Love your people

Leadership is an affair of the heart, and love is the ingredient for greatness, says Roshan Thiran in Be A Leader

Pg 6-7

AIA’S BILL LISLE
shares his story of success from a working class mining family to CEO of an insurance giant

Pg 03

WACKY WONDERFUL
and some out-of-this-world ideas to spice up your workplace

Pg 10

DID YOU KNOW
that the more brain reserve you have, the better you will cope with life?

Pg 14
ONCE, there was a frog sitting in a pot filled with cold water. It was serene, and completely unaware of the fire below the pot heating the water up ever so slowly. Curiously even as the temperature of the water increased, the frog remained insensible to the death trap it was sitting in. It simply had no idea that the water was getting hotter and hotter. Eventually, the water reached boiling point, but even then, the frog did not jump out. Unfortunately for the frog, it died from being boiled to death.

It’s a bit of a morbid story for animal lovers, isn’t it? But the story of the frog in the pot is a great reminder of the importance of our surroundings. Our environments shape, mould and affect us, whether we are aware of them or not.

Put Joey, a sluggish guy with a group of 10 regimented army officers for one year and Joey will become less sluggish. Throw Sarah, an enthusiastic young manager into a cynical working environment for a few years, and we’ll likely see Sarah change.

It’s the fascination we also encounter when we see documentaries about children like Oxana Malaya, who was raised by dogs in Ukraine. This unusual upbringing resulted in her acquiring dog-like behaviour. She preferred to walk on all fours and held things with her mouth rather than her hands.

Even in the nature vs nurture debate, scientists agree that while people may be born a certain way, nurture plays a tremendous role in shaping, adding to or sometimes undoing what nature instilled into the individual. Our environments have a lot to do with the way we behave, the values we hold, and even the goals that we have.

I wonder how much attention we pay to our surroundings at work? Do they bring the best out in us, drive us to pursue and achieve more, to grow and make significant contributions to the world? Or is the current environment slowly draining us of creativity and vitality? I’m not just referring to the physical working space, but also the behaviour patterns, expectations and general atmosphere - the culture of the work place.

This Saturday, why not take a moment to truly assess what kind of environment we are sitting in at work. What does your pot look like? Are you and all the other frogs thriving and happy in it? Can anything be done better?

This week’s articles may offer interesting food for thought. For one, Roshan Thiran talks about the importance of love in the workplace in Be A Leader. Too gooey and just a bit controversial? Have a read and see what you think. On a similar note, Prema Jayabalan in page 12 explores the idea of a “giving” culture. Top 10 lists wacky things to spice up any office environment, and Lim May Lee explains why it’s even worth considering your physical office space looks like.

In our centrepread pages, we dive into the colourful world of See Hoy Chan, whose workplace culture may pleasantly surprise you. Even though Leaderonomics has a playground in our office, I’m a little jealous of See Hoy Chan employees. In my First Job on page 3, AIA CEO Bill Lisle shares his fantastic story on how he progressed from a mining family in England to where he is today. I hope the story will inspire you.

So do enjoy the pages this week. If you have any suggestions or comments for us, write to us at myStarjob@leaderonomics.com. We’d love to hear from you.

Happy reading, and have a fantastic week ahead.

Until next Saturday,

LILY CHEAH
Editor, myStarjob.com
DETERMINATION is something that Bill Lisle, AIA Malaysia’s chief executive officer, knows well. The British-born 48-year-old began with humble beginnings. Growing up in a working class min- ing family in a small town north of Newcastle, Lisle learned the value of a good attitude and diligence at a young age.

At age 12, he was already working as a golf caddy, and took every opportu-nity throughout his teenage years to take on holiday jobs. By age 16, Lisle was able to buy himself a car. “I wasn’t even able to drive at that age,” Lisle beams, “so it sat in the garage until I turned 17, the legal driving age in the UK. But this taught me that hard work turns into results.”

Throughout his career, Lisle has applied the same zeal, and is reap- ing its rewards. Today, he sits in the driving seat of one of Malaysia’s largest life insurers, American International Assurance Bhd (AIA). It comes as no surprise then that AIA’s own mantra sings a similar tune to Lisle’s approach to life: it values and rewards individuals with a great atti-tude and a hunger to learn.

NEW WATERS

For Lisle, insurance wasn’t always the plan. “I ended up in insurance quite by accident as most agents would say, probably, but also quite by accident.” After graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering and a short stint as an engineer, a wide-eyed 23-year-old Lisle came across an advertisement by a leading insurance company in the UK. “It got my atten-tion because it featured a flashy car,” he recalls candidly.

Lured by the financial rewards of the role, he applied for the job. Unfortunately for Lisle, he was reject-ed at the interview stage for being too young. “I was devastated, and it made me want the job even more,” he shares with myStarjob.com.

“My way out, I met another manager who had overheard the conversation during the interview. He asked me to come back a week later, I did, and he offered me a job. His name was David Harrison, and I’m indebted to him till today because he put his neck on the line for me and gave me a chance.”

Despite his enthusiasm, Lisle did not get off to a good start as an insur-ance agent. He struggled to sell any-thing in the first four months. “After going home one day quite depressed, my father gave me the best advice I ever got. He said ‘Why don’t you find the best salesperson in your office, find out what they do and copy it?’”

With a renewed drive, Lisle approached the office legend, O’Carrol, an Irish man in his late 50s. After some persuasion (and two bottles of whisky), Lisle had found himself a mentor.

“Shadows of O’Carroll opened Lisle’s eyes to the importance of personal presentation, establishing relation-ships, and learning to help families build a good financial plan for their future.”

“In the office, this guy looked ordinary,” Lisle recalls, “But when he was around clients, he transformed completely. In the office, he was a lit-tle grumpy, but in the client’s house, he was the family’s best friend and confidant.

“I saw how he functioned, and I imitated him. The bottles of whisky I invested to be able to follow him really paid off because I had a great year. My career had finally taken off,” Lisle shares.

MORE THAN A JOB

Initially, Lisle saw insurance as being about earning money and having a nice lifestyle. However, his views changed when he paid out his first claim.

In Lisle’s first year on the job, one of his clients broke his back in an accident and lost his ability to walk. “I went to the hospital with a $220,000 cheque,” Lisle recounts. “His wife Margaret started to cry saying that without that money, she would not be able to put her children through school and that I had given her hope.”

Six months later, they invited me over for dinner. They had sold their house and bought a one-storey bung-alow which was fitted for a disabled person. At dinner, they gave me a cheque for S$180,000 and asked me to reinvest the money for them and their children. At that moment I realised what I was doing. I was helping people realise their dreams and giv-ing them hope. It was a life changing experience.”

