WISDOM FROM BATMAN
ADVICE FOR YOUR CAREER FROM THE DARK KNIGHT
PAGES 8–11

Innovation at AIA
AIA’s creative initiatives to equip its life planners with the tools they need for success.
Pg 3

YOUR LEGACY
lives longer than you do - what will you leave behind?
Pg 6-7

SYNERGY IN DIVERSITY
and how to integrate differences at work
Pg 12

HOW OLD IS YOUR BRAIN?
asks Terry Small. Take this test to find out
Pg 14

200 years of British Educational Excellence now in Malaysia.
E ARLIER this week, I met with Gerd Leonard, dubbed by the Wall Street Journal as “one of the leading media futurists in the world”. Naturally, we talked about what the future could look like, and all the fantastic, weird and wonderful gadgets that could soon become reality.

But what I found more fascinating than the possibilities of the future, was Leonard himself. When I meet futurists like Leonard and Dr Michio Kaku (who we did a Leaderonomics Show with last month), I am completely intrigued by the way they see the world.

To them, everything is a possibility. Anything can be done – it’s just a matter of figuring out how to make it happen. They are not blind to the limitations of humans, but they embrace the need for growth and progression, and believe that imagination and perseverance can accomplish many things.

When I think about superheroes, Batman stands out to me for the same reasons that Leonard and Kaku do. Bruce Wayne doesn’t possess The Hulk’s strength nor Superman’s ability to fly. Wayne is ordinary, and is well aware of this too. If I’d venture to say he’s not that much smarter nor stronger than any other citizen of Gotham.

But what Wayne does seem to possess, is relentless determination and a willingness to do anything to accomplish his mission of protecting Gotham city.

Even as an ordinary man, he believes that he is capable of conquering the biggest of obstacles with enough perseverance and mental tenacity (climbing out of Bane’s prison in The Dark Knight Rises). He believes he can triumph over even the toughest of villains provided he equips himself with the right tools, and surrounds himself with the right people.

Weak and vulnerable body? Build a strong suit. Need to travel fast? Build a really amazing car and bike. There seems to be few impossibilities in the Dark Knight’s world. He finds a way around everything.

In the context of our own lives and careers, there are a lot of remarkable lessons on determination, resourcefulness and attitude that we can learn from Batman. For this reason, we dedicate this week on pages 6 and 7, Roshan Thiran writes pullout to our caped hero. Have a read of our.

THE ORDINARY CAN ACCOMPLISH THE EXTRAORDINARY

LEADEROMICS

BE A LEADER

Leaving a Legacy
We become immortal not through material possessions but through the legacies we leave.

Harmony through diversity
How to integrate differences at work to the advantage of an organisation?

Faster and stronger
Learn how to overcome your weaknesses.

PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Batman

Anyone can be a leader – superheroes without superpowers

CAREER TIPS

CAREER TIPS FROM SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE SUPERHEROES

Be aware of your weaknesses – Superman
Recognise your weaknesses and manage them so that they don’t hold you back from reaching your full potential. Clark Kent knew that he was vulnerable to Kryptonite, but worked around this weakness in his pursuit of helping the community.

Respond quickly – Flash
Responding as quickly as lightning could make a big difference in the outcome of work issues. Be quick to find solutions and implement them. Just remember, make decisions quickly and efficiently, but don’t make them hastily.

Nice people do not finish last – Captain America
Do not believe in the saying “If you’re nice you’ll get left behind”. Stand by your principles and values of integrity even at work. Steadfastness in this regard will eventually be recognised and rewarded.

Put your best foot forward – Batman
Especially when you are applying for a job, people will be analysing you from all angles. Perform a self-check, not only on the way you carry yourself, but also your personal profiles on social media. Would you prefer your potential employer to see you as Batman, a crime fighting vigilante or Bruce Wayne, a party animal?

Anyone can be a leader – superheroes without superpowers
Not everyone is a natural leader, but he or she can develop into one. It starts with belief in yourself and diligence to pursue the path you have chosen. Embrace learning as a lifestyle, and take charge of your personal development.
Addressing public perception, Wong acknowledges current stereotypes attached to the insurance industry. For many, being an insurance agent, or a life planner as it is known in AIA, is seen as a part-time venture to sustain them until they land themselves a more “stable” job.

“There is a lack of support from family and friends as they do not see this job as a secure one,” says Wong. “However, in reality, this is not at all the case. A career as a life planner in AIA is fulfilling and meaningful. You can generate substantial income if you are willing to put in the effort,” adds Wong.

To increase awareness of how rewarding a career in this industry can be, AIA has recently launched a life planner recruitment campaign targeting younger talent. “An increasing number of people are joining the industry every year, as more and more people realise that insurance really is a viable and great sector to build a career,” he shares.

In addition, Wong shares that AIA is ready and willing to provide assistance to its life planners to achieve their goals, in terms of training and development, as well as practical tools to enable them to reach greater heights.

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In conclusion, Wong shares that “The best rewards of being a life planner are in helping customers secure their future”. This, according to Wong, is the core of what it means to be a life planner. “It’s not merely about pushing products but rather educating customers on the importance of insurance, its benefits and the different policies out there.”

“Life planners strive to understand and meet the needs of their customers at any stage in life. This entails great people skills, good communication, perceptiveness, and the ability to craft plans that not only fit in with the customer’s budget, but also make the customer clearly understand the implications and are satisfied with it. It is imperative that the customers are comfortable and fully trust their life planner’s suggestions before they purchase the plan.”

A life planner has far reaching influence in the lives of many people, says Wong. They provide customers with access to funds, which can sometimes mean

Boasting a network of 45 branches nationwide, and supported by over 2,000 dedicated employees and 17,000 agency force members, AIA has grown to be one of the largest insurers in the country. AIA greatly values its life planners, because the way they carry themselves and conduct their business has direct implications on AIA’s customers. For this reason, the company stresses the need to uphold the values of being empathetic, alert, fair, enduring and professional. By helping customers provide for the unexpected, life planners are equipping Malaysians with the tools and plans to fulfill their aspirations and to protect them during tough times.

“AIA, our life planners are transparent and open,” says Wong. “They build a lifelong relationship with their customers that do not end right after a policy is sold. They journey through life with our customers and are always there for them in times of need.”

According to Wong, individuals who are driven, hungry for success, great with people and genuinely care for others, will find being a life planner with AIA a very rewarding career path.

The difference between life and death. The funds may enable the customer to undergo treatment, which they would not otherwise be able to afford. There is a fulfillment there that goes beyond just the great financial benefits the role brings, he asserts.

“If individuals invest effort and commitment, especially in the early years, the rewards are great. Part-time is not a solution if you want to be a successful life planner. Here at AIA, we offer full-time opportunities and will equip you with all the knowledge and support you need for success.”

