Employee engagement

Most leaders hardly spend time with their workers, says Roshan Thiran in Be A Leader. → Pg 5

CATCH-22 FOR WORKING PARENTS

ARE YOU FINDING A BALANCE BETWEEN WORK AND HOME?

PAGES 8 – 10

CELEBRATED HAIRSTYLIST

Winne Loo talks about her early days’ struggles in Dare To Fail

CULTIVATE A GARDEN

of innovation in your organisation with sustained diligence

LEND A HELPING HAND

to your community and you’ll be surprised at the benefits
I ponder about the concept of work-life balance regularly. It’s interesting that this elusive balance involves balancing “work” on the one hand, and “life” on the other. Work is compartmentalised as one aspect that we devote a portion of our existence to, and then everything else is “life”. Fascinating.

I don’t see “life” that narrowly. Do you? Even if we assumed that an individual works eight hours a day for five days a week, this amounts to 2,080 working hours a year. A quarter of our total available time per year is spent at “work”. For many, their total work hours add up to far more than 2,080. Surely then, the time we devote to “work” should be recognised as a part of “life”.

To see jobs purely as a means to earn a living would be a great loss. Our places of work are also places of possibility, growth, contribution and influence. They are opportunities to further ourselves in a chosen field, and why not in fields that we are interested in or passionate about. Do what you love, is what we say here at myStarjob.com, because enjoying work is a real possibility. In such a scenario, boundaries between so-called “work” and “life” melt away.

I am one of these people. I enjoy my work. The hours never drag on and actually pass too quickly. My colleagues are also my friends, and I enjoy the daily challenges.

Now here comes the problem. For those like myself, who very readily embrace “work” as an integral part of “life”, it’s very easy for “work” to then consume too much of “life”. The hours roll by and it begins to take a toll on other aspects of our lives, like friends, other personal non-work commitments, and of course, family. Admittedly, this issue crops up not only for those who enjoy their work, but for those who also experience pressures on the job to perform, meet deadlines or just conform to the “working culture”.

Naturally, this leads to a not-so-prettty scenario. The reality is that everyone functions with 24 hours in a day. Time travelling and time stretching don’t exist and we cannot be in two places at one time. Spending more time at work will always mean spending less time elsewhere.

Time conflicts like this are not good for all involved. They impact people who are important to us, and studies show that they also impact our job and life satisfaction. One study in 2008 published in the Journal of Athletic Training surveyed athletic trainers, who devote long hours to their jobs. Time work was cited as one of the main causes of work-family conflicts (WFC) they experienced. Findings showed that an increase in WFC resulted in increased job burnout and higher likelihood of wanting to leave the company. In addition, life and job satisfaction decreased.

What’s the relevance to us? As much as I gripe about the wording of the term “work-life balance”, it raises an important consideration. In order to have a level of job and life satisfaction, there must be some sort of balance between work and the rest of our lives. We cannot neglect non-work commitments and relationships that also deserve our time. This is important not just for the people in our lives, but also for our well-being. So in our centrespread pages this week, we get some wise tips from parent coach Zaid Mohamad and Lim May Lee on how to manage work time more effectively to achieve this balance.

In the rest of the guide, Be A Leader this week stresses the importance of spending time with people on page 5. Consulting Corner on page 7 is all about how to create an environment of innovation in your organisation.

I hope this edition of the career guide enriches you in some way this weekend. Do you have a comment or suggestion? You can reach the Leaderonomics editorial team at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com. We always enjoy hearing from readers. Be sure to also check out leaderonomics.tv for great videos, and find us on Facebook at facebook.com/leaderonomics.

Don’t get carried away by the tide of circumstances. Take ownership of your days.

Until next Saturday,

LILY CHEAH
Editor, myStarjob.com
**SNUBBING THE NAYSAYERS**

After she failed to further her studies in New Zealand, Loo decided hairstyling would be suitable for her since it was a shorter course and she had sought her parents’ permission. Despite their reservations, her parents supported her and told her to give it her best shot.

Loo proved her mettle and graduated with a diploma in comprehensive hair dressing from London’s Morris, Sassoon, Alan International, which is affiliated to the British Federation of Hair Dressing Council.

While working in a London salon, she then barely 20-year-old fresh-faced hairstylist often heard remarks from customers that she must be the new kid on the block, and that these customers would not want to take any chances to have their hair cut by her.

“Tired of being marked as inferior, Loo constantly surprised her customers by suggesting new styles. She became a style icon in the local scene.”

Looking back, Loo believes “nothing can stop anyone from shining bright if they have the right mindset. They should believe in themselves.”

**NOT ONE TO GIVE UP**

Being the fighter that she is, Loo believes in herself and refused to be “brought down by her tormentors,” and today still upholds the same values of being nice and respectful to others. “If we believe in ourselves enough and take the necessary actions to realise our dreams and goals in life, we will be able to emerge triumphant and live our dreams,” she shares.

**MAKING THE CUT**

**WINNIE LOO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY**

By ANGIE NG

ANGIE LOO is an acclaimed and celebrated hairstylist who adorn the covers of many fashion magazines and her own autobiography entitled A Cut Above. Born On Hard Work, True Grit And A Pair Of Scissors.

In many ways, she has become the hair-style maestro who has revolutionised the local hair fashion arena by bringing to the fore creative and trendy styles and designs to the once “sundie business.”

Despite the trauma and injuries she sustained to her left eye, nose and cheekbones after she was hit by a car in the basement of a shopping complex in Subang Jaya on March 23, Loo was in her usual gregarious and spirited self when she met at her house in an upscale neighbourhood in Kuala Lumpur recently.

Not many people are aware that the owner and chief creator of A Cut Above had not had it easy when she started as a rookie hairstylist in the 70s.

Sharing the story of her early career days, the former Tacrisian Convent Ipoh student is a picture of collected wisdom and calm despite having to dig deep into her memory bank to recollect events that had happened more than three decades ago.

For somebody with 37 years of experience under her belt, her cool disposition belies the fact that even this petite hairstylist doyen had to bear her fair share of setbacks before basking in her success today.

Even as a young girl she had always displayed a flair for creative and artistic tendencies as she loved creating, drawing, needlework and cooking.

Her parents wanted her to pursue a business degree so she enrolled for the London Chamber of Commerce’s diploma in business studies at Stamford College in Kuala Lumpur. With her diploma in hand, she was supposed to leave for New Zealand to continue with her degree studies but her application fell through because she had not sat for the English Language entry exam.

“My father thought I was not thorough enough as I only did the minimum to pass the exam and would not be able to cope,” Loo, who has a BSc in business administration and management, says.