SCALING THE LADDER

Even with this newfound job moti-vation, Lisle was not blind to the diffi-culties. Facing rejection was a part of the role. “Insurance is something that people know they want, know they need, but are not willing to buy. To be an insurance agent you need perseverance, and you need to genu-inely like people and care for them and their future.”

However, true to his drive and work ethic, Lisle embraced the chal-lenges and progressed quickly. By age 28, he was the youngest branch man-ager in his company, leading a team of over 100 people.

“The company gave me opportuni-ties because they saw the effort I put in, and this sticks with me until today. Give me a person who is prepared to try hard and we’ll train them. Attitude is as, or more important, than aptitude,” Lisle affirms.

In 2003, Lisle moved to Singapore as head of agency development for AIA Singapore. Later that year, he joined Prudential Corp Asia as direc-tor of agency development. There, he continued working his way up and attained CEO status at age 40 in Prudential Korea, followed by Prudential Malaysia.

Lisle rejoined AIA in 2011 as the group distribution officer in Hong Kong, but used Malaysia as his home base. Both his children were born here, and he and his family are very proud to be permanent residents.

After AIA’s S$1.73bil acqui-sition of ING’s Malaysian insurance operations at the end of 2012, AIA was asked to come back and be the CEO of AIA Malaysia, an opportunity which he enthusiastically accepted although he knew the challenges would be huge.

“I was thrilled to be closer to fam-ily, have the opportunity to integrate these two great companies and be a part of building this great organi-sation into the No.1 life insurer in Malaysia,” he shares.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Six months into the role, the energy-filled CEO has set high expec-tations for AIA Malaysia. “The most burning task is to achieve integration. I am lucky to have a great team work-ing extremely hard to meet a tight deadline. For that I thank them, as together, we are building a legacy to be proud of.”

“We want to be the undis-puted No.1 life insurer in Malaysia,” exclaims Lisle. Attached to this goal, is a commitment to deliver excep-tional service and provide Malaysians with the best financial protection. To achieve this, Lisle wants the best peo-ple on board the AIA team.

“It’s for this reason that AIA has launched an aggressive integrated agent recruitment campaign target-ing Gen-Ys who are entrepreneurial, confident and tenacious and who desire career fulfilment and financial success.

“We want to be recognised as an employer of choice and attract the best talent, because what sets AIA apart is our people. They are energetic, passionate about serving Malaysians, and also ambitious and these are the people who inspire me to come to work every day!”

“For individuals who possess this energy and desire for success, we are committed to train you, support you with the right technological capabili-ties and products as well as reward you for your effort,” he adds.

Even though Lisle can come from any background, “Insurance is not for everyone,” Lisle affirms. “You have to be willing to work hard, learn, listen and genuinely care for people.”

“For those who are willing, the rewards are incredible, both personal-ly and financially,” shares Lisle, refer-encing his own career experience. “If you put in the effort, you will get the rewards and recognition. But what is most gratifying about this industry is that you are helping people plan their lives and realise their dreams.”

Lisle’s own stellar career stands as a testament to the rewards that passion and commitment can bring in the insurance line. “It’s an amazing industry,” the CEO concludes, “and I am living proof that this business gives everyone an opportunity.”

“If you are interested in a career as an AIA life planner and want to find out more about what AIA can do for you, visit www.aia-LifePlanner.com. my and leave your contact details.
IF ONLY HIGH PERFORMERS CAME WITH LABELS

It’s never as visible as this to identify what makes up our talents. Their social and psychological wiring, whether it’s fight or flight under pressure or whether they’re really up to managing conflict.

Employers can often overlook what is necessary, considering the risks when assigning or promoting someone to any major position in the company.

Luckily, Leaderonomics is here to fill you in.

Our Assessment services help eliminate that risk. By applying well-researched psychometric tools and our experiential assessment simulations, we help provide an objective and justified insight into identifying that right person to develop and promote.

So, life is no longer a box of chocolates. With Leaderonomics’ Talent Assessments, you will always know what you’re gonna get.

For more details, please contact our Assessment Team at elisadass@leaderonomics.com or call 603.7957.5809.
I’ve been doing a lot of thinking these days about the “culture of innovation” — trying to get down to the root of what it all about. It’s easy to wax poetic about the topic (and a lot of people do), but too much of the stuff I’ve been reading sounds like a bad advertising copy for motherhood and apple pie.

So, at the risk of over-simplifying the whole thing, here’s my whack at boiling the mumbo jumbo down to the core.

If you want to create a sustainable culture of innovation, you will need to understand that there are always four forces at work — four currents that are always interacting with each other:

1. **Top Down**
   - It is essential that the leaders of your organisation play a “culture-enhancing role” far more than they currently do. They may not think they have the time or the experience, but they’ve got to step up to the plate and really own the effort.
   - They may not think they have the time or the experience, but are willing to do whatever it takes to “change the culture” will turn into some kind of ritual that will have no impact on the people you are trying to lead the effort.
   - I’m advocating that all those senior leaders actually lead the effort. I’m advocating that all those wonderful people with three letter acronyms after their name walk the innovation talk… stir the soup… shake and bake… do everything they can to make their companies change, in whatever way is necessary to transform “business as usual” to “I love this place and I can’t wait to get to work.” Yes, it’s possible.

2. **Bottom Up**
   - If an organisation wants to innovate, it will need to get everyone into the act. Not just senior leaders. Not just R&D. Everyone. Ideas - the fuzzy front end of innovation - can come from anywhere, anytime.
   - When an organisation really GETS this and finds new ways to tap the collective brainpower of the workforce, the culture starts changing for the better. People become more productive. More energised. More passionate about their work. Indeed, it could easily be said that the democratisation of the workplace is one of the most important social movements of the 21st century.
   - As power and decision-making trickle down, creative output ratchets up. People become self-organising, self-directed and, on a really good day, selflessly committed to being a force for positive change.

3. **Outside In**
   - Establishing a culture of innovation is only meaningful if the fruits of the effort yield the kind of results that are valued by your customers. Otherwise, the effort to “change the culture” will turn into some kind of weird, solipsistic ritual that will have no impact on the people you are serving.
   - Do you know who your customers are? Do you know what they want? Do you have any kind of process in place to track changing market conditions, demographics, and emerging trends?
   - Have you figured out how to get real feedback and input from your customers — how to include them in your ideation process?

