GET UP
AND START WALKING
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Number plate making
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STOP SITTING... GET UP AND EMBRACE LIFE!

My first boss, Mike Petruccelli, used to keep telling me to “stop sitting around and just do something.” As I have progressed through various roles, I have begun to realise how profound his advice has been. There is a place to reflect and rejuvenate oneself but nothing gets done if you do not do things. Sitting around and hoping for your career to soar to spectacular heights is something we all do at times but it is just wishful thinking. Your career needs to be action-oriented.

In this issue, we explore how sitting for prolonged periods can not only harm your physical and mental health, but also affect your career and life in general. According to researchers, we sleep an average of 7.7 hours but spend 9.3 hours sitting per day. Apparently, our bodies were not meant for sitting all day. In this issue, we explore the perils of sitting too much.

Last week, I spent a day with hostage negotiator George Kohlrieser while he was in Malaysia for a holiday. He constantly reminds me not to “sit” and become a hostage in so many other areas of our lives. Isaac Newton’s first law of motion states, “An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion, stays in motion with the same speed and in the same direction unless acted upon by an unbalanced force.” Objects tend to “keep on doing what they’re doing”. In fact, it is the natural tendency of objects to resist changes in their state of motion. This tendency to resist changes in their state of motion is described as inertia.

It is almost the end of another year. How many of us are wishing that we had done all those things on our to-do list at the beginning of the year? How many of those resolutions have we skirted around so many times, waiting for a more opportune moment to start gym, stop smoking, or start being more proactive in our career?

Inertia is so easy. We allow ourselves to fall into this safe, comfortable trap that protects us from all the challenges and hardships out there. It also ensures that we miss out on all the wonderful opportunities too. This is true in both our personal and our professional lives. Career inertia refers to all of those things that slow you down as you try to reach your goals: not obstacles that stop you in your tracks, but your own tendency to “sit down” instead of getting up on your feet and executing the dreams you envision.

Remember, nothing will change until we take action. In fact, sitting kills. Further research shows that sitting more than six hours a day increases your likelihood to die by 40%, within 15 years. Scary proposition. But the same “death” is inflicted on your career.

Career inertia is a comfortable trap that protects us from all the challenges and hardships out there. It also ensures that we miss out on all the wonderful opportunities too. This is true in both our personal and our professional lives.

In this issue, we explore the perils of sitting too much. As always, you can download our amazing Top 10 and other videos from www.leaderonomics.tv and we wish you all the best in your career journey!

Have fun learning! Career diem!

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

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**CAREER TIPS**

**YOUR CAREER CAN STAGNATE IF YOU ARE NOT PROACTIVE.**

**IF YOU FEEL THAT YOUR CAREER IS NOT GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION OR THAT YOU ARE NOT PROGRESSING FAST ENOUGH, HERE ARE SOME POINTS TO PONDER:**

- **YOU ARE NOT ALONE**
  - Everyone stagnates at some point or another in their careers. Realising that you are not alone in this challenge makes it easier to deal with. Instead of trying to “fight it”, acknowledge it and tell yourself that it’s going to be alright. Only then, will you be able to focus on more important things.

- **KEEP LEARNING**
  - There is a great deal of material online regarding career enhancement. Keep on reading and learning new things to improve your career. Do not fall prey to obsolescence especially in our current fast paced, technology-driven society.

- **TAKE A BREAK**
  - If you already feel weighed down by a career that you believe is not moving well, take a break. By doing this, you will be able to re-evaluate and reconsider some of your goals. You may also spend some time engaged in recreation which can restore your vigour and enthusiasm at work.

- **BREAK OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE**
  - One of the best ways to avoid stagnation in your career is by interacting with new people and trying new things. You may even learn a new skill and make some new connections. Break out of the mould - try switching some things, try a new routine and experience something different and fresh.

- **START SMALL**
  - The more you think about it, the more it grows. Stagnation is actually a part of growth and more often than not, it is a sign that something in your life is not growing anymore. Hence, be keen and observant to your surroundings as they might just open you up to more opportunities than you ever imagined possible.
A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A NUMBER PLATE MAKER

HARD WORK, PATIENCE, AND HUMILITY – THE MARK OF A REMARKABLE MAN

BY DEBBIE POZZOBON
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A sa child, it never occurred to Chiang Chen Seng that he would choose number plate making as his profession. Born in Ipoh, Chiang obtained his primary and secondary education at ACS Ipoh. He loves to listen to music, mostly oldies and sentimental tunes. “It wasn’t out of passion that I first started this business,” he says. I got into number plate-making because I got tired of the pressure I went through working for other people. It came to a point where being an employee did not appeal to me anymore and I wanted out. Furthermore, my brother was already in this profession, so even though I had no knowledge about this business, I decided to give it a try. I was jobless anyway,” reminisces Chiang.

Number plate making is Chiang’s first and only business and he has been at it for a long time. The reason he has been doing this for more than two decades is because of the satisfaction he gets when he sees his customers pleased and satisfied with his work. What started off as a trial venture bloomed into a business promptly at 8.30am every day. He has been at Honsen Trading – in Ipoh which he opened for business promptly at 8.30am every day. The roller door opens to reveal his shop which is packed with tools, number plates, saws and other cutting equipment. It seems full to overflowing. To Chiang though, this is his passion, and he knows where everything is. “My job is to meet my customers’ needs,” says Chiang. “I help them to decide on what number plates they want, and assist in the choosing of the various fonts and styles that I think will make them happy.” There are essentially three different types of number plates: Ready-made. These are the most common plates. The letters and numbers are all white and they are ready for application to the black plate surface. Stickers. These number plates are only for motor cycles. They also comprise of white lettering and numerals but they are all stickers. These stickers are then affixed to a larger black sticker, which in turn is stuck on to the motorbike.

