LET’S CELEBRATE!
MAKE TIME FOR CELEBRATION AT WORK
PAGES 8 & 9

THE PERFECT TEAM
Teamwork lessons from the Rolling Stones.  
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ACCOMPLISHING SUCCESS
is a function of hard work, determination, and values
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EFFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING
involves learning to trust your instincts
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can help your career development
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ROSHAN SAYS
COME ON AND CELEBRATE

N our past issues, we have touched on goal setting, driving productivity, teamwork, problem solving, growing your career and other aspects that steers you and your organisation towards achieving ultimate success. This week, we look into the importance of celebrating success and the power it yields in achieving longer-term achievements. I write about how the power of acknowledging achievements and the role it played in helping me and my team celebrate small achievements which resulted in a massive turnaround and grew my then organisation more than five times its size. You can find the story in our centrespread on pages 8 and 9.

Success, big or small, needs to be given recognition as this form of acknowledgment boosts an employee to strive even harder to achieve greater things for you and your organisation. Having celebrations in the office to recognise an employee's successful contributions plays an important role in ensuring that the employee feels appreciated and valued. It also serves as an encouragement for the employee to show more dedication to his/her employer. It may not have to be a huge accolade; even a small gesture such as a thank you note posted on the office notice board, a message or a short article in the company newsletter highlighting the achievement, goes a long way in showing that you are thankful for your employees' accomplishments. Sometimes, it can be as simple as office get-together, with some food, music and fun. It can also be a meal treat such as pizzas and desserts for all in the office. You can come up with various interesting ways to celebrate success in your office according to your creativity to keep things more exciting. Again, you can find some of the ways to celebrate success highlighted in our career pullout.

In this week’s issue, we have come up with a few interesting and ultimately worthwhile methods on how to celebrate the success brought in by employees in the office. They are not expensive, nerve-wrackingly difficult deeds but rather simple, easy ones which can be fun and exciting for all. An organisation that celebrates the achievements of its staff and comes up with interesting, exciting rewards and treats is a favoured establishment that will have a dedicated work force to support it.

Flip to pages 8-9 and read about how my simple satay party worked as a significant boost in getting the workforce to make extra efforts and drive more productively towards the company’s achievement. Find out also about how it was implemented and how it rendered success. Use this guideline to come up with innovative and creative methods to celebrate the success of your employees and create a dynamic work force within your organisation today.

So, read on this week and we do hope you enjoy our career guide. We also have other great articles on various other topics to help you become the leader you are meant to be. We do hope our career guide will continue to inspire you to keep learning and growing every day of your life. Learning is painful yet it is essential for our development and ultimately our success. We have filled this issue with ideas and resources to help you grow your career. Keep leveraging our amazing videos and other resources which can be accessed at www.leaderonomics.tv or at our main home site www.leaderonomics.com.

We wish you all the best in your career journey! We hope you have as much fun with this pullout as me and my team at Leaderonomics have had fun putting it all together. If you do have any feedback on the pullout, feel free to email me and my team from Leaderonomics at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com. We love all feedback (we believe it’s a gift from you to us regardless of the nature of the feedback)! So do send us your thoughts, ideas and aspirations for the pullout. Have a super weekend!

Warm regards,
Roshan Thiran
Editor, myStarjob.com & CEO, Leaderonomics
JENNY LOYNTON FINDS MALAYSIA UNFORGETTABLE

BY ANGIE NG
angie@theestar.com.my

B eing deprived of parental guidance since childhood did not stop Taiping-born Jenny Loynton (nee Simon) from realizing her dreams as a successful lawyer and a notable member of society in the United Kingdom. She is happily married to Briton Paul Goodwin and is a mother of two girls, aged 10 and 12.

Loynton and her three elder sisters and a brother were born and grew up in a Thai Buddhist temple, Wat Bodhicharam. After her mother passed away before she turned one, her father took off by himself, leaving the children with their grandparents.

“My father was Indian and my mother was half Thai, half Chinese. We are grateful for the temple monks and patrons for providing shelter to us. My maternal grandfather, Nai Boon Chithraporn, was the caretaker of the temple and my oldest sister was one of the founders of the temple. My eldest sister, Nelly, who was only 16 then, had to take care of us,” she relates to myStarjob.com.

Instead of blaming her circumstances, Loynton practises the virtues of gratitude, humility and not taking things for granted to earn her place in life.

She willed herself to do well academically and to put behind her the trying days in Taiping to become a notable Malaysian in the UK.

For the past two years, the 50-year-old director of her own legal firm, Loynton & Co Solicitors Ltd, is Queen Elizabeth II’s Deputy Lieutenant for the West Midlands; a royal representative reaching out to the ethnic minorities in Britain. She is the first Malaysian to be appointed to this role and will be carrying the coveted title until she reaches 70.

Capping her string of achievements that also include being on the board of governors of the Birmingham City University, is her recognition by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery recognising her as “one of the people” of Birmingham.

Loynton attributes her success to the love and support from good Samaritans, including the monks and patrons of the Thai Buddhist temple, and of course her own unyielding effort to make good in life.

The words of the chief monk of the temple still inspire this vivacious lady.

“She predicted that I was destined for big things when he heard my first cry. However, to achieve these things I had to ‘go across the waters’. I was only seven then and it was my first day of school! When the time came for me to leave for the UK, the monk gave me a betel nut to remind me of home. To me the betel nut is a token given by someone who symbolises humbleness and inspirational attributes,” she recalls.

Loynton proved her mettle by studying hard and earned herself the opportunity to pursue her A Levels in the UK. Her sister, Nancy, and brothers-in-law Christopher Boyd, who is executive chairman of CB Richard Ellis Malaysia, supported her studies financially.