4. **Inside Out**
   - Now we’re really getting down to it. If you want a culture of innovation, you will need to find a way to unleash the passion, fascination, and inspiration of your workforce.
   - Not by dangling carrots and sticks (read Dan Pink’s book, Drive, if you doubt me), but by finding a way to activate the innate desire for meaning, enjoyment, and success that is buried deep within the bones of every single person who shows up for work day after day.
   - Organisations don’t innovate. People do. If you can find a way to unlock the primal mojo of your workforce, you won’t need to manage as much as you do. You won’t need to rely so heavily on incentive plans, performance reviews, pep talks, frowns, and punishments.
   - That stuff only exists because your culture has failed you. If you can find a way to spark the natural desire and passion of your workforce, the culture of innovation will naturally evolve.

**How to Cultivate Innovation at Work**

**By Mitch Ditkoff**

The never-ending evolution in technology and the business world has sparked the emergence of many new businesses. There are all types of businesses to cater to the ever-changing needs of the current group of customers. Competition is stiff among businesses and entities and in order to stay ahead and survive, innovation is crucial.

True, creativity can’t be forced. However, you can inspire methods into the workplace culture to get your employees to be more creative and innovative. Below are some tips on how to promote innovation in your organisation:

**Hire an Assortment of Talents**

If you want to create an innovative culture at work, it should start with having the right employees. So the initial step to take is to hire a variety of workers. Look into diverse and trustworthy employees; what’s next? Provide them with the privilege to work creatively. Establish a system that gives your employees the necessary breathing room to explore new ideas.

Don’t be stringent with the working hours. Some people are not the best of thinkers in the morning, but rather produce the best of results when they are on fire with purpose, in touch with their own authentic desire to create, a culture of innovation will naturally evolve.

**Practice Flexibility**

You have a pool of diverse and trustworthy employees, what’s next? Provide them with the privilege to work creatively. Establish a system that gives your employees the necessary breathing room to explore new ideas.

**Accept Mistakes**

No one wants to waste his/her time and money on ventures that are bound to not take off. It is every company’s dream to have every one of their initiatives succeed at the first attempt. However, mistakes and failures are part of innovation.

In 1879, after testing more than 1,600 materials did Thomas Edison finally figure out the right filament material for his electric bulb. Employees should be given the assurance that failure is not expected every time. Every failure that is not a success story if they fear being reprimanded when a venture backfires, then it is more likely that they will not try the risk of exploring new ideas. Communication lines should be kept open with employees and appreciation must be conveyed for their efforts regardless of the outcome.
By ROSHAN THIRAN
roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

LOVE IS patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, or rude. It does not demand its own way, it is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It isn’t happy when injustice is done, but it is happy with the truth. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love never fails.

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

On Valentine’s Day this year when love took centre stage, my thoughts started to drift to my old apartment in Dallas, situated near Love Field, home and only consistently profitable of the “love” airlines– Southwest, with its NYSE ticker ID: LUV. The largest and most profitably profitable airline through tumultuous times, Southwest’s model of success has overlooked ingredient in any business of love is an essential, but often overlooked ingredient in any business.”

When time came to appoint a successor, Kelleher chose Colleen Barrett, someone who started her career as a legal secretary, but who knew “how to love people to success.” Barrett claims that she spends 85% of her time on her people. Interestingly, love is rarely described as a leadership competency. Yet, a lack of love in some form is generally the cause of failed leadership. We want our customers to love us and our products. We want our employees to love their jobs and their company. Yet, when we talk about leadership, we ignore love. “It might sound slightly bizarre,” says Ken Blanchard, leadership guru, “but one of the keys for effective leadership is to be madly in love” with all the people you are leading.”

So, why is love ignored? Firstly, love is synonymous with intimacy, beauty and its physical form. This makes talking about or expressing love in an organisation dicey. Furthermore, love is intangible, causing leaders to be sceptical. Most leaders fear love believing it entails group hugs, soft mushy talk or holding hands around a company campfire singing “Rasa Sayang.”

But what Kelleher meant by “leading with love” was truly caring, serving and loving people – both employees and customers. “We’ve never had layoffs,” Kelleher once declared. “Our people know that if they are sick, we will take care of them. If there are occasions of grief or joy, we will be there with them. We value them as people, not just cogs in a machine.” Kelleher really loves his employees and customers, knowing them all by name and unselfishly delighting in their well-being.

Although Southwest is a low-cost airline, salaries are on par with other airlines. However, its employee productivity ranks highest, allowing it to price tickets low. Its pilots spend more time flying and less time on the ground. It can turn around an airplane in 20 minutes while others struggle. Its short hauls are more fuel-efficient than most big airlines’ long hauls. Because the leaders at Southwest love their employees and have a “love” strategy, their employees always deliver.

Dallas Maverick owner Mark Cuban’s love for customers ultimately led him to becoming a billionaire too. When it came to customers, Cuban passionately believed that customers should be happy, even if it meant working 24 hours a day to please them.

Love Strategy

According to the “love” guru Patch Adams, every organisation needs a “love strategy” as it delivers a better ROI than any other investment. According to new research, leaders who put love into their work are significantly more successful than those who rule by fear.

Great leaders are fueled by love – they love what they do and they love the people they do it with. Indra Nooyi, CEO of PepsiCo, reinvented Pepsi by caring for people and the planet, pushing PepsiCo towards becoming a “green company.”

Most business leaders have a disinclination to embrace love as a business strategy because they are conditioned to believe leadership means being cut-throat, aggressive and mean. Love is for ‘sissies’. Being nice could result in loss of your leadership grip by being viewed as soft. Nothing could be further from the truth. Leaders who love their people are more likely to push their employees to perform at their potential through honest feedback. They raise the bar consistently just as a parent who loves his child does, disciplining the child and ensuring the child faces difficulties so the child can learn and grow.

What’s Your Love Strategy?

Love is a leadership competency needed for greatness

Sayang

Rosash

“IT MIGHT SOUND SLIGHTLY BIZARRE, BUT ONE OF THE KEYS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IS TO BE MADDY IN LOVE WITH ALL THE PEOPLE YOU ARE LEADING.”

- Ken Blanchard
LOVE IS ACTION
Love is not what you say or feel, but what you do. Mahatma Gandhi’s leadership was driven by passion and action. He lived humbly because he loved people and wanted to engage with all walks of life.

Love is action. Love leads to positive thoughts, thoughts lead to words, and words to action. Negative emotions destroy organisations. Humberto Maturana, a famous biologist, notes that love is the only human emotion that consistently generates productive and intelligent actions.

Leaders cannot ignore feelings as leadership is emotional, dealing with dreams, passion, inspiration and love. But the opposite of love is hate. Hate manifests passion, inspiration and love. But the love liberates it. Fear freezes enterprise, but not commitment. Unfortunately, most leadership is emotional, dealing with dreams, and insidiously rooted in our work structures and culture.