Loo says her father had instilled a sense of self-worth and belief in her. “He is my greatest inspiration and the person I looked up to. He arrived as a young man from China penniless, worked very hard and persevered to become a successful and well regarded businessman in Menglim, Perak,” she reminisces.

The senior Loo who had a successful tin mining business and three iron foundries in Ipoh, was president of the Perak Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Perak Foundry Association.

“Fortunately for me I had the support of my parents,” Loo says.

“Being the fighter that she is, Loo believes in herself and refused to be ‘brought down by her tormentors’, and today still upholds the same values of being nice and respectful to others.”

She headed back to Malaysia and worked in a hair salon in Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile, to expand her professional prowess, Loo enrolled in a professional modelling course at Act One Modelling. She also started to dabble in fashion tailoring.

“Loo’s break came when a regular customer made a business proposition for them to open a hair salon together. They started out small with a capital of just RM20,000 each to open the salon in Wisma HLA (formerly Wisma MPI). She was only 23 years old then.”

“My real break came when my partner offered to let me buy up her share of the business as she had to spend more time on the tides while pursuing your passion,” she advises encouragingly.

In 2010, Ernst & Young presented Loo with the Woman Entrepreneur of the Year award and on March 28, Women in Leadership Forum Asia bestowed upon her the Most Innovative Woman Entrepreneur award.

“Take the necessary actions to realise our dreams and goals in life, we will be able to emerge triumphant and live our dreams,” she shares.

Loo has been applauded many times for her entrepreneurship and for raising the benchmark of local hairstyling, and has quite a collection of awards to her name.

On April 16, Loo and her team basked in the Amazing 34th Fashio Party to celebrate the 34th anniversary of A Cut Above in Mid Valley. With five premier A Cut Above salons, four Re-store salons, two K-Cut kiosks, and a A Cut Above Academy in the Klang Valley, it is certainly cause for celebration.

Loo is training her children, Marcus and Hazel Teo, who are in their 20s, to take over the reins of the company in a couple of years.

The 57-year-old doesn’t plan to retire just yet and still has many plans up her sleeve.

“Retirement does not cross my mind as I believe it will only make us aged and dated! Thanks to the chance to recuperate and some quiet moments after the accident, I’m already thinking up new hair trends and styles to spice up the new fashion season!” Loo says.

She still takes part in the annual autumn hair shows in the fashion capitals of London and Paris – Alternative Hair Show and Salon International Hair Show.

“I love walking in the streets of London and Paris, and looking out for inspiration for new hair styles and trends from other hair stylists and the people there,” she beams.

With so much to keep her occupied, it is amazing Loo still finds time for charitable activities. She is a member of the all-girl choir group, Glitterama, that sings to raise funds for the sick and needy.

“If you love what you do, nothing can stand in your way. So go ahead and find out what you are passionate about and ride with the tides while pursuing your passion,” she advises encouragingly.

Loo was the winner of the Most Innovative Woman Entrepreneur 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, Navetta Group.
A Leader Is Relentless

Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison before he was freed. In spite of his long incarceration, Mandela stayed true to his cause. His relentless pursuit of the vision of an Apartheid-free and united South Africa, saw his dream finally realised.

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

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

Be A Leader.

We can help your organisation develop leaders. Write in to: people@leaderonomics.com or call 6012.343.7716

www.leaderonomics.com
Spend your time wisely and the company will flourish. By ROSHAN THIRAN

A school teacher spots a scribbled paper of her student and suddenly gets emotional. Her husband Rallys in and asks why she is crying. She quickly shows him the essay and asks him to read it. The husband reads it, thinking it is an assignment of one of her students. The essay goes as follows:

“Dear God, Gr unt me a favour. Please make me into a television. I want to take the place of the TV in my house and I want to have my family around ME. To be taken seriously when I talk.

I want to be the centre of attention and be heard without interruptions or questions. I want to receive the same special care that the TV receives even when it is not working. I want to have the company of my dad when he arrives home from work, even when he is tired. And I want my mum to want me when she is sad and upset, instead of ignoring me.

I want my brother and sister to fight to be with me. I want the whole family just to spend some time with me. And lastly I want to make my family all happy and entertain them, just like the TV.

Please grant me this wish to be a TV.”

At that moment the husband pauses and says, “Poor kid! What horrible parents he has!”

“The wife looks at him and says,” That essay is our son’s work!”

Many businesses are just like this family who care more about their TV sets than their children. Many businesses have leaders who hardly spend time with their employees and are shocked and surprised when their top talent leave their organisations. Just like the frustrated child lacking attention, care and focus, your top employees similarly crave your attention, care and focus. A Conference Board survey reported 55% of workers are not engaged by their success.

This is alarming as most organisations rely heavily on their people than on any other resource. In the old world, employees needed the company far more than the company needed the employee. But in the new world, employees need the company far more than the company needs them.

In the old world, employees needed the company on their priorities and engaged things simply and direct. When employees know their priorities and what they should spend their time on, they achieve desired outcomes and are engaged by their success.

At GreatCall, a successful social enterprise, they have an extremely high turnover rate. Employees who are engaged stay with them. Two factors have been identified for a successful employee experience: connection and engagement. The organisation is all about providing a service to the customers, and the employees play a key role in this service delivery. By educating and engaging the employees, the company can achieve its goal of providing excellent customer service.

The connection between the employees and the management is crucial. Managers need to be open and transparent in their communication with the employees. By doing so, they can build trust and encourage the employees to feel valued. This will ultimately lead to increased engagement and productivity.

The leadership team at GreatCall is committed to investing time and resources in employee engagement. They believe that by doing so, they can achieve their goals of providing excellent customer service and contributing to the overall success of the company.

The Company’s Mission

GreatCall’s mission is to improve the lives of older adults by providing cutting-edge technology and exceptional customer service. The company offers a range of products and services, including紧急呼叫系统, personal safety devices, and entertainment solutions.

The company’s focus on employee engagement is a key factor in its success. By investing in the employees, GreatCall can attract and retain top talent, create a positive work environment, and improve overall productivity.

In conclusion, the leadership team at GreatCall believes that employee engagement is essential for the company’s success. They are committed to creating a positive work environment and providing opportunities for employees to grow and develop. By doing so, they can achieve their mission of improving the lives of older adults and contribute to the overall success of the company.
INNOVATION, the endless effort to find a better way, cannot be achieved by robotically lining up best practices and imitating them. The real catalysing agent for innovation is the ground from which these best practices spring—the confluence of purpose, people, and processes better known as culture. From where will the next wave of groundbreak- ing innovation come?

Not from organisations mechanically mimicking each other’s best practices, but from organisa- tions with the commitment to take their stand on innovation (let’s just call it a garden of innovation) is simply a matter of conscious effort. And yes, sweating comes with the terr- itory. But getting a yield—something to harvest—is a fundamentally straightforward task.