Customised plates: These are unique plates that Chiang has on offer, and they are very popular with his customers. Some people may have their own ideas, or they may choose from the many designs on display. Once the choice is made, he sets about cutting each letter and number according to the design and fonts chosen. “Of course my job also has its challenges”, Chiang contends. “The first of these is undoubtedly the weather. When it rains, customers, especially motorcyclists, don’t come to the shop.” The second obstacle that he has to deal with are small injuries. He works with cutters and saws all day long, and has to be very careful not to hurt himself. The last of the challenges that he faces is the growing number of competitors. He has to constantly check that his prices are competitive, and that he treats his loyal customers well. Ipoh is a small town, and maintaining relationships with his customers is of utmost importance. Judging from his interpersonal skills and the warm relationships that he has developed over time with his customers, it is doubtful that this will pose much of a threat. Nevertheless, Chiang is aware of the competition and of the issues that are posed in terms of his business, and works tirelessly to ensure that he maintains a competitive advantage.

Chiang believes that number plate-making is slowly becoming a dying art. This is due to the fact that this skill will soon be replaced by machines, in this technology-infused era. He further explains that currently there are not many people doing this, especially custom-made machines. This is probably because it is time consuming and does not generate quick income. The current generation is more into businesses that produce instant money.

This hardworking man advises those who want to venture into this business to be ready to make sacrifices when it comes to their time. This is after all, a time consuming job. He also adds that this profession is not a number one money making business, but if you have the passion to do this, then you will enjoy your work. Number plate-making does generate a relative amount of income besides being fulfilling. If you are one who places importance on job satisfaction and want to be happy with what you do, then you could give this profession a try. “If you need are sawing skills and a passion and interest for the job,” says Chiang. He enjoys seeing the satisfied expressions on the faces of his customers. But more than this, he is proud of his two children who have both completed their tertiary education, thanks to the dedication and hard work of this honest, humble man. He has provided for his customers and family for over 21 years, and it seems that he is on track for 21 more. Honsen Trading and this unassuming, diligent man is surely one of the prides of Ipoh.

Customers can choose the font they want for their number plates from samples in the shop.
Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as Mahatma Gandhi, was born of humble beginnings. From a young age, he had an unquenchable determination to create a better future for his people. His policy of pacifism and protest through civil disobedience eventually succeeded when he led his country to freedom in 1947.

Like Gandhi, many leaders believe in the power of teamwork and collaboration. Winston Churchill, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln all led their people through difficult times to a future based on equality, fairness, and truth. Their persistence, courage, and belief in their ability to craft a new destiny are what distinguish them as great leaders of the past.

Leaders are not born. Everyone can realise their loftiest dreams by guiding the people around them in the right direction.

Be A Leader.
CONFLICT TO DIALOGUE

LEARN TO HAVE AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE USING HOSTAGE NEGOTIATION TECHNIQUES

BY GEORGE KOHLRIESER
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T
HE chance of being taken hostage with a weapon is small. However, anyone can become a metaphorical hostage in a relationship with a boss, employee, colleague, or customer without a physical weapon being involved.

Most people are dissatisfied in their jobs. In fact, 72% of employees in the United States (88% in Germany) describe themselves as emotionally detached in their jobs, primarily because of poor relationships with their bosses or colleagues. Employees who feel dissatisfied and powerless to change have, in effect, become hostages.

The fear of conflict, and ineffective conflict management strategies cause employees to settle into a state of helplessness similar to what hostages feel. Yet there are ways leaders can influence others to feel empowered. You tend to avoid conflict because your brain is wired to avoid potential danger. However, you can learn to do what is counter-intuitive to step towards conflict, instead of stepping back into passivity. Conflict must be seen as a challenge, a problem to be solved, as an opportunity, as something positive.

The techniques used by hostage negotiators may provide a powerful framework for managers to use in situations where people are not functioning at their best. What can managers learn from hostage negotiators?

• Create and maintain a bond even if there is not a natural liking of one another.
• Keep a positive state by focusing on constructive outcomes and on common goals regardless of any desire to defend, attack, or give up. Use this positive state to influence the other(s) into a cooperative relationship for finding productive solutions.
• Manage emotions by focusing the mind’s eye in the brain on positive outcomes to see the benefits beyond the pain, loss, and frustration.
• Use questions rather than telling to overcome resistance, to invite a change of mindset, and to focus on the benefits.
• Address problems with honesty, authenticity, directness and genuine concern for the dignity of others.
• Use the law of reciprocity and appropriate concession-making to build trust. Help the other person save face by offering choices and encouraging self-regulation.
• Use dialogue to gain understanding, to discover new information and to maintain social bonding.
• Learn to use yourself as a secure base to create trust and confidence to explore creative solutions.

IMPORTANCE OF DIALOGUE
Dialogue is an essential tool to develop a climate of collaboration — a powerful combination of listening and talking. The process of dialogue starts with an attachment and a bond between two or more people. The most important sign of dialogue is how mutual influence occurs in the process. If I do not let you touch me, influence me and change me, then I am not in a dialogue. Dialogue requires a mindset of discovery where thinking together leads to creating something new — seeking of a greater truth beyond what each participant has alone. Many leaders find it is easier to get into a debate or an argument. The exchanges usually go on too long with too many details and end in frustration. Effective dialogue is measured by the depth of understanding, the degree of mutual influence and the quality of new ideas generated rather than the time spent talking.