LOVE BRINGS SUCCESS
Basketball coaching legend John Wooden, who won a record 10 NCAA titles, considered love the "most powerful thing there is". The power of love powered his coaching career, claiming "your players must know that you care for them more than just as athletes. Certainly, they understand that they are there because of their athletic ability. But when you have them under your supervision, it’s up to you to make sure that they understand that you care for them as individuals. I’ve never had one I didn’t love."

Wooden must have learnt from Sun Tzu’s The Art of War, which states "he who loves them as his own beloved sons and they will stand by him until death." Research shows love being more effective in driving organisational cultural shifts than visionary statements or brilliantly worded goals. Even hard-nosed leaders such as Rudy Giuliani believe that "If you don’t love people then don’t be a leader."

In studying successful leaders, we find success driven by the quality of loving relationships within an organisation. These loving relationships are seen through behaviours like compassion, commitment, care, kindness, reflection, intuition, inclusiveness and forgiveness.

John Hope Bryant, a prominent leader, believes there are four laws of love-based leadership for business:

• Fear fails - Leading through fear is anti-optimised and crippling. Love is the antidote to fear
• Love makes money - Long-term loving relationships with customers and employees makes everyone wealthy.
• Vulnerability is power - When you open up, people open up to you.
• Giving is getting - Giving inspires loyalty and confers true wealth. People railed to him because he gave. He later used his wealth to build universities and fund great causes.

MILITARY LOVE
Surprisingly, we find high levels of trust in military leaders. Most expect fear to be the dominant leadership style but according to retired colonel Scott Snook, it boils down to love, adding that “it’s a deep abiding love and respect for one’s comrades” that matters most in battle.

A study by sociologists Shils and Janowitz attempted to understand why soldiers fought till death and concluded: A soldier continued to fight well beyond the point when the battle was lost “as long as he gave affection to and received affection from the other members of his squad.”

Soldiers love each other and are willing to lay down their life for each other. If love can be the touchstone of leadership in a vocation as violent as the military, then why not in business?

Snook adds that even during military training at West Point, love is emphasised continuously. Love your country, love your classmates and friends, love the future officers you will someday serve with and love the soldiers you will someday lead. Great commanders love their troops and put their well-being above theirs.

FINAL THOUGHTS
Here are seven questions you can ask to help you get love into your organisation and start your journey to bring a love-based leader:

1. When was the last time you did something unexpectedly nice for someone at work?
2. When was the last time you thanked or recognised someone for a particular special effort for the company?
3. Whom have you not thanked who has done something really nice or been especially helpful to you recently?
4. Who goes the extra mile routinely (for example working late or doing things technically not part of their job) that you take for granted?
5. What are things you could do regularly to add “love” to your workplace?
6. What are the actions that you can take to truly “love” your customers? (Not actions just for marketing reasons)
7. What can you do to bring fun and joy to the workplace?

Decorated Army Major General John Stanford, known for extraordinary loyal troops, claimed, “the secret to success is to stay in love. Stay in love with the fire to ignite others. A person who is not in love doesn’t feel the kind of excitement that helps them to lead others. I don’t know any other thing in life more exhilarating and positive a feeling than love.”

Love gets us remember the dizzying joy of being in love. We need to get that energy in the workplace too. Leadership is an affair of the heart.

Love begins with you. So, this weekend, your people need you to take a good long look in the mirror and decide that you and your organisation deserve a leader who has the courage to stand up and love them.

Rachan Thirani is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about ensuring love permeates across the business landscape. To learn from great leaders from across the world, head to www.leaderonomics.tv or contact people@leaderonomics.com for great leadership development programmes for your organisation.
LIM MENG WEN
Senior Manager, Marketing

I joined the company in August 2013 when I heard about the vision of See Hoy Chan and its plans for the future. What drew me to the company was the culture and the leadership. The company’s leadership is vibrant and encourages us to be creative and innovative. At the same time, we are also held accountable to deliver the best results. They really believe that every employee can contribute and make a difference. See Hoy Chan doesn’t only start projects for the sake of it. When considering a new development, the company used to listen to the needs and requests of the local community and their stakeholders and then work towards the demands and needs of the market. The company always strives to ensure that the residents will benefit from it. For this reason, the value of See Hoy Chan is always presented to me, so I come prepared for new challenges.

Besides sales, marketing and sales administration, the company has also given me the opportunity to get involved in the business development division where I see more prime land locations for development. I now get to be involved in the full property development cycle – from site acquisition, due diligence, feasibility studies, site investigations, land development, design, construction, sales and marketing to the final handover to the buyer. This has given me an extremely clear understanding on the whole property development process, and I am now more capable of dealing with the challenges that lie ahead. As a business unit leader, I am embarking on the challenges ahead, and am taking on the challenges with confidence. After 15 years in sales and marketing in the property industry, I gladly accept that I am happy to be where I am.

EMILY HO
Senior Manager, Marketing

We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done. We respect and lead by setting examples in getting things done.
**TOP 10 WACKY IDEAS FOR THE WORKPLACE**

1. **Build Creative Ways of Getting Around the Office**
   - There are many alternatives to walking and using the stairs and lifts. Think of creative ways to travel from one floor to another, like a long slide or even a fireman’s pole to go one floor down. It would be a fun way to travel, and inject some fun into the workplace.

2. **Make the Pantry Look Like a Shop**
   - Inject some luxury into the office by building a pantry stocked like a retail store. Fill the fridge with energy drinks and ice-cream, and provide drink machines, snacks and even light meals like sandwiches. Throw in some tables and chairs, and maybe add some light background music for those who would like to have lunch in the office with their mates.

3. **Game Room**
   - Build a game room where employees can go to take a break and unwind. The game room can provide a variety of options for employees, from board games to video games, and if your office has the space for it, even a small basketball or football court. Your imagination is the limit. This would also encourage bonding among employees outside of the normal work context.

4. **Have Fun with Office Layout**
   - Offices don’t have to consist of traditional cubicles. Inject personality into the design of your workspace. The office layout can even reflect the nature of your business. For example, if you are an IT company, you could design your office to look like an inside of a computer.

5. **Create a “Zen” Room**
   - Sometimes, employees just need some time out, or a quiet space to focus on their work. Give them a room where they can work in a calm environment. Decorate this “zen” room with calm colours like blue, peach or light green. Fill the room with couches and pillows for comfort and coziness.