It was during her student years in the UK that Loynton took up her first job “filling shelves” at Marks & Spencer’s Food Store in Solihull, an affluent upmarket town in England. Although the job seemed menial, it provided her with many worthy life-long lessons. “Probably to some people this must be the lowest paid job but to me it was an opportunity to learn and to integrate into the English society and understand them”, she says.

She had to clock in at the store by 7am daily from Monday to Friday.

“I remember my first day at work vividly; a winter morning in December 1983. It was misty and dark when I arrived at the store and was immediately given a uniform. There were a few other ladies much older than me but I was the only ‘brown’ person. The supervisor was a stern and officious lady. She showed me what was to be done and told me that I should put fresh items at the back and the ones with shorter shelf life in front. Checking the ‘sell by’ date was extremely important as those items with expired dates had to be removed. It was important that the items on the shelves looked attractive and neat. I made sure of that”.

INVALUABLE INSIGHTS

An important lesson she gained from the job was how to make things attractive on a shelf and the importance of time keeping, communicating with people and being aware of the surrounding things.

“I learned very quickly how to pay attention to details which unerringly prepared me as the lawyer I am today. I particularly appreciated the opportunity to be a part of the community and to ‘people watch’ without staring like some Malaysians do,” she muses.

One particular enduring moment of her first job happened one Saturday when the store was busy with Christmas shoppers, piling up their trolleys with jars of cranberry sauce, miniced pies and turkeys.

Loynton was in the bread section when she witnessed a well-dressed woman putting a pack of hot cross buns into her own bag instead of the trolley.

“I was horrified and did not know what to do. I had to use my common sense and followed the woman around the store pretending that I was tiding up the shelves praying that she would do the right thing by putting the pack back on the shelf.

When she came to the checkout, I managed to alert a fellow shelf filler. A supervisor quickly arrived. I felt my heart beating twice the beat. I was so scared as I could have made a mistake!”

That day she learned her first lesson that would shape her career and personal advancement.

“I did not know it then but I suppose the job ‘tested’ me. I knew that it was my duty to report the woman to my employers and to use my common sense. In Malaysia, when I was growing up I did hear stories about people stealing but usually those people were poor and stole to feed their families. Here, in this affluent town why did a woman, who looked prosperous, steal those buns which probably cost only pennies? I was asked to make a statement of what I saw. Now, as a lawyer, I have written many statements, reports, affidavits and declarations. I did not know then that I was going to be a lawyer but the experience of that day prepared me for the path of becoming a lawyer dealing with my first case of theft”, she reminisces.

Besides getting praised by her supervisor for being attentive, she also learned the importance of work ethics which she came to adopt in her business.

At Marks & Spencer; there was a canteen where the management and staff sat and chatted during their breaks. And today, Loynton provides lunch to her staff, engages and talks freely with them during break time to create harmony and a sense of togetherness.

REACHING OUT

On her role as the Queen’s representative, Loynton says it provided her with the opportunity to reach out to ethnic minorities and make people feel special.

She also lends support and offers praises wherever the situation warrants. Her “royal duties” are extremely important to her “as I am interested in what people do and of their achievements”. She says she has never abused her position as Her Majesty’s representative, or allowed it to increase her profile professionally or personally.

“I view it as an honourable, purposeful position. I feel it is important that people’s achievements and celebrations are marked with honour and pride,” she explains.

Loynton started her law firm 11 years ago after leaving her former partners who she says were “utterly unsupportive and chauvinistic”.

There are five lawyers and five support staff in her firm today.

“...I am approachable and work very hard. Good work ethics and an early start in the mornings which were the basis of my first job are important to me until today, I have not stopped working since I started training in 1985. I try to be the first one to arrive at the office so I can ensure that the office looks clean and attractive every morning”, Loynton adds.

She stresses that her main aim is not to become wealthy but to be a good person.

Going forward, she aims to make Loynton & Co the number one British law firm that makes significant impact in investments for clients from Asia and China into the UK.

“I think that I will be a very good envoy for Malaysia as I feel that Malaysia has not sold itself to this fast moving 24-hour media world. People in the UK still consider Malaysia as a third world country I’d like to change that perception. Whenever I have been asked where I originate from, I felt a sense of pride when I say I am from Malaysia”, she beams.

On life in the UK, she says, “of course there are good moments and not so good moments but generally they are good. My upbringing of being respectful of others has been important as I have never felt any racial discrimination or prejudice”.

There have been many memorable moments for her; getting invited to Buckingham Palace, meeting up with British Prime Minister David Cameron, and dining in the Houses of Lords, among the highlights.

Having been away in the UK for over 30 years, Loynton says she would love to retire in Malaysia. “This is the place I was born and where the sun never stops shining. It is the best place on earth! The food, smell and sound of Malaysia are hard to forget”, she says.

Loynton and her siblings still maintain a strong sense of togetherness and will travel across the world just to be with one another; “even if it was for only 24 hours”.

Sharing her words of wisdom to her fellow Malaysians, she says, “never forget your roots, be respectful and grateful for everything that comes your way.”

“Always have a big smile and never be revengeful. If a poor disadvantaged girl like me can make it, any young Malaysian can do it too. Never forget that Malaysians eat, sleep and talk all at the same time! No time to be depressed,” she chimes.

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There are some things that money can’t buy, like happiness.

There are some things that don’t require training, like learning to serve others.

There are some things that cannot be replaced, like a wonderful family and great friends.

Leaderonomics wishes each and every one of you a prosperous Chinese New Year with an abundance of happiness, a delightful time of serving each other and wonderful moments with family and friends.

Happy Chinese New Year.