If you check the contents of the most popular books on innovation, the same topics show up again and again: strategy, systems, process, leader- ship, customer focus, risk, speed to market, proto- totyping, metrics, mass collaboration, market intel- ligence, technology, and creative thinking. Yes, all of these topics are important. But none of them can take root in an organisation without one fundamental element being in place—a con- sciously created culture of innovation. Is such a culture simple to create? Yes. Is it easy? No. And the reason why it is not easy is because the ground of most organisations is hard, untilled, and in major need of clearing.

The metaphor that most clearly conveys the effort required is creating a garden. To experienced gardeners, the steps needed to create a garden are simple. To the inexperienced gardener, it is a tangle of complexity.

Yes, gardening demands sustained and methodi- cal effort. And yes, sweating comes with the terri- tory. But getting a yield—a something to harvest—is a fundamentally straightforward task.

If your company is clear about the effort required, creating a culture of innovation (let’s just call it a garden of innovation) is simply a matter of taking the time to execute each step thoroughly in the time-honoured way gardeners have always practised their craft.

1. WHET THE APPETITE
If you are serious about being a gardener of innovation, the first thing you will need is hunger—a real appetite for results. Growing a garden takes sustained effort. It is hard work—most of it unglamorous and unappreciated. Hunger for a yield is the serious gardener’s real motivator. Yes, the serious gardener likes being outdoors and, yes, the serious gardener likes getting exercise, but the ultimate product of his/her labours, the harvest, is what it is all about.

Without this level of commitment, the garden- ing effort remains only a hobby and does not have the roll-up-your-sleeves-and-get-dirty quality, so essential to reaping a result.

If your workforce has no appetite for innovation, you will need to find a way to whet it. If you choose not to, people will sit idly by, waiting for R&D, sen- ior leadership, or the tooth fairy to lead the change. And while they may talk about growth, shovels, and the need for bulk purchase of mulch, talk will not put food on the table.

Fortunately, somewhere, deep inside everyone in your organisation is the impulse to create. This impulse is innate. Your task is to awaken this impulse and help people own the effort to inno- vate. If they do not own the effort, the only thing you will be eating at harvest time will be your own words.

2. STAKE AND PREPARE THE GROUND
Amateur gardeners, fuelled by visions of ripe tomatoes, have a tendency to plant before they are really ready. Unclear about how large a garden they can sustain, unsure about what is needed to pre- pare the ground, unable to resist the impulse for a quick yield, they rush in willy nilly.

The result? Lots of wasted effort and the kind of sweating that signifies almost nothing. The same holds true for organisations who claim they want a culture of innovation. The antidote is a simple, two step process (though the description of the process is much simpler than the execution).

First, an organisation needs to get clear about the scope of the effort it wants to make. It needs to stake out its territory or, more precisely, define the fields in which it wants to innovate. (If it tries to innovate everywhere, all the time, it will only deplete its resources and exhaust its workforce.)

Secondly, it needs to prepare the ground for planting. This task includes removing obstacles that will interfere with growth, as well as enriching the fer- tility of the soil. Weekend gardeners cringe at this kind of preparatory effort. It does not feel like fun and there is nothing immediately to show for it. But without this effort there will be no foundation, no ground, for future success.

3. FIND THE SEEDS
You can have ample space to plant a garden. You can know exactly where that ample space is. And you can have lots of fertile soil in this ample space. But unless you have healthy seeds to plant, space is all you will ever have.

If you want a garden of innovation, you need seeds. Not just one kind of seed, but many. Indeed, the more varied seeds you have, the greater your chances for an interesting yield.
In the realm of innovation, ideas are the seeds. All innovation comes from the inside out with an idea. Ideas are the fuzzy front end of the innovation process – the alpha and omega of new growth. No ideas, no innovation. It’s that simple.

The big question, then, is this: Where will your company get its new ideas? Is there an existing process? And if so, is this process working? Can you count on your workforce to deliver high quality, game changing ideas? Or is there something else you need to be doing in order to tap their brilliance?

4. PLANT THE SEEDS

While it is true that some seeds, spontaneously carried by the wind and landing on fertile soil, find a way to plant themselves, most gardens require that seeds be planted in a more dependable way.

If your company is sincere about its intention to create a culture of innovation, it will need to refine its seed planting process. More specifically, it will need to establish a more effective way for the carriers of seeds to increase the odds of those seeds taking root.

Yes, aspiring innovators will need to become more adept at pitching and planting their ideas. But at the same time, the people to whom new ideas are being pitched will need to become more receptive to the possibility that something new is worthy of taking root.

Having a silo of healthy seeds is a good start, but ultimately those seeds need to be planted – and they need to be planted in a way that will radically increase the odds of them growing into seedlings.

5. FENCE THE GARDEN

If you have ever planted a garden, you have experienced the phenomenon of unwanted predators showing up at all hours to devour your tender, young seedlings. Deer, raccoons, moles, rabbits, and a host of other unidentified varmints seem to have no other mission in life but to downsize your dreams of winning the state fair or, at the very least, eliminate all possibility of you having fresh lettuce for dinner. It comes with the territory. And it will continue to come with the territory unless you fence your garden.

Organisations of all shapes and sizes experience the same phenomenon. Promoting new business growth ideas – the tasty indicators of breakthrough innovation – are routinely devoured by ravenous corporate naysayers. That is, unless the organisation finds a way to protect their aspiring innovators. Your role, as a gardener of innovation, is to fence your garden and protect your people from the ever-present acidic scrutiny, doubt, and premature evaluation of predominantly left-brained, metric driven, analytical inhibitors of innovation. It can be done. It must be done. And you are the one to champion the process.

6. TEND NEW GROWTH

Conceiving a garden is relatively easy. It requires no special skills, discipline, or education. Anyone can do it. Indeed, anyone does do it every single day of the year to millions of people. Bringing them to fruition is not so easy. Along the way, they get neglected, mishandled, and trampled on. What starts out as a brilliant new possibility, often shrivels on the vine.

Most organisations have no conscious process for nurturing the growth of new ideas. As a result, many powerful, new ideas never mature. They may break new ground, but they do not necessarily flower and bear fruit.

The good news? It does not have to be this way. With the right kind of sustained effort, gardeners of innovation can dramatically increase the odds of exciting new ideas becoming part of the harvest and making it to market.