6. **Life-sized Board Games**
   - Decorate certain sections of your office floors to look like board games. Workers can play life sized board games with people as the pieces. Interesting game suggestions will be snakes and ladders, tick-tack-toe, or even chess. This encourages engagement, and may help employees recharge.

7. **Playground Area**
   - There is a child in each of us, regardless of age. Having a playground area in the office is a great way for employees to bring out the child in them again. Your playground area can also be used for brainstorming and meeting sessions.

8. **Create a Maze**
   - Place a maze in the office that employees can go through in order to get to the other side of the office. This could be a shortcut to the normal route. The maze would sharpen the brain’s functionality so that it stays alert. The office maze should be slightly different each day so that the employees would not be slacking while trying to find a way out. The walls should be moveable to make it easier to change the route.

9. **Colours, Colours, and More Colours!**
   - The use of colours helps brighten up the office environment. Decorate your office walls, tables and chairs with bright colours to create a vibrant atmosphere. Avoid colours which are too striking such as hot pink or neon shades, as they can be distracting.

10. **Vision Board**
    - Put up a big vision board on the office wall. On the board, put up a picture collage of the best memories or achievements of the company. You can also include a section for random shout outs from the employers and employees to motivate others. Why not also include a section for the company’s vision and goals.
WHY do we need a "fun" workplace? Some might ask: Why the need for football tables, slides, beanbags and/or disco balls and funkily-named meeting rooms? Is it even good for the company, or is it just to pandeer to the Gen-Y that will soon be taking over the offices?

It’s simple: Fun brings people together. Together, they can produce brilliant innovations and industries-changing ideas. Bringing your team into close contact with each other is one thing; however the FUN factor is what makes minds alert and keeps the conversation going.

What Gen-Y leaders are hoping for is that this constant flow of conversation and mind-engaging activities will ignite a game-changing spark of genius.

“There are numerous reasons why fun is important in the workplace,” says Roshan Thirian. “Levity boosts our ability to think outside the box and enables us to generate innovative solutions to solve problems.”

He’s in good company, as many other successful companies seem to be thinking along the same lines, if their workplaces are any indicator.

SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES HAVE FUN

Let’s take a look at Fortune’s “100 Best Companies To Work For” list: Topping it is, as can be expected, Google Inc with its slide and campus spilling over with free cafes and electric cars. Not only has employee satisfaction increased; so have share prices, revenue ($55.38B in 2011) and profits, proving that the kind of innovation that comes with a fun workplace could actually bring in great returns.

Besides Google, a number of the other top 10 companies seem to place a great deal of importance on a vibrant and fun work culture. Camden Property Trust (10th place) based in Houston, Texas, has benefits that include discounted rentals for employees and founders that enjoy a good practical joke. Having a laugh at work seems to be paying off for the apartment-manager company as they recorded a revenue of US$655mil in 2011.

Fun also helps people de-stress. What better way to work off the frustrations brought on by a finicky customer than by playing a round of video games/having a chat in the cafeteria/going for a walk near some pretty landscaped garden (choose where applicable) with a colleague or two? Allowing your employees some time to decompress could go a long way towards productivity. Stress dampens creativity and kills efficient work whereas spending a few minutes away from the workstation could provide a much-needed paradigm shift or flash of inspiration.

Collaboration is the name of the game when it comes to companies investing in a “fun” workplace. When cubicles are rare and divider walls are low, people interact more. The same thing happens when there are sofas and game consoles. People gravitate to fun things, and when they meet, collaborations happen. The human factor also plays a part in encouraging people to work! For example, glass-walled meeting rooms where there is a lot of foot traffic means that people would see their colleagues actively discussing matters on a regular basis and be inspired to do the same.

If your offices are scattered across the country, you don’t have to start making plans to construct a skyscraper to contain all your staff! Privately-held securities firm Edward Jones (eighth place) eschewed a sprawling campus in favour of 11,000 small offices, creating a close-knit office culture. Fun in Edward Jones includes regional gatherings for ice-skating and fishing tournaments, and this culture undoubtedly played a part in its 2011 revenue of US$4.577mil.

“A fun work culture also means greater creativity, stronger camaraderie and a higher morale for team members,” says Seah-Khoie Le Boon, senior VP, HR and Training, Resorts World Sentosa, on HRM Asia’s website. Her sentiments are echoed by many other successful companies (think Facebook) where teams are given many opportunities, some of them in the form of physical surroundings, to get to know each other. While the more traditional team-building activities like spending a day in a theme park do work, heading out once a year cannot be as effective as spending every day in an environment that promotes closeness and friendship.

Speaking of Facebook, its video game room and the fact that CEO Mark Zuckerberg sits amongst his staff has made it the best place to work according to job site Glassdoor.com. Happy employees are motivated employees, as any HR consultant could tell you, so it makes sense to do away with dull workspaces and inject a little fun into your team’s workload!

HOW TO MAKE YOUR WORKPLACE FUN

Research at California State University Long Beach showed that people who have fun at work display more creativity, work better with others, are more productive and -- here’s the clincher -- take less sick days off!

So how do you help your team have more fun in your workplace? It could be as simple as rearranging your furniture to create spaces for people to sit and chat. Lawrence Lee, head of learning and development – Asia-Pacific, Hilton Worldwide, shared on HRM Asia that his office boasts an open office concept and low partitions to encourage better interaction and open communication.

You don’t need slides like Google or swings like Box, but you could have a stocked pantry with coffee and other drinks, and you could invest in a game console for your staff to relax a little. Whether pool table or console, you could set up a scoresheet as well to encourage people to come, play and relax. Good-natured competition could also go far.

Bright colours and modern designs are not just eye-pleasing: Colours affect moods so picking a vibrant colour like orange (orange is said to inspire creativity) could help with the innovation process, whereas a pale blue wall could help with relaxation after a long day.

Everybody’s got some sort of quote or inspirational image on their desks. Consolidating all of those into a bulletin board could also go far in fostering close- ness between colleagues as will team holidays, budget permitting, of course.

Take a cue from Google’s 20% rule, where employees spend 20% of their working on any project they like. This has resulted in great new ideas and innovations that could make a difference in Google as well as in your own company. If you implement this. Taking 20% off to work on pet projects could also positively affect the way people approach their work the other 80% of the time, as it enforces the idea that creativity can exist, no matter what your job description is. This is what most companies want: Creative, critical-thinking employees who can improve upon existing ideas and possibly change things for the better.

Mentoring systems, especially group mentoring where a team is mentored by a senior manager or someone who knows the ropes, is excellent for team-building and collaborations. Not only do employees learn new skills, but they also foster better relationships with other colleagues that they may not have interacted with much in normal circumstances.