Warm wishes from your friends at Leaderonomics
Thin-slicing is something everyone does all the time. In football, the most gifted strikers have “goal-sense” and great Gary Lineker scored goals for fun. In the military, brilliant generals possessed coup d’œil, meaning “the power of the glance”. Researchers discovered that the higher up the corporate ladder a business leader progresses, the more he or she relies on “guilt-feel” and that successful CEOs have a highly developed intuitive decision-making style, even though at times there is no clear logic to guide him or her.

The good news is that “thin-slicing” decision-making can be learnt and practiced. You can actually become better at making quick, fast, instinctive judgments through practice and experience. Stroke victims, who have lost their speaking ability, become thin-slicing experts over time by reading into facial expressions regardless of their competency levels. In business, the best salespeople are expert thin-slicers. The moment they meet a customer, they quickly listen and make snap judgments about the customer’s needs and state of mind. But they also avoid the biggest mistake many salespeople make – never judge a customer on the basis of his or her appearance and assume he or she is unqualified or lacks ability.

The concept is demonstrated by psychologist John Gottman, who for decades analyzed video-taped conversations of married couples and is able to predict with 95% accuracy whether the couples will stay together or get divorced in the next 15 years just by listening to a couple speak to each other for 15 minutes.

How does Gottman do it? He thin-slices these 15 minute conversations by disregarding expressions, tones and words, but instead focusing on four key cues: defensiveness, stonewalling, words and externalities like what a person drives, but zooms in on key cues from the customer, enabling him/her to close a sale.

So how do you learn this skill? Jack Welch, Fortune’s ‘manager of the century’, and famous for gut decisions, describes how he learnt to “thin-slice” – sometimes making a decision is hard because it is unpopular, but because it comes from your gut and defies a ‘technical’ rationale. Much has been written about the mystery of gut, but it’s really just pattern recognition, isn’t it? You’ve seen something so many times you just know what’s going on this time. The facts may be incomplete or the data limited, but the situation feels very, very familiar to you.

Another way to cultivate thin-slicing is by spending time with people not like us. This broadens horizons and provides new perspective in growing our experience-base. Having richer experiences and context sharpens our ability to thin-slice. Finally, pay attention to your emotional state. When stressed-out or in a bad mood, your “guilt-feel” is distorted by negative feelings. Police personnel tend to make a significant number of bad decisions after high-speed car chases, according to researcher Dave Grossman. Research has shown that bad “thin-slice” decisions are made when a person is highly stressed-up. And when your mind is relaxed, the ‘aha’ moments occur. But people are so stressed by overloaded schedules that they lose their own innate wisdom of intuition.

Thin-slicing can sometimes throw you off too, especially if you are over-confident and lack expertise in a changing field or function. For example, some of us have an inner prejudice or pre-condition that somehow taller people are very intelligent and forceful as leaders. As a result, many CEOs are taller people despite the fact that shorter people are just as smart and capable.

According to research in the book Blink, 14.5% of the US male population is six feet or taller yet 58% of CEOs of Fortune 500 companies is above six feet.

Professional speakers and trainers have long asserted that first impressions are formed within two minutes. Thin-slicing experts believe that it takes less than three seconds to thin-slice and create first impressions. I have interviewed and hired more than 1,000 people at various organisations over the past 15 years. If I look back at my best hiring decisions, they were hire made quickly and instinctively. At times, I had no rationale for those decisions, but my gut kept telling me it was right. And when I didn’t listen to my gut, I generally had regrets. Listening to your gut and making fast decisions is also profitable to your business and drives better business performance.

The saying, “trust your gut” is a cliché but it’s 100% true, if you have learnt the art of thin-slicing well. We are genetically programmed with a lifetime of knowledge that equips us with the ability to make GOOD decisions, quickly. Remember, information overload can negatively impact our ability to “thin-slice” effectively. So, go develop your gut and trust it!
10. BREAKFAST
As the saying goes, “eat breakfast like a king”. Having a healthy breakfast helps to jump start your day as it prepares your body and mind for a busy day at work. Having a nice meal for breakfast can brighten up your day. This is because things that you do and eat first thing in the morning can affect your mood.

9. PRAISE YOURSELF
Look in the mirror before you go to work every once in a while. Don’t be shy to praise yourself by telling yourself how good looking you are today or telling yourself that your hair looks wonderful. However, do not over exaggerate and be too proud of yourself, because people do not like individuals who are narcissistic!

8. ENCOURAGING QUOTES
Having quotes pasted up on the wall in your workplace can encourage you to have a better day at work. Quotes like, “Very little is needed to make a happy life; it’s all within yourself, in your own way of thinking,” “All is well” or “Life knocks us down but we can choose whether or not to get back up” can really make a difference.

7. TIME MANAGEMENT
When things are not organised, you will tend to get stressed with loads of work. Plan and set a time limit to complete what you need to do at work.

6. PLANNING
Always plan ahead. Prepare your own list one day before the actual day, and list down all the things that you have to complete within the day. This is to prevent you from forgetting any important tasks that you need to do.

5. EXERCISE
Wake up 30 minutes earlier and do a short exercise before getting ready to go to work. Exercising helps our mind and body get ready for a long day at work as our muscles will start warming up and we are able to release the tension from within us.

4. SLEEP
“Early to bed, early to rise, makes you healthy, wealthy and wise.” Always make sure you have enough sleep of at least seven to eight hours a day, to help you stay fresh and awake for longer. Not having enough sleep can affect your mood and brain. Thus, we may not function well when we are at work.

3. THINK POSITIVE
Tell yourself that today is going to be a great day and don’t let anything stop you. Whenever something that you dislike occurs, always try to look at the bright side. For example, “things may get worse if it’s not for this” or “there is always a reason for everything.” You can also give an excuse to yourself - for example, if on the way to work, someone tries to cut into your lane, instead of getting mad, just tell yourself “maybe he is in a rush because his wife is in labour” or “maybe she needs to go to the toilet.”