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.
Last November, a group of teenage boys and girls went out to various locations in Kuala Lumpur and spoke to people from different backgrounds, cultures and age groups. They discovered the general societal perception towards them was that the youth of today are a bunch of nuisance.

Whether the perception is the reality or not, a more important question remains: Under such discernment, where can our youth go to receive the acceptance and empowerment they need to become the hope of our future?

At Leaderonomics, we believe that it takes a village to raise a child and a community to build a leader. Our hope is to continuously build platforms that inspire and empower our young people towards being better leaders. Some of the initiatives we have launched include:

**DIODE Youth Camps**

DIODE Youth Camps are conducted during the public school holidays. Our campers learn to break out of their comfort zones, pick up new skills and to learn from positive role models to grow their leadership potential.

**Youth Club**

Our vision for our Youth Clubs is to bring weekly, intentional leadership interaction and learning into every school. We are currently running these clubs in 5 schools around Klang Valley.

**Youth Inspiration Centre**

Our youth centre, Dropzone, is located in PJ Old Town. It opens on weekdays to youth of ages between 13-19, who come by for our workshops, activities, or just to hang out.

For more information or to get involved in our youth services and initiatives, email us at youth@leaderonomics.com, call 03-79575809 or log on to www.leaderonomics.com
B

OVED by her strong family name in Indonesia’s business world, entrepreneurship runs deep in the blood of Shinta Widjaja Kamdani. Her affinity with business and her own enterprising streaks set her up for the exciting world of business and commerce.

Shinta started her career in 1989 as a promotion purchasing officer at one of her family’s businesses engaging in consumer products, PT Tiga Raksa Satria. The company was mainly involved in direct sales and multi-level marketing.

She was later promoted to branch sales manager, nationalsales manager and director of marketing.

In recognition of her corporate prowess, Women in Leadership Forum on March 28 named Shinta as Asia’s Leading Businesswoman of the Year 2013. She was also voted by Forbes as one of Asia’s 50 Powerful Businesswomen in 2012 and 2013.

ENDURING MOMENTS

Shinta says her first job experiences while working in PT Tiga Raksa Satria also gave her a good head start and induction to the business world.

While striving to get the newly established company going, she had the opportunity to learn a whole spectrum of new skills from setting up the office systems to recruiting the sales force.

She was given the responsibility to set up the office system, recruit and train the sales force and develop the work processes.

She was also busy travelling all over Indonesia training and motivating the sales staff.

“My first job taught me to relate with all kinds of people from different backgrounds. It taught me an invaluable lesson about dealing with people and helped to build up my character to persevere and not to give up easily. I also learned that all things can be done with continuous efforts and hard work.

“I believe every problem has a solution, and it actually provides us an opportunity to gain more knowledge and to further hone our skills,” she says.

There are many lessons that I’ve learned from my first job, such as dealing with customers, in this case the sales distributors, who distribute our products to consumers. I was trained to be able to work with a wide range of human characters. Being based in a division with mainly female staff, I picked up new skills and experience. To work with women requires a high level of precision and accuracy,” she explains.

Shinta says one of the things she had never forgotten from her first job was her former expatriate boss who treated her professionally and respectfully.

“There was nothing in my Widjaja family name that interfered with his decisions in any way. I was treated just like any other staff. Under his guidance, I blossomed and learned quickly and expeditiously, and learned the right aptitudes and skills to overcome problems and challenges,” she recalls.

Shinta admits that having to deal with a wide range of people and their respective characters was not easy.

“Ultimately, it boils down to finding a common chemistry and a common interest. It taught me a worthwhile lesson about the need to adapt easily and learn quickly in whatever situations we are in and from the surrounding environment.”

And her tenacity to learn and advance in her career has proven to herself and others, especially her parents, that she is able to stand on her own feet.

SELF-RELIANCE

Shinta is aware that many people assume that she holds such a strategic position in the company because she is working in her family business.

“What I have been through and achieved in my career to-date are all a result of my relentless efforts. I will always remember when I advanced in my career from a managerial staff to the current level without parental interference despite working for the family company. I spent close to 10 years to get to the managerial level and to my present position,” she discloses.

Through hard work and perseverance, she aims to demonstrate to her family and the world that despite being a woman, she is capable of carrying the torch of the Sintesa Group’s business potential.

She believes that being passionate in what she does and having a sense of responsibility in discharging her duties are the two balancing factors that have contributed to her success.

She works hard to win investors and under her stewardship, the group has succeeded in convincing renowned international companies to invest in companies under the Sintesa Group umbrella.

“Sintesa is always looking for synergies in developing its businesses. The best way to merge and grow businesses is to have a merger of minds,” she says.

Today the mother of four also keeps busy in a number of social and business organizations that have a positive impact on the environment, community and businesses in Indonesia.

Some of the roles and responsibilities that benefited from her leadership include Global Entrepreneurship Programme Indonesia which Shinta founded; Indonesian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Vice-President); Employers’ Association of Indonesia (Chairwoman); Women in Business Coalition on Aids; and Indonesia Business Council for Sustainable Development (President); Women in Network Regional Chair Asia of Young Presidents’ Organisation; Indonesian World Wide Fund For Nature (Executive Board Member); Indonesia Aids Foundation; and Indonesia Business Coalition on Aids.

Shinta advises young people to keep trying and not to stop learning.

“Failure is only a delayed success. The series of failures that we have been through should be used as our strategies for a better future. Experience is the most invaluable teacher to us.”

THE BUSINESS WORLD BECKONS

SHINTA WIDJAJA KAMDANI BUILDS ON HER FAMILY LINEAGE

By ANGIE NG

angie@thestar.com.my

angie@thestar.com.my
A few years ago, I shared the stage with Patch Adams at the “Gathering of the Great Minds”. Patch Adams is building a legacy of greatness through his simple message of “love.” Adams was a renegade medical student who vowed to build a hospital where no one would ever have to pay for care. Upon becoming a physician, he immediately invited patients into his home; and for 12 years lived with his wife, two children, four other physicians and as many as 50 homeless patients. He never turned anyone away and never charged a penny for care during these years. He treated tens of thousands of patients out of love, asking nothing in return. Years later, Adams set up the Gesundheit Institute which offers free, holistic medical care to everyone. Adams learnt love from his mother. His father was killed in the military when he was only six and since then he has championed “love” in everything, including in business. Adams, now 65 years old (and famous from the movie about him) uses love and humour to heal, creating a great legacy that will outlive him.