The possibilities are endless! You can make a difference in your workplace, and you will likely reap the rewards of a lower employee turnover rate as well as the revenue benefits that come with a happy, engaged team.

Looking for more career articles? Head over to mystarjob.com/talentdevelopment for more insights into working life.
**GIVE-AND-TAKE OR EVERY MAN FOR HIMSELF?**

By PREMA JAYABALAN
prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com

**H** OW many times have we come across people who do not want to share any skill or knowledge with their own colleagues as they fear that the other party will benefit, and that they themselves will “lose out” if they are generous? I am sure all of us, at one point in our careers, have bumped heads with these individuals. It has become a norm amongst many to keep whatever knowledge they know to themselves like guarding a chest of treasure, without realising that sharing it with their team will bring in more returns than can benefit all.

Evidence from studies conducted by Philip M Podsakoff, a professor of organisational behaviour and human resource management at the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University shows that the extent to which employees help their own colleagues, and make connections without expecting anything in return, is essential in determining an organisation’s success story. A good establishment is one that unites employees of every rank around the goals of the organisation as a whole. Here are some ways to infuse a giving culture into a company:

### BE GENEROUS IN SHARING INFORMATION

Leaders should encourage employees not to be defensive in their work. Demonstrate to them that they are free to share useful information with their colleagues, and commend them when it happens.

Sharing information amongst team members or lending expertise to one another will enable tasks to be completed quicker. After all, it takes several experts in various aspects to work together in order for a project to be successful.

If you are in a team with juniors members, offer them guidance and provide them with the resources they need to complete their jobs well. Share your input with them and work together for the betterment of your organisation.

### GIVE CREDIT

It is human nature that all individuals love to be praised for doing a great job or be acknowledged for their successful ideas and contributions. If you are a team head, give recognition to your employees for their good performance or for the extra mile they went to complete a task. It can be announced during meetings or you can even send out a mass email. Even if it is a colleague, give credit for the person’s brilliant strategies in staff meetings.

If due credit is always given to the source of ideas, then everyone will be encouraged to contribute their thoughts.

### PRACTISE MENTORSHIP

Be gracious when it comes to sharing your time and expertise as it all boils down to the benefit of your company.

Pass on what you know without being selfish as it will only go to waste if you don’t. Your professional experiences are valuable treasures for those who have just embarked into the working world. Take a mentee or two under your wing and show them the ropes into the working world. Take a mentee or two under your wing and show them the ropes of the organisation. Be a role model in developing their career and assist them in their problems. Set a path for these mentees to follow. One day, they themselves may provide mentorship for their juniors.

### LEAD THE CHANGE

A leader can make or break the giving culture in an organisation and should drive the importance of having a giving attitude. Getting employees to trust each other and to share skills and knowledge without the fear of being sidelined may take time, but programmes which emphasise on teamwork and working together may help in this process.

In order to promote team spirit, teams should be committed as a whole, not just specific individuals. To set examples to all, rewards or prizes can be given to departments that practise this mantra to create awareness of the culture the company embraces.

Leaders must lead workers to the attitude that in extending their hands to each other, they can accomplish great things as a team.

### A SIMPLE EXERCISE TO TRY: RECIPROCITY RINGS

A professor from the University of Michigan Professor Wayne Baker and his wife, Cheryl Baker at Humax Networks came up with an exercise called the “Reciprocity Ring.” In this exercise, employees are put in groups. Each employee is asked to request help in sectors where he or she needs assistance. Others in the group will use their knowledge and networks to help grant the request. The exercise is run in two 60 to 90-minute rounds. The first round emphasises on personal requests. Here, people will already begin to open up. The second round focuses on professional requests. Since everyone is asking for help, any form of hesitation or self-doubt are eliminated.

This exercise lets employees know that they can access a wide network of support, and illustrates to them the possibility of getting help from each other. It also helps them to stop expecting anything in return. The exercise was carried out at companies such as Estee Lauder and Lincoln Financial with great success. Why not try it in your organisation on a weekly or monthly basis to open the doors for more giving and receiving among employees.

---

**A company is on its way to success when its employees practise the habit of openly contributing their knowledge and skills to their team members and subordinates without any hesitation. If you have this giving culture at your workplace, here are some benefits you will notice:**

1. Better teamwork and team cohesion
2. Systematic and incremental transfer of expertise from experienced staff to new recruits
3. Employees will be able to get work done at a faster pace because they will be able to get solutions to problems much quicker
4. Ultimately, the organisation will be able to provide quicker and better service to customers, since the aim in a giving culture is to pool together knowledge and manpower for better performance

---

**By PREMA JAYABALAN**
prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com

---

**Despitethe implications of collaboration, this open sharing of knowledge and efforts is not widespread because of the hurdles of fear, sometimes attributable to company culture. At times, in the effort to increase productivity, employees push employees in a way that only increases competition and defensiveness rather than promote a spirit of collaboration. “After a decade of studying work perform- ance, I’ve identified different types of reciproc- ity norms that characterise the interactions between people in organisations,” Podsakoff explains. “At the extremes, I call them ‘giver cultures’ and ‘taker cultures’.”**

“In giver cultures, employees operate as high-performing intelligence units do: helping others, sharing knowledge, offering mentoring, and making connections without expecting anything in return. Meanwhile, in taker cultures, the norm is to get as much as possible from others while contributing less in return. Employees help only when they expect the personal benefits to exceed the costs, as opposed to when the organisational benefits outweigh the personal costs.”

A cohesive and strong company culture is essential in determining an organisation’s success story. A good establishment is one that unites employees of every rank around the goals of the organisation as a whole. Here are some ways to infuse a giving culture into a company.

---

**Evidence from studies conducted by Philip M Podsakoff, a professor of organisational behaviour and human resource management at the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University shows that the extent to which employees help their own colleagues, and make connections without expecting anything in return, is essential in determining an organisation’s success story. A good establishment is one that unites employees of every rank around the goals of the organisation as a whole.**

---

**Delilah**

---

**Despitethe implications of collaboration, this open sharing of knowledge and efforts is not widespread because of the hurdles of fear, sometimes attributable to company culture. At times, in the effort to increase productivity, employees push employees in a way that only increases competition and defensiveness rather than promote a spirit of collaboration. “After a decade of studying work perform- ance, I’ve identified different types of reciproc- ity norms that characterise the interactions between people in organisations,” Podsakoff explains. “At the extremes, I call them ‘giver cultures’ and ‘taker cultures’.”**

**In giver cultures, employees operate as high-performing intelligence units do: helping others, sharing knowledge, offering mentoring, and making connections without expecting anything in return. Meanwhile, in taker cultures, the norm is to get as much as possible from others while contributing less in return. Employees help only when they expect the personal benefits to exceed the costs, as opposed to when the organisational benefits outweigh the personal costs.”**

“A cohesive and strong company culture is essential in determining an organisation’s success story. A good establishment is one that unites employees of every rank around the goals of the organisation as a whole. Here are some ways to infuse a giving culture into a company.”