2. CLOTHING
Classy and formal clothes will help to boost the confidence in you. When you look nice and neat, you tend to feel good about yourself and become confident in whatever you are doing, including talking to other people.

1. LAUGHTER
Make it a point to share (appropriate) jokes with your colleagues or watch a funny video clip every once in a while, as laughter helps us to ease tension. By having a cheerful environment in the workplace, it enables you to have a great day at work.

To view this video, visit www.leaderonomics.tv/top10
COHESION is the invisible force that keeps a team together and is the basis for high performance as a unit. And perhaps nowhere is cohesion better demonstrated than by the career of the Rolling Stones, which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. During the last half-century, it has performed in more places to more people than any other band—and its most recent member—Ronnie Wood, joined nearly 40 years ago.

The Stones’ performance on record and on stage is the result of a combination of creative elements, lead, rhythm and bass guitars, drums, harmonica and Jagger’s vocals. Cohesion grew out of the band’s recognition that each member of the band was a master of his own instrument or voice. The Stones’ alchemy also stemmed from a fusion of different personalities, passions and the dynamics between Jagger and Richards is the group’s musical engine. Richards is the group’s musical engine. Richards is the group’s musical engine.

On stage, Jagger is a natural showman. He also takes the lead as the driving force in the Stones organisation and its highly lucrative business empire. It was Jagger who had the insight to bring in merchant banker Prince Rupert Loewenstein to turn around the band’s fortunes in the late 1960s. His need to control is legendary, and the fuel of the Rolling Stones continues to be the best manager to fill their own personal purpose is essential to attracting the right talent, inspiring them to do great work and keep working, when the team has become effective at performing.

The Rolling Stones have evolved and adopted a method of decision-making that cannot be mastered alone. Unless the members join the team and objectives are shared. Second is storming, in which the initial conflict and working as a unit. The Stones’s story suggests that the best teams go back over these stages again and again. They are able to form and keep working, when the team has become effective at performing.

The Rolling Stones keep going together because it can, and because it still want to. As Bruce Tuckman’s model of team development states that teams go through four stages before becoming effective. First is forming, where the members join the team and objectives are shared. Second is storming, in which the initial conflict and working as a unit. The Stones’s story suggests that the best teams go back over these stages again and again. They are able to form and keep working, when the team has become effective at performing.

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WHY LEADERS SHOULD CELEBRATE WINS

HINT: IT GIVES YOUR LEADERSHIP BRAND A BOOST!

By BRIGITTE BERCE
leaderonomics.com

WHY your team is essential is not a mystery. The importance of your role in motivating and leading your team can’t be overstated. That’s why when your team wins, it’s your job to make sure they feel the pride and excitement that comes with success. Celebrating wins is a great way to boost your leadership personal brand at the same time.

1. REMEMBER YOU and your team set out a vision to achieve your target. It’s your job to create strategies to achieve it, but you get to enjoy the moment when your team succeeds.

2. REMEMBER your team is essential. Your team succeeds when you succeed, and the world is speaking through your team.

3. REMEMBER your team is essential. You need to give your team goals to work towards, but you need to make sure your team is working towards goals that are meaningful to the company.

4. REMEMBER your team is essential. Your team is the one that will help you achieve your personal and professional goals.

5. REMEMBER your team is essential. Your team is the one that will make the company successful.

6. REMEMBER your team is essential. Your team is the one that will bring you success.

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As a leader, it’s your job to keep your team motivated towards their goals. When a success is achieved, your team will be excited. That’s why it’s important to celebrate success with your team.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS MOTIVATES YOUR TEAM TO CONTINUE DELIVERING GOOD WORK

Why is that important? Your leadership personal brand—defined as the way others see you—is your reputation, your relationships, your performance. As a result, it will impact your overall career and success. So, if you gloss over your team’s successes without recognition, what does that say about you as a leader? Do you think your team will feel valued and supported, or do you think they’ll feel like their hard work is going unnoticed?

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3. REMEMBER your goals.

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**COMUNICATION ENHANCEMENT**

Toastmasters is primarily an organisation that aims to assist its members develop their communication skills, in order to assist them with their career, personal relations and social situations where public speaking or disseminating information is needed.

Once a person becomes a member of Toastmasters, he or she is given a membership kit. This includes guidance and information on 10 assignments which members will be preparing for; to be conducted in the order specified. Each of these 10 speeches has different objectives, and intend to develop specific aspects of public speaking. The members are evaluated on the effectiveness of each speech by their peers, based on the specific objectives.

**THE OBJECTIVES OF A NEW MEMBER’S ASSIGNMENTS:**
1. Ice breaker – about yourself
2. Organising your speech
3. Getting to the point
4. Saying something clearly
5. Using body language
6. Vocal variety
7. Researching a topic
8. Using visual aids
9. Persuading with power
10. Inspiring the audience

After completing the first 10 assignments, members have an option to go for 15 advanced manuals, each with five assignments. These advanced manuals are focused on career-oriented skills, and members can choose which to take on. There are members who stay on in Toastmasters for many years, and the assignments provided are enough and are structured in a way that everyone, from first-time long-standing members, can continuously learn and improve.

**THE SESSIONS**

There are 24 meetings for each club in a year. Each meeting takes about two to three hours, and it is split into three segments:

1. **Assignment speeches**
2. **Evaluation session**
3. **Sergeant at arms**
4. **Imromptu speaking**
5. **Table topics**
6. **Researching a topic**
7. **Using visual aids**
8. **Inspiring the audience**
9. **Mirror – we provide suggestions for improvement**
10. **Evaluation to members and act as a “mentoringah counter”, looking out for the use of language, someone acting as an “ah, counter”, looking out for the frequency of fillers, and someone to ensure that members stick to their allotted time. These roles are to test the listening skills of the members.**

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

The organisation, in each district, is structured in the levels indicated in the diagram.

