A state of mind

Overcoming obstacles is a state of mind. The more we think of them as obstacles, the harder it is to overcome them.

Pg 6-7

LEADING CHANGE

is an important skill for every manager

Pg 11

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

in the workplace should be dealt with from the outset

Pg 12

DRESSING APPROPRIATELY
during presentations can strengthen your impact

Pg 13
A couple of weeks ago, I sat down with Victoria Martin, senior director of Diversity and Inclusion (EMEA and APAC) at AIG, at the Women in Leadership conference in Kuala Lumpur. Naturally, our conversation centered on the topic of workplace diversity.

Often times when we think of the word “diversity,” the main concepts that come to mind are differences in terms of nationality and ethnicity. However, Martin points out that this only covers a small subset of the fullness of the term. There are many other elements to diversity that can be considered: personal skill sets, exposure to different cultures and environments, leadership style, gender, socio-economic background to name just a few.

Organisations like Malakoff, Alliance Bank, SapuraKencana Petroleum and AIG seem to unanimously agree that diversity in the workplace brings about better results because it puts on the table various strengths and a variety of opinions that if managed well, will produce the best results. This week’s centrefold examines why this is so and how diversity can be implemented in organisations.

For employers, we hope this issue will offer practical tips on how to ensure your organisation gets a great variety of talents who possess the skill sets you require, but also bring a variety of perspectives and ideas to the table to maximise your company’s performance.

For individuals in the working world, we offer this week as a valuable insight into the way several companies plan their recruitment policies and more importantly, how they set their talent objectives so that you’re aware of career possibilities for yourself. Many companies out there are prepared to empower individuals with the tools they need to craft the best career path that allows them to reach their potential — sometimes even in a field different to what their previous experiences dictate but that demand the same skill set. Find out who these exceptional companies are, and get a foot in their door. These are the companies to be at.

As always, we aim to fill this career guide with insights that we hope will expand your mind and help you sharpen the skills in your career tool belt. Rupa Sivanoli examines the topic of leading change in your career tool belt, and in Consulting Corner, Joseph Tan writes about the importance of your words in sustaining a high performance culture.

If you have a comment on our pullout — whether a suggestion for improvement, a topic you’d like to see discussed, or even a commendation on things you feel we are doing right, send us an email at ian.lee@leaderonomics.com. Alternatively, we store all videos on our TV website: www.myStarjob.com. You can also find us on Facebook at Facebook.com/Leaderonomics.

Have a great week ahead. Until next Saturday.

LILY CHEAH
Editor, myStarjob.com

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**IS YOUR WORKPLACE A MELTING POT?**

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**DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE**

**FIND DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION APPROACHES**

Different people tend to have diverse styles of communicating. Don’t just stick to your usual approach of communicating with others; for example, younger colleagues may prefer communication via technology, while the older ones may prefer a direct approach.

**FIND YOUR COMMON CORE VALUES**

Opposite isn’t the only thing that attracts. There will always be certain core values which would be commonly shared between colleagues of different backgrounds. Get to know your colleagues and once you find these common values, you will have something to talk about, and thus open the doors towards team bonding.

**R.E.S.P.E.C.T**

Aretha Franklin couldn’t have said it better in her hit song. When working together with different generations and races, it is very important that you understand and respect each other’s values and beliefs, even if they may be different from what you practise. Be aware of hand gestures and body language when speaking to people from different cultures, to ensure that you don’t accidentally offend them.

**HAVE GROUP ACTIVITIES**

Have lunches and social activities outside working hours together with your colleagues. Use this time to understand them better and you may just discover your new best friend among them.

**KNOW GENDER ETIQUETTE**

Different culture groups have different beliefs and principles on interaction between men and women. Physical contact between men and women may not be acceptable in more conservative cultures. In situations like these, it would be best to just offer a friendly smile when greeting them.
Quijano joined pharmaceutical company Warner Lambert as a management trainee two months after graduating with a bachelor's degree in business management from the Ateneo de Manila University. She completed a 12-month training programme in various departments before taking up a permanent position in marketing. The position she applied for.

From the get-go, she was determined to advance as far as she could. After the year's training, she was made brand assistant in the consumer products division and subsequently in the over-the-counter products division. The five years she worked with Warner Lambert went by very quickly as she moved around different product categories and got promoted quickly. She was a full-fledged senior brand manager by the fifth year.

“I loved my job. I enjoyed the creative side of it. Launching new products, reviving an old brand and turning it into one of our biggest and most profitable brands,” she shares with myStarjob.com.

She was part of the team responsible for creating advertising campaigns and working with the sales force to bring new products to market. Looking back, she attributes the great relationship she had with the sales team as one of the elements that supported her career progress in Warner Lambert.

“It was given that sales and marketing are at odds with each other but I had a great relationship with our sales team. Needless to say that the good relationship helped a lot in my performance,” she recalls.

She attributes her first job for some of the life lessons she has learned both professionally and personally.

“I was blessed to be surrounded by people who were really smart, who were good leaders, and who were genuinely interested in training me and helping me become successful. As a young employee, I was looking for role models and I found a number of them in this company,” she says.

ROSE AMONG THE THORNS
Quijano was the youngest and for a long time, was also the only female brand manager in her team. During that time, which was 33 years ago, although brand management was still a ‘man’s world’, she managed to break the glass ceiling, thus paving the way for other deserving women. Despite that perceived stigma, Quijano was thankful she did not have to act like a man to prove her worth.

“I still speak slowly and softly. I wear heels and make-up. I tried learning a few men’s ways to be in and accepted, but I quickly found out that at the end of the day all they were interested in were results. And results were the easy part,” she muses.

Nothing less than excellence was expected of the employees, and of course having the mindset of winners and being aggressive in getting market share helped.

“The most important lesson I got was on leadership. We had so much trust in our boss that we happily worked hard and put in long hours.

“On a few occasions when we had to work overnight or through the weekends, I saw him sending flowers with 'thank you' notes to the wives of my colleagues.

“Family was recognised as part of our team. I kept that lesson close to my heart ever since,” she reminisces.

As a young 20-year-old eager to explore the world, Quijano was imprestionable.

“Although I continue to learn until this very day, many of my life long lessons were learned when I was younger, and I continue to hone them as I get older. It’s important to learn the right skills and the right values early on. That’s why a company’s culture is important.”

With the experiences she had gathered from her first job, the mother-of-two now advises her children that they should be thoughtful when choosing their first job.

“It’s not just the money. I remind them to choose a reputable company which has a training system in place. The first job will dictate what they learn and pretty much dictates their next job, as it did to me. When it was time to move on, my training, previous superiors who also moved on, and the credibility of my first company were all important factors in my landing another great job,” she recalls.

