. Think about it, it may only take one person amongst your network to be instrumental in promoting your potential (hence career) to others.

**HALF OF IT IS IN YOURS**

   Your career is also YOUR responsibility. Take half of it is in YOUR hands

   10. **“COLLECT BADGES”**

   The more rounded your experience, the better the quality of work delivered, and the higher your value will be to others. Like Scouts and Girl Guides, collect as many skills badges (multi-disciplinary experience) as possible. This knowledge and experience will serve you well by growing your maturity, credibility, understanding of business/issue, and in making the best decisions possible.

**SPEAK UP**

   We sometimes hesitate to speak up in crowds or in the presence of senior group members, believing that our points may have been covered, or are not important. In Asian cultures, we sometimes keep silent at formal meetings that have Westerners attending, and later chat away robustly amongst ourselves, all the while thinking, “Maybe there’ll be a better time to speak my mind.” You can’t afford to think like that, sooner or later you’ll be left behind and the feeling of regret will linger. Remember that teams are brought together to capture experiences from all angles. No input is too small, and you may trigger useful discussions. And “Out Of Sight” (or Voice) may result in “Out Of Mind”.

**WIN @ LIFE TOO...**

   Your health, wellness and family are important to sustain a successful career; peace-of-mind can sometimes be the biggest motivation of all. Although the Work/Life Balance is often a big challenge to overcome and perfect solutions may be hard to achieve, rely on your common sense and personal discipline and you’ll achieve what is necessary. Note: It’s true that even lesuires some effort and work, but it’s important to do it, and do it properly!

   Now you know, it’s no secret. Once you can successfully tick all 12 steps off your checklist, the answer to your original question: “What am I missing?” should be “Absolutely, positively, assuredly, unquestionably nothing!” You have the right frame of mind, motivation enough to pass on those around you, and also the dedication to succeed. So...

   **WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR??**
DRESSING SEXY AT WORK
IS THAT THE WAY TO GO??

By Jermaine Bee
jermaine@leaderonomics.com

DRESS down Fridays is one thing, but wearing party or clubbing clothes to work, is another matter entirely. It is often said that people tend to dress according to current fashion trends, or according to their generation. The question that we need to ask is whether baring flesh is a go or a no-go at work? Living in the 21st century, many think that dressing-down-and-daring is the norm. What we are attempting to establish today is whether dressing sexy helps or hurts your career? How does dressing affect people’s perception of you? What message do we convey through the way we dress?

DRESSING PROVOCATIVELY
You have seen her. She comes to work wearing short skirts, cleavage exposing shirts, and tight pants that reveal every inch of her body. Dressing provocatively certainly raises eyebrows, but is it the kind of attention that we are supposed to attract at work? Malaysian celebrity Hannah Tan says, “It is inappropriate to dress provocatively but every woman should dress according to her profession.”

There is also a hefty disadvantage to dressing provocatively at work, which was confirmed in a study published by the Psychology of Women Quarterly in America. Videos of businesswoman dressed differently were shown to senior executives. The woman that dressed in a more provocative fashion was evaluated as “less intelligent and capable” than the modestly-dressed woman. Whilst this may not be true, it does indicate how one’s dressing sense could influence the perception of one’s capability and credibility. Former Miss Universe Malaysia and national director of Miss Universe Malaysia Organisation Andrea Fonseka thinks that dressing too provocatively or revealing at work can affect one’s perception of women and how best to accentuate or play down certain issues.

DRESSING TO SUIT OUR ENVIRONMENT
“It’s getting hotter these days and I’m just wearing lighter fabrics to avoid getting all sweaty.” Due to climatic conditions, we may opt to wear lighter clothes that may also be semi-transparent. Whilst we need to consider the weather when we dress for work, it remains crucial for women to dress according to their profession as well as their environment. Sometimes one must simply look around at what other women are wearing to work. Are the female vice-presidents wearing overly tight fitting skirts with low-V-neck shirts or are the managers wearing blazing tops on top of their trendy black dresses? Certain industries and fields may have a more relaxed dress code than other professions. The fashion, social services, entertainment, and advertising industries may be examples of where a less formal approach to work wear is acceptable. Despite how certain fields allow more latitude to informal styles, leadership management trainer Sheela Chandran shares that there should always be a limit to the way that we dress, and that we should allow our work and not the provocative clothes that we wear, speak for us. If one wants to maintain one’s professional image, dressing to kill can wait till the next killer date!