7. THIN AND TRANSPLANT

Inexperienced gardeners, intoxicated by their need for a big harvest and overcompensating for their fear of having nothing to show for their efforts, tend to plant too many seeds too close together. Their fear usually dissipates in a few weeks when the first sprouts emerge, but then another challenge surfaces – what to do with the apparent bounty on new growth? While the profusion of greenery certainly looks good to the untrained eye, the reality is different. New seedlings start competing with each other for water and nutrients. Roots entangle. Left unaddressed, the results are disappointing – now row of stunted, scraggly plants. Savvy gardeners respond quickly, thinning out new growth to make room for a select number of the healthiest plants to flourish.

Really savvy gardeners go one step further – transplanting the healthiest of the thinnest out plants to new, roomier locations. Organisations trying to raise the bar for innovation face the same challenge. Intoxicated by their need for impressive growth (and wanting to involve as many employees as possible in the process), they get overwhelmed by a profusion of ideas and initiate too many projects – ideas and projects that end up competing for the same, finite resources.

The result? Craggy, stunted, and undeveloped ventures. The antidote? A clear strategy for how your organisation will evaluate, select, and fund new initiatives – along with a process for identifying promising new growth to be transplanted for future development.

8. CELEBRATE THE HARVEST

All cultures around the world have a holiday, ritual, or ceremony dedicated to expressing gratitude for the bounty of the harvest. In their bones, they understand the purpose, power, and privilege of giving thanks. Their recent harvest may have fed the body, but the collective acknowledgment of the harvest feeds the soul, strengthening everyone’s resolve to begin the growing process again the next season.

Corporate cultures could learn a lesson or two from this age old practice.

Historically, organisations have been severely lacking when the time comes to acknowledge the harvest and the people whose efforts were essential to manifesting that harvest. The endless demand for output drives most business leaders to conclude that acknowledging successes is a waste of time – a luxury no bottom line watching organisation could afford.

Somewhere, deep within the collective psyche of senior leaders, lurks the fear that celebrating successes will invariably lead to a fat and lazy workforce.

Nothing could be further from the truth. People flourish when their efforts are acknowledged – not only individually, but as an entire workforce. If you are serious about establishing a sustainable culture of innovation, remember to take the time to acknowledge your gardeners. For their effort. For their resilience. For their collaboration. And for whatever harvest they are able to manifest.

Mitch Ditkoff is the co-founder and president of Idea Champions, an innovation consulting and training company headquartered in Woodstock, New York. He is also the author of the popular Heart of Innovation blog, the award winning business book, Awake at the Wheel and a regular contributor to the Huffington Post. Additionally, he is a much sought after keynote speaker on a variety of innovation-themed topics. To connect with him, email mitch@mystarjob.com

myStarjob.com, Saturday 4 May 2013
Let’s take a look at what working parents can do to achieve a balance between work and play. "I have found that whatever you may do and however you may sacrifice, you will never be able to achieve work-life balance until you stop blaming everyone else and start blaming yourself," says Zaid Mohamad.

7 STEPS TO FINDING BALANCE

1. Stay positive.
   - No two parents have two exactly same situations to juggle, and no two children are the same. As parents, there are often stresses and challenges that we face, and it’s hard to sympathize with the greater number of people. But remember, it’s normal to have those moments, and it doesn’t make you a failure. You’ll quickly adjust and develop strategies to stay resilient to such situations and challenges.

2. Remember the importance of family
   - Children today are expected to have a string of As in their report cards. When the air is not filled with parents’ pressures, children become more proactive than before. They start to understand the changes to happen instantly rather than gradually. Very few parents actually stop to appreciate how busy people actually are, assist their children through these pressures, or in some cases, even need help from their children. Children who are encouraged to participate in the solution have a better chance of understanding the situations and helping others.

3. Focus on the positive
   - Instead of just celebrating good results, we should place more importance on celebrating improvements. When the As are not coming, parents mount the pressure. Parents become more pressurised and expect their children to improve. However, very few people actually stop to analyse what went wrong and how it could be rectified. How can we make an hour spent with the children stop misbehaving. One way to do this is to ensure that the family is connected and not left out. Carefully plan your week and make sure that the children are included. Children must be some basic rules that are created to reduce your burden.

4. Smart outsourcing
   - The household chores fairly among them. The burden shared will be reinvested enough to fix many domestic issues within the family. Try this first before considering hiring a domestic helper. A part-time maid will charge as low as RM30-40 per day depending on the tasks. In some cases, the tasks may not work out, then the family should hire a maid on a full-time or part-time basis depending on the tasks. Instead of just celebrating good results, we should place more importance on celebrating improvements. When the As are not coming, parents mount the pressure. Parents become more pressurised and expect their children to improve. However, very few people actually stop to analyse what went wrong and how it could be rectified. How can we make an hour spent a day with the children stop misbehaving. One way to do this is to ensure that the family is connected and not left out. Carefully plan your week and make sure that the children are included. Children must be some basic rules that are created to reduce your burden.

5. Get help with household chores
   - Do not underestimate the power of prayer. It can help you in times of need. Pray for new ideas and solutions to your problems. Parents who are able to stay positive will not feel too burdened. The rest of your family members will be in a mood to help and support you.

6. Don’t stop believing
   - Once we have done all that, it’s time to go back to the basics. Guide your children to learn how to manage their time and tasks effectively. Never underestimate the power of prayer. It can help you in times of need. Pray for new ideas and solutions to your problems. Parents who are able to stay positive will not feel too burdened. The rest of your family members will be in a mood to help and support you.

7. Time has always been a major challenge to working parents.
   - Let’s take a look at what working parents can do to achieve a balance between work and play. "I have found that whatever you may do and however you may sacrifice, you will never be able to achieve work-life balance until you stop blaming everyone else and start blaming yourself," says Zaid Mohamad.

8. Family work and dilemma
   - Children today are expected to have a string of As in their report cards. When the air is not filled with parents’ pressures, children become more proactive than before. They start to understand the changes to happen instantly rather than gradually. Very few parents actually stop to appreciate how busy people actually are, assist their children through these pressures, or in some cases, even need help from their children. Children who are encouraged to participate in the solution have a better chance of understanding the situations and helping others.
WORK-life balance is, in essence, knowing when to stop work and start with other aspects of life. It’s a subjective matter and it’s up to you to decide when enough is enough. However, a general rule of thumb is: if your work emails are the last thing you see before you sleep and the first thing you check when you wake up, your balance is a little off-kilter. In today’s society, there is a constant bombardment of the “perfect” life, where “having it all” means a C-suite level position, a perfect family life complete with two to four children, a great house (immaculate, of course) and a sharply-tailored wardrobe. With this in mind, the pressure to succeed is embedded in the very fabric of society, leading to an added drive to check all the boxes, at the expense of the average quality of life.

To top it off, we live in an age where it is literally possible to work wherever you are, be it your office or your bedroom. While this is convenient, more and more people are finding the line between work life and home life becoming increasingly blurred in their pursuit of success. Where do we draw the line? How do we keep work in the “work” part of life, away from the “leisure” and “home” components?