PRIMARY BLOCKS TO DIALOGUE
There are four blocks to dialogue.
1. Passivity. This is when a person displays and uses language of withdrawal or non-responsive behaviour. The focus of the person is on inhibiting himself or herself rather than engaging in problem-solving behaviour.
2. Discounting. When people say something to minimise, maximise, disrespect, or put down another person or themselves, they are discounting.
3. Redefining. This involves not answering a question or changing the focus of the transaction by avoiding something that may be uncomfortable or emotional. If this continues, the dialogue shifts away from the point being discussed. People appear to talk past each other and not with each other, or they simply go in circles. The original point may even be forgotten.
4. Over-detailing. The dialogue does not proceed because the person gives excessive detail, overwhelming others with too much information, and the important point is lost or hidden. It can also be recognised by exhaustion in listening to the speaker.

SECONDARY BLOCKS TO DIALOGUE
There are six secondary blocks to dialogue. These may or may not occur in conjunction with one of the primary blocks.
1. Appearing too rational. Conversation is conducted too analytically, without any personal warmth, emotion, or bonding. It discounts the feelings connected to the topic.
2. Being too emotional. This is when an emotion such as anger, sadness, or fear takes over in the dialogue and the person stops thinking clearly about the subject. Emotions drive the person to say and do things he or she later regrets.
3. Over-generalising. If someone takes a small piece of truth and exaggerates it to an extreme or absurdity, they are over generalising — making statements that are meaningless, overwhelming, and lacking in relevance. Such statements often involve the words always or never.
4. Abstraction. This occurs when the conversation moves too far off subject and the focus and core thoughts are lost. Ideas and concepts are not connected to a specific incident, are disconnected from reality, or are too philosophical.
5. Lack of directness. This means avoiding an issue or problem, or talking around the subject. The sentences are clear but avoid the topic.
6. Lack of honesty. When one or both persons are not honest with the other, then open dialogue becomes impossible. This may involve a lack of self-disclosure, distortion of true feelings, or lack of authenticity that can be reflected in a simple or a serious lie.

More than one block may exist at the same time. Be aware when you or others are blocking dialogue. Most negotiators engage in mutual monologues and other forms of ineffective communication, as reflected in meetings that are too long and boring, adding little value and making participants exhausted and frustrated. Hostage negotiators achieve a 95% success rate. You can achieve similar success rates by using some of the same techniques effectively. Doing so will help you significantly in your career. Have fun by engaging in real dialogues.

George Kohlrieser is professor of leadership at IMD in Switzerland and a former hostage negotiator. He spent significant time in Malaysia helping Malaysian organisations to forge authentic communications within their employees. For more information on more programmes that George can deliver for your organisation, email people@leaderonomics.com.
Always Apologise

As we all know, “Customers are always right”. It is best if we assume responsibility for the problems that our customers point out, because if one customer complains, chances are, there are others who are facing the same situation too. After you remedy the situation, make sure that this never happens again as repeat offences do not go hand in hand with retaining customers.

Top 10 Ways to Handle Difficult Customers

1. **Smile**
   - Always put on a smile on your face and have a friendly chat with customers whenever you first speak to them. This reduces the tensions as you have created a friendly relationship environment for them to express their feelings. Customers will then tend to inform you about their problems in a nice way, which helps you to prevent a harsh scolding. Moreover, befriending a difficult customer, and creating a relationship built on trust, may benefit the company by ensuring that they remain customers for a long time.

2. **Listen**
   - The best way to resolve a problem is to listen to what they are really asking for and not what you think they need. Use questions like what, who, where, when and how to clarify customers’ concerns. You could also repeat customers’ complaints to show that you are aware of what they are saying. Most people become far more reasonable when they believe that they are being understood, and when they believe that their needs are being taken care of.

3. **Show Empathy**
   - To have a win-win situation, there is no need to defend your own position. Try to be considerate; understand customers from their point of view and then validate by saying “Thank you for letting me know about this issue”. Nodding while talking with customers can also help calm the situation as it shows that you understand their predicament and that you are honouring their concerns.

4. **Reverse Psychology by Agreeing with Them**
   - Whenever a customer is frustrated and is complaining about a problem, always nod and agree with what he/she is saying no matter if that person is right or wrong. There can be a rebuttal in your arguments like “Yes, I do agree with you on this matter and you are right but don’t you think...”. This way the customer will settle down and at the same time, they may consider what you say.

5. **Understand the Types of Customers**
   - Every customer has a different personality. Some may just want attention and some may want to be in control of things. Understanding customers’ values is one way to handle them. When a customer wants to be recognised just ask them if they have any suggestions about the issue at hand, and if customers want control, provide them with choices on how the issues could be resolved.

6. **Control Your Tone**
   - No matter how loud your customers speak to you, always respond in a proper tone, and be polite while speaking. Staying calm as well as having a clear mind helps you dispel the anger and not be affected by a customer’s angry tone. This will reflect on the customers and will help them calm down.

7. **Think Positive and Thank Customers**
   - Always accept complaints from customers as a “gift” from them. Think of the complaints as gifts to you and your company as this is a chance to improve and fix any gaps that you may have. It is better to know what is going wrong than not being aware of the problem at all, which can then cause the loss of more customers in the future. So, whenever there is a complaint, always thank the customers for informing you about it.

8. **Remember That You Are Interacting With a Human**
   - As human beings, we all have bad days once in a while, especially in this busy world that we live in. With grumpy customers, it is best to try to stay calm and interact with them in a pleasant, calm voice, speaking politely and smiling, as this can make their day slightly better.

9. **Never Take Things Too Personal**
   - If customers are verbally abusive and swearing during the conversation, just take a deep breath and pretend that you did not hear anything. Later, just inform the customers how you can help them. Bring the conversation back to the issue. Always try to provide a solution and stay objective. Ignore any personal comments, as customers are just venting frustrations at you as a representative of your company.