Being born to a family of six children, Quijano says she and her siblings were brought up appreciating the importance of getting a good education and using it to become better people and improve their lives.

“While my father provided well for us, we were brought up believing that we should create our own destiny. We had more material things than most people around us and we were taught the joy of sharing,” she recalls.

ENCHANTED BY HER JOB
Quijano joined Nu Skin Enterprises some 15 years after an illustrious career in various other companies including Tupperware, Sara Lee Direct Selling Asia and S.C. Johnson & Son Inc.

“This is the longest I have stayed in a company and I look forward to many more years of service. The company gives me the opportunity to do what I love. We are a lucrative business opportunity but at our core, we are helping people. It is an uplifting company culture.”

She manages South-East Asia and the Pacific regions that cover 10 markets, around 400 employees, more than 5,000 executive distributors and a turnover of US$300mln last year.

The company recorded six consecutive years of year-on-year growth and doubled its business twice in those years. “Nu Skin is growing fast globally with new opportunities opening up for us from time to time. That’s why 15 years went by very fast. There’s something new and challenging each time,” she discloses.

According to Quijano, Nu Skin measures its success by the number of people it has helped to create a sustainable business that provides them and their family with a higher quality of life. “In this part of the world, our business model and our products are truly relevant. I want Nu Skin to be a major player in every market that we operate in,” she says.

Of course, she also sees herself assuming new roles and responsibilities within the achievement of the future. “There are many career opportunities in this company. Fifteen years ago, I was hired as SEA regional manager. Five years later, I became general manager of our Thai and Malaysian operations,” she notes.

She has lived in Kuala Lumpur for four years and helped open most of the company’s markets in South-East Asia.

Before assuming the position of regional president, she was vice-president for global sales services based in Nu Skin’s head office in Provo, Utah in the United States.

With her illustrious career record, she was named as the Best Asian Executive in 2010 by International Stevie Awards for leading Nu Skin South-East Asia as the fastest-growing region in the Nu Skin world. Young people who are getting started in the working world will do well to heed Quijano’s advice.

“Find out what is important to you. Find out what makes you happy and develop a career around it. That’s the only way you can overcome the many difficulties that come with building a career and it will give meaning to what you do. If you do what you’re passionate about, you will produce great results and great results usually bring with it financial gains,” she says encouragingly.

Quijano was one of the shortlisted candidates for the Leadership Businesswoman of the Year award presented at the Women in Leadership Forum in Kuala Lumpur on March 28. The forum was organised by business information company, Nasoba Group.

By ANGIE NG
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PASSIONATE FROM THE START

MELISA TANTOCO QUIJANO STAYS TRUE TO HER CAREER MISSION

Quijano’s first job has taught her some of the life-long lessons in life.

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As companies battle for the best talents, talent decisions take on greater complexity. In Leaderonomics, we believe that by first understanding your needs for talents, we can better assess, identify and develop the potential superstars in your organisation.

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**Tongue Discipline no.1: Confront Deviation Immediately**

Your power to act is directly proportional to your confrontational speed. Let’s say you discovered your employee lied about the reason why he was on medical leave yesterday. The effectiveness of your leadership may not be sustainable if you are not aware of one major blind spot. The need for performance could blind you to the necessity for conversations. What does it take to sustain a high-performance culture that goes beyond just neat slogans and detailed quality charts? The tool for maintaining the momentum of performance has more to do with words than works. How well you control your tongue is more important than how you manage your task.

**Tongue Discipline no.2: Compliment Others Publicly**

When an employee is asked to go the “extra mile” when it comes to performance and productivity, they also need that “extra smile” from you as the authority. Think about it — wouldn’t it be more pleasurable working for someone who recognises your effort and “smiles” in appreciation? Do not fall into the trap of being a “militant manager” who prefers to tell and not tell people they are doing well. On the contrary, your responsibility as a manager is to make the mistake of waiting for the other party is willing to do so. The longer you delay the words of praise and compliment, the more insincere it becomes when you finally get around to doing it.

**Tongue Discipline no.3: Commitment Before Communication**

The weight of your words becomes heavier as you progress in your leadership role. Despite the fact that the evidence may be overwhelming against the other party, you must begin by playing to honour, and on and on. Your brain is at the centre of all this.

**Building a high-performance culture**

What does it take to sustain a high-performance culture? Performance stress happens when your words of leaders. You can generally get people to perform based on your positional authority but when it comes to sustainable performance, you need to demonstrate that you are a person of principle and of your words.

**The weight of your words becomes heavier as you progress in your leadership role.**

**Tip for a Character-Wise Conversation:**

Despite the fact that the evidence may be overwhelming against the other party, you must begin by playing the role of the lawyer rather than the judge. A simple and sincere compliment. Many make the mistake of waiting for the moment of performance appraisal or long service awards night to officially state your compliments. The longer you delay the words of praise and compliment, the more insincere it becomes when you finally get around to doing it.

Here are the steps towards a complimentary conversation:

1. Define the character qualities demonstrated (responsibility, creativity, punctuality, diligence, dependability, thoroughness, etc.).
2. Illustrate the incident with details — who was involved, what was the task, when it took place, and what the circumstances were.
3. State the benefits. Link the demonstration of good character with commendable results.
4. Tip for a Character-Wise Conversation: Do not underestimate the power of a simple and sincere compliment. Many make the mistake of waiting for the moment of performance appraisal or long service awards night to officially state your compliments. The longer you delay the words of praise and compliment, the more insincere it becomes when you finally get around to doing it.

Here are the basic steps for a confrontational conversation:

1. Share the facts and wait for a response (in case there are other factors you are not aware of).
2. Relate how the offense affects the bigger picture (team performance, company reputation, the employee’s own future, etc.). Never make it a personal affront.
3. State your own responsibility (what you are willing to do).
4. Ask for a response (what the other party is willing to do).
5. Decide the next course of action (depending on the response above).

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IMPOSSIBLE IS NOTHING
OVERCOMING OBSTACLES IS KEY IN LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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A few months ago, Jamie and I were facilitating at an IMD class. In January 1999, Andrew was just a normal bloke who loved to climb mountains with his best friend. As he and his best friend reached the top of Les Droites in the Mont Blanc massif, they were caught in a horrible storm, trapped on a small ridge with winds of 90 mph and temperatures of -30°Celsius for five nights. On the fifth night, his best friend died of hypothermia. Miraculously, Andrew survived the experience and was helicoptered off the mountain. However, Andrew lost both his hands and legs. With no hands and legs, he wished he had died on the mountain. Andrew spent months in rehabilitation, slowly learning to walk again (with artificial legs). But deep inside, every fiber of his being, led him to believe he would climb mountains again. Soon after he learnt to walk, he decided to challenge himself by climbing up Scotland’s highest hill, Blackford Hill. Andrew decided to challenge himself further from hill to mountain, to finally climbing Kilimanjaro, Africa’s highest peak with three other disabled mountaineers.