DRESSING FOR PROMOTIONS
As much as the media portrays the sexuality of professional women at work and how they may be able to use their womanly assets to the advantage of the company – this may also be a paradox in terms. Sexiness and professionalism do not appear to go hand in hand. Psychology of Women Quarterly states that women who dress in a sexy manner are viewed as less competent, regardless of their skill sets. These women are also passed over for promotions more often than their modestly-dressed female colleagues. Whilst some women may be trying to move up the corporate ladder by using their looks, the more appropriate method is to achieve success on merit. As much as sexuality may be appealing at first, Fonseka says that one cannot only rely on one’s sex appeal as it has a short lifespan. One must prove oneself a lot more in other areas, by establishing oneself beyond just dressing. In addition, Tan comments that if a person wants to attract a professional client, she should not sell sex but rather promote her company, its products, or her expertise.

Many women are leaders in the workplace today. They dominate almost half of the workforce as leaders of great companies or entrepreneurs on their own. Many women have undoubtedly reached these heights of success on their own merits. Credible career promotion is based on substance, rather than physical form. It is imperative that women realise that they are rewarded with more responsibilities or attain positions of authority based on how they portray themselves. Their disposition truly determines their positions. Knowing how to dress according to the working environment is a good start to create a good image. A good image comes from professional attire alongside ethical and acceptable behaviour.

Generally, whilst dressing in a sexy manner may help women to climb the ladder faster in the entertainment or social service industries, it may hinder a person’s professional image and performance at work in the long run. Therefore, a woman should dress according to her workplace culture and in line with the industry norms. This must be done in conjunction with the perception or impression that she wants to portray.

Fonseka points out that women should be aware of their body shapes, and be careful as to what is accentuated in terms of the types and styles of clothes that they wear. Thus, inappropriate dressing for the workplace, may just be a matter of a lack of understanding of one’s own body, and how best to accentuate or play down certain issues.

Dressing for Promotions

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Prove yourself a lot more in other areas, by establishing oneself beyond just dressing.

Be savvy with how you dress to work, not sexy. It’s about the appropriate clothes with the right colours and accessories. Nevertheless, remember that comfort at work comes first; then fashion.

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Asia-Pacific employees across all age groups prefer traditional rewards such as monetary compensation as opposed to non-traditional rewards such as taking days off (Kelly Services).

A study by the Monetary Authority of Singapore reveals that firms with diverse boardrooms outperform those with male-dominant or family controlled ones.

A study by the Monetary Authority of Singapore reveals that age, gender, educational background, and ethnicity can strengthen corporate governance.

Firms with more diverse boardrooms outperform those with male-dominant or family controlled ones as they tended to ask different questions and challenge commonly held perceptions.

According to a Kelly Services study, 44% of individuals in the Asia-Pacific region believe generational diversity contributes to workplace productivity with Generation Y members being the most optimistic.

A study of Singapore reveals that firms with diverse boardrooms outperform those with male-dominant or family controlled ones.

The highest percentages of women are employed in China, followed closely by Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore. The lowest percentages of females are employed in India, with Japan being the second lowest.

Women in Malaysia rank highest amongst others in the Asia-Pacific region in regards to participation rate in the workforce at 11.35% higher than the national female labour force participation rate.

At senior level positions, Malaysia has the highest representation of women (27.57%), followed by Hong Kong (22.77%) and Singapore (21.50%).
I just started working for a leading company in Kuala Lumpur. I was appointed a clerk at the secretarial department. I haven't become a permanent worker yet. I am on a three-month probation. My problem is, I have been worrying so much lately about my performance in the office. While most of the co-workers including my bosses are very nice to me, there is one co-worker who always treats me as if I'm incompetent. I have always been a slow learner. I'm not dumb. It's just that sometimes I need a moment to digest some information and a little time to get things done right. Now, I'm so worried that my bosses will see me as he does too, even though they didn't mention anything to me. Previously, I was a substitute teacher in a public high school. I love teaching so much that I never thought that I'd get an opportunity to work in an office. When I was a teacher, I had so much control over myself. I always knew what to do and what people expected of me. Now, when the situation has changed, I feel that I'm alone, with no one to turn to. What should I do? Please help me.