10. **Smile**
    - As we all know, “Customers are always right”. It is best if we assume responsibility for the problems that our customers point out, because if one customer complains, chances are, there are others who are facing the same situation too. After you remedy the situation, make sure that this never happens again as repeat offences do not go hand in hand with retaining customers.

      To view a full video, visit www.leaderonomics.tv/top10
BUILDING TEAMS WITH PURPOSE

By VINESH NAIDU
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TEAMWORK is not always the best means to an end. There are many areas where work is better done individually. The most important question is when it is relevant to have a team and when to work alone. When is teamwork actually needed and when will it not degenerate into a hindrance? As a leader, you need to spend time identifying where the opportunities are to build teams, as it can prove to become detrimental if not done correctly.

Let us look at how we build teams. Or rather, how at most organisations have jumped on the team building bandwagon. Does engaging in a fun team sport really translate to more teamwork back in the office? Firstly, remember that employees are human beings, and that humans are social animals. This means that they gravitate to work in groups rather than on their own, given the opportunity.

Therefore, employees are already naturally geared to work in teams, and making them swing from ropes or building and paddling a raft across a crocodile infested river will not necessarily enhance “group behaviour”. This is already part of their genetic make-up. What if CAN do is to develop stronger bonds between individuals, engender or improve trust and allow the group to feel more enthusiastic about going back to work together. Harnessing this positive atmosphere is the role of the leader.

“Teamwork is neither ‘good’ nor ‘desirable’, it is a fact. Wherever people work together or play together they do so as a team. Which team to you use for what purpose is a crucial, difficult and risky decision that is even harder to unmake. Management has yet to learn how to make it.”

– Management guru Peter Drucker.

We now come to the most essential element of building a successful team - PURPOSE. Can you, have you as a leader, identified and provided a broad and compelling purpose for your team? Have you articulated what the overall desired outcome of your team’s work and effort is? The definition of purpose is one of the trade secrets of the world’s most successful teams, be it sports teams or business management teams. Successful teams know the company’s goals, objectives and vision at their finger tips, and they are focused in the pursuit of the company’s objectives.

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people together to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.”

– Antoine de Saint-Exupery

People need to know they are making a difference in what they are doing – they want to know that they are contributing to a higher purpose.

Individuals do not want to come to work to complete a spreadsheet or a powerpoint presentation. They need to understand WHY they are there as your team. What’s the purpose of the team?

An example of this is in my company – Leaderonomics, where we have a talent management and corporate training arm, a multimedia division, and finally our youth section. However, we don’t come to work because we want to run training programmes, create leadership videos or perform any task just for the sake of it. Roshan, our leader, has articulated the vision and mission of our social enterprise and team members will shift the member’s focus away from team goals to protecting their individual interests. Contrary to popular belief, there most certainly is an “I” in “team.” It is the same “I” that appears three times in “responsibility”. When the individuals trust and have mutual respect for one another, then the team is enabled to take responsibility and ownership of tasks.

As you start your work team, ask yourself – WHY do you want the team to exist? WHAT do you want to improve? HOW are you going to do it? When establishing your team, try using this simple check list as your guide.

ARE THE TEAMS’ GOALS:

- S – SPECIFIC
- M – MEASURABLE
- A – ACHIEVABLE
- R – REALISTIC & RESULTS ORIENTED
- T – TIME - BOUND

Working in teams can be challenging, fun and frustrating at all the same time. Clear definition of goals and a common purpose serve to align the energy of the members towards the achievement of personal and organisational success. Build your teams with authenticity and purpose, and do what you love!

Trust and mutual respect are key ingredients to a successful team and a lack of trust among team members will shift the member’s focus away from team goals to protecting their individual positions. Contrary to popular belief there most certainly is an “I” in “team.” It is the same “I” that appears three times in “responsibility”. When the individuals trust and have mutual respect for one another, the team is enabled to take responsibility and ownership of tasks.

By VINESH NAIDU

“THE FIVE SEPARATE FINGERS ARE FIVE INDEPENDENT UNITS. CLOSE THEM AND THE FIST MULTIPLIES IN STRENGTH. THIS IS ORGANISATION.”

– JAMES CASH PENNY - FOUNDER OF JC PENNY STORES, USA

LAYERING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR AUTHENTIC TEAMBUILDING

Consulting corner...
**SITTING AFFECTS YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

Did you know that too much sitting can affect your career? Think about it. When you sit too long, your body becomes lethargic and this affects your thinking and your performance. This affects your work. This affects your performance and chances for promotion. In fact, it can also cause you to lose your job.

**WAYS TO AVOID SITTING TOO MUCH AFTER OFFICE HOURS**

- Engage in fun activities such as playing sports or watching television.
- Try a standing desk if you are able to.
- Go for a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.
- Try to do some light exercises before bed such as stretching or yoga.
- Set a timer to remind yourself to take breaks and stand up.
- Try to incorporate movement into your daily routine such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

**GET A STANDING DESK INSTEAD OF A SITTING DESK BECAUSE:**

- You will sit less, move more, and feel more energized.
- You will be less likely to gain weight.
- You will have better posture.
- You will have better sleep.
- You will have better mood and energy.
- You will be more productive.
- You will have better health overall.

**WAYS TO MOVE AT WORK**

- Take breaks from the chair by yawning or stretching your legs.
- Take a walk around the office or outside during your breaks.
- Use a standing desk or a sit-stand desk.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Use a standing mat if you have a standing desk.
- Use a standing desk for at least 15 minutes each hour.

**SITTING OBSERVATIONS**

- In a recent study in the journal *Lancet*, it was found that people who sit for more than 8 hours a day are more likely to develop heart disease.
- A study published in *The Lancet* found that sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of all-cause mortality.
- According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, sitting for more than 4 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing diabetes.