Andrew kept challenging himself to overcome obstacle after obstacle, taking part in skiing, snowboarding, paragliding, caving and even completing the Ironman Triathlon. All without hands or legs. How did he manage to do all that?

Andrew’s simple answer was to “keep setting impossible goals, break them down into smaller mini-possible goals, keep persevering and achieve them one by one. Then, disregard what everyone says is possible or not, and keep pursuing your dream.”

In his case, even though every single person tried hard convincing him to give up on his dreams, he personally believed it was possible, ultimately succeeding in climbing icy mountains. Andrew clearly believed it’s not problems that determine your state, it’s your attitude.

Great leaders understand that obstacles are part of life and need to be dealt with. Andrew is not special in that sense. Nelson Mandela overcame huge obstacles, including detention for more than 27 years, as he pursued his dream of eliminating apartheid. Jack Welch went through a horrendous first few years as he struggled through numerous obstacles as General Electric CEO in his mission to make GE “the most productive enterprise on earth.”

Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Steve Jobs and Sir Richard Branson all had to overcome significant obstacles that were thrown their way in the pursuit of their goals. And overcome they did. In studying their lives, we find four key reasons that helped them overcome obstacles:

1. Nullify your “hostage” or “victim” mindset

2. Reframe obstacles into opportunities

3. Break down the obstacles into smaller achievable chunks

4. Learn from the obstacles but keep the focus on your big goal

NULLIFYING YOUR “HOSTAGE” MINDSET

When someone tells us that something we plan to do is an impossible task, our general reaction is to agree with them. Sometimes we become our biggest obstacle, allowing fears and self-doubt stand in our way. We become “hostages” to the obstacles faced. This mindset cripples us to believe that the obstacles faced are bigger and scarier than what they are. Great leaders know how to quickly free themselves from this “victim” state.

We cannot control what happens to us, but can control how we react to it. Obstacles become obstacles only when you believe they are so. Sometimes when you don’t realise that you are facing an obstacle, you overcome these obstacles without a second thought. However, when someone highlights this obstacle, we are suddenly paralysed.

George Dantzig, was a math student, with a habit of coming late for classes. During a class, where Dantzig was late, his professor Jerzy Neyman wrote two examples of famously unsolved statistics problems on the board. At the end of the class, Dantzig assumed that the two problems were homework assignments. According to Dantzig, the problems “seemed to be a little harder than usual,” but even though he struggled, he finally figured out how to solve it and handed in the completed solutions.

Professor Neyman was surprised to receive Dantzig’s “homework” as he did not assign homework. He reviewed it and could not believe that his “student” had solved two famous unsolved problems. Dantzig later admitted, “If I had known that the problems were not homework but were in fact two famous unsolved problems in statistics, I probably would not have thought positively, would have become discouraged, and would never have solved them.”

Our state of mind need to be addressed first if we are to overcome obstacles. If we believe that obstacles are too big to handle, they will become too big.

Before 1954, doctors knew for certain that the four minute mile was a physical barrier that no man could break without causing significant damage to the runners’ heart. Then came Roger Bannister who did it in three minutes and 59 seconds. Within months of Bannister’s achievement, 16 other runners accomplished the same feat. Something that was impossible, quickly became possible.

So what happened to this famous physical barrier? Often these obstacles we perceived are only in our own minds and we become hostages to them. Great leaders quickly disregard these “hostage” beliefs and firmly believe in possibilities. Lee Iacocca sums it up best, “The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.”
REFRAME OBSTACLES INTO OPPORTUNITIES

If you watch a river flow, you will notice huge rocks curtailling its path. But instead of removing these obstacles, it simply goes around the rock and finds a new path. Likewise with our obstacles. We don’t need to remove them.

Michael Jordan, the great basketball player who faced many personal obstacles said, “If you run into a wall, don’t turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it.” Turn obstacles into opportunities.

Ratan Tata, chairman of Tata Group, was driving when he saw a poor family of five crammed onto a scooter. His heart was filled with sympathy and declared to the world that Tata will launch a one lakh (US$2,000) car.

The world laughed at him. But that did not deter Ratan. He started with a five-man engineering team and challenged them to “question the unquestionable”. He gave them only one mandate – ensure the cost was less than US$2,000. Problem after problem cropped up but Ratan kept persisting, even personally working with the team. After four years, Ratan kept his promise by unveiling Nano, the People’s car.

There’s a saying that goes, “If you live with a problem long enough, it could eventually become a blessing.” Within every adversity in life, there is always a silver lining. Every invention enjoyed today comes from some obstacle. Obstacles inspire the desire to solve dilemmas. Obstacles are a miraculous opportunity for innovation and change.

BREAK IT DOWN AND KEEP PERSEVERING

Andrew started his journey of achieving the impossible by breaking down the real dimensions of his obstacles, dividing it into parts or steps that can be done one at a time. By splitting the overall objective into smaller, easily defined functions, the challenge may seem easier. This can break through procrastination and helplessness. As the problems get addressed one by one, it is important to keep persevering. We all want that immediate silver bullet that will solve our problem and hence breaking down the issue may be frustrating and slow, so perseverance matters.

Walt Disney dreamt of building Disney World and started planning his dream one step at a time. But his biggest issue was funding. His request for funding was rejected more than 300 times but he kept persevering and ultimately succeeded.

Likewise, Colonel Sanders faced similar issues when setting up KFC, being rejected more than 1,000 times but his perseverance together with his step-by-step plan ensured his dream became a reality.

Obstacles are like mountains; not likely to move themselves. You must take action to overcome it, not sit at the foot of the mountain hoping it will suddenly vanish. Breaking the problem down is an action-oriented approach to begin addressing the problem instead of moping around in fear and worry. Action trumps all else. Few things are impossible when you exert extraordinary effort to make your dreams a reality.

Learn from obstacles in your life and keep the focus on the bigger goals. “If we did all the things we are capable of doing we would truly astound ourselves” claims Thomas Edison. After struggling to develop the electric light-bulb for years, Edison was interviewed by a reporter asking him if he felt like a failure and if he would give up now. Baffled, Edison replied, “why would I feel like a failure? And why would I ever give up? I now know definitively over 9,000 ways why an electric light bulb will not work. Success is almost in my grasp.” And shortly after his 10,000th attempt, Edison invented the light bulb.

Great leaders truly understand how to learn from the obstacles thrown their way and like Edison, they also clearly have sight of the end-goal. There is always something to learn. We learn courage facing danger. We learn patience enduring suffering. We learn to value true friends when forsaken. Without trouble we be a stunted person with no real growth.