- **District Level**
  - **10-15 Divisions**
  - **4-6 Areas**

- **Divisions**
  - **4-6 Clubs**

- **Clubs**
  - **20-30 Members PER Club**

**THE DISTRICT & CLUB STRUCTURE**

At each level, there are positions of leadership to be filled. At club level for example, there are seven such positions:
1. President
2. VP education
3. VP membership
4. VP public relations
5. Secretary
6. Treasurer
7. Sergeant at arms (makes sure everything runs smoothly during sessions)

**GIVE YOURSELF A CHANCE TO IMPROVE**

Toastmasters international provides excellent and relevant training.

- **Leadership and Communication**
  - **Communication: Table topics**
  - **Assignment speeches**
  - **Sergeant at arms**
  - **Imromptu speaking**
  - **Table topics**
  - **Researching a topic**
  - **Using visual aids**
  - **Inspiring the audience**
  - **Mirror – we provide suggestions for improvements**

The processes teach you how to deliver evaluation without hurting the members. We also learn the art of communicating and interpersonal skills”, notes Lim.

**CHOOSING A CLUB**

Between clubs, the programme followed is standard. They may tweak a few things here and there, especially for the table topic sessions, however, they all follow similar patterns. The culture of each club however, may differ, as it really depends on the individuals who attend.

**COME AND JOIN A CLUB**

“Toastmasters has helped me acquire confidence as well as the ability to disseminate information in a manner that is easily digestible and at the same time eloquent”, says Nayyar. “We become all rounded individuals. Our participation increases our self-confidence, and this becomes all the more relevant when giving presentations to someone with authority”, adds Lim.

Essentially, attending Toastmasters teaches first, effective listening, then effective thinking, and finally, effective speaking.

Toastmasters is an organisation that is commendable for its large membership and its ability to pull together so many interested individuals from all walks of life to dedicate their time and commitment to other members – it is an organisation based on servant leadership and the commitment of its members to carry on learning, while at the same time helping their co-members improve on their side. For a nominal fee and the commitment of some time, anyone can join a club and benefit immensely from this organisation. Toastmasters will eventually benefit all aspects of one’s life, be it family, work, or social interaction in general.

To find out about clubs in your area, visit www.toastmasters.org.
I

MAGINE receiving your first pay cheque, the fruit of your labour. Finally, this is the reward for one month of slugging, sleepless nights and tolerating painful clients. Unfortunately, for most young adults, this is when the nightmare starts. With no financial education in our 11 years of formal education and with more banks conjuring fancy financial products, it is hardly surprising that today’s youth feel confused and intimidated by money matters. Moreover, for Gen Y-ers, instant gratification is a brainwash. While this issue is somewhat overwhelming, take baby steps by starting to budget. Budgeting in this sense is not merely a plan for expenses but rather an overall plan for your income, expenses, savings and investments. Start with a yearly budget and then break it down into monthly budgets. Adhering to a budget is achievable with discipline. Hence, make it as easy as possible by using mobile apps to record your cash flow. The key purpose of budgeting is to know where your money has been channelled, to avoid the classic “What happened to all my money?” at the end of the month. This awareness will allow you to make small but effective changes to your daily habits that will improve your financial situation. For example, you may realise that forego-ing independent. Besides, it will teach you the value of money, hence the chances of you splurging impulsively on a “must-have” iPhone will be less likely. Explore your career options and gain some valuable skills along the way. Another alternative is to start your own business. The recent trend of blog, shops mushrooming overnight is a testament to the easy start-up of an online business. Those with entrepreneurial instincts should consider starting something that they are passionate about be it shoes, IT gadgets or party planning services. However, all that hard work will go to waste without proper financial habits. Working certainly does not guarantee you will be able to pay for your own expenses. Besides investing time and energy into learning about savings and investments, ensure your expenses are purposeful. Identify your major expenses, decide whether they are necessary, discover alternatives and make adjustments. Certain decisions you make along the way are bound to affect your finances. For instance, deciding whether to move out after college or continue living with your parents, when to buy a car and how to finance your further studies is crucial. There are plenty of resources for advice but it is best to do your own research and decide for yourself. Bear in mind the innovative ways to obtain resources such as crowdsourcing to fund your business start-up. Once you start getting involved in the process of having sound financial education, you will be aware of such options. Take heed from successful public figures such as Donald Trump who made his children work through college. Donald Trump Jr’s first job was at the tender age of 13 as a dock attendant at the marina at Trump Castle. In college, they were given an allowance of US$300; anything more had to be worked for. Trump Sr., conceded that having his children work would teach them the value of money from a young age. Sharon Stone, Rachel McAdams and Queen Latifah all started out working as attendants in a fast food chain. Starting small, many successful people have worked their way to the top. In a nutshell, financial literacy is your suit or armour to face money matters. Stand up on your own two feet and pay for your own expenses. Control your finances before it controls you. By starting to do so from a young age, it will prepare you for life’s journey and a purposeful, more financially satisfying career.
Hi! is the most important examination of all... do well and your future will take care of itself...” With hindsight being a greater teacher than even Lao Tze, this sage advice from my parents is still vividly etched into my auditory memory. This mantra has been the way I’ve lived my life... “Nothing matters until you are finally ready to find the path...” to me at that time meant spending hours on end after school and weekends on the beach enjoying the breeze, playing football on the endless stretches of golden beach and diving into the gloriously blue-green sea of Tanjung Bungah in Penang. No lessons to be gained there as a “beach bum” doesn’t even make it to the Top 100 Career list. Unfortunately, SPM finally arrived and we sat for it with heavy hearts and even heavier trudges home after each paper. But all’s well that ends well. My cohorts and I made our way happily to Form Six in our beloved alma mater St. Xavier’s institution.