**WHAT CAN SITTING DO?**

- **Increased risk of heart disease:** Sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing heart disease.
- **Increased risk of type 2 diabetes:** Sitting for more than 4 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing diabetes.
- **Increased risk of obesity:** Sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of obesity.
- **Increased risk of cancer:** Sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing cancer.
- **Increased risk of premature death:** Sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of premature death.

**EASY WAYS TO MOVE AT WORK**

- Take breaks from the chair by yawning or stretching your legs.
- Take a walk around the office or outside during your breaks.
- Use a standing desk or a sit-stand desk.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Use a standing mat if you have a standing desk.
- Use a standing desk for at least 15 minutes each hour.

**TALK WHILE YOU WALK**

- Take a walk during your lunch break.
- Take a walk during your coffee break.
- Take a walk during your meeting.
- Take a walk during your break.
- Take a walk during your commute.

**SITTING IS BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH**

- Sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing heart disease.
- Sitting for more than 4 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing diabetes.
- Sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing cancer.
- Sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of premature death.

**STRETCH THOSE LIMBS**

- Stretch your arms and legs before sitting down.
- Stretch your arms and legs after sitting for a long time.
- Stretch your arms and legs during your breaks.
- Stretch your arms and legs during your meetings.
- Stretch your arms and legs during your commute.

**ON AVERAGE, WE ARE SITTING ABOUT 10 HOURS A DAY, COMPARED WITH SEVEN TO EIGHT HOURS OF SLEEPING**

- According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of developing heart disease.
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- According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, sitting for more than 6 hours a day is associated with a 20% increase in risk of premature death.

**GET A STANDING DESK INSTEAD OF A SITTING DESK BECAUSE:**

- You won’t sleep off. That’s right! With a standing desk, you are very much aware of your body and your body is always alert and ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action.
- You will eat healthier and happier. You won’t sleep off. That’s right! With a standing desk, you are very much aware of your body and your body is always alert and ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action. Being seated, you are ready to spring into action.
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A SCHOOL THAT HELPS STUDENTS “LIVE LIFE TO ITS FULLNESS”

By GOH CHEE LEONG
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THE NEW HELP INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

The HELP education group, known for being a leading player in tertiary education, is establishing the HELP International School (HIS) and will begin its first intake of students in September 2013.

This school, run on the platform of the British education curriculum, will cater to students from pre-school level to secondary school level. HIS will be housed at a new purposefully built campus facility in Subang Delima which is located next to Kota Damansara and the Subang airport. HELP International School is currently looking for teachers and administrators who passionately share their philosophy and ethos.

LIFE IN ALL ITS FULLNESS

The motto “Vita ad plenitudinem”, which in English means “Life in all its fullness”, captures the essence of what we hope to achieve at HELP International School.

As educators and as parents, we want our children to live to the fullest, enjoying all the opportunities that our world has to offer as well as finding meaning and fulfilment in all that they do.

In many cases, schools and education systems focus on the “future success” of the child, and the total emphasis tends to be “how we help you score As in your exams”. What we’re saying is that whilst academic excellence and preparing students for success in their careers is important, it is just a part of a more complete package. Beyond just achieving success, we also want our students to be happy in life and to realise their fullest potential in all aspects of their lives.

EDUCATING ALL-ROUNDERS

We believe that to thrive in the global village of this new millennium, students need to be all-rounders. We are determined to ensure that we do not just pay lip-service to this notion of being “all-rounders” at our school. As such, the curriculum will integrate all aspects and processes within and outside the classroom, needed to nurture this development.

For example, all students in our school will be required to participate in sports, including swimming and athletics. Similarly, all students will be trained in the performing arts, such as music and drama. They will get to further flex their creative muscles through art and design. The critical concept of a “nurturing environment” will ensure that our students will feel emotionally and psychologically safe when they explore the opportunities for growth in all their activities.

The purpose built campus ensures that all the sport and performing arts facilities required to support this all inclusive curriculum will be in place. One of the most exciting elements of this school is the new Shakespearean Performing Arts Centre which includes a black box theatre and a Film Academy for the budding Spielbergs, Ang Lees and Yasmin Ahmad.

LOVING THY NEIGHBOUR

It is part of our school ethos that students develop compassionate hearts, and more importantly, that they develop a larger vision of the world that extends beyond their immediate sphere of friends and family.

Carpe diem

Many teachers and members of our generation were inspired by the film “The Dead Poet’s Society”. It is the story about an English teacher who challenges his students, through the teaching of English Literature, to “seize the day” and engage fully with life, rather than being passive spectators of it.

We know many passionate teachers who want to have the same impact on their students, who want to go beyond just covering a classroom curriculum, to really encouraging and inspiring young lives, who believe that education must be more than just exam scores, who feel that teaching is not just a job but a personal mission and vocation. Many of these teachers feel frustrated because they are trapped in systems and institutions that do not give them the encouragement and freedom to do this. Our message to them is that here at HELP, you will find a leadership team that shares your vision and philosophy of education.

That is why our own leadership and talent development policies will ensure that HELP International School will have a work environment that upholds the dignity of each team member and ensures they are constantly growing, discovering and finding meaning and fulfilment.

WORK AS AN EXTENSION OF WHO WE ARE

Too often as working adults, we are asked to sever the connection between who we are and what we do. This creates an emotional disconnect, psychological unease and cognitive dissonance. People feel emptiness about their jobs because it is not a true expression of who they are. They either stay or just accept that their work has no meaning, or they move on, hoping that the next job will bring them closer to their ideals and aspirations.