Learning is what differentiates leaders. Obstacles provide situations for us to learn. Nietzsche once said that “whatever doesn’t kill us will only make us stronger”. Also key, is to keep your mind’s eye on the end goal. Visualise what success looks like. The more you see this success, the more likely you will achieve it.

FORMULATE AND STAMP IDEAS

There is a saying that goes, “the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph.” Great leaders don’t become great just for their accomplishments, but by the opposition they have encountered, and by the courage showed in maintaining their struggle against overwhelming odds. There were numerous people fighting apartheid in South Africa but Mandela stands out because of the obstacles he overcame.

Don’t pray for an easy life, rather pray to become a strong person, that can overcome obstacles and try to truly achieve the full potential of your ability.

As Muhammad Ali said, “champions aren’t made in gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them - a desire, a dream, a vision. They have to have last-minute stamina, they have to be a little faster, they have to have the skill and the will. But the will must be stronger than the skill.” And the will is what overcomes the obstacles, not the skill. Impossible is nothing for those that believe.

Roshan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about transforming the nation through leadership development. For more information on leadership programmes and support to develop leadership curriculum for your organisation, email people@leaderonomics.com. For inspiration on leadership, login to www.leaderonomics.com, and stay passionate about transforming the nation through leadership development.
BIRDS OF DIFFERENT FEATHERS SHOULD FLOCK TOGETHER

WHY WORKPLACE DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT FOR EVERY ORGANISATION

1. Varied opinions and perspectives

Employees bring diverse ideas and perspectives to the workplace, leading to fresh thinking and innovative solutions. However, diversity also brings challenges, such as working with people from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. This can be both beneficial and challenging. While it can lead to a more creative and dynamic work environment, it can also increase conflicts and misunderstandings.

2. Unity of diverse strengths

Diversity also presents the opportunity for organisations to consider candidates who may not fit the traditional mould of the job description. This can lead to a more inclusive and productive workplace. For example, someone who is shy and introverted may be more detail-oriented and analytical, while someone who is outgoing and extroverted may be more creative and risk-taking.

3. Utility of diverse strengths

Diversity can also lead to a more competitive and innovative workplace. By leveraging the strengths of employees from different backgrounds, organisations can gain a competitive advantage. For example, a company that hires employees from different cultural backgrounds can better understand and serve diverse customer needs.

IMPLEMENTING DIVERSITY

There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to diversity because, as you know, every organisation is unique. There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to diversity. There is no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to diversity because, as you know, every organisation is unique. When you hire someone from a different background, you’re hiring someone who has a slightly different perspective. It’s not that they’re necessarily better or worse than someone who’s more like you — it’s just that you’re hiring someone who’s different, and that diversity is a good thing.

Creating a culture of diversity

Internally, the culture of the organisation plays a crucial role in promoting diversity. An organisation that values diversity will have a strong sense of equality and fairness. It will promote a culture of inclusion and respect, where everyone feels valued and respected. This will lead to a more positive work environment and increased productivity.

If managed well, the strengths and best insights of every employee can be harnessed to heighten productivity and deliver better results.

The focus of workplace diversity now lies on the promotion of inclusivity. Acknowledging that every person can bring something different to the table.

This amalgamation of diverse individuals can add to an organisation’s perspective and are unable to contribute having a workforce composed of individuals to ensure that essential components alternative solutions and approaches when variability of perspectives, thereby evoking give organisations an edge? Here are potential of each individual.

The challenge, says, is “the issue of inclusion.”

OVERCOMING MUSCLE MEMORY

Cultural identity makes “muscle memory” as one of the main obstacles to workplace diversity, referring to the difficulty that says “This is how it has always been done. Why change it?”

Hidden biases from a major corporation in the form of this muscle memory is difficult to overcome. People tend to draw on the hidden biases when making decisions about who they believe will be the best candidate for a particular role. They may favour a person of a particular race or educational background over others who may be more qualified.

This is how it has always been done. Why change it? It’s not emotional. Martin concurs. “It’s just this feeling that I’m not comfortable with people like me.” She advises that people, especially managers, must take steps to identify and challenge their own biases. This can involve attending diversity training or seeking feedback from colleagues.

The goal, according to Martin, is to create an environment where every employee has an equal opportunity to succeed. This means ensuring that people, especially managers, are comfortable with people like them. It also means creating a culture that values diversity and inclusion, where everyone feels supported and encouraged to bring their unique perspectives and ideas to the table.

THE CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY

There are, however, natural instincts to protect our identity, which is to be seen as part of an organisation. Our feeble efforts of image loss surgery, the harmonious combination of different perspectives and a melting pot with a teratologically diverse ingredients may be easy enough to talk about. However, we would.stripped to the boneless challenges of advocating diversity and then moving on to encourage more than ensure it is a strength, and not a human resources and organisational nightmare.

Earlier this month, I cut down with Victoria Martin, senior director of diversity and inclusion (AEMC and ARCA) at AIG, to discuss some of the obstacles to establish diversity and inclusion and its importance.

The good, according to Martin, is to create an environment where employees have the opportunity to be successful and where their differences are leveraged for the success of the organisation. The challenge, she says, is “the issue of inclusion.”

IMPLOMETING DIVERSITY

So what is it about diversity that can help organisations thrive? Diversity, referring to the attitude that says “This is how it has always been done. Why change it?”

Hidden biases from a major corporation in the form of this muscle memory is difficult to overcome. People tend to draw on the hidden biases when making decisions about who they believe will be the best candidate for a particular role. They may favour a person of a particular race or educational background over others who may be more qualified.

This is how it has always been done. Why change it? It’s not emotional. Martin concurs. “It’s just this feeling that I’m not comfortable with people like me.” She advises that people, especially managers, must take steps to identify and challenge their own biases. This can involve attending diversity training or seeking feedback from colleagues.

The goal, according to Martin, is to create an environment where every employee has an equal opportunity to succeed. This means ensuring that people, especially managers, are comfortable with people like them. It also means creating a culture that values diversity and inclusion, where everyone feels supported and encouraged to bring their unique perspectives and ideas to the table.

THE CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY

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OVERCOMING MUSCLE MEMORY

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When not stalking out on Purple alcohol use, and references to pictures, evidence of frequent candidates for hire. The top reasons the internet to suss out potential that an applicant would turn to the internet for more information on for most employers to do a quick Google search on applicants to vet for hiring managers and human resource personnel from various industries stated that they commonly take to the company they are applying to. In a study conducted by Career Builder in 2011, up to 50% of hiring managers and human resource personnel stated that they commonly take to the internet to suss out potential candidates for hire. The top reasons for turning downs an applicant that included inappropriate and racy pictures, evidence of frequent alcohol use, and references to drug use, poor communication skills and bad mouthing of past employers. Think about it: a few years from now Google searches might actually yield pictures and stories of an applicant all the way from the day of their birth! Talk about starting young! While you might be careful and cautious of your own privacy, you have limited control over how others in your life share about you. Plus, it’s tough to keep up with ever changing policies and settings on the wide array of websites we frequent. I personally spend a fair amount of time on social networking sites like Facebook and I’d say that the mean age of the 1500 over Facebook friends I have is between 18-20 years old. My newsfeed is populated with stories of young love, teenage angst, drunken parties, and many pictures that you will one day wish gone but will forever be stored on the servers of Facebook for all potential hiring managers to find. So how can we be more mindful of our online shenanigans? Is it possible? Actually, according to Erik Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial development, teenagers from the age of roughly 12-18 years old enter into a stage of identity vs Confusion. This means that as children make the transition into adolescence and adulthood, they are exploring their independence and developing their sense of self. During this time, teenagers may experiment and try out many different behaviours and activities to learn how they fit into society and to discover their role in life. Failure to form a strong identity during this time may cause confusion, insecurity and a lack of direction in life. In this time and age, this search for identity has partially moved online. While we used to be able to make mistakes that shape our identities virtually as well, having it broadcasted online for people to comment and share and like. Stopping teenagers from engaging online is to a certain extent, curbing their ability and need to define themselves. **So what can you do as teenagers?** I would suggest that you learn the basic privacy settings to protect yourself and try to portray yourself as a decent human being online. This doesn’t mean that you should be faking it, but just think twice before posting anything or get a trusted (older) friend to call you out on potentially detrimental posts. Firefox and Chrome also offer a **Social Media Sobriety Test version** which you can use to prevent yourself from posting things when you’re too tired or emotional. Finally, be ready to delete past pictures and posts and possibly even recreate a new account when you’re ready for work in the future. All the best!  

**MAKE, PROMOTE, BUILD, SELL AND BE THE PURPLE COW**

**What makes you stand out from the rest of them?** Unfortunately, I can’t give you an answer to that. What I will say, though, quoting Godin, is that you have to find a way to “be exceptional.” “Remarkable people with remarkable careers seem to switch jobs with far less effort. Remarkable people often don’t even have a resume. Instead, they rely on sages who are quick to recommend them when openings come up. Remarkable people are often recruited from jobs they love to jobs they love even more.” And the way to be exceptional? Work on high-profile projects, take risks, learn from your mistakes, be ready to delete past pictures and posts and possibly even recreate a new account when you’re ready for work in the future. All the best!  

**By EVA CHRISTODOULOU**

Eva Christodoulou is a featured guest writer on the Leaderonomics Facebook page. She is currently an intern at the Leaderonomics Research Centre and also a management trainee at the Diodecamps. Eva is very passionate about youth leadership and youth development. She is currently pursuing her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Malaya, majoring in Development Studies.

Eva Christodoulou has more people can find their purple cow and be remarkable in the job market, as well as their personal lives.
LEAD OR BE LED

By RUPA SIVANOLI
rupa.sivanoli@leaderonometrics.com

IKE everything else that goes on in an organisation, when we talk about leading change, there needs to be a common direction in which efforts are channelled so that common objectives are met. To ensure this happens, leadership needs to be in place.

The difference is that when we talk about change leadership, there are some out of the ordinary elements as compared to normal day to day leadership. The best way to look at these elements is to see why organisational change is different and why change efforts can fail.

SO WHY IS CHANGE DIFFERENT?

Organisational change is like a project, so the work involved is organised differently from how you would run day-to-day operations. To name a few differences:

1. In terms of timeframe there is a specific start and end date.

2. There will be outcomes to deliver (business value), for example a greater level of automation, more robust work processes or building a different organisational culture which may not be easily as it is envisioned at the start of the project.

3. The people involved in enabling the change have to work in a different way, given that while being on the change project they have left the comforts of their “normal” work and will face anxiety with regard to their future once the project comes to an end.

Over and above this you have regular employees who are generally left on the sidelines until the go-live date or when the change project is rolled into the business, they too will have their fair share of worries.

Often these issues never present itself directly or in a timely manner. So what an organisation may wind up with is a situation that seriously undermines the business or impacts productivity the day it goes live or even worse – disengaged employees who still show up physically for work but do not contribute or have no passion or interest in what they do. So this is when we have change efforts failing, as productivity dips or disenchantment becomes widespread. Statistics show that 75% of change efforts fail not because of a poorly thought out solution but because of the way the change itself was not well managed.

Here’s a story to illustrate this. Once a heart surgeon took his car to the workshop to be serviced, and in a friendly exchange with the mechanic, the mechanic said, “Actually… I was thinking about both our jobs, and develop employees and develop employees, there’s more the less the same. I check how the engine is running, open it up, fix the valves, clean it and put it all back together so it works good as new. We basically do the same job don’t we?” And you are paid 10 times what I earn – how do you explain that? The surgeon thought for a moment, and smiling gently, replied; “Try it with the engine running”. The moral of the story is while the tasks may appear similar on the surface the execution on the other hand is very different.

CHANGE LEADERSHIP WITH A DIFFERENCE

Change leadership, effectively executed is the secret weapon in making change successful. It is not so much the leader but that the employees must perceive that they are receiving leadership. The quality the leadership should address the key aspects of change and this is elaborated in the next section. In terms of quantity of leadership it’s about striking the right balance, if leadership involvement is overly heavy at the beginning, it may overshoot the intent of showing commitment and come across as management trying to “sell” something. And this may be counter productive.

With the right amount of quality and quantity there is a real chance of getting the full value of the change effort. For example, in the late 90s in the Malaysian banking sector there was a heavy push towards automation of banking operations, which laid the backbone internet banking that would reduce transaction costs by 80%. While good for the banks, the employees, especially the tellers were not at all enthusiastic. However, leadership of this change did not waiver as they knew this was the future of banking. And now we have them to thank for the convenience of internet banking catching on so quickly in Malaysia.

BEING AN EFFECTIVE CHANGE LEADER

The success of an organisational change is not so much about the charisma or influence of one person, as it is about giving the sense of leadership presence and involvement. Iconic leaders like Jack Welch, Steve Jobs, Sir Richard Branson, Bill Gates have transformed and reinvented themselves and their companies many times over and they certainly come to mind when we say change leadership. However, change leadership does not mean having a larger than life person to champion the process. Many Fortune 500 companies, especially the European ones have more low profile leaders but they are just as effective in leading change. It really is about employees experiencing leadership during times of uncertainty.