As the year passes by, it may be a good time to consider the legacies we leave behind. An ancient proverb says, “When you die, nothing you've accumulated, except the love you've given away, is with you.” Instead of receiving, volunteered and helped countless people. Their youngest daughter, Agnes, decided that she would devote her life to being “significant.” She was smart, pretty and industrious and knew these were keys to success. But Nick and Drana decided that they did not want the same success for their kids. Instead, they wanted to raise their kids to achieve significance. They realised that they needed to change their own lives from a successful one to an enduring one. They opened their home to strangers, started serving

By ROSHAN THIRAN
roshan.thiran@gmail.com

The Wright Brothers focused on significance – not to become rich but to change the world through flight. Instead of receiving, volunteered and helped countless people. Their youngest daughter, Agnes, decided that she would devote her life to being “significant.” She was smart, pretty and industrious and knew these were keys to success. But Nick and Drana decided that they did not want the same success for their kids. Instead, they wanted to raise their kids to achieve significance. They realised that they needed to change their own lives from a successful one to an enduring one. They opened their home to strangers, started serving

Mother Teresa’s parents’ decision to forego “success” in lieu of “significance” ensured that their legacy lived on in their daughter and lives on today in millions of lives affected by Agnes’ grace and mercy.

In July 2006, Enron founder, Kenneth Lay died, leaving a tainted legacy. Jeffrey Skilling, Bernie Ebbers (Worldcom), John Rigas (Adelphia), Dennis Kozlowski (Tyco) were CEOs focused on short-term monetary success which ended in shameful legacies. Lee Iacocca and Jack Welch, painstakingly built their businesses on solid foundations, achieving a leadership legacy admired the world over.

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Have you given thought to your legacy? The answer begins by taking an inventory of yourself. You need to find out what makes you tick. It starts with passion.

In 1997, Agnes passed away and I was asked to do a TV obituary special on Agnes. The world knew Agnes as Mother Teresa. Her parents’ decision to forego “success” in lieu of “significance” ensured that their legacy lived on in their daughter and lives on today in millions of lives affected by Agnes’ grace and mercy.

The Wright Brothers focused on significance – not to become rich but to change the world through flight.

Great leaders leave legacies that transcend them. Ken Blanchard adds, “Many people measure their success by wealth, recognition, power, and status. There’s nothing wrong with those, but if that’s all you’re focused on, you’re missing the boat. Instead, focus on significance.”

The Wright Brothers focused on significance - not to become rich but to change the world through flight. Their competitor Samuel Langley worked tirelessly for monetary success in aviation. Langley was never successful.
LEGACIES ARE BUILT ON SIGNIFICANCE

Mother Teresa’s parents, Nick and Drana, consciously made a decision to move away from chasing success to chasing significance. Adams made a resolution as a medical student to move away from being a rich, successful doctor to making a significant impact in medicine. How do you move from pursuing “success” to “significance”? Here are a few questions that may help you:

1. Who am I?
2. Why am I here?
3. Where should I be going?
4. How will I get there?
5. When I get there, will I feel significant?

You can also make a list of the 10 most significant achievements of your life and why these were significant. As you discover where your deepest passions intersect with your greatest abilities, you begin your blueprint for significance.

Two construction workers were asked to describe their same jobs. The first employee said his job was to lay bricks. The second said, “I was building a cathedral. Which employee would you hire? The second employee works for significance whilst the first works for a pay cheque. I spent two years working at Johnson and Johnson. In 1942, General Robert Wood Johnson wrote a one-page document that came to be known as the J&J Credo. The Credo outlines the company’s priority and responsibility to conducting business - firstly to people who use their products, secondly to its employees, next is to the community and environment, finally to its stockholders. He believed if J&J focused on significance (patients and employees) first and relegated success (shareholders value), shareholder value would ultimately be realised. And he was right. Additionally, every employee at J&J finds personal significance in their “lives” by the Credo.

LEGACIES ARE CREATED DAILY

John Maxwell states, “the success of my day is based on the seeds that I sow, not the harvest I reap.” Too often, leaders bypass the process of sowing seeds in favour of short-term results. This is what led leaders like Ken Lay to their ruin. Sowing unwaveringly is better than instant results as real reaping is dependent on the seeds you sow today. Legacies are the results of giving today as “sowing daily into the lives of others will compound over time.”

Legacies are not created instantaneously. They are built daily through values, hard work, integrity of leadership and character. The choices you make every day with your time and efforts directly impact how you will be remembered. The secret of significance is determined by your daily agenda. It’s not about leaving a legacy, it’s about living a legacy. “Leaders have been conditioned to think about the future. But in doing so, they have forgotten about the present. And the present is how they create their legacy,” claims author Shane Yount.

Legacies take years to build but can be lost in a moment. CSPAN commissioned a study to judge the 41 past American presidents on 10 leadership qualities. The top three presidents were Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and George Washington. The bottom two – Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon. Both Clinton and Nixon would have ranked higher if only they had moral authority, which they tarnished due to scandals.

LEGACIES ENDURE THROUGH SUCCESSION

Finally, legacies must have succession. Peter Drucker said that “there is no success without a successor.” Abraham Lincoln’s leadership ended slavery in America. After the war, Lincoln rebuilt the south, ensuring goodwill towards the freed black slaves. However, he was suddenly assassinated and Andrew Johnson took over as president. Johnson reconstructed the South’s oppressive system of white domination and destroyed Lincoln’s legacy of freedom stunting the civil rights movement and perpetuating injustice for another century.

As Maxwell rightly states, “a leader’s lasting value is measured by succession”. If Lincoln had a successor who shared his vision, America’s torrid racial issues may not have plagued them into the 20th century. As leaders close out their tenure, leaders must channel their being towards helping their successor continue the legacy. The best leader creates new leaders, which includes developing, training and equipping others for leadership success.

The great leaders who leave lasting legacies are the ones who are most generous with their knowledge and expertise. These are the people who wind up creating the most economic value and create lasting leadership legacies.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It is always morbid to think of death, but when we die, what will be said at our eulogy? We become immortal not through material possessions but through the legacies we leave. People do not remember us for what we do for ourselves but for what we do for them. At the end of the day, no one remembers what numbers you closed for each of the quarters you were in charge. They do remember your leadership, service, character and inspiration.

Adams talks about love as his purpose in life. Lennon and McCartney, echo Adams by saying “in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you give”. Likewise, your legacy is more dependent on what you give today, than what you take.

Rashan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about creating a leadership legacy in our nation. For more information on world-class leadership programmes for your organisation or opportunities to provide leadership education to the under-privileged, contact people@leaderonomics.com or login to www.leaderonomics.com

HOW TO LEAVE A LEGACY WHILE MOVING ON

By PREMA JAYABALAN
prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com

MOVING on is an inevitability for every leader, whether it be because of a shift to another role, or stopping work due to age. During this period, leaders are often bogged down with concerns whether their team can manage without their guidance or their organisation without their leadership. Whilst great leaders build a legacy during their term, the transition periods are also crucial to ensure the organisation moves from success to success. Here are some ways to manage through a leadership transition.