At the HELP International School, we want to create a work culture that encourages consistency and integration of the person and profession. After all, our work should be extensions of our values, our life force. We are looking for teachers and administrators who encapsulate our motto in their own lives. We want role models who will show students what living life in all its fullness means.
YOUTHS GOING ABROAD AND MAKING A DIFFERENCE WITH AIESEC

By AMY LIM SU YEN
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

WO words: “life changing”, says Jovian Tan, a member of AIESEC, Malaysia. Unlike his peers, Tan spent seven weeks of his holiday abroad. As a student aged 24 years from Universiti Utara Malaysia, he travelled to Taiwan on his own to work on an animal protection project. It was not only a good working experience abroad but it also made a difference in his life.

This animal protection project, organised by Life Welfare and Environment Quality Association in collaboration with AIESEC, brought Tan and his team together to educate them about animal protection and create awareness among the community in Taiwan. His team consisted of international students from the Czech Republic, Malaysia and Indonesia, all of whom were youths of similar ages.

The team worked at the only animal shelter in Taiwan and took part in events such as an animal adoption campaign, animal protection press conference, pet expo and many more. They also had the chance to meet professor Andrew Chang, a member of PETA, who provided some insights into the animal protection act. According to Tan, “We were sent to attend courses and classes, and were lectured by prestigious veterinary professors from the National Taiwan University. We helped in various animal adoption campaigns and even had the opportunity to participate in huge events like the Taipei Pet Expo.”

Moreover, they also visited various institutes and shelters in Taiwan including the National Chung Hsing University College of Veterinary Medicine, as well as a private shelter in Tai Chung. In addition, they also had meetings with the Agriculture Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister. Nothing beats hands on experience. This was indeed proven to be true for Tan and it was definitely a life-changing experience.

Tan showed that being young did not stop him from going abroad and making a difference. He says, “I have learnt a great sense of tolerance and perseverance from Aunty Liu (the person who was in charge of the project). I accepted criticisms and improved myself. She organised this project by gathering us from so many different countries. Her objective was simply to create a new avenue for us to learn from her experience, unite us to plant this seed in our own countries and spread this movement to make a difference for our society.”

Similarly, Kavidha Natarajan, former president of AIESEC, Malaysia, went to Lublin, Poland to work on a cultural understanding project. She was at a community in Lublin which focused on developing children’s ability to speak the English language. It is not only about her experience, it was also about the impact that she had on them. “What really touched me was that in the three years they had been trying to get the children to actually speak English on a daily basis. My team and I managed to accomplish that in six weeks.” she shares. No matter what your age is, you are never too young to learn, to give and to make a difference. Start defining your future today – life with purpose and make that difference in your own and others’ lives.

THE SECRET OF READING COMPREHENSION

By TERRY SMALL
terry@terrysmall.com

EVER get to the bottom of a page and wonder what you just read? You are not alone! Most people’s reading comprehension is not very good. Our minds wander. In fact, studies show that average retention is 2% after 30 days. There is a secret to doing much better. A brain secret!

Your brain works best from the big picture to the details. Not the other way around. Ever do a jigsaw puzzle? That picture on the lid helped! Could you have put the puzzle together without the picture? Yes, probably. Would it have taken longer? Yes. Is there a greater chance you would become discouraged and stop working on the puzzle? Most certainly. Again, have you ever got to the bottom of a page that you just read and asked, “What did I just read?” Odds are your brain went sideways for the same reason... no picture. When you pick up something and just start reading it is pretty much the same as trying to put a jigsaw puzzle together without the big picture.

So what is the secret to better reading comprehension and retention?

SCHEMA.

Schema is a word that means mental map. It is what you know about a topic before you read about it. That is what determines comprehension. Good schema equals good comprehension.

Here is a great way to get improved schema when you read any non-fiction material. Read the first sentence of each paragraph only all the way through the chapter. This is one of my favorite learning strategies that I teach people in my speed reading seminars. The first sentence of each paragraph contains the main idea or the topic sentence. When you read the first sentence of each paragraph you get the big picture. When you read the details later they have a place to “stick” in your brain.

Try it now. Get a book. Turn to a chapter that you have read. Quickly read the first sentence of each paragraph. I think you will be quite surprised at what your brain does. Now when you read the chapter, notice the improvement!

More reading secrets to come in the next Brain Bulletin!