I really was happy to go back to school although I must admit, the spectre of SPM did not loom as large as it finally did towards the end of the two years. What drove me to take this option after SPM, you must be wondering. I was a wide-eyed, impressionable teenager and I had just been selected to be a break monitor—now before any of you wise crack about the title, it’s actually a junior prefect position and was determined between examinations and results discussion for another day. This was a key lesson in making the conscious decision to get into Form Six and not taking the easier path through college. Going to college locally or overseas has its merits, but don’t discount the experience and skills that an individual can gain pursuing further education locally. You gain from life what you want it to be — the key being the surrounding enablers that you nurture. I gained valuable lessons in time management and peopleskills in Form Six. I gained friends and life lessons and an indelible mark on my political psyche in Universiti Malaya (oh, and a bachelor’s in economics too, by the way).

My journey has seen me working for an NGO, an NPO, an MNC and now pouring my heart and soul into a mission to transform this nation by helping to build communities of love and nurturing people into leaders. The paths are many, the choices are varied, but the decisions are always ours, however hard they may be. I leave you with Coelho once again painting my world view — “People are capable, at any time in their lives, of doing what they dream of”.

So what kept me going through the spectre of STPM did not loom as large as it finally did towards the end of the two years. What drove me to take this option after SPM, you must be wondering. I was a wide-eyed, impressionable teenager and I had just been selected to be a break monitor—now before any of you wise crack about the title, it’s actually a junior prefect position and was determined between examinations and results discussion for another day. This was a key lesson in making the conscious decision to get into Form Six and not taking the easier path through college. Going to college locally or overseas has its merits, but don’t discount the experience and skills that an individual can gain pursuing further education locally. You gain from life what you want it to be — the key being the surrounding enablers that you nurture. I gained valuable lessons in time management and peopleskills in Form Six. I gained friends and life lessons and an indelible mark on my political psyche in Universiti Malaya (oh, and a bachelor’s in economics too, by the way).

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I had done enough to get into Form Six. Optimistic that I would be able to weather the storms ahead to enter Universiti Malaya after Form Six.

“It’s one thing to feel that you are on the right path, but it’s another to think that yours is the only path.” This was a key lesson in making the conscious decision to get into Form Six and not taking the easier path through college. Going to college locally or overseas has its merits, but don’t discount the experience and skills that an individual can gain pursuing further education locally. You gain from life what you want it to be — the key being the surrounding enablers that you nurture. I gained valuable lessons in time management and peopleskills in Form Six. I gained friends and life lessons and an indelible mark on my political psyche in Universiti Malaya (oh, and a bachelor’s in economics too, by the way).

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Eva’s journey has spanned both the non-profit world of youth development with LaSalle Centre to the corporate world of IBM Finance. He is currently a talent programme manager with the corporate division of Leaderonomics striving to transform the nation by growing people into Leaders.

By VINESH NAIDU
vinesh.naidu@leaderonomics.com

I sounds a bit hypocritical to say “Do what you love”, many of us are fortunate enough to have the luxury of choosing what we do. Whether it is because we do not have the skill set to do what we really want, or we were not given the opportunity, or we just need money to pay for rent and food and cannot afford sitting around waiting for that perfect job. Some of us often end up doing things that we do not necessarily like, and in some extreme cases, in fact, hate. Even after listening to our parents’ constant reminders of “Make sure you study, so you can go to university and get a good job—that’s the only way to have options in life”, we sometimes end up doing what we do not really love — either because we were not given a job in the field that we love, or because the field that we love does not pay enough for us to sustain our lifestyles. What then happens to those of us who do not really “Do what they love”? Should we be forever doomed to be unhappy at a task that takes up most of our time? Well, of course not! There are always choices. One, is to carry on doing what you are doing, all the while aiming to develop yourself and ensure you are ready to move into what you really want to do. The other, is to learn to “love what you do”. Surely there must be a reason why you chose your current profession over the few choices you had at the time. Go back and look at the positives of what you do — try to understand how you can make the most of your “job”, and how you can utilise it to develop yourself and achieve your dreams. Surely there is something there that has the potential of keeping you happy!

By EVA CHRISTODOULOU
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“Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life” — Confucius

OK, NOW THAT THE FUTURE IS HERE... SOME DEEP THOUGHTS AS TO WHAT’S NEXT?

WHAT’S AFTER SPM?

SIXTH FORM VS COLLEGE LIFE

By VINESH NAIDU
vinesh.naidu@leaderonomics.com

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

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WHAT’S AFTER SPM?
ANY of us fear the F word. The horrid, four-letter word – F beyond any shadow of a doubt is the word that symbolises failure, which is something that almost every one of us will experience at some point in our life.

Getting a big red F usually means the end of the road. The “culture” of failure is highly-frowned upon and shunned. It seemed to have continued on into working life as well. But we never stop for a moment and think that maybe, just maybe, calculated failures are what we really need to advance – after figuring out what and where exactly we went wrong.

We all know of someone who was deemed a failure during school days, yet turned out to be a polished figure in their career. And the explanations? They learned a great deal from previous failures and were determined not to repeat them in the future. It’s a fair to say that usually these characters are more likely to break the norm. They go on to create something significant while working in their adult lives – after experiencing a bout of creative disruption earlier on.

Having said that, why is it then that we fear failure so much? Too often we worry about the dire consequences that come with every flop, especially in our career. We rarely question the need to occasionally think out of the ordinary. Perhaps we take the maxim “if it can’t be broken don’t fix it” too seriously. If that is true, by that same logic, we should have never made any progress in any aspect of our lives. How then, can we realise our full potential if we never experience and learn from failures? Pick any popular figure, and we quickly realise that it is common of them to have had a remarkable ascent from defeat.

For instance, the inspiring story of Abraham Lincoln, arguably the most revered president of the United States. He is well-known for ending slavery and bringing America to great heights. The usual great leadership stories that even today aspiring leaders take a cue from. The less revealed tale however that Lincoln had actually failed at eight elections, twice in his business, and even had a series of nervous breakdowns – all before he significant and worth a steady stream of failures, yet Lincoln did not quit. He embraced those failures, learned a thing or two, and emerged a role model for perseverance.

Let’s take a look at recent icons. In his book, Rick Newman studies 12 highly successful people (the likes of the late Steve Jobs and J.K. Rowling) and finds that they all share one very important trait – failure. More to the point, they rebounded from failures.

One might argue that Jobs might or might not be one of the greatest CEOs in modern history. A lot of Apple Inc’s incredible rise to success was attributed to this man. But it was never smooth sailing for Jobs. From the massive achievement of the newly-launched Macintosh, he was fired in 1985 – by the very own company that he founded! He funnelled his disappointment into powerful motivation – for example driving Pixar to become the most celebrated animation studio, and most importantly his return to Apple. Imagine if he had never failed – consumer-friendly innovations (simple graphical interface, mouse, intuitive smartphone, tablet) might not enjoy the same rate of popularity as today.

The degradation is to embrace failures as part of continuous learning. To overcome past mistakes and gain wisdom from the many defining moments in life.

There are a lot of rise-from-failure stories out there. Even our local iconic business leaders have had to endure failures to get to where they are now. Ask any of them and they will probably agree to the notion that failures can help you tremendously in the future. It helps to realise that failure is just a process. Quite simply, if you don’t fail, you will never succeed.

There is no shame in failing. Don’t fear failure so much that you refuse to try new things. If celebrated, you can only yourself to blame for not learning from it.

By IMRAN HASHIM
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E M B R A C E   T H E   F   W O R D

I F   Y O U   D O N ’ T   F A I L ,   Y O U   W I L L   N E V E R   L E A R N.

WHAT’S MORE IMPORTANT: THE SALE OR YOUR REPUTATION?

By SIMON SINER

ONE definition of a prostitute is someone who sacrifices a good name in order to make a buck. But what do you do when someone else is driven by the sale but it is your reputation that suffers as a result?

This is the risk run by any company that relies on a third party to sell its product. Franchises, car dealers, distributors and affiliates are independent businesses that trade off of someone else’s reputation. It is a regional airline, for example, offers bad service it is not its company or brand that is damaged, it is Delta, American or other brand names that appear on the side of the plane.

This is the case with car dealers, as well. And I recently had an experience at Fiat of Manhattan that was nothing short of mind-blowingly bad.

I walked in, very excited to get a little Fiat 500. I told them that I was prepared to make this the easiest deal of their day. I even told them that I already looked up the price on the Fiat website and was willing to pay it. No haggling required. Four hours later - that’s right, FOUR hours later of being put through the ringer, guess where we ended up - right at the beginning, at the original price I offered to pay.

In the process, the branch manager insulted me, took me for a moron and would try to raise the price hoping I wouldn’t notice. Lies, deception, fast-talk and every other tactic usually reserved for a stereotypical used car dealer were employed. I’ll save you all the gory details including the tale in which I was told, “I just talked to my boss and he said I can offer you the price you want”, which sounds good except she never left her seat the whole time we were talking.

The result: I felt frustrated, angry and dejected. My excitement was gone. Even when I went to pick up the car – my excitement reemerged once they made us wait an hour-and-a-half despite the fact I called in advance and they told me what time to come in. Instead of asking me if I was excited and pumping up me to take possession of my new Fiat 500 - they made sure to tell me that I “made them work hard” and they weren’t making any money on me – a clear indication of their priorities. It was clear that this dealership is motivated by one thing and one thing only: the sale. Worse, it’s not its name that hangs on the door.

Whoever owns that dealership suffers nothing except maybe I wouldn’t recommend the dealership to anyone. The name that suffers is that.

So why didn’t I just buy the car somewhere else you ask? The dealership has a deal with parking garages in Manhattan, offering really cheap parking. If other dealers in the area offered something similar (I checked, they didn’t), I would have bought the car somewhere else. But given the price of the car as a true big deal. Such a big deal, in fact, that even getting a bad deal on the car still works out cheaper than paying full-price for a garage.

The dealership is cleaning up. Manhattan residents who own a Fiat 500 have little choice but to buy from this one dealer even if they know they can get a better deal or get treated better somewhere else. The dealer even bragged about sales claims, claiming to be the top Fiat seller in the North East. Which is very good. Sadly, it is the Fiat brand and the customer that are suffering...not the dealer.

To be fair, I tweeted that this dealership was ruining the Fiat brand and someone from Fiat USA has already tried to contact me to find out what happened. I have never talked to the person yet, but I will try to.

It is what happens next that really tests the theory of what is more important, the sale or the reputation. Fiat’s foray into the American market with the 500 after a 30-year hiatus was disappointing and it is working to make up lost ground.

The question is, given that indeed this one dealership may be moving more cars than any other in the region, is that more important to Fiat than the damage that this dealership may be doing to its brand and reputation? Time will tell.

Whenever we use a third party to represent us, we must hold it to our high standards. We must earn the right and work hard to maintain the right to use our well-earned reputation and good products to make money. In return, it must promise, protect and advance our good name.

However, if the parent company fails to hold its dealers and affiliates accountable, regardless of the sales numbers, then it will end up looking like the pimp in this game. And that leaves us of feeling cheap, dirty and used and likely never return to that street corner ever again.
According to a Forbes article, the happiest employees are more motivated and productive in the workplace.

According to Mercer Consulting, Finland has the longest period of statutory minimum days’ leave, special leaves and public holidays in Europe, with 44 days off per year.