1. Create a conducive atmosphere for the new leader by affirming his or her leadership. Extend a helping hand by helping him or her connect with your team.

2. Introduce him or her to important clients and stakeholders. Share your knowledge and thoughts without prejudice.

3. Reaffirm to the team the vision of the company. Empower them to take hold of the objectives and to continually innovate to bring the organisation to greater heights.

4. Encourage the team about their abilities and their future. Provide them with useful and practical advice. Be generous in sharing constructive feedback and your knowledge with them.

5. Ensure the transition of power to your successor takes place in a positive and harmonious manner. It may be difficult to move on as you may feel emotional but look ahead. Importantly, know when it is time to go. Allow the successor to lead without having to be in your shadow.
BUILD GREAT, EVERLASTING LEGACIES

The Dark Knight trilogy, the latest adaptation of Batman by Christopher Nolan, has been a huge success. As of today, the entire series has more than $1.2 billion worldwide, and all three are in the Top 250 Movies of all time on Rotten Tomatoes.

As Batman, the Dark Knight trilogy tells the story of Bruce Wayne and his journey from a wealthy playboy to a heroic vigilante. The trilogy begins with the Dark Knight Returns, where we see Bruce returning to Gotham City after a long absence to fight crime once again. The story continues with Batman Begins, where we see Bruce as a young man trying to find his purpose in life. The third and final film, The Dark Knight Rises, shows Bruce struggling to balance his personal life and his responsibilities as Batman.

Throughout these films, we see Bruce struggling with the idea of whether he can truly be a hero in a world filled with injustice. He is tested physically and psychologically, and he must learn to balance his personal interests with his responsibilities as Batman.

LEARN FROM THE DARK KNIGHT

WHAT BATMAN CAN TEACH US ABOUT CAREER GROWTH

By IMRAN HASHIM

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1. Trust the Good in People

When Wayne decides to be Batman and protect Gotham, he is motivated by his sense of justice and his desire to make a difference. He trusts the people of Gotham to support him in his mission.

2. LEARN FROM MISTAKES

The Dark Knight Rises

In The Dark Knight Rises, the purified crusader is pushed to his limits and is forced to deal with the depths of his own vices and flaws. The Joker (Heath Ledger) is a symbol of human evil and a representation of the darkness that lurks within all of us.

3. Take Risks AND PERSEVERE

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4. SEEK ADVISORS

Wayne, on his own accord, is highly capable of impressive feats — he is, after all, a graduate from an Ivy League school! But he does not think of himself as the only ‘saviour’ of any problem.

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The concept of Batman is a symbol of hope and perseverance. He represents the idea of taking risks, being courageous, and never giving up in the face of adversity. This is a powerful lesson that can be applied to our own lives in the realm of business and leadership.

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5. LEARN FROM MISTAKES

When Wayne decides to be Batman and protect Gotham, he is motivated by his sense of justice and his desire to make a difference. He trusts the people of Gotham to support him in his mission.

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LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM BATMAN

TOP 5

By HYMA PILLAY
hyma.pillay@leaderonomics.com

1. BE A HERO

“A hero can be anyone” – Batman

Batman was never bitten by a radioactive bug, he wasn’t born in a distant planet, and neither does he own a ring which possesses super powers. He saw that the world he lived in had problems, and he saw that something needed to be done to change it, and instead of waiting for someone to do it, he took a stand. He made the choice to be Gotham’s hero, and eliminated all threats of evil against Gotham City.

One of the keys to being a great leader is having the ability to recognise problems and being courageous enough to stand up, address, and eliminate them. Although fighting challenges can be scary at times, if Bruce Wayne can do it, so can you. Anyone can be Batman, we just have to rise!

2. SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE MEAN NOTHING WITHOUT STRONG WILDPower

“The training is nothing! The will is everything” – Henri Ducard

For many years, Bruce Wayne was burdened by the death of his parents. He blamed himself for their death, as he felt that if he wasn’t powerless, he could have saved his parents. Henri Ducard tells Bruce in one of their training sessions that the will is more powerful than any sort of training, and it is the will for justice that later continues to be a source of Batman’s motivation to fight against the evil of Gotham. In the working world, it is not unusual to see people with qualified skills and sufficient amount of training not performing. This may appear bizarre to most people, because logically, they should be able to perform, given that they have the capabilities. What’s missing here is the key component, and that is passion, or a strong will, which is the primary incentive to perform. If someone is passionate about what he or she is doing, and has a strong will to achieve the goals of the organisation, high performance will come naturally.

3. LEARN TO ENDURE

“Endure, Mr. Wayne. Take it. They’ll hate you for it, but that’s the point of the Batman. He can be the outcast, he can make the choice that no one else can make, the right choice.” – Alfred Pennyworth

Gotham City needed a hero, but they also needed someone responsible for the murders committed by Harvey Dent. Batman and Commissioner Gordon both knew that the people of Gotham would be devastated if they found out the truth about Harvey Dent, whom they trusted. Batman then decides to take the blame, because he knows that is what the people need. It wasn’t an easy choice, because he now becomes the outcast of Gotham, and he learns to endure it because it is the right thing to do.

Being a great leader means always putting the needs of your people first, even though sometimes this means being the bad guy in their eyes. We have to be able to endure things that are thrown at us. At times we may have to take the bullets for the organisation’s mistakes, and we have to be able to endure the hardships and continue to move forward.

4. YOUR ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER

“It’s not who you are underneath, it’s what you do that defines you.” – Rachel Dawes

In Batman Begins, Rachel says this to Bruce as he tries to convince her that inside, he is a different person, and that what she sees now is just an act to keep up his billionaire playboy status. Rachel believes that it doesn’t matter what your intentions are inside, your actions are what define you. Many of us are filled with great intentions. How often do we use the phrase “it’s the thought that counts?” This phrase is not necessary applicable in all situations. We always intend to do better, to work harder, to contribute more, but sadly, not many of us actually make the effort and put in the time to put these into action.

Start now. Why not start getting to know that colleague better, or provide better solutions to the glitches we see in our organisation? Or spending a little extra time at work once in a while if it means helping the organisation accomplish its goal? It is time to match our intentions with our actions.

5. RISE FROM YOUR FAILURES

“...and why do we fall, Bruce? So we can learn to pick ourselves up” – Thomas Wayne

Failing is one of the recurring themes in the Batman trilogy. In Batman Begins, a young Bruce Wayne falls into a deep pit, and upon rescuing him, his father, Thomas, tells him that the reason we fail is so that we can learn to pick ourselves up again.