Adam

DEAR CAREER-NOMERS,

Thank you for sharing your problem. I hope what I am going to share will help you.

Firstly, with regards to your worries about your performance in the office, one of the first things you can do is to have a quick chat with this new colleague who has been making you feel uncomfortable. I suggest you sit with him/her and ask this person to share some honest feedback about how he/she thinks you are doing and how you can improve at work. During this chat, also share with this colleague about how some of his/her words/actions towards you make you feel small and belittled. Approach this with an open mind and a calm heart. Don't confront when you are angry. Talk it through.

However, if you find that this colleague simply has a mean streak in him/her or acting out of prejudice, then I suggest you minimise your dealings with him/her if you intend to stay on in this company.

But more importantly, in life we will always come across bullies and people who genuinely won't like us because of certain traits in us. And you know what, that's totally FINE! What is more crucial for you is to learn to love yourself and be secure with who you are. If you know that you are not dumb, then there is nothing anyone can do or say that will make you dumb – as long as you don't believe in their words! Sometimes a new job can make us feel incompetent because of the many things that we have to learn. But that doesn't mean we are not smart. Focus on what you need to learn and ask for "lessons" from the experienced ones in the office who are generous and non-judgmental.

Once you are more certain of yourself and when you have built a rapport over the chat with the colleague, things may take a different turn for you. I suggest you read up a little more about confronting people or better still, speak to someone with more experience who is close to you to gain some insights on how to go about this.

My personal hope for you is that you find more confidence in yourself and what you enjoy doing.

All the best!

Elisa Dass

DEAR ADAM,

Please take comfort that you really are not alone. The challenges you face at work are not unlike what others, including myself, have gone through earlier in our careers. Further, as you mentioned, most of your co-workers are supportive. So have the confidence and belief that you will prevail. Not sure whether you've seen the Lord of the Rings film trilogy but in one scene, Sam said to Frodo, "It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back, only they didn't. They kept going." Adam, life is a journey, full of challenges for you to overcome.

You mentioned worrying about your performance, feeling that you don't know necessarily what to do or what is expected of you. I would advise you against seeing this as a problem. Look at it from a different perspective, there is nothing worse than being in an environment where you're not learning or being challenged. Take it as a good thing that you're out of your comfort zone. It is an essential part of growing as a talent. I have struggled during periods in my career and have definitely been referred to with less than complimentary terms. Do reach out to your bosses and co-workers to help guide and teach you along the way. You were recruited into a new role, so I am sure there are reasonable expectations on what you can deliver. I wouldn't unduly worry about being slow. As the wise Treebeard in Lord of the Rings said, "don't be hasty." It is more important to demonstrate a positive attitude and a commitment to learn, whilst ensuring work entrusted to you is delivered. If you have to worry, channel it productively, towards motivating yourself to drive the performance needed to first get you confirmed at work as a permanent staff.

In school, we would never have everyone liking us. Likewise, it would not be the only or last time in your career you have a co-worker treating you badly. The challenge for you is not to retaliate but to remain professional. Difficult as it may sound, learn to effectively work with your co-workers, especially the ones whom you don't get on with. Do attempt to engage with your co-workers to build better rapport. However successful such efforts may or may not be, as they say "no man is an island." This is especially the case at work, where our performance is typically inter-connected with others. Hence, learning to work together with those whom you get on with and those with whom you don't, will ultimately enhance your performance in your career going forward.

I once saw a US Marines poster with the caption "pain is weakness leaving the body." Whilst I am no fan of pain, I have no doubt that the challenges you face now will ultimately make you stronger. Be resilient and embrace your challenges as opportunities for you to grow.

Wishing you all the best,

Johan Merican
Coming up in next Saturday’s issue . . .

KEEPING THE WORLD CONNECTED
WE HIGHLIGHT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE EXCITING WORLD OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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Find out how in Consulting Corner

Roshan Thiran shares the importance of having entrepreneurial skills in Be A Leader

How to make a great first impression

Is technology bringing work into your family life?
Parent coach Zaid Mohamad offers tips