In 2013, the top three countries that have the highest number of national holidays in the Asia-Pacific region are Hong Kong, Malaysia and Philippines with 18, 17 and 16 days respectively.

Mercer’s statistics in 2011 showed that Colombia had the highest number of public holidays and Mexico, the least.

The most celebrated holiday in the world, not inclusive of New Year’s Day, is Christmas; followed by Easter, and Wesak Day.

In Australia, during a 2011 Christmas party held for the Airservices Australia’s Melbourne staff, a senior male manager allegedly groped and bit a junior female colleague.

According to Taxpayers Australia, presents that a company in Australia gives to each of its valued customers during Christmas are tax deductible to the company.
DEAR CAREER NOMERS,

I am in my late-20s. I graduated as an industrial designer a few years ago and started working as a product designer. At that time, I had so much interest and passion that drove me to continue being a designer for five years until two years ago. The industry is very limited as only a handful of companies here focus on product designs compared with design hubs and design-driven companies in the UK, the United States, Japan or Australia. Because of this, I decided to make a career switch into the manufacturing industry as a process engineer and later an industrial engineer. My job scope will be diversified into planning, improvement and management in a production line. Should I make another job switch and if so, how can I discover what I really like to do and what I am capable of? I am a “Jill of all trades” in a few areas. I have experience and exposure in different areas but I do not have a specific talent or skill focus. I am afraid that I will be stuck in my current company for the rest of my career life and as age catches up, it will be too late to make a career switch. In addition, I don’t know what my passion or interest really is or what other fields I can venture into. How can I find direction and what is your advice?

Best regards,

BRENDA

DEAR BRENDA,

As you mentioned, the opportunities in Malaysia for industrial design are very limited and at most times not as robust or prioritised as in certain foreign countries niche in innovations. That is also because Malaysia is more of a hub for manufacturing capability rather than an innovation hub at the moment. I’m not sure if you have to live in Malaysia and where your degree in industrial design is from (ie, is it recognised internationally?) But if you want to continue to pursue your passion, then you should consider applying for roles in countries more well-known for product innovations. Some Asian countries that are and have been investing heavily in innovation is Japan and South Korea if you don’t plan to go too far away from Malaysia. That’s when you can build your specialisation in industrial design and you can come back to Malaysia with your expertise.

Alternatively, consider being an expert in your current field. Perhaps you feel disadvantaged because you do not have the “engineering” qualification, but I have to tell you, that experience matters a lot in the manufacturing industry. In fact, most engineers, when they join the workforce, work towards getting a certification in a particular expertise. I’m not familiar with the “qualifications” in the production field, but I’m sure there are certain certifications you can look for in your current organisation to build on your expertise.

On top of that, “process/production” expertise is sought after. There are many roles out there where “process/production” expertise is in high demand and if you can position yourself and set yourself apart in this field, you will be able to leverage this experience in many different organisations. You mentioned that you are a “Jill of all trades” in some areas. Well, employers value people who are flexible, you should be proud that you are a well-made “engineer” in your current work capacity through your own initiative and willingness to learn. This should be a trait you shout about when you go for interviews. It’s your strength.

All the best!

ANG HUI MING

DEAR BRENDA,

If I can just rephrase the few questions you posed, it will mainly revolve around rediscovering your passion, if your abilities match your passion and what do you do once you have answered the first two questions.

From what I read, it doesn’t seem to me that you have lost your passion. Instead, your eagerness to chase your dreams is probably dampened with the many unexpected industry challenges that have hit you unexpectedly, such as the lack of demand for your specialised skills or being less qualified compared with your peers. These circumstances seem to have left you a little jaded, hence you start to question your passion and strengths.

That said, it is not uncommon for us all to go through this time of questioning what we love, or thought we love. And trust me, after this episode, a decade down the road, you may be asking the same question again. The truth is, our passion may change/tweak with the different seasons in our life.

For now, I have a few questions that I’d like you to ask yourself. Journal it if possible, as you can look back on this in the near future to reaffirm yourself of your decisions.

1. What attracted you to the industry in the first place? What is still attractive to you and what is no longer attractive as you see it?
2. In your role as industrial designer, process engineer and industrial engineer, which part of the job did you enjoy the most? Be specific as you work on each role individually. At this stage, don’t think about what you CAN do, i.e. your ability, but just what you LIKE to do, i.e. your interest.
3. “I am reflecting on the same three roles, list down specific parts of the job that you did/do well in. Disregard the fact that you may not even like what you did well in. Now, cross-check both lists. Here, you will get an idea of areas that your passion and your skills meet.

Outside of your job, is there something that has caught your attention with regards to your interest and/or skill in it? This can be a societal project that you’re involved in or hobbies. If there, write them down.

Now, if you compare your list in Q2 and Q5, do they seem similar or vastly different? If similar, then your passion probably has not shifted far from where you started. If it’s vastly different, then you will need to take some time off, talk to your friends and family and ask them to tell you what they THINK interests you. Sometimes, the people around us can help us see our blind spots.

From the list, choose a few interests that you want to zoom into and build yourself up in those areas. This means practice, reading, courses, qualifications, training, etc.

Sometimes, little detours in our career life can be building blocks to our eventual career destination. More importantly, I suggest you don’t let your fear of “not being in demand” and “not good enough” stop you from persevering in your dreams and developing yourself. All the best!

ELISA DASS AVIN
Coming up in next Saturday’s issue...

STRAATEGIC
INFLUENCE
DO PEOPLE WILLINGLY FOLLOW YOU?

Don’t let the past weigh your dreams down.
writes Roshan Thiran

Also next week

➔ To kiss, hug or shake hands? Appropriate greetings in Image Matters

➔ Leadership wisdom from The Lion King in Starting Young

➔ Women and Careers asks if occupational stereotypes still apply to women