This is repeated again in The Dark Knight Rises; when Wayne is in Bane’s prison, badly injured. But when it seems almost impossible for him to pick himself up again, he hears his father’s voice in a subconscious state, which drives Wayne to escape the prison to save Gotham. He rises up again and reclaims his legacy and once again saves his city.

Failure is something which is unavoidable. No matter how much effort and work we put in, at some point in our lives, we are bound to experience some form of failure. The real leadership test comes down to how well we deal with this failure.

Some fail to learn and carry on repeating the same mistakes, and continue to fail, getting more demotivated and frustrated with each fall. We should use our failure as leverage to push us forward, by embracing and acknowledging responsibility for our mistakes. By learning from our mistakes, we are empowered to be greater and stronger leaders.

hymaneill.com, Saturday 1 June 2013
OVERCOMING YOUR WEAKNESSES

– THE BATMAN WAY

By HYMA PILLAY

hyma.pillay@leaderonomics.com

SUPERHEROES – well, we all have our favourites. There are Superman, Spiderman, Wonder Woman, Batman and so many others. These superheroes are symbols of strength, bravery, integrity and morals. Many of us have wished that we had superpowers like our heroes to empower ourselves, especially in times of difficulty and hardship. Every superhero has lessons for us. So even though we may not become like them, perhaps our lives can at least bear a little bit of resemblance to theirs.

As a child, Bruce Wayne helplessly witnessed the horror of his parents being shot dead in front of him. Growing up, he developed natural abilities and yet manages to overpower all his enemies. He managed to overcome his weaknesses to become one of the greatest superheroes of our time. We all have our weak points, things that hinder us from moving forward. But Wayne found ways around his. So here are six tips we can learn from Batman on how to overcome weaknesses:

1 BUILD A WINNING TEAM TO SUPPORT YOU

Batman was never really alone in his endeavours to retain justice in Gotham City. He had the support of a few of his trusted associates. There was Robin, his sidekick who was always there to cover his back in battles, and Lucius Fox, his tech expert and the brains behind most of the cool gadgets he uses to win battles. Not to forget, Commissioner Gordon who helps him keep a look out for crimes in the city and of course his loyal servant Alfred, who is always there to help when Wayne pick himself up. It is always good to have a great team to support you. Build your team with members that have different sets of skills, as they will be able to bring much more to the table. Your team members would be able to keep a check and balance on each other and ensure that everyone is on the right track.

2 LEVERAGE ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF TECHNOLOGY

Batman is one of the few rare superheroes who does not actually possess any super powers. Instead, he improvises. He makes up for his lack of superpowers by taking full advantage of what technology has to offer. The bat suit itself is an impressive piece of technology. It is a combination of an armour equipped with knee guards, calf guards, leg armour, arm guards, a full torso vest and a spine guard. Communications and combat technologies like the utility belt and of course, the wings, help him fly.

In this era where technology is rapidly advancing, there are various kinds of gadgets made available to us. Internet and wireless connections everywhere work to our advantage as they facilitate our communication. We are no longer limited to phone calls or snail mail to interact with each other. Electronic mails, instant messaging and video calls enable us to communicate instantly and information can be passed through multiple channels.

3 POLISH YOUR TALENTS

Wayne wasn’t born with skills that complimented Batman. He polished his skills by training hard to improve his agility, strength and combat skills. The only difference between normal civilians and Batman was that he took a lot of effort to groom himself into a superhero.

We may not all be born with the natural talents of a salesperson, a writer or a designer, but if we put in the effort, we can be the best in our field. There are many ways to learn and develop new skills. Attend a course, get a mentor and read up. There are many great books by great leaders out there on how to improve skill sets. The most important thing is to keep practising. As cliché as it sounds, the saying “practice makes perfect” actually does make a lot of sense.

4 SETTLE DISPUTES ETHICALLY

Batman has only one rule: he doesn’t believe in killing his enemies. Although he has the ability to do so, sometimes it may be tempting to just kill those ruthless criminals, he chooses to always resolve it in an ethical manner. At times we are forced to deal with challenging parties, be it a competitor speaking ill of us or dealing with clients who refuse to keep up to their end of the deal. Always be the bigger person, and take the high road. It may not be easy but ultimately it projects the level of professionalism you have, and this will go a long way in uplifting your image.

5 IDENTIFY THE ROOT CAUSE OF THE PROBLEM

Batman is as much a detective as he is a superhero. When something happens, he doesn’t just go around slaying the villains; he takes time to actually investigate the situation and get to the core cause of the crime. By finding the root cause, he gains a better understanding of the criminals and thus, is able to tackle them in the most appropriate way. Treating a problem at the surface level instead of addressing the root cause first is a disaster in the making. Treating a problem superficially is a faster making. Treating a problem at the surface level instead of addressing the root cause first is a disaster in the making. Treating a problem superficially is a faster way of being the hero we are not. Over time, we can see ourselves the trouble of going through the whole cycle of fixing the same problem over and over again.

Although finding the root cause requires a lot more effort and time, once we discover why a certain issue occurred in the first place, we can solve ourselves the trouble of going through the whole cycle of fixing the same problem over and over again.

6 STICK TO YOUR PRINCIPLES

Batman’s primary goal is to rid the city of Gotham from evil doers and ruthless criminals. Nothing can get in the way of his commitment to keep the public safe. No matter how physically weak he is, or even when people don’t believe in him, he always believes in what he does and never fails to restore peace to the city.

The corporate world is cluttered with individuals and organisations failing to live up to the values they set for themselves. It is very easy to stray away from our beliefs when things get tough. Of course, as humans, it is only normal for us to fail once in a while, but what is important is that we don’t fall and stay at the bottom, but we pick ourselves up and redirect back to the path we promised ourselves to stay on at the first place.

No matter how difficult things are, Batman never allows anything to stand in his way of being the hero he is meant to be. He constantly comes up with solutions to overcome his weaknesses. He proves that we don’t need to rely on physical strength to be strong. We just need determination and diligence.
Society today seems to be a lot more complex than it was in the past. This is in part due to the fact that the workplace is not as homogenous as it used to be. While race is often seen as a big divider, it is by no means the only distinguishing factor among people.

The term “diversity” first came to the forefront in the 1990s when American writers argued for a shift from what was then known as “equal opportuni-ties” to “diversity”, because the former term was perceived as being inadequate in its attempt to eradicate discrimination.

Diversity recognises our differences – different backgrounds, perspectives, needs and aspirations. It recognises that no one should be stereotyped or labelled in a way that unnecessarily stops them from expressing their individuality and giving their best. Diversity recognises and celebrates a wide variety of differences and not just those traditionally covered by legislation.