BE EFFICIENT
One way to keep work within the nine-to-five working hours is to be efficient! If you notice that your day is mostly taken up by chat boxes and social media, leave you to rush through your daily work load well into the late evening, you might not be as effective as you think. Don’t feel bad though, a large number of people including self-proclaimed workaholics – actually overestimate their efficiency at work.

Try to plan out your day, factoring in short breaks and meetings that go on too long, and cut down on the time spent looking at your friend’s holiday album and/or checking your personal emails. If necessary, create blocks of time in which you work completely undisturbed, surfacing to take a break, answer messages and succumb to that social media siren call (but only for a while).

SAY NO
Work has a nasty habit of piling up, especially if you never say “no.” An absence of dissent can result in back-to-back meetings that take up your entire day, work piled up on your desk because nobody else wanted to do it, and a complete lack of work-life balance. By not accepting time-consuming tasks, you can concentrate on your job and produce better results.

Saying no doesn’t just apply at work, it applies in your daily activities too: You don’t have to be the one baking the cookies for that resident’s association potluck. You can politely decline and offer to bring the drinks, or just offer store-bought cookies instead. The word “no” carries many negative connotations, but used the right way, it can bring more positivity and balance into your life.

HAVE ‘ME’ TIME
A huge part of the balance lies in having time for work, family, and other commitments; but don’t forget to factor yourself into the equation. It is vital for you to have “me” time, whether it is a solo holiday or an hour of hibernation in Starbucks. Those who have children will know the importance of getting away once in a while so you can hear yourself think, those without can also use some time to decompress without having to keep up a conversation. You may find that you emerge refreshed and full of new ideas!

TAKE A BREAK
Speaking of holidays, it was recently mentioned by Roshan Thiran in the career guide that there was a Gen-Y employee who stated that she would only work 11 months in a year, spending the remaining month travelling. This is actually quite a brilliant idea, if it’s talked through with your employers and then accepted.

This may need a lot of negotiation, so it’s helpful to exhibit exemplary work habits throughout the year so you can leave for your holiday with the happy knowledge that you’ve completed everything and handed over your tasks to the appropriate people.

Getting out of your comfort zone once in a while is fantastic for your outlook on life in general. Removing yourself from the rat race can cause a paradigm shift in your life that could bring about positive changes in both your career and home life. If you’re the sort who works all hours and loves it, then this could be a great way for you to get away from it all. As they say, work hard and play hard: Now that’s balance!

BE REALISTIC
Make sure that you always get your priorities straight and your expectations realistic. There’s no point in being determined to get two promotions in a year and working your fingers to the bone – even if you do achieve your goal, will you be in the right state to enjoy it? Likewise, don’t beat yourself up too much if you’re finding it difficult to juggle family commitments as well as your career. Delegate whenever possible; Hire someone to maintain your garden (or choose a simple fuss-free layout) and/or start a carpool roster with other parents so you don’t have to rush your children to and from school on a daily basis. It’s the little things that free up time that make your life easier to balance.

Make sure you eat right, get enough rest and take care of yourself! Since balance is the keyword here, keeping your health in balance will do wonders for you, your job as well as family. Good luck!

Lim May Lee hopes that everybody will achieve the balance they want in life. Looking for a great job to balance your great life? Log on to www.myStarjob.com for the latest positions today!

WHAT DID THE PAST CAMPERS SAY ABOUT DIODE CAMPS?
I can’t write enough of the activities we did but the best and worth mentioning one was called ‘Pitch Out’. We were given ‘business opportunities’ and presented in the audience of several distinguished guests for their approvals. That module demanded our collective efforts for interesting presentations, ideas and courage.

Batriziyo Mazlan | 17 years old | DIODE Camper 2011

BREAKTHROUGH!
DIODE gave me the opportunity to not only learn but BE a leader as well. It was indeed a breakthrough in my tween years. DIODE helped me find out my weaknesses and strengths as well as improve myself. It was through this that I discovered myself as an individual as well as a future leader.

Zachary Lau | 17 years old | DIODE Camper 2010

SIGN UP TODAY! REGISTRATION ENDS MAY 17, 2013
For more information email audrey.tong@leaderonomics.com or log on to www.leaderonomics.com/diodecamps
WHERE does one begin with a discussion on gender equality in the workplace especially in top management positions? The differences, whether imagined or real, that each gender possesses? The way that one could be better than the other? Perhaps the real question is whether embracing the ever-accepted idea that leadership is masculine is even necessary. In societies throughout history, women have been generalised as nurturers and men as leaders. The roles could never be switched or it was impossible difficult to do so. Here’s another question. Must women, in order to be perceived as leaders and worthy commanders, be like men? So much so that they will have to discard all ideas and habits ascribed to women because they are now to take on the mantle of a man, hard, tough, practical and emotionless? But who says women can’t do that? Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher disagreed. The somewhat sensational coverage on the passing of Thatcher raised many discussions and arguments, including those on women’s rights. What did this woman, known for running the country on the iron fist, do for her own gender, so to speak? One journalist wrote: “Nothing” And perhaps nothing is exactly that. The same journalist ventured that it is quite likely that Thatcher never saw the need to raise these differences. She promoted whoever she chose by what she saw was merit and surrounded herself with people whom she felt would benefit her. To her credit, she made it so that the world would know that a woman can lead. However, does a woman need to subscribe to masculine leadership once she is at the top? Let us consider a few points on gender inequality before getting to that. Statistically, as of January 2013, Fortune 1000 shows that women CEOs still make up a remarkably small percentage in the list at 4.2%. Only 13% of parliamentarians are women. These numbers have not increased much since 2002. An often-cited reason is that the current state of affairs plays heavily on stereotypes. We have attributed skills like “care-taker”, “nurturer” and “emotive” to women while their male counterparts walk away demonstrating the very same with labels like “supportive”, “mentoring” and “strict”. Women are at times seen to be less contributory because men are seen to be problem solvers, while the former are apparently not as good in doing so. Here’s an interesting thought. Through a study done by Catalyst, a non-profit membership organisation that conducts research on all aspects of women’s career advancement in the United States, it was discovered that men and women are perhaps more similar than they think and that greater variants exists among each gender group. Furthermore, their research also found that gender is not a reliable indicator of how a person will lead. Indeed something similar was mentioned by Catherine Sterk, founder and managing director for Asia OnTime, in a radio interview recently. She acknowledged that women can sometimes be hard on each other. “I think that female bosses are perhaps more intolerable towards women than we are towards men... don’t cry in the office, make sure you are strong.” In addition, she believes that managing men and women is roughly the same, stressing that one needs to work with the personality types, understand the people they are working with and adjust accordingly. Did Thatcher see it correctly then? It’s a yes and no. It was interesting that her governing style shows her lack of acknowledgement of the existence of gender bias, but it may have been to her credit to recognise the situation. You cannot erase a problem simply because you choose not to see it. In an inspiring speech on TedTalks on Why We Have So Few Women Leaders, Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook shares her wisdom on how women can become the authors of their own success in getting to the top. She points out that women are most certainly capable leaders but sometimes they have to learn to step up, or as she puts it “Sit at the table.” If you test men and women, and you ask them questions on totally objective criteria like GPA’s, men get it wrong slightly high, and women get it wrong slightly low. Women do not negotiate for themselves in the workplace... no one gets to the corner office by sitting on the side, not at the table, and no one gets the promotion if they don’t think they deserve their success, or they don’t even understand their own success.” Sandberg also stresses that women are, in fact, expected to work harder to overcome negative perceptions attributed to them for the same success they show as men. “Because the data shows, above all else, that success and likeability are positively correlated for men and negatively correlated for women.” Besides Sandberg, many female leaders are also quick to point out that at times, established rules seem to have been made for men by men. Let’s not look too far. In Malaysia, women are given less of a voice, but not because we are not speaking out but, because when we do so, we are emotional and loud unlike our male counterparts. We are bound by traditions and cultures where men make major decisions in our lives. Thus leadership is then perceived to take on a more masculine approach. Aung San Suu Kyi, chairperson for the National League for Democracy is widely recognised for her femininity as her Fierce determination in leading a nation. It would be simplistic to say that women like her never had to battle their way to the top unlike any other woman in the corporate ladder, but what we can take from women leaders like her is the fact that they lead in a way that incorporates the best of both worlds. She embraced motherhood, nurtured a nation, and inspired the people. Perhaps the solution lies in not getting drawn into the arguments with regards to male-female leadership at top management level. Perhaps the challenge is in letting people come to the juncture themselves by identifying a person’s merit and capabilities rather than whether he or she is making a gender-influenced decision. A good example of this was shared by Sterk. During her first years in the business, she had a male associate whom she often brought to meetings as clients had a tendency to ask him technical questions. After a few years however, once they started noticing that the technician was calling her for answers, the clients began communicating directly with her instead. “I don’t think it matters how customers understand the message, as long as they do. And if I get all caught up in sexism and feminism, you know, I’d be out of business already so I focused on what we needed to do,” adds Sterk. The point to take home from all this is that we should perhaps start looking at the situation in another light. The existing concept of masculine leadership is not something that we can or should shut ourselves off from because it’s undeniably prevalent in the workplace. However, belaboring the issue dilutes the focus as we are not looking to point out how leading as a man or woman brings about various results. It’s a matter of seeing that as individuals, we are simply a diverse, capable group of candidates with different styles and skills independent of our genders.
HAVE A HEART

 By RADHIKA CHELLIAH

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I t is a common misconception that today’s youths are self-absorbed thanks to the likes of Facebook, blogs or Twitter mania. To an extent, the concept of Gen-Y being narcissistic is justified as it lives in a bubble and is unaware of the happenings outside its world. It assumes charity is hitting the “like” button for some picture of a starving African or sharing videos about evil warlords on the other side of the world. The world revolves around it and that is the only thing that matters. Perhaps it is a reflection of society becoming more materialistic where true voluntarism is scarce.

So why volunteer? You might be thinking it sounds ridiculous trying to solve the world’s problems if you cannot even solve your own. Fret not; you are not required to be Superman. Helping others can be a lot of fun! In college, I organised an event called the Food Flash Mob. With flash mobs being the hype, why not utilise it to help others? The idea was to get a group of people together to distribute food packets to 14 different charities on the same day, at the same time. It was a lot of fun and indeed it is a win-win situation. There is a surprising people with lunch and spreading the same day, at the same time. It was a lot of fun. You get a group of people together to distribute food packets to 14 different charities on the same day, at the same time. It was a lot of fun. People are slowly but surely realising the importance of community service with corporate social responsibility.

Most people do not expect to get anything out of volunteering but it can be a lot of fun and indeed it is a win-win situation. There is so much joy and satisfaction for volunteers hence many of them return to help out again. It is an enriching and humbling experience, being able to make a difference in the life of someone else. Reaching out to help others comes naturally to most of us. Once you become a volunteer, there is a sense of newfound gratitude and you will realise that there are so many serious problems out there than your little blog rant.

Volunteering will give you an opportunity to give back to the society. There is a lot of positivity surrounding volunteers and a warm sense of happiness for being able to help a worthy cause. It will also add depth to your life experiences as volunteering is bound to be a meaningful part of your life. Make a positive difference in something that you are passionate about such as women’s rights or preventing cruelty to animals. There are plenty of other benefits to volunteering. Although this should not be your ultimate motive, having volunteer experience will look good on your CV or scholarship application. It will also enable you to gain soft skills and get to know more people.

The best way to start out as a volunteer is to engage in your local community. Look out for advertisements, posters or channels such as Do Good Volunteer, which will help you connect with the NGOs. Decide on how you want to contribute to these charities. Most youths will be able to provide time, energy or expertise such as a particular skill. Decide how much time you can set aside, then make it a regular occurrence as volunteering requires dedication and commitment. There are also a variety of projects available such as fund raisers, cleaning up the animal shelter or volunteer tourism. Organising fund raisers are perfect for people who enjoy planning, able to get people together and raise funds. People who enjoy getting out one voice and separate it from all the other voices and general sounds coming from many different directions. Your brain shines in this situation. It takes the voice in the left ear and the general room noise in the right ear. It looks like this:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{left ear} & \quad \text{BRAND} \\
\text{right ear} & \quad \text{BRAND}
\end{align*}
\]

This is called source separation. Electronic circuitry and communications technology cannot do this. Yet it is easy for your brain.

Now enter your, your telephone, and a noisy room. The phone makes your brain’s job much harder because while you are listening to your friend’s voice on the other end of the line your phone feeds in general room noise in through the mouth-piece. The phone, through its circuitry, mixes in the general room noise with the signal from the other phone. It looks like this:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{left ear} & \quad \text{BRAND} \\
\text{right ear} & \quad \text{BRAND} \\
\text{room noise} & \quad \text{BRAND}
\end{align*}
\]

This is a problem for your brain. The phone has mixed the room noise and your friend’s voice into one source. Source separation can’t happen now. When you cover the mouthpiece you stop this mixing from happening. Your brain can now do its job and recreate the “cocktail party effect”. Your friend’s voice is much clearer!