So if you are part of the team managing organisational change you need to look at your leadership and plan for their involvement throughout the process. Pick and choose the right individuals to take on the right roles. It works better if you rely on a team of leaders. Pick the right leaders (credibility, influence) and use them effectively. The CEO does not always have to be focal point for change leadership, in fact you could use the head of sales or marketing to give an inspirational speech to launch the journey and sound the battle cry. Perhaps midway through the change process, the leader may have to inject some additional mentorship and guidance. It is not so much who the project leader is but how the leader is perceived. The quality of leadership should be at every level of the organisation and strive to add business value through simplification of processes, incorporating new technology and aesthetics is more likely a bigger consideration. This item is a foremost consideration whereas in Asia the cost is purchasing a table, the quality and sustainability of the item is more important.

In his book Leading Change, John Kotter talks about eight steps to change, and it is a helpful framework as it covers all the essential roles that a leader for change needs to have.

1. Establishing a sense of urgency

The leader needs to be aware of market and competitive realities, and identify and discuss crises, potential crises, or major opportunities. Politicians, especially when it gets close to election time – everything and everyone is the “enemy” and speeches, actions get revved up and more dramatic as they try to create a picture of an impending crisis.

2. Creating the guiding coalition

Leadership as experienced by the employees and it needs to come from leadership as a group not as an individual. So there is a need to assemble a group with enough power to lead the change effort, and encourage the group to work as a team. Like the team that leads the USS Enterprise in Star Trek which has an excellent complement of various leadership styles that bring into bear a very strong and capable team to “boldly go where no one has gone before.”

3. Developing a change vision

Create a vision to help direct the change effort, and develop strategies for achieving that vision.

4. Communicating the vision for buy-in

Use every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies, and teach new behaviours by the example of the guiding coalition.

5. Empowering broad-based action

Remove obstacles to change, change systems or structures that seriously undermine the change, and encourage risk-taking and non-traditional ideas, activities, and actions.

6. Generating short-term wins

Plan for visible performance improvements, create those improvements and reward employees involved in the improvements.

7. Never letting up

Use increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that don’t fit the vision. Also hire, promote, and encourage those who can implement the vision, and finally reinvent the process with new projects, themes, and change agents.

8. Incorporating changes into the culture

Articulate the connections between the new behaviours and organisational success, and develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession.

LEADING CHANGE IN THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

In an Asian context, sustainability is not always a value that comes out strongly when leaders make decisions, as it is not culturally ingrained. In western cultures if someone is purchasing a table, the quality and sustainability of the item is a foremost consideration whereas in Asia the cost and aesthetics is more likely a bigger consideration. This type of short-term thinking to me is one of the things that we need to look out for when leading change.

The other thing that we are not good at is the upkeep or maintenance of the nice things that we make or build. Applied to change it means post go live of an organisational change the effort, leadership must still be “present” to ensure that the desired behaviors are achieved. We should not overlook the “ribbon cutting” and celebrations at go-live’s only to have leadership disappear soon after. It is more critical to focus on the desired business value and behavioral changes and this needs to be measured and it’s a long-term goal that once achieved is a far better reason to throw a party!

Former Big Four management consultant, Rupa Sivanoli strives to add business value through simplification of thoughts and actions, when it comes to planning and managing workplace change. To engage her for the benefit of your organisation, email people@leaderonometrics.com

CHANGE LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVELY EXECUTED IS THE SECRET WEAPON IN MAKING CHANGE SUCCESSFUL
SEXUAL harassment at work is a common, yet avoidable issue that is far more prevalent in the workplace than most people actually realise. A victim may not even know what would be the right time to say it. Smiling while saying it would give the impression that you may enjoy such attention.

WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

There are many forms of harassment or violence, but sexual harassment is one of the most common forms especially with women as victims. According to the All Women's Action Society (AWAM), “sexual harassment is defined as receiving any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature including sexual comments, fondling, lewd gestures, jokes, emails, smses, pornographic pictures, coercion and more”. To be specific, there are two types of sexual harassment, namely “quid pro quo sexual harassment” and “hostile environment sexual harassment”.

Quid pro quo (which means this for that) is a form of sexual harassment whereby a person’s work performance is based purely on whether he or she submits to unwelcomed sexual conduct. This is also known as abuse of authority and this is more commonly initiated by male employers/superiors. “Hostile environment” is the other form of sexual harassment. It can be in the way of verbal, physical or visual type harassment that is sexual in nature. It is also most commonly created by a series of occurrences. This type of working environment is also considered “unsafe”.

SHUN THE UNWELCOME ACTIONS

It is crucial to be aware and to avoid any unwelcome actions toward us. We should always be wise in dealing with such cases. There are multiple solutions to deal with this issue but there is no one best way to respond to harassment because every situation is different and unique. Based on a study published by the American Psychological Association, some of the effective strategies that many women have found useful are:

1. **Breaking into your space**
   - Many women would have a story to tell about being victims of sexual harassment. Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit Kozeny recognised and said that “It is a sobering revelation that every woman who has spent time in the workforce in the last two decades can tell at least one story about being the object of sexual harassment.”
   - Women can be sexually harassed at the workplace by anyone – either by their peers, superiors or even clients. However, the majority of the incidents in fact, occur between a superior and his subordinate. A study conducted on Fortune 500 companies found that almost two-thirds of sexual harassment complaints were brought against a woman’s immediate supervisor or another person with greater authority.
   - Despite knowing that sexual harassment is common, we are often confused about it. You may suspect that you are being sexually harassed but you are not sure how to react. On the other hand, you may not even know what would be considered sexual harassment, especially in situations where such harassment is mild. If a male colleague comes close and starts putting his arm around your shoulder, is that considered harassment or is he just being friendly and warm? The way to look at it is when someone is physically “too close for your comfort”; then, it may potentially be some form of sexual harassment. Another way to suspect that it is happening is when you feel a form of an unwelcome sexual behaviour coming from someone, which then makes a person feel offended, humiliated or intimidated. An example of this is when someone breaks into your personal space while interacting with you.

2. **Staying engaged and connected**
   - Despite the short-comings shared above, women employers should not shun all forms of contact with their male counterparts. Practising good interpersonal skills is still crucial in every organisation. Being friendly and warm is still advisable as long as it is professional and there is a limit drawn to the proximity of the relationship between colleagues, superiors or clients. Monica Patrick, in an article on work boundaries puts it this way: “professional relationships should be personal but they must be guided by decorum and specific boundaries”. Every woman should be able to be herself, and be caring if she likes. Staying engaged and connected are also positive traits, which everyone should continue to practise. The art is to know where the boundaries are and this will then firm up grey areas concerning job duties, increasing efficiency and making the workplace more productive.

3. **Writing a letter/email to the harasser, describing how the incident made you feel and mentioning that it needs to stop. Keep a copy of the letter/email.**

4. **Recording what happened. If it happens in the presence of a witness, that would also help justify your statements when you lodge a complaint or take legal action if you decide to do so.**

5. **Telling someone about it as you may not be the only victim of your harasser.**

6. **Being professional at work.**
   - Drawing a line will help. It is crucial to differentiate between having good interpersonal skills and being overly-friendly, which may come across as flirty.
   - Ignoring such situations will not cause harm, but the relationship between colleagues, superiors or clients. However, the majority of the incidents in fact, occur between a superior and his subordinate. A study conducted on Fortune 500 companies found that almost two-thirds of sexual harassment complaints were brought against a woman’s immediate supervisor or another person with greater authority.
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      - Many women would have a story to tell about being
Ne of the things I get asked very often by my participants during my workshops is what to wear when they need to do public speaking or make a presentation. Whether you are a corporate professional, business owner, entrepreneur, there will be instances where you will need to stand in front of a crowd and showcase your products or expertise. But before you sell anything, you will need to sell YOU first. Your personal presentation is your marketing tool. You need to craft it well so that it represents and reinforces your message! Here’s what you should do:

1. **ANALYSE YOUR EVENT**
   Find out the theme and dress code of the event. Trust me, you’ll look awkward in full suit when the rest of the cast are in safari outfits. Definitions like business casual and smart casual convey different meanings to different people. So, get the organiser to give you specific examples of what the audience will be wearing. In a typical Malaysian setting, you’d have the following events where you might be invited to give a presentation:
   - Offsite sales cycle meeting
   - Award presentation night
   - Annual company dinner
   - Sports club activity
   - Media product launch
   - Business conference
   - Networking session

You’d probably see your audience in jeans and T-shirts if they are attending an offsite sales cycle meet; in formal attire if it’s a business conference, and in business casuals for a networking event. If you are travelling to the event and you are unsure, take several options with you so that you can adjust at the last minute. I once flew to Thailand to speak at an event and my luggage went elsewhere. Since then, I have learnt to always carry an extra outfit in my hand luggage.

2. **ALWAYS DRESS BETTER THAN YOUR AUDIENCE**
   It is wrong to assume that you need to look like your audience. If you are standing in front, you must always look one step better. You need to command attention visually. Dressing a notch higher gives you extra authority. But to me, one of the main reasons to do so is that it buys you a little insurance in case your audience analysis was flawed. If you dress one notch higher than your predicted audience dress code, and the audience is dressed better than you predicted, then you are still safe. But let me stress that it’s only one notch higher. Not three. This means if your audience is in business casual, i.e shirt and tie, then as a gentleman, you should put on a jacket, but forgo the tie. And ladies can opt for a tailored dress instead of a matching skirt suit.

3. **KNOW WHERE YOU WILL BE PLACED**
   On stage? Behind a podium? Sitting? These specifics play a role in deciding what you should be wearing. For example:
   - Flowery patterns are ok for a small audience, but if you are addressing a large crowd, then stick to plain colours for a better effect.
   - If you will be standing behind a podium or sitting behind a desk, then you should frame your portrait by putting on a nice necklace or choosing an elegant tie.
   - If you are required to sit on a sofa with the host, in front of the audience, then pay attention to the length of your skirt and shoes.

4. **BALANCE BETWEEN YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL STYLE**
   To evaluate your best style option for your speaking engagement, you need to answer these crucial questions: Who are you? What are you selling?
   - What you wear must support both you and your products as a holistic brand. Often I find that people have conflicting ideas when it comes to sending out their visual message. Regardless of what your personal style is, you have to balance it between what you like, and what you think the general audience can accept. For instance:
     - As a designer, you probably dig skin-tight jeans and leather jackets, pairing them with five earrings. So, to keep a good balance, you can keep your skin-tight, but go for an overcoat and lose the earrings when you need to do a presentation. You want to come across as contemporary. Not creepy.
     - If you are a senior consultant, make sure you are not stuck in a style rut. Out-dated clothes send a message that your content and business philosophies may be out-dated as well. So remember to style up!

5. **PREPARE YOUR OUTFIT**
   When you’re standing in front of a group, with several sets of eyes focused on you, it is not the time to take chances with your new outfit. There are two important components you need to look at when it comes to preparing your outfit:
   - a) Your Silhouette: You need to create a flattering silhouette while speaking in front of a live audience.
   - b) Your Colours: The colours you wear set your mood, the mood of the audience, and the mood of the whole presentation.

   - For professional engagements, go for rich colours like emerald or royal blue. Guys may add colours in the form of ties, or contrast the colours with the likes of a light pink shirt and a navy jacket.
   - If you are addressing a large audience, dynamic colours will bring forth the passion and enthusiasm you hold for the content of your message.
   - You are not Steve Jobs. Avoid all black. You run the risk of looking like a dark blob to the audience.
   - And even if you are selling candy, avoid neon. You will just look plain silly.

6. **TEST IT OUT**
   I once made a mistake of wearing a wool jacket that had shrunk after a few washes. I felt like I was in a straight jacket the whole day long. It is very important to feel physically comfortable so that you can fully engage with the audience without worrying about your buttons popping any time.

   So, do a fit test. Questions to ask are:
   - Will your outfit make you sweat profusely in the event that the air-conditioner is not really working?
   - Are you accessories jing-jangling away?
   - Once you start to fidget, your audience will feel uncomfortable. So, the fewer visual distractions you offer your audience, the more likely they are to pay attention to your content, and the more confident you will appear to be.

7. **GROOM TO PERFECTION**
   So, you’ve got everything figured out. Content checked. Clothes checked. Presentation tools checked. Before you walk out, do a last check on your grooming. Fix your hair so that you are not self-conscious or fiddling with it when you are speaking later. Check your face, teeth and makeup. Then take a deep breath, look into the mirror, give a mega-watt smile and you are ready to go!

   Quality content, effective communication skills, and attractive visuals play a role in the success of today’s speakers. When you adorn an outfit that is both flattering and appropriate, your audience will tend to be more receptive and supportive when they see and feel a confident you. So the next time you are out there in the limelight, remember to look your best!

By WENDY LEE

Gwendy Lee is the president of Mabic (Malaysian Association of Brand and Image Consultants) and a director at Brand Image International Institute (BII). She is a firm believer that with Style...there must be Substance!
**A SUCCESSFUL AND SMASHING STAR**

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Lee attributes his achievements to the fact that he had a very strict coach. Lee’s coach Datuk Misbun Sidek was a tough person who trained him hard. Lee trained with his coach for about six years. He has received reprimands, been banned from taking part in tournaments and made to practise for long hours throughout these years.