Differences in the workplace exist across a broad spectrum – gender, sexual-orientation, religious beliefs and even lifestyle prefer-ences. In fact, problems of generational differ-ences have come under the glare of the spot-light in recent years, with much being made of the difficulty of managing the “Generation Y”. That is a diversity issue and one that is becoming increasingly significant.

The question then of whether we should have a diverse workforce seems to be a moot one, since we can’t reject it even if we do not want it. Diversity in all its shapes and forms has descended on us and is here to stay. The good news is that research has shown that well-managed diverse teams outperform homogenous teams as they tend to be more creative and effective at problem-solving. The downside is that diverse teams are not easy to manage and when poorly managed can lead to lower performance.

The question for organisations then is how to reap the benefits of a diverse workforce and harness the immense talent and creativ-ity that diversity brings, while maintaining harmony and building cohesiveness. To put it another way, how do we integrate diversity effectively?

As with any business undertaking, the starting point for any organisation in tackling the issue of diversity and integration is to have a clear strategy in driving the company towards achieving that goal and linking that objective with the bigger organisational goals. Roffey Park’s research guide, Diversity and Equality: Implementing Successful Strategies by Claire McCartney and Adrian Lock, illustrates that “successful strategies are clearly linked to business objectives and mainstreamed into all organisational proc-esses and procedures, making diver-sity and equality part and parcel of everyday management”.

A STRATEGY FOR INTEGRATION

Organisations need to adopt a strategic approach to diversity and inclusion with a long-term focus and a clear link to business objectives. The more the strategy covers every aspect of the organisation, the more likely it is to start changing attitudes and behaviours.

While attitudes and behaviours are shaped to a large extent by our upbringing, societal norms and standards, beliefs and even per-haps inherent personality traits as well as a whole lot more complex factors, policies, guidelines, action plans and programmes can influence employee behaviour at work.

One of integrating diversity and equality into the business is not something within the sole purview of the human resources department or diversity practitioners. Influencing the right stakeholders is particu-larly important as it is building up networks inside and outside the organisation. The more people that are involved the more sustained the work is likely to be.

Mainstreaming diversity and equality and emphasising integration into general business strategy is a primary aim for most organisations that show a commitment to the issues. If diversity and equality strategies are to be successful, there must be buy-in, involvement and support from senior level leadership. Leaders need to motivate others to be part of the leadership on this subject and see it as part of their personal day-to-day performance. In addition to senior level lead-ership, organisations need to develop shared accountability. Creating structures such as steering groups and diversity councils that all levels of employees can participate in have been helpful for many.

BABY STEPS LEADING TO GIANT LEAPS

From Roffey Park’s research on fair and progressive employment practices in a neighbouring country, it was found that the organisations that demonstrated fairness and inclusiveness in their employment practices started tackling the diversity issue gradually. They started with one or two issues that were more pertinent to their needs and slowly expanded from there. Leading prac-tices evolved step by step with the realisation that principles of helping employees, so feel included in one area also applied to other employees in other areas.

Organisations should draw on existing support systems, within and beyond the organisation to draw up and implement strategies and programmes for integration and inclusiveness in their employment prac-tices. In the case of MNCs, this can mean tai-loring existing practices overseas for the local context or sharing best practices and learn-ings from all over the world. Smaller organi-sations can tap on government programmes or tripartite organisations that may have best practice blueprints to help them cope with the issues that most impact them, and slowly build up a more comprehensive pro-gramme from there.

Learning and development that is practi-cal, contextualised, directly applicable to individual roles and which engages hearts and minds is likely to impact positively on attitudes, beliefs and behaviours. Effective communication and consultation chan-nels and supportive practices and policies (such as diversity awards, flexible working and mentoring) can also help to create an inclusive culture where diversity and equality is seen as relevant to all employees and integration is the responsibility of all employees.

CHANGE IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL

At the end of the day, each and every one from top management to line staff, has a part to play in ensuring that the place at which we spend the most of our waking hours, is one that treats everyone fairly and with respect, recognising that the dignity of work is a right of every individual.

Gary Miles is director of international operations at Roffey Park Institute, an inter-national leadership institute with offices in the UK and Singapore. Roffey Park is recog-nised as a leading authority in its areas of specialism: leadership, people management, personal effectiveness, human resources and organisational development. To engage their services, email people@leaderonomics.com

**KEY SUMMARY POINTS**

- Adopt a strategic approach to integration with a clear link to business objectives
- Get buy-in from all levels of the organisation
- Start with the important issues of diversity and inte-gration which impact the organisation and implement programmes which address those issues
- Implement learning and development programmes and open up communica-tion channels to reinforce the idea of integration
Carnegies, the Edisons and the Fords. In which penetrates all obstacles. Examples
of visionaries are Sir Winston Churchill, the Camesies, the Edisons and the Forts. In the present context, we have Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com and Larry Page of Google. What makes them different from everyone else? Visionaries can see the future. Bezos saw his future when he learnt that the web population was growing by 2,000% a year. Steve Jobs saw the future of personal computing when he went to the Xerox Palo Alto Research Centre ("Xerox PARC") and saw the mouse and graphical user interface.

Visionaries are willing to suffer and struggle for their dreams to the extent of ignoring their health, risking and losing their money and neglecting their relationships. It has been scientifically proven that there is a relationship between the brain and our emotions and behaviour. If there was a metaphor to describe the brain, it would be the computer. The brain and the computer appear to process information in the same manner, and this is referred to as the computational theory of the mind. We will look at visionaries through the lens of cognitive psychology and science of the brain.

**STEP 1: THE ELEMENTS OF VISION**

Vision is like a laser beam of foresight which penetrates all obstacles. Examples of visionaries are Sir Winston Churchill, the Camesies, the Edisons and the Forts. In the present context, we have Jeff Bezos of Amazon.com and Larry Page of Google. What makes them different from everyone else? Visionaries can see the future. Bezos saw his future when he learnt that the web population was growing by 2,000% a year. Steve Jobs saw the future of personal computing when he went to the Xerox Palo Alto Research Centre ("Xerox PARC") and saw the mouse and graphical user interface.

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**STEP 2: AWAKENING**

The human brain is good at spotting patterns. This explains why it is easier for us to remember numbers by breaking up the digits or using mnemonic aids to remember letters. For a visionary, it is the quality of the pattern which is more important than the number of patterns.

An example would be Shirley Polykoff, whose biggest success was Miss Clairol. What is Clairol? It is hair dye. What is a higher thought than that? It lightens your hair. What is a higher thought than that? Blonds have more fun. That line has caused thousands of women to grab a bottle of Clairol and try it on themselves. That is what visionaries are like Shirley Polykoff do. They raise the pattern to the next level.