Why do phones do this? It turns out that years ago the makers of phones found that mixing the callers’ own voice with the signal from the other voice gave more of a feeling of talking live. Engineers call this “null duality”. This is great until the room gets noisy.

Can you hear me now?

In the next Brain Bulletin we will look at what’s really going on in your brain.

Remember: “You are a genius”.

By TERRY SMALL

myStarjob.com, Saturday 4 May 2013

WHAT do you do when you can’t hear on your cell phone because the room is too loud?

You put your finger in the other ear. It doesn’t work very well. There is a better way and it has to do with how your brain and phone work together. I was shocked when I read this. It works amazingly well.

The way to hear more clearly is to cover the mouthpiece when you are listening to the other voice.

You will hear just as much noise around you but you will be able to hear the voice on the phone much better. Try it. It works!

Why does this happen?
The reason it works is that your brain has a special ability to separate signals from each other. Sometimes this is called the “cocktail party effect”. In a party you often have to make this mixing from happening. Your brain can now do its job and recreate the “cocktail party effect”. Your friend’s voice is much clearer!

By TERRY SMALL

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To find out more about this Brain Bulletin, please visit our website at www.myStarjob.com.
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HARMA reveals to us the secret to achieving personal success, transforming our lives and the world around us in this book. The book shows us that regardless of our current circumstances or position within an organization, we are born with the power to demonstrate leadership where we are planted, and how we can all play a part in all that we do. We team four key ideas through a modern parable, involving a fictional person by the name of Blake Davis.

Coming from a loving and supportive family, Davis, pretty much lived the average American life. However, when both his parents were murdered, his world crumbled and he began seeking solace through food and TV, dragging himself through his daily activities. While enlisting in the army became his means of escape, all the carnage and brutality he witnessed during the war left him with emotional scars and trauma. Eventually, he survived the war, but he had found that he had trouble reconnecting to society again. Subsequently, he started working in a bookstore, as he had a love for books and reading. However, he was unproductive and just sat there, not doing anything. He eventually found a man who ran an organisation. The people with the big titles like CEOs. But the truth is, every person has the potential to change the world. For example, to truly grow, and outgrow its competition, this leadership talent has to be grown and developed in everyone in the company.

Everyone, no matter what rank or position, has to take full responsibility of his task. Even the role of the janitor cannot be neglected. Just think how successful and fast the company will grow when every person in the whole team understands that, and starts to become truly excellent in his current role. Flinn climbs up on the chair and starts to become truly excellent in his current role. Flinn climbs up on the chair and starts to become truly excellent in his current role. Flinn climbs up on the chair and starts to become truly excellent in his current role.

Compare this with a life spent to the fullest of our talents, harnessing the best of our potential at work, having been a person who built people up versus one who tore people down, where the great deeds we did failed and left the world better than we found it, a life wasted.

Leadership is not only somethings we exercise at work but also in every arena of our lives. For instance, we have to model leadership in our health, demonstrate leadership in our finances and with loved ones.

Some people think that leadership is about being a perfect person. But leadership is about connecting in so many fascinating ways! When we give ourselves permission to be open, real and brilliant around ourselves, we give others permission to be open, real and brilliant around us. People relax and open up, and that’s what we need.

Authenticity is about being true to who we are, even when every other person around us wants us to be someone else. Ask Michael Jordan and he will tell you that leadership is about being authentic to yourself when no one else does. Instead of slav- ing for superficial pursuits like larger offices, bigger titles and more.Given these few capabilities and give complete focus on doing our best work, making a difference in the lives of our teammates and customers, and building a better organisation.

To Lead Without A Title, one has to be unrealistically persistent and wildly courageous. To lead means to be more than the ordinary person and risk far more than the ordinary man. The very nature of leadership as the aim for bigger dreams and greater mastery is bound to have greater resistance. Hence, do not fear setbacks. Expect it; embrace it and even ask for it. This is merely because they are frightened of change and feel more comfortable clinging to the old way of doing things. Seeing opportunities where others see challenges, and envisioning things, becoming a whole lot better while others grow, requires Guts. All these obstacles come hand in hand with true leadership. Leaders with- out a title will experience periods of self-doubt but they stay passionately committed to their vision, having the faith to carry it through. Just like how all successful people have done so.

E - ETHICS

Lastly, E represents Ethics. It has never been more important to have good manners, excellent business ethics and in today’s world. It is about being honest, highly-dependent, staying on time and treating people the way we would like to be treated. Doing good business is actually very good for business. Reputation will flock all customers to you, so never sacrifice integrity for temporary gains. Be heroically humble as a leader. Become a true leader, and express your absolute best as a human being.

Koh Earn Soo and his team take the best books and summarise them into shorter, readable content in the hope of inspiring people to read more and learn more. To read the rest of this summary and summaries of other best-sellers, subscribe to www.thebestbook-summary.com
A recent survey showed that when looking for a job, 70% of Malaysian employees prefer companies which offer a healthy work-life balance than companies offering higher salaries.

Research has shown that the higher the level of job stress, the lower the level of job satisfaction and employee loyalty.

A recent survey showed that 68% of Australian fathers felt they did not spend enough time with their children.

Employees working in an office with work-life balance want to be loyal and stay on longer with their companies compared to those without.

A healthy work-life balance in the office leads to higher efficiency and work quality produced by workers.

Single and young employees are also asking employers if they allow their workers to pursue personal interests or provide them with the appropriate amount of balance they need.

Having work-life balance means having a measure of control over when, where and how you work.

Many companies now are introducing sabbatical leave as part of their employee benefits package. Employees who take a break from work and go for sabbatical come back feeling more recharged and they are also eager to start work again.

What do you do in your spare time? Hungry to learn more about great leaders and want to equip yourself with even more valuable information on how to prepare yourself for the working world? CPA Australia has launched a great new resource aimed at engaging university students and giving them insights into the minds of CEOs. The project, called The Naked CEO, is an online reality TV show anchored by CPA Australia chief executive Alex Malley.

Launched in Malaysia on April 13, students are invited to join Malley behind the scenes with inspirational companies and their leaders as he reveals the secrets they must learn on the road to success.

Malley believes that anyone can become a leader provided they have got the right guidance. As a former university lecturer, he is excited about heading back to universities and to be mentoring students. “I owe it to these students to show them how great, how tough, how interesting leadership is, and let them see for themselves that they can do it. If I can open a few minds to that possibility then fantastic,”

The Naked CEO builds a bridge from university to the real world through an interactive website, providing a 24/7, interactive website, providing a 24/7,

The Naked CEO gives students a unique career advantage and genuine advice. An episode is filmed talking to a CEO while the student sits in the studio as it is filmed. Another part of the episode requires the student going around the company to see what opportunities there are for graduates and what the company is looking for in potential employees, and the last part is a one-on-one mentoring session between Malley and the student.