“I remember this one time when I lost my temper during practice and threw my racquet to the ground. I was banned from Misbun from returning to the court for two weeks. I then apologised for throwing a tantrum. Training went on as usual after two weeks. I guess my coach’s principles and strict training made me the champion that I am today. I remember him asking what I wanted on the first day of training. I replied that I wanted to make money and become Malaysia’s No.1. He smiled at me and told me that for that, I had to give him my time and dedication. I agreed and started training hard. When I won the first Malaysian Open, I really basked in the success and have the urge to win more tournaments.”

Lee believes that in order to excel, one has to have two important traits. First is discipline. One has to be disciplined and adhere to all the rules and regulations of a sport. Secondly, the diligence to work hard. One has to give it all when training in order to be the best. For Lee, if you do not work hard then there is no point in having the talent as it will only go to waste.

Despite the success achieved, Lee is not smug. He aspires to own his own personal stadium and academy, one day. If all goes well and fate permits, he plans to participate in the 2016 Olympics and win the gold medal.

Lee Chong Wei.

None other than our very own Datuk Lee Chong Wei. He has a huge following in China. He is idolised not only by Malaysians but by people from all over the world. Malaysia has one of the highest success in achieving workplace diversity due to our cultural flexibility.
Dear CareerNomers,

I am a 25-year-old that has never completed a degree. I gave up university to start my own enterprise, a convenient store, which unfortunately failed, and now I face the difficulty in getting hired, as most employers look for people with paper qualifications. I was never brilliant at studying; however, I feel that I carry many stories quite easily – an opinion supported by many of my friends and relatives. Could you suggest how I can “sell” my “stories” to potential employers to get them to put aside the fact that I do not have any paper qualifications?

Warm regards,

Vas

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Dear Vas,

Do not be discouraged by not having a degree. Less than 25% of the Malaysian workforce has tertiary education. You are therefore clearly not in the minority. Furthermore, consistently the top reason for graduates not securing a job is the lack of communication skills, proficiency in English. In this respect, by your own description, you have an edge over many graduates.

Granted there are many employers who look for qualifications and would state it as a requirement in job advertisements. However, this certainly does not apply to all employers and all jobs. You will need to focus on looking for jobs that do not require a degree and yet offer the opportunity for progression. Given your ability to carry yourself and speak well, you should leverage on your abilities and aim for front line or customer facing roles, such as in sales and marketing, communications or in shared services call centers.

Many sectors in Malaysia are growing strongly and with that organisations are actively expanding their sales and services functions, from financial institutions selling insurance or credit cards, to telecommunication companies offering voice and data services. Beyond sales functions, the shared services and outsourcing sector is a major growth industry in Malaysia with AT Kearney consistently ranking Malaysia as the third best global services location in the world. This is an area where your ability to communicate can lead you to a career with large multinationals with international exposure.

Hence, the good news is that opportunities are in abundance. You will need to seek out the right one. Your experience of giving up university to start your own enterprise is not typical. I expect that in going for interviews, you will be asked about it. Interviewers may probe to assess whether you lack resilience. You should be prepared to answer and how you can turn it to your advantage – in terms of what you learnt from the experience and how it will help you perform for your future employer.

Paper qualifications often just serve to determine entry level into a job. Beyond that, it comes down to your performance. In this respect, you will need to be patient and resilient as you may find yourself starting off at a lower level than a degree holder. However, it will be up to you to prove your value.

Speaking from personal experience, in TalentCorp, we had recently promoted a couple of colleagues who do not have degrees. They did well in exceeding expectations by going the extra mile, being proactive in performing their work and proving they could deliver as well if not better than others with a degree. You may start off at a lower level but with the right attitude to work and by delivering performance, you will progress and advance in your career.

I know of CEOs in Malaysia without a degree. It comes down to you. You must have self-confidence that you can do it – securing a job and building a career of your dreams.

Too often, we are defeated in our minds even before we begin. Put aside your perceived disadvantages and use your strengths to your advantage.

All the best,

Johan Merican

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I’m the man for the job

1. Identify your strengths. Start by clearly articulating the value that you can bring to a potential employer. People believe that you talk and carry yourself well, that you are very sociable and can sell many stories easily. This indicates that you have strong interpersonal and communication skills and that you are persuasive. In order for you to have a full list of your strengths, go over your past successes and achievements. It does not matter how big or small they are. Then ask yourself: how did I manage to succeed? What skills, knowledge and abilities did I apply? This simple exercise will enable you to fully understand and articulate your strengths.

2. Match your strengths to potential jobs. Different types of roles require different things from potential candidates. Some jobs require professional qualifications and defined years of experience. Some other jobs expect candidates to have hands-on experience. Understand what type of jobs you are suitable for and the type of skills, knowledge and abilities required, seek information and learn further. Go to the internet, read relevant books, talk to people who do similar jobs. Learning never stops and it is not confined to the classroom or formal degrees.

3. Prepare a professional cover letter and CV. First impressions are extremely important. Now that you know your strengths and have an understanding of the type of jobs that you are suitable for, you need to put together your CV. Remember, this is the one and only chance that you will have to showcase the potential employers how you will add value to their company. The quality of the CV is not measured by its length. Don’t list down everything that you have done since you were born. Identify outcomes achieved which showcase your strengths, qualities and abilities. The objective is to show potential employers that you have what it takes to do the job.

4. Cast a wide net. The employment scene is a competitive one, therefore you must ensure that you explore a variety of options when applying for a job. Talk to your friends and business contacts. Ask them if they know of potential job opportunities in their companies that suit your strengths/ experience. Check the job advertisement section of the newspapers regularly. Get in touch with and forward your CV to suitable employment agencies. By doing this you are increasing your visibility in the market and you are also gathering information which will enable you to further understand what is available and what are the specific requirements for the job.

5. Prepare yourself. The fact that you don’t have a professional qualification, does not mean that you can’t be well prepared to perform a job. As you understand the type of jobs that you are suitable for and the type of skills, knowledge and abilities required, seek information and learn further. Go to the internet, read relevant books, talk to people who do similar jobs. Learning never stops and it is not confined to the classroom or formal degrees.

6. Lastly, have a positive attitude. No matter how stressful the situation may be, it is always important to remain positive. Each time that you get a negative reply from a potential employer, it can be used as an opportunity. If you have the chance, ask your potential employer why you were not successful. This will enable you to understand the reasons behind the negative response and will also allow you to improve further and understand what else you need to do in order to increase your chances of securing a job.

I hope that with this advice you will be able to move forward in your quest to securing a job that allows you to contribute, add value and use your talent.

Regards,
Claudia Cadena

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of myStarjob.com
Coming up in next Saturday’s issue . . .

EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES
AWAIT YOU IN MALAYSIA’S ELECTRONIC & ELECTRICAL INDUSTRY

WHY
HOW
WHAT

Outside-in Model
Conventional Way

Inside-out Model
Starts with “Why”

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