There is an experiment where the test subject is told to look at a film and count the number of times the ball is passed from one person to another. The test subjects are so intent in counting the number of times a ball is passed from one person to another that they missed seeing a gorilla dancing through the game.

This test shows us that when we are actively looking for what we expect, we are blind to what is right before us. This is another difference with visionaries. They do not need to see what does not exist to see what is there but not seen by others.

**STEP 3: SEEING**

Using our brains, we have the ability to visualise images, scan across them, zoom in and out, paste, join and superimpose. We can even escape reality. Based on IMRI studies, scientists believe that the same part of the brain is used to process imaginary images and visual images.

Essentially, when you look at something, the same part of the brain lights up when you imagine that something. This is referred to as "mutual interference" between imagery and perception. A pianist who imagines playing a piece on the piano activates the same part of his or her brain as when he or she actually presses the keys. A stroke patient who has lost the ability to see colour will also lose the ability to imagine in colour.

As for visionaries, they work their imaginations on the things that matter to them the most. Elmer Sperry, creator of the Sperry gyroscope and more than 400 other patented inventions, was said to just stare into space and all at once, he would pick up a pencil and start drawing. It would take several tries to get the product right on paper but the idea was there all along. Fastening before his eyes. For visionaries, seeing is everything.

Visionaries have the ability to see and imagine things on a large scale and also on a smaller scale. They can imagine the details and new pictures come to their mind one after another. Einstein said that in pursuing his famous theory of relativity, he tried to imagine what it was like to travel on a beam of light. Richard Feynman, the physicist, made his discoveries in quantum physics by asking, "If I were an electron, what would I do?"

Some people seem to be natural visionaries because they can imagine things vividly while the rest of us are remembering our lives like a fuzzy 1950s TV. Note that people who claim to be able to construct vivid mental images are not necessarily better at taking those images and actually doing something with them. Vivid imaginers generally remember the colours better than the rest of us but they do not remember the other details any better than the rest of us.

What makes a visionary different? It is not whether the images they imagine are vivid or fuzzy but rather their ability to dismantle the components and modify those images in their mind. They can rotate, bend, fold and more importantly, see the image from different angles of perspective. Visionaries excel in cluing on to an imagined object long enough to change it from thin air into substance.

An example would be Jeff Hawkins. He invented the PalmPilot which was the first successful handheld computer. In 1989, he invented his first product known as the GRIPPAD, a portable writing-based computer. It could read handwriting scrawled on the screen. Unfortunately, the GRIPPAD was expensive, had a short battery life and was too heavy to carry around. Since he knew that the GRIPPAD was not going to succeed, he worked on an improved handheld called Zoomer.

The Zoomer failed because it was heavy, expensive and slow. At the same time, Apple had suffered a humiliating failure when it introduced its first tablet computer, the Newton. Hawkins tried to get his team to work on Zoomer 2 but no one was interested. The investors and the press thought that portable pen computing was finished but Hawkins thought otherwise.

Hawkins went home and thought about the reason why handhelds failed when he eventually saw what others did not see: What people wanted was not an all-inclusive device but one that was handy and inexpen- sive, that could deliver a reasonable number of features. No one wanted a miniature computer but a device that interfaced with one.

With that idea, he went to his garage and pulled a scrap piece of wood and made a tablet which was small enough to fit into his shirt pocket. He created a screen and some function keys on it. For several weeks, you would see him walking around the streets with that piece of wooden handheld, imagining what it could be used for. The PalmPilot was introduced in 1996 and changed the whole personal computer world.

**STEP 4: INTUITION**

Visionaries usually go with their guts and that is scientifically called intuition. Some refer to it as "unconscious intelligence" or "adaptive unconscious." To understand intuition, we need to understand that there are two minds. The conscious mind which makes lists, recalls conversations and relishes events. Most of our conscious thoughts are generally mundane. Then, there is the subconscious. We do not realise this but our subconscious mind is active all the time. For example, muscles, joints and skin are signalling orientation of our body, keeping us in position and preventing us from falling.

Philosopher Dan Dennett argues that the subconscious mind is what gives us our orders, like a president. The conscious mind is like the press secretary who announces those executive decisions to the conscious brain. The adaptive unconscious gathers information, interprets and evaluates it and sets goals in motion, quickly and efficiently. When you have a certain feeling that something does not seem right, it is your subconscious mind at work.

The events in your life may seem random at first. However, in most ways, they are predictable and the brain is constantly looking for familiar patterns. It is the key to our survival.
Take a sheet of paper and number from 1 TO 25 and answer TRUE OR FALSE to the following statements:

1. I get seven to eight hours (or more) of sleep each night.
2. I eat at least five or more servings of fruits and vegetables.
3. I eat at least one serving of blueberries, raspberries, or blackberries daily.
4. I eat baked or battered fish high in omega-3 fatty acids at least three times a week.
5. I take fish oil supplements high in omega-3 fatty acids or flaxseed supplements at least five times per week.
6. I take folic acid supplementations with my daily multivitamins.
7. I take a low dose of aspirin daily.
8. I drink red wine or grape juice at least five times per week.
9. I exercise most days of the week for at least 30 minutes each time.
10. I read challenging books, do crossword puzzles or sudoku, or I engage in activities that require active learning, memorization, computation, analysis, and problem solving at least five times a week.
11. My total cholesterol is less than 200.
12. My LDL ("bad") cholesterol is less than 110.
13. I have "longevity genes" in my family, with members who lived to 80 and older without memory loss.
14. I am not obese (less than 20 pounds overweight for a woman, less than 30 pounds overweight for a man).
15. I eat a Mediterranean style diet (high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, seeds, and olive oil as the source of fat; little red meat).
16. I use olive oil and spreads with no trans fat instead of butter or margarine.
17. I have never smoked cigarettes.
18. I have normal blood pressure.
19. I do not have diabetes.
20. I do not have metabolic syndrome (high triglycerides, central obesity, and hyper-tension), also called insulin resistance syndrome.
21. I do not have a sleep disorder such as snoring or obstructive sleep apnea, or untreated insomnia.
22. Daily uncontrolled stress is not a problem for me.
23. I have a strong support group and enjoy many activities with friends, colleagues, and family members.
24. I have no problems with short or long term memory.
25. I am ready to prevent Alzheimer's and am willing to do whatever it takes.

Ok. Your Real Brain Age is the same as your chronological age. That said, you have a mild risk of Alzheimer's disease, so pay attention. Carefully review your results to see what changes you need to make on your diet, exercise, mental stimulation, or rest and relaxation.