Terry Small is a brain researcher who believes that everyone is a genius. He argues that “Anyone can learn how to learn easier, better, faster”, and that learning to learn is the most important skill a person can acquire. To interact with Terry, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com
Lim May Lee hopes that everybody would progress to do our A-Levels or foundations at private colleges near-by before moving on to a university somewhere overseas to complete our education. This expectation came true for many of my classmates; however, my own plans were derailed. When I was nearing the end of my SPM, my parents told me that the most cost-effective education option was to do my A-Levels in the form of (the dreaded) STPM. Form Six?? I was horrified. Another two years of (the dreaded) STPM. Form Six?? I was nearing the end of my SPM, my parents told me that the most cost-effective education option was to do my A-Levels in the form of (the dreaded) STPM. Form Six?? I was horrified. Another two years of school uniforms and waking up at 6 am? I couldn’t bring myself to accept understanding their influence still resonate today. Form Six was definitely an experience I won’t forget anytime soon. There really is no such thing as dropping a course and switching to another programme. You can, like I did, switch from Science stream to Arts in the beginning of the school year, but there’s really no option like quitting halfway through and starting fresh with a new intake. With that in mind, Form Six students generally take things a little more seriously, because for many, STPM is the only way to a tertiary education. There is no safety net in the form of taking another programme or just quitting to study privately. If they fail their STPM and don’t get accepted into a public university, a degree may just be impossible. My friends and I soon finished STPM and moved on to our respective colleges and universities. While many went on to public universities, many also moved on to private institutions (STPM is accepted in all tertiary institutions in Malaysia, and is generally accepted internationally as well, especially within the Commonwealth of Nations and the United States). I was one of those who went on to a local public university. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, or UKM. The National University of Malaysia, as it is known in English, was the second public university to be established in the country, and was only one of four universities in the country to offer an English Literature degree programme (the programme is currently not being offered, sadly). To say I was ecstatic is an understatement — I was over the moon at the prospect of being able to delve into literature and explore new worlds. The programme in UKM was quite well-rounded in the sense that we dabbed in media studies, with a bit of sociology and even dramatic arts. There was less of “ye olde English”, and more of contemporary writings by people like Buchi Emecheta and Shirley Lim, with some manga to make the learning fun! In our Performance Arts module, we produced a play from scratch, from script-writing all the way through to managing costumes and lighting which is, in all sorts of ways, super awesome. Until that class, I had no idea I could write a script, and one that could make the audience laugh, at that! My classmates and I suddenly realised that we were actually capable of pursuing a programme, with all it entails, and that experience was an education in itself. I can tell you. Since it was quite a distance from home, it made more sense to live on campus. Nothing enforces real Malaysia spirit like living in close quarters with people of every race. You soon become familiar with subtler cultural nuances you wouldn’t have been privy to had you only met in the lecture halls. Living with a Malay roommate ensured that I soon learnt the importance of not touching her after she had taken air wuduk and maintaining absolute silence while she performed her prayers. I dare say she also ended up quite familiar with lots of Chinese customs and superstitions by the time we moved on to different roommates. How’s that for culture-sharing? Honestly speaking, I started off my journey a little unsure about my path (Literature is hardly the doctor/engineer/accountant direction in which most parents want their child to go) but now that I’ve travelled further down the path and am doing what I love – writing! I am more sure now than ever that this journey of mine has taken me exactly where I needed to go.

Lim May Lee hopes that everybody will be able to do what he or she loves. Log on to www.mystarjob.com
**BEING PROACTIVE AND ACTION-ORIENTED**

By SHEELA CHANDRAN
mysstarjob@leaderonomics.com

ET’s just see where this job takes me,” is what most professionals tell me when they accept a new position. Even the greatest of strategists do not have a clear plan when it comes to their own careers. Most just accept jobs or opportunities that come their way, without ever thinking about where it will lead them.

Have you done this in your past or is this you right now? We live in dynamic times where the old world of job security and a job for life is vanishing and is being replaced by re-organisation, and downsizing, so stop waiting for things “to get back to normal” as it’s not an option. It’s time for a mindset change and time to remove self-imposed barriers put up due to fear, lack of confidence, or being told “you’re not good enough.” Stop wallowing and realise that there is no magic formula to guarantee career success. So what should we do? First, you need to understand how you perceive the world and yourself, as well as where your career is heading. Ask yourself these questions:

1. **DO YOU HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF THE FUTURE?**
   Can you imagine where you'll be in five years, in 10 years, where you'll live and where you'll be working? Are you currently on the right path to this dream future?

2. **DO YOU KNOW WHAT DRIVES AND MOTIVATES YOU?**
   Are you driven by family, monetary or social recognition (extrinsic) or do you do what you do because you can’t imagine doing anything more worthwhile with your life (intrinsinc)?

3. **WHAT ARE YOUR PASSIONS IN LIFE?**
   Confucius said, “Choose a job you love, and you’ll never have to work a day in your life.” So think about things you love doing even without anyone telling you to.

**YOUR LIFE IS YOUR CHOICES**

You may have studied for something completely different from what drives you due to circumstance, peer pressure or sheer luck. However, that path has taken you into your current job so you need to make the most of it. Know that your life is a product of your values and not your feelings. Your life is a product of your decision not your conditions. You are the programme of your life.

The best way of driving this point home is by actively practising a proactive mindset. Proactiveness is the realisation that you have the freedom to choose your response based on your values rather than your emotions. The phrase “if only”, for example, is the language of reactivity and will help you identify and fill gaps in your career.

**Step 1 // Change your Focus**

Every time you find yourself thinking a negative thought, counter it with something positive about the same subject.

**Step 2 // Do Things Now**

Never do tomorrow what you can today; do not procrastinate as this becomes a habit and is a career and life killer.

**Step 3 // Develop an Attitude of Gratitude**

Appreciate people around and yourself. Make it a habit to thank at least three people around you each day.

**Step 4 // Keep Learning**

Create a continuous education programme for yourself. Things are changing all the time and you need to keep up or get left behind. Read one new thing on Wikipedia/online everyday.

**Step 5 // You Are Awesome**

Build self-confidence and do things that enable you to feel good. Feeling good within translates into increased performance and improved relationships, as there is a direct correlation between feelings and behaviour.

**Step 6 // Eliminate Negativity**

Stay away from negative influences and people. We often get influenced by our surroundings so either stay away from such situations or set boundaries of “acceptable language” patterns like the language of proactivity.

**Step 7 // Learn to Like the Things That Need to Be Done**

Start by doing the necessary, then do what is possible and suddenly, you’ll be doing the impossible.

**Step 8 // Start Your Day with Something Positive**

Practise positive thoughts and behaviour daily until they become a habit. Every morning, tell yourself something you like about yourself and do something for someone who cannot repay you at least once a week.

Changing your mindset and removing your self-imposed barriers is the first step to detaching your life and career. Adopting the eight step guide to proactivity will enable you to understand your current reality and will help you identify and fill gaps in your career. After all, if you’re going to move up the ladder, make sure that your ladder is leaning on the right wall from get go. Be proactive NOW!