---

**Evidence from studies conducted by Philip M Podsakoff, a professor of organisational behaviour and human resource management at the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University shows that the extent to which employees help their own colleagues, and make connections without expecting anything in return, is essential in determining an organisation’s success story. A good establishment is one that unites employees of every rank around the goals of the organisation as a whole. Here are some ways to infuse a giving culture into a company.”**

---

**Despitethe implications of collaboration, this open sharing of knowledge and efforts is not widespread because of the hurdles of fear, sometimes attributable to company culture. At times, in the effort to increase productivity, employees push employees in a way that only increases competition and defensiveness rather than promote a spirit of collaboration. “After a decade of studying work perform- ance, I’ve identified different types of reciproc- ity norms that characterise the interactions between people in organisations,” Podsakoff explains. “At the extremes, I call them ‘giver cultures’ and ‘taker cultures’.”**
O ne extremely hot afternoon, after somehow convincing myself that I “deserved” an ice-cream, I walked out of DropZone, our youth centre in PJ Old Town and headed toward McDonald’s for a sundae. The walkway I took was scattered with secondary school students just hanging around waiting to attend one of the four tuition centres in the area, when I passed by this conclusion to a conversation:

Boy 1: Your mum did that!? Geez, that sucks, man!
Boy 2: I know, right? I just can’t wait to start earning my own money so I can get and keep whatever I want, and best of all, I wouldn’t have to answer to ANYONE!

I was immediately transported back to my teenage years (not very long ago) where there was the strongest yearning for freedom from parents, school or any form of system that I felt stopped me from being me. “No, you can’t have that”, “No, you can’t go there”. Of course I forbid you to watch that movie” and “Just because they have a handphone doesn’t mean you need one”. These don’t even begin to describe the tip of the iceberg of factors that cause teenage angst. Perhaps it has something to do with that two letter word: “No”. But that is a discussion for another day.

I certainly did look forward to that blessed day I didn’t have to answer to anyone. But growing up taught me that this was all a lie. Just like how it was a lie when they told us that things would go our way once we get through SPM, STPM and then university. The moment we feel our way once we get through SPM, STPM anyone. But growing up taught me that blessed day I didn’t have to answer to another day. Has something to do with that two letter words that cause teenage angst. Perhaps it to describe the tip of the iceberg of factors that cause that angst. Perhaps it has something to do with that two letter word: “No”. But that is a discussion for another day.

Before you quickly say that “we answer to ourselves”, let’s consider these options:

**DO WE ANSWER TO FEAR?**

Fear is our emotional response to an imagined future. Unfortunately, when we think of possibilities, we usually like to imagine the worst, or as we like to say, we are “being realistic”.

As a result, we prefer the well-trodden trail because it has proven to work best. Everything else is too much of a risk. When fear is in charge, we play safe. Not that this is a bad thing but by allowing fear to dictate our actions, we turn away from possibilities and live a limited and familiar story. Again, this is not a bad thing.

There are different fears that can bind us without our knowledge. First, we fear change. Any new possibility becomes an imagined threat to an equilibrium we have made for ourselves. Validly terrifying. This leads us to the fear of failure. These what-ifs and what-nots are linked to the fear of what others would say about us. Each of these fears can cause us to make fear-based decisions. The question is, are these going to be the best decisions for us?

**DO WE ANSWER TO EXPECTATIONS?**

Once we’ve broken free from the rule of fear, the next authority would probably be expectations. A lot of us have, from a very young age, dreamed of the life that we would lead when we get older. Some from a very young age determine that they are going to be doctors, lawyers, or any other profession that will make them rich and famous. This becomes more apparent when these expectations are placed upon them by families and communities.

Do we then become subjected to honouring these expectations and lead lives in pursuit of them? Many do. People, especially those near and dear to us, only want the best for us and their expectations are difficult to ignore.

Admittedly, problems can really come streaming in if we suddenly decide we are passionate about baking or playing the yo-yo. Again, if we walk only the straight and familiar path under the authority of expectations, we will end up living in a one-dimensional existence; the dimension of another or of an imagined version of ourselves.

However, as cut and dry as this may sound, I do not hold to the thought that answering to expectation is wrong, especially if the expectations come from people who care for us.

**DO WE ANSWER TO OUR BELIEFS?**

Since we come from a multi-religious background and the first tenet of our Rukun Negara is “Belief in God”, we are accountable to a higher being and the religious principle that we are taught, and we derive our moral rules and virtues from this.

We can also give authority to our ideas or imagination. Our minds create what our reality is supposed to look like, based on our hopes and ideals. However, along the way, we sometimes come into the danger of ignoring what is actually happening in our lives.

We forget to be human. We forget that fear and expectations are real. That family and community are important and that we should strive to be part of a bigger picture.

So, I will not stand on a wooden barrel and declare that you owe it to yourself to answer to you and you alone or that we write our own destiny. The answer to this question goes beyond “you” (or “I”, depending on which angle you’re coming from).

**REALITY HITS**

We know profoundly how one of Newton’s laws of motion speaks of every action having an equal and opposite reaction – we are bound to the consequences of our decisions. And yet building a better you is oppressed with an ever present dissatisfaction because there is always something that can be improved.

Am I saying we’re not in-charge then? No. We can make a call as to who or what we answer to. Life’s complexity inevitably weaves us into the lives of others, and whether we like it or not, expectations, hopes and fears will manifest themselves and seek to govern the way we live.

As to what it is you answer to, only you can identify and decide on this. Who I answer to may vary as I journey through life.

Someday if I have children, I will have to be answerable to them too. Just remember no man would be happy being an island, and answering only to oneself may not be a dream come true.

My fellow young sojourners, as much as we are the masters of our own destiny, let’s not forget that we are a part of a sisterhood, brotherhood, family, neighbourhood, community, school, university, organisation, nation, idea or belief system. We have a responsibility to each other.

We are a jigsaw puzzle piece of each other. We accept one another and thus we answer to one another. Thus our struggle for excellence, or “freedom” in the view point of these young gentlemen I came across, is not a fight we make for ourselves. Whether we realise it or not, there is a bigger portrait we are painting.