You have a moderate risk of Alzheimer's disease. Add five years to your chronological age for your Real Brain Age. While there's not a lot of disparity between your chronological age and your Real Brain, it's important that you review the quiz and circle any of the statements that indicate some work is needed. Talk to your doctor about your Alzheimer's risk factors you have to see if treatment is indicated.

You have a high risk of Alzheimer's disease. Add 10 years to your chronological age for your Real Brain Age. You may want to call your doctor and talk openly about health problems you may have. Ask if you're doing all you can to manage these problems. Flag responses that may help to decrease your risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Take your Real Brain Age and subtract your chronological age to get your Real Brain Age. This is your brain age. Your brain age is an indication of how your brain is aging well. Subtract the number of years from your chronological age to get your Real Brain Age.

Now please go back and count how many of the 25 true or false statements you marked “true”. Write your score true or false statements you did for a living, I wasn't really pleased. But, I feel good about now having four things to work on. I plan on bringing them up with my doctor because I believe any change in your life, your risk of Alzheimer's disease is extremely low.
DEAR CAREERNOMERS,

I am puzzled with the job market in Malaysia. I just retired from my last job to take a short break and I am now ready to look for a new role. I am 53 this year and I have 29 years of experience in IT and management, and have travelled extensively globally while employed at several MNCs. I find that the moment a potential employer reads the age section on the resume, that's the end of it.

This gives me an impression that the Government's initiative to raise the retirement age to 60 is either a gimmick or for people like me to look for some menial roles. I am still able, in good health, and capable of serving willingly for the next 10 or more years. Are potential employers out there aware that those in the higher age bracket can contribute and will stay longer, whether contractually or permanently, or are they just being biased and narrow minded?

Please advise what is not linking in my search.

Best regards,

DHIRENDRA PATEL

HI DHIRENDRA,

There is this saying that becomes so true in today's day and time: "Organisations need to learn how to harness the savviness of young people and combine it with the wisdom of the experienced ones". I truly believe that organisations in Malaysia do value the deep expertise and wisdom of senior leaders.

I will be honest and confess that while age is not a determinant factor, it has frequently been one factor to consider for any role in an organisation, be it from a management trainee position, to a senior level position.

Age is an indication to employers of the level of experience a person has, the perceived maturity of a candidate, the years of wisdom a person has accumulated and leadership opportunities a person has taken on.

I have met many senior leaders above 55 who are in employment in organisations and doing really well, while they build successors in their stead.

And I've also known of many within that age bracket who are currently in the capacity of consultants and advisers, mostly a mutual agreement between the organisation and their own preference for flexibility.

Having said that, the reality is that the job market opportunities for senior positions are a lot more limited than opportunities at entry level. This is a pyramid situation that applies in every country. It gets harder to find a role at the level that you are in simply because of scarcity.

The trend nowadays is for organisations to develop internal leaders organically, where succession happens within the organisation itself rather than hiring externally. This shift in the industry again decreases the availability of open jobs at the senior level.

On top of that, because of Malaysia's focus on IT over the last few years, the number of available people who are highly skilled and experienced in this line has increased, making competition in the IT industry very challenging.

Dhirendra, I believe that an employer who is truly looking for someone of your calibre will make their lives more manageable and improve their standard of living.

Why I mention this is because in whatever profession we are in, especially one that involves technical know-how, keeping pace with the evolution of technology is critical. In the context of age, I feel that it is a non-factor if we possess skills-sets which are in demand at any point in time.

As long as we continue to sharpen and hone our skills in the IT world where technology advances at the speed of light, the demand for our competencies will always be there, regardless of age.

This is due to the fact that it is not a laborious job such as that of a driver or machinist where as we age, our physical abilities are not able to cope with the demand of the job. In your case, being an IT professional, physical limitations are not great obstacles.

Hence, you need to understand why you are facing challenges in securing a job and what you have built quite an impressive career before your retirement.

If the skills you have developed over the years are now no longer in high demand due to the advancement of technology, you may have to re-train yourself or be willing to start at a level lower than where you were before your retirement.

One notable scenario today is that as we progress as a nation, with the need to develop a knowledge economy to improve our competitiveness as a nation globally, there is a surge of bright and ambitious graduates into the job market. In 2010 alone, there were 2.1 million fresh graduates entering the job market. The job market is now more competitive and only those who stand out possess the advantage.

With the advent of the Internet, information and knowledge is abundant in the virtual world.

You not only now compete for jobs with your peers, but are also scrambling for jobs with these eager and savvy individuals of the younger generation who acquire and absorb knowledge like a sponge.

I suggest that you should be open to employment on fixed term contract basis, at least for a start, and once you have proven yourself, a permanent employment offer may come your way.

There may be many reasons why companies are more willing to employ on contract, one of them being that cost is a factor these days, and employers also may not want to take the risk of carrying a cost which may not give them the return for the rewards they pay.

I wish you all the best in your journey to find a job suited to your competencies and aspirations.

Regards,

BANI ZAINAL

DEAR CAREERNOMERS,

I have four experts on career management, HR and office issues who will address your questions weekly. We refer to them as Careernomers — experts in career matters who will help you in your career journey. So if you have any burning questions to ask, send them to dearcareernomers@leaderonomics.com and we will get the panel to answer your questions.

This week, Bani Zainal, senior vice-president at Malakoff, and Ang Hui Ming, co-founder of Leaderonomics, answer Dhirendra’s question.

ANG HUI MING

GOOD DAY DHIRENDRA,

Please do not feel dejected as I personally do not feel that in the current economic scenario, age in employment is a factor.

A clear competitive advantage of any company or product lies in the technology it offers.

With the pace of the world moving as fast as it is today, consumers are hungry for new technology which can help make their lives more manageable and improve their standard of living.

Why I mention this is because in whatever profession we are in, especially one that involves technical know-how, keeping pace with the evolution of technology is critical. In the context of age, I feel that it is a non-factor if we possess skills-sets which are in demand at any point in time.

As long as we continue to sharpen and hone our skills in the IT world where technology advances at the speed of light, the demand for our competencies will always be there, regardless of age.

I suggest that you should be open to employment on fixed term contract basis, at least for a start, and once you have proven yourself, a permanent employment offer may come your way.

There may be many reasons why companies are more willing to employ on contract, one of them being that cost is a factor these days, and employers also may not want to take the risk of carrying a cost which may not give them the return for the rewards they pay.

I wish you all the best in your journey to find a job suited to your competencies and aspirations.

Regards,

BANI ZAINAL

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

SETTING YOU FREE
EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN THE WORKPLACE

Also next week

Next week’s Top 10 looks at ways to empower people at work

RHB’s talent development initiatives prepare the company for success

Two of AIA’s female life planners share their career journeys in Women & Careers

Smile more to have a healthy brain says Terry Small in Brain Bulletin

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