There are currently 18 episodes online, with a minimum of 12 more planned for 2013. Each major brand visiting to a CEO while the student sits in the studio as it is filmed, is set to be featured soon mentored by Malley and together they will interview the CEO of AirAsia X, Azran Osman Rani.

For more information on The Naked CEO, visit www.thennakedceo.com

By EVA CHRISTODOULO
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DEAR LAANA,

Congratulations on your recent achievements. You have a good problem and I hope that my explanation can help you make a better decision. Two key remarks attracted my attention: you are more concerned about learning opportunities than you are with money. That is a great attitude to have. This will help you arrive at the decision easily. Lana, I too started my career in marketing and I hope to rely on my past experience to help you think through this.

The advertising landscape has changed in recent years and I don’t have a hint as to the role that you have been offered. Planner? Account management? Copywriter? I can only assume it’s one of these. In selecting an agency to join, especially if it’s your first job, I would look at the following: leadership and people in the firm, reputation and general connection of the firm, knowledge management, financial strength and also systems.

Now, let’s look at them one by one:

(a) Leadership and People In The Firm: In the advertising business, the large agencies are known to manage large global accounts especially in Asia and South-East Asia owned by Fortune 500 companies or large Asian conglomerates. Today, Chinese brands are also known to call for pitches on their related accounts. The agency business is about people, and you will notice that some brands are closely linked with certain agencies and these agencies have been managing the accounts for more years. There is especially true with accounts that have large billings like telecommunication, oil and gas, fast moving consumer goods, financial services and also hospitality-related accounts.

Agencies are also known to have grown with just one account, and there are account directors that follow the client when it changes its choice of agency. Some clients are also known to call for pitches on their account every few years and this is the trend when there are changes in leadership or when the client loses market share. In view of this, some agencies also grow a very solid talent base and you would notice that their relationship with their clients is embedded.

You should now analyse if the agencies that have offered you a position have any of these large accounts and if you are keen on any particular brand, industry, etc. Sometimes, agencies also do pro bono work and they manage accounts like Unicef, AIDS Foundation, etc. Many Gen Y graduates are also very keen on this area of work. You should also find out which account the CEO/account manager is doing. Changes are this is the bread and butter or main revenue stream. If it’s a very successful or emerging brand, you will have the chance to interact with a lot of bright minds and gain a lot. I also note to you that sometimes global account agency development is centred on annual themes and the creative ideas could originate from a corporate structure. You should have found out by now how much the local offices can tuck such ideas.

(b) Global connections – Does the firm offer a management trainee program? Would you get the chance to work abroad? Large agencies offer such opportunities and you should have been selected to work abroad on global accounts. There are many Malaysians who do excellent account management and creative work. Thus, if you were keen to travel and see the world, a large agency with global connections would serve this agenda.

(c) Knowledge Management – Large agencies offer good blended learning systems and you will be able to access many structured ways of learning. How to be a competent planner, account manager, creative thinker; etc. They invest in knowledge management and this will enable you to access successful and award winning campaigns. Many agencies operate virtual offices and you will also be able to link up with like-minded individuals from different offices. I met the Kraft team in the UK and I was impressed with the way the client developed virtual teams and also the way it worked with its agencies.

(d) Financial Strength and IT systems - While money is not important now, agencies that are well capitalised are able to attract top talent and retain them. You would want to work with an agency that has solid clients, and a team that builds successful brands. The two are inter-linked. Agencies that are financially strong are also able to buy the latest IT systems for their employees and in this virtual world, the latest IT systems get the work done faster.

Finally, I would like to add that large agencies usually have 50 to 150 employees and smaller agencies, below 50. The advertising agency business is about people and you would notice that the hierarchy is pretty flat and they are big supporters of the team concept. Most advertising agencies are not so stiff but again it is dependent on the local leadership.

Depending on whether you are a self-starter, a large agency would also provide a much better support system whereas smaller agencies would expect you to be on your own. I hope this would provide you with some basic steps in arriving at your decision. Good luck.

NANCY LIM

Dear Lana,

I was once asked this question by a candidate I was interviewing. In turn, I asked her to go back and do her research and send her thoughts to me. I’m glad she has decided to join us and I’m sharing her findings with you in the table below to help you through your decision making process.

On top of that, here are some questions you can ask your interviewer to help you decide, but please use your discretion before shooting out the questions below by gauging your interviewer’s body language. If he/she is open to answer your questions, he/she would welcome more queries, otherwise, refrain from asking too many questions:

> What are the traits of a good employee that you value in this organisation?
> What is the working culture in this organisation?
> Does your organisation subscribe to helping employees gain depth or breadth in their career and role?
> Could you walk me through a typical long-term career path for someone in this role?
> What challenges and learning experiences can I expect in this role?
> How open is this organisation to cross functional and cross department assignments?

Besides asking questions to get clarification from your interviewer, observe your surroundings and the work culture. That would give you an indication of the workplace and if it fits you.

It’s great that you have to know that you have got your priorities right from the start, Lana. Seeking the opportunity to learn as much as possible against the right attitude that will take you far in life and career. And truth be said, it doesn’t really matter. You join a big or small company because they offer ample opportunities if you’re willing to learn. And because you are just starting out, you have so many years ahead of you to move from big organisations to smaller ones.

“The beautiful thing about learning is that nobody can take it away from you” – B.B. King

All the best!

ANG HUI MING

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of myStarjob.com

Source of findings: Evelyn Teh Jiai Vieno

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DEAR CAREERNOMERS,

I have just completed my degree in media and communications, and I am looking to start my first job. I am very interested in advertising and have applied to a few advertising agencies and firms. My problem is that I have been offered two jobs, one with a big corporate advertising agency, and another with a medium-sized advertising firm. I am not particularly concerned about salary at this point of time, but I am more eager to gain experience and learn as much as I can. I want to go with the company which offers more learning opportunities. Some people say that there are more learning opportunities in a corporate agency, while others say that it’s easy to be ignored in a big company. On the other hand, some say it’s easier to learn when you’re with a smaller group but it may not be as fast paced as a corporate agency. It would be really great if you could help me out with some tips on what questions I should ask these companies before I make my decision.

Regards,

LANA
WHO ARE THE EMPLOYERS OF CHOICE?
WE DIVE INTO THE WINNERS LIST OF A 2013 SURVEY BY AON HEWITT

Next week’s Be A Leader unravels the importance of virtue in great leadership.

Attaining the status of a great employer involves eight steps.

Master the art of listening and bring out the best in you, says Vinesh Naidu in Hard Talk.

Turn off auto-pilot mode and be conscious of your consciousness.