By DIVYA CHANDY

divya.chandy@leaderonomics.com

MYSTARJOB.COM, SATURDAY 25 MAY 2013
By TERRY SMALL
mysstarjob@leaderonomics.com

HAVE you ever wondered why stress, problems, and the “stuff” life throws at us affect some people a lot more than others? I have. It just seems that some people I know have the ability to bounce back – and some don’t! I believe the brain plays a bigger role in all of this than we ever realised. Your brain responds to the environment based largely upon what is already in your brain. Brain scientists call this brain reserve. The more resources you have in your brain, the better you cope with life. It’s like having extra money in your bank account to get you through tough times.

Here is an excerpt on the importance of brain reserve:

Have you ever wondered why some people get depressed after losing a parent while others, although sad, keep going? Why some people, after a minor head injury, seem to really be affected, while others don’t? Or why some people can work many hours straight, while others are completely spent after a short period of time.

Several years ago, after looking at many thousands of brain scans, I started to think about the concept of “brain reserve.”

Brain reserve is the cushion, margin or extra neurons that we have to deal with unexpected events or insults. The more reserve we have, the more stresses or injuries we can handle. The less reserve, the more vulnerable we are.

When we are conceived, let’s say, your brain’s reserve was likely increased. Anything that harms brain function, starts to erode your brain’s reserve. Here are some factors known to decrease brain reserve:

- Prenatal or birth injuries
- Brain injuries
- Excessive alcohol
- Drug abuse
- Negative thinking
- Poor diet
- Environmental toxins
- Chronic stress
- Lack of sleep/sleep apnea
- Smoking
- Excessive caffeine
- Too much television or violent video games
- Lack of exercise

Likewise, maintaining a brain healthy life will increase your reserve or hardness to deal with pending stresses or trouble. I always want to be increasing my brain reserve, to deal with the crises that inevitably will come my way. Here are a number of ways to do it:

- Positive social connections
- New learning
- Healthy diet
- A daily multiple vitamin
- Fish oil
- Learning music
- Regular exercise

At Leaderonomics, it is part of the work culture to Drank new colleagues in order to welcome them to the team. Welcoming a new member to the family is always expected to be fun!

According to the Malaysian Labour Law 1955, female workers in the industrial and agricultural sector are not allowed to start working work from 10pm to 7am nor overnight work without having 11 consecutive hours free from work.

Google believes in transparency and the employees being comfortable sharing opinions and ideas. It highly values input from the Googlers’ input helps towards the growth of the company.

Dancing (of course, without drinking)
- Positive thinking
- Gratitude
- Meditation or prayer

If you wish to stay healthy during stressful times, you need adequate brain reserve. Start working today to add more neurons to your life. You can build brain reserve at any age, it’s never too early or too late! And always remember: “You are a genius!”

Terry Small is a brain expert who resides in Canada and believes that anyone can learn how to learn easier, better, faster, and that learning to learn is the most important skill a person can acquire. To interact with Small, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

In China, white people can be rented as fake employees or business partners. Essentially it is all about the age-old Chinese concept of face. Having foreigners in the company would mean that the company has prestige, money and crucial connections to businesses abroad.
Dear Nithya,

Thank you for your question. You have not indicated how many jobs you have had but I assume that you have spent a decent amount of time with your past and current employers. I also do not have a hint if you are currently working with one of Malaysia’s top 100 employers. This does have a bearing especially if you are applying to one of the top employer brands.

To ace an interview, you should attempt to do the following:

1. First impressions matter
   Be punctual and dress the part. For interviews, dress smartly and use common sense. If possible, before the interview, observe the employees and check the dress code. Remember to switch off your phone!

2. Practice, practice and practice
   This is hardly done so those who take the time stand out miles ahead of their peers. Ask for the interviewee’s business card (if he/she appears friendly and approachable). Else, you can take the time stand out miles ahead of your peers.

3. Practise, present and perform
   All certificates should have copies, passport photographs. If you have done any form of presentation or written articles, bring these along. Any form of work done for NGOs would also help and this would enhance your image.

4. Ask interesting and relevant questions
   These could be related to career development plans, training opportunities and the working environment. Try not to ask about compensation during the first interview. Typically, such matters are only discussed during the second interview or at a much later stage. Do some research about the company and be prepared with a few questions to show how interested you are in what they do and how you can contribute to their success.

5. Follow up with a thank you email
   This is hardly done so those who take the time stand out miles ahead of their peers. Ask for the interviewee’s business card (if he/she appears friendly and approachable). Else, you can email the person who helped schedule the interview and ask that he/she passes your email to the interviewer. Describe how you felt after the interview and reiterate how you’re eager to contribute once hired. And remember to thank them for the interview opportunity and state your availability for another round if need be.

Best wishes,

Nur Haryati Hisham

---

Dear Nithya,

My name is Nithya and I am in my late 20s. I have attended a number of job interviews but was not successful in any of them. I am an ACCA graduate. Could you please give me some advice on attending interviews and how to ace them?

Thank you in advance.

Nithya

---

Dear Career Nomomers,

While most firms do inform you of interviews and how to ace them? This week Datin Nancy Lim, senior vice-president and head of human capital of Great Eastern Life Assurance (M) Bhd, and Nur Haryati Hisham, head of maintenance and managed services and former head of HR at Mesenia Bhd answer Nithya’s question.

---

Nancy Lim

---

Nithya, to conclude, you do need to assess if your current employer has a good brand name and whether you are being too ambitious applying for a bigger role or to a company with a more reputable brand name.

Top employers have high standards and since I have no hint of this, this is something you must assess yourself.

Good luck.

Nancy Lim

---

We have four experts on career management, HR and office management questions who will help you in your career journey. So if you have any burning questions, feel free to ask, send them to dearcareernomers@leaderonomics.com and we will get the panel to answer your questions.

This week, Chatin Nancy Lim, senior vice-president and head of human capital of Great Eastern Life Assurance (M) Bhd, and Nur Haryati Hisham, head of maintenance and managed services and former head of HR at Mesenia Bhd answer Nithya’s question.
Coming up in next Saturday’s issue . . .

CAREER ADVICE FROM BATMAN

WHAT GOTHAM CITY’S DEFENDER HAS TO SAY TO TAKE YOUR CAREER TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Also next week

In next week’s Be A Leader learn the significance of building and leaving a legacy

Sintesa Group’s managing director Shinta Widjaja shares the lessons learnt from her first job

If you’re into technology and innovation, then AIA is the place to be

Do you know how to test your brain’s actual age?

If you have any suggestions or feedback on our content, get in touch with the Leaderonomics team at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com, if you are an organisation and believe you have a great story to share with our readers, contact ian.lee@leaderonomics.com - 036 974 7087