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**By SHEELA CHANDRAN**

Sheela Chandran is trainer & CEO of STARTER Talent Development and loves to help people move from “sitting aimlessly” to pro-active and action-oriented. If you would like to engage Sheela for her “Being proactive and action-oriented programmes”, email people@leaderonomics.com

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**By EVA CHRI$$TODOULOU**

Eva Christodoulou@leaderonomics.com

THEODORE Roosevelt has wisdom in his words. A positive attitude and having faith in oneself is immensely powerful tools. They are the tools that will keep us going, no matter what comes our way. Indeed, those that believe in themselves and their ideas are the ones that can in the end achieve something great, despite all the obstacles they may face along the way.

This is so true for all the little things we do in our daily lives, related and not related to our career. Whether it is taking exams at school or university, going for an admissions or job interview, presenting to our colleagues or top management, turning around that huge loss that our division is currently making, or even landing that dream job that seems to be so far from what we currently do, just prepare very hard for it. Do the necessary research, and have faith in yourself. Humans are capable of achieving much more than we give ourselves credit for. No problem is insurmountable if we combine faith with a good and thorough preparation.

The biggest obstacles that people face when it comes to achieving something are the lack of self-confidence, and the fear of failure. However, with the right attitude much can be achieved.

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**Eva Christodoulou wishes that everyone will believe in his or her ability and scale great heights in their careers and personal lives.**
A study by Diabetes UK done on 800,000 subjects claims that people with jobs that require sitting tend to have twice the rate of cardiovascular disease compared with people who mostly stand in their jobs.

Research by the British Journal of Sports Medicine says that sitting down for extended periods could make bottoms bigger due to the force exerted on the body tissues that make fat cells.

Steelcase US has produced the Wallstation, which is a desk with a treadmill built into it.

The British Journal of Sports Medicine claims that as soon as you sit down, electrical activity in the leg muscles shut off and calorie burning drops to one per minute.

Studies by the British Journal of Sports Medicine shows that after two hours of sitting down, your good cholesterol level drops by 20%.

Research done by the Pan American Health Organisation reveals that on average, a working adult is sitting for an average of 9.3 hours/day; 7.7 hours/day, which is a working adult is sitting for an average of 9.3 hours/day; 7.7 hours/day.

Over five large scale studies were done in the UK where researchers have claimed that sitting down for long hours and a sedentary lifestyle is almost as bad as smoking.

Spent too much time looking for that car?

Maybe it’s time you start doing what you love for a living!

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(Contest period: 20 November 2012 – 14 January 2013)

Visit myStarjob.com now!
Dear M.,

Thank you for being so honest in sharing your thoughts. You seem to be self-aware of your problem with procrastination and have taken some good, although drastic steps to help yourself overcome that problem. I believe you must have read a ton of “How to overcome procrastination” tips on the web as you have clearly identified the key actions and problems of procrastination like time management, distractions, prioritisation and the like. I actually don’t think I need to advise you on the problems of procrastination like time management, distractions, prioritisation and the like. I believe you must have read a ton of “How to overcome procrastination” tips on the web as you have clearly identified the key actions and problems of procrastination like time management, distractions, prioritisation and the like. I actually don’t think I need to advise you on the

1. Parking Lot is a tool we use very often in meetings to avoid that protracted meeting and assure you that you are NOT ALONE in this!

2. All the best M... The choice is in your mind.

3. Track Consequences – Another form of thinking about empowering you to avoid procrastination is to have a consequence chart so that you are reminded of the pain your procrastination can cause you. Every time you procrastinate get distracted, jot down the consequences. For example:

   a. Being late for work – Consequence: negative performance review
   b. Rushed a report with many errors – Consequence: get scolded by my boss

   Accumulate these and go through them so that by the end of the week, you can evaluate all the consequences that you have to face because of your bad habit. Hopefully, it would be painful enough to help you decide to try to be more proactive the following week to avoid the embarrassment of these consequences.

   Having said all the above, I do believe that truly you way you can overcome this is to set it in your mind to do so and have the willpower to see it through. All the steps in the world can be laid down in front of you if you do not make a commitment to follow through with them, it will be futile.

   All the best M... The choice is in your mind.

Ang Hui Ming

Dear CAREEROMERS,

I would like to share my problem – procrastinate everything. You see I am stuck, in fact. I am finding it difficult to get back on track. I am not a procrastinator by nature, mainly because I spend time reading Wikipedia or other sites and I am also not punctual and have less sense of time. My time management is very bad, even though time is the most important resource. I hope there is solution to my problem as I hope to be more productive, be able to prioritise and do the important things first. Your suggestion is highly appreciated as I really want to deal with this before it is too late.

I feel disappointed because I am unable to change this bad behaviour.

Thanks in advance.

M.

DEAR CAREEROMERS,

I would like to share my problem – procrastinate everything. You see I am stuck, in fact. I am finding it difficult to get back on track. I am not a procrastinator by nature, mainly because I spend time reading Wikipedia or other sites and I am also not punctual and have less sense of time. My time management is very bad, even though time is the most important resource. I hope there is solution to my problem as I hope to be more productive, be able to prioritise and do the important things first. Your suggestion is highly appreciated as I really want to deal with this before it is too late.

I feel disappointed because I am unable to change this bad behaviour.

Thanks in advance.

M.
Coming up in next Saturday’s issue . . .

DEBUNKING CAREER MYTHS

Find out how leadership and passion steered McDonalds towards great heights of success in Consulting Corner

Imran Hashim shares on how effective visual thinking helps planning and development

Lim May Lee shares her insight on how to set goals in one’s career

AP Photo/Lefteris Pitarakis