In this week’s career guide, we want to showcase the machinery of this fast-paced sector. What does it take to get that jar of cream into your bathroom? Or that ice-cream into your hands?

### Thinking Outside the Box

#### Study! Take a Class!

Often when we are in a specific industry, all that we know about work comes from our experience within that industry. A good way to think outside of the box is to learn something unrelated to your work. Study another industry, religion, or even a different country’s history. Your study of seemingly unrelated topics will open up new ways of thinking and methods for business solutions.

#### Break Free from Your Routines.

Wake up earlier, take a different route to work or even try an unusual drink from a new restaurant. Spend time outside of your comfort zone in major and minor ways and you’ll be surprised at the new things you’ll encounter. Small things may be able to trigger ideas and help generate unusual thought processes that may lead to solutions outside of the ordinary.

#### Work Backwards.

If all possible solutions end up with an unsatisfactory outcome, then play cheat by coming up with your ideal goal first. Select your most desirable scenario, then reverse-engineer the process. You will be able to clearly trace the chronology of the actions needed to be taken. This would also help you to see if there are any other possible methods previously overlooked.

#### Ask a Child, or Talk to Different People.

We often refer to childhood as a simpler time, so why not check with a seven-year-old to see what he/she thinks of the situation? Sure, he might not be able to solve 100% of your complex problems, but at the very least his untainted moral compass may help to steer you in the right direction in the case of an ethical dilemma. The solution might be more straightforward than we think. Don’t underestimate the opinions of people who you think are less qualified.

#### Challenge (Your Own) Assumptions. Study Your Fears and Prejudices.

Sometimes the inability to think creatively stems from our own fears and prejudices towards things we do not understand. Do a self-check to examine where it is that you may be potentially limiting yourself. Perhaps it may be negative experiences in the past or baseless discriminations; overcoming these restrictions will not only help you as an employee but also offer a fresh perspective as an individual.

**CAREER TIPS**

**Brain facts**

Six things you didn’t know about your brain. **Pg 14**

**Brain Facts**

- **100%** of your body is connected to your brain. There are 100 billion neurons in your brain which makes over 100 trillion connections.
- **86%** of your brain is made up of water, which is why it’s so important to keep hydrated.
- **90%** of your brain’s neurons are used in your sleep, which is why it’s so important to get a good night’s rest.
- **78%** of your brain’s neurons are used in memory, which is why it’s so important to keep learning.
- **75%** of your brain’s neurons are used in learning, which is why it’s so important to keep challenging yourself.
- **70%** of your brain’s neurons are used in decision making, which is why it’s so important to keep thinking critically.
- **65%** of your brain’s neurons are used in creativity, which is why it’s so important to keep being creative.
- **60%** of your brain’s neurons are used in problem solving, which is why it’s so important to keep being innovative.
- **55%** of your brain’s neurons are used in communication, which is why it’s so important to keep being communicative.
- **50%** of your brain’s neurons are used in thinking, which is why it’s so important to keep being thoughtful.

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**HOUSeHOLD Names**

I have always been intrigued by fast moving consumer goods. From the bright colours, great packaging, ads, to the products themselves, as a consumer, it’s my favorite category of products to shop for.

The FMCG industry is well-established in Malaysia, and has built brands that we hold strong emotional connections to. Just think of a few names in the FM&B side—brands like Milo, Jule’s and Twisten will surely trigger memories of some sort. It’s the short shelf life of fast moving consumer goods that ensures we come in such frequent contact with them. From foods to toiletries, companies in this industry are familiar names to us and their brands instantly recognisable because their products sit in every facet of our homes.

But what does it take to run the FMCG engine? As consumers we cannot live without their final products, but what happens behind the scenes?

In this week’s career guide, we want to showcase the machines behind this fast paced sector. What does it take to get that jar of cream into your bathroom? Or that ice-cream into your hands?

With industry content courtesy of TalentCorp, we aim to increase awareness but also showcase the exciting roles available within the industry.

From generating demand, to supply to support services, flip through to pages 1-11 to find out more.

Gen-Y readers will be pleased to hear that many FMCG companies also offer great work benefits, like training and development, and a great working environment. If you’re passionate about these products and are looking for an exciting industry to join, this may be the sector for you.

For students, TalentCorp is organising a visit to the leading FMCG companies in August. What an opportunity! Check out page 11 for details on how to sign up. For readers already well underway in their careers, we also want these regular industry insights to serve as great knowledge tools for your work conversations and decisions.

On our other pages, we feature Rahul Colaco in My First Job on page 3. Colaco gives some great career tips, including the importance of exposing ourselves to different cultures, and also surrounding ourselves with supportive individuals who can spur us on.

In Hard Talk, HR thought leader Dr John Sullivan tackles the hard question of Why for those who find themselves unable to land a job. He’s pulled together great facts and figures on the recruitment process. Did you know, for instance, that HR folks usually only spend 5-7 seconds looking at a resume? In Be A Leader on page 5, Dr Glenn Williams again digs into what role virtues play in leadership.

I hope you get great insights out of this week’s career guide, and remember you can also get the e-version of this guide weekly on leaderonomics.com, which you can share on Twitter and Facebook.

**LILY CHEAH**

Editor, myStarjob.com

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NEVER STOP LEARNING

RAHUL COLACO SHARES TIPS FOR CAREERS SUCCESS

By ERIC QUAH
eric.quah@leaderonomics.com

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) industry is an integral part of Malaysia’s retail landscape. The profit margin may be small for each product item, but the industry plays a volume game. All packaged goods have a relatively short shelf life so the turnover rate is high, and high returns come in through this rapid movement of stock.

Spearheading a company in this industry is no easy task. It requires stamina and an agility to formulate quick solutions that are tasteful and cost-effective.

Rahul Colaco has been leading Dutch Lady Milk Industries Bhd as managing director since 2012. Colaco started off as a management trainee at Hindustan Unilever in 1997, the largest FMCG organisation in India, known for its training.

As part of a 12-month training management programme, Colaco was exposed to various departments. Colaco fondly compared his experience there “to drinking water using a firehose.” As drastic as that may sound, “say that in a positive way,” he chis.

The result was an increased capacity for learning and the chance to stretch his mind and imagination. It empowered him to explore and discover his limits, encouraging him to grow even more. Colaco believes that people fresh out of university or college should take opportunities such as the one he had and push themselves to their limits.

The experience had also taught him to look at life through different lenses. “It allowed me to experience different functions. Although I was a finance graduate, I was out in the market selling soaps to retailers, and sitting in the two-wheeler driving around from shop to shop. We really had to start from the bottom.”

Colaco sees three aspects to working towards career success. The first is understanding yourself, which is not easy. It takes time to discover your capabilities, motivations, interpersonal skills and limitations. However, knowing and understanding these is essential.

Colaco also believes in investing in yourself. Like a product, everyone is essentially a brand that needs to be marketed to how you want people to perceive you. One way which he recommends is to constantly learn from all experiences. For Colaco, the learning journey never stops - he added that “the moment you stop learning, your brain dies.” This belief was the reason he decided to take a career break in 2003 to spend a year earning his MBA at IMD (International Institute for Management Development) Business School in Switzerland. Amid questions on why he was leaving the company, he rationalised that he wanted a global experience and to learn more from different cultures and nationalities. It was quite a risk, but Colaco asserts: “Investing in one’s self is obviously the greatest payback. It was a good decision in hindsight but it was certainly challenging.”

ON ATTITUDES AND SUCCESS

Colaco admits that he loves the FMCG industry because it allows him to not only understand consumer needs but also meet them. He regards it as a challenge and he likes the fast-paced energy it generates. It keeps him on his feet and presents him with many opportunities to learn.

The industry also offers cross-function mobility which Colaco believes is useful for someone to accumulate different sets of skills. The possibility of diversifying his skill-set is something that appeals to him.

Furthermore, there is the opportunity to explore international territories as more FMCGs are becoming more global. This was evident when Colaco made the leap from Hindustan Unilever to Unilever Europe in 2004, and now to Malaysia at Dutch Lady Milk Industries.

Being in the FMCG industry has also allowed Colaco to distil the best of his six bosses - three from India and three from the Netherlands – into his current leadership style. With that, he cites all of them as major influencers in his learning to become a more effective leader.

Colaco, an avid tennis player, also finds inspiration in Roger Federer, whom he describes as a fantastic player and someone who embodies great sportsmanship. “You go all out to win, but you don’t do it all costs,” he says.

CAREER TIPS

As words of advice for others, he firstly stresses the importance of having a great life partner, one who contributes to your dreams and helps build it together. He adds: “It is hard to make this journey on your own. If you have an inspiring and supportive partner along with you, that makes a big difference.”

“Because when you go home to family, it makes a big difference having the life-partner who is on the same wavelength as you: to be able to talk to, bounce ideas off with, manage the stress, inspire or energise you.”

Colaco also emphasises the importance of thinking globally. As business is rapidly becoming global, one very important attribute to have is the awareness of different cultures, he says.

“Open your horizons, be ready to learn from different cultures and different ways of looking at life,” he advises. He travels frequently, enjoys learning about new cultures and exploring new places.

He also stresses on the importance of integrity: of keeping your word and delivering what you promised and not being afraid to be held accountable.

“I feel this is very important because today we live in a highly-dependent world, so it is important that you are accountable for yourself and for what you deliver,” he says.
A Leader Is Never Deterred By Failure

We all fear failure. The best leaders in the world fail all the time but instead of fearing failure, they embrace it.

Thomas Edison failed 10,000 times before he perfected the light bulb. He never let failure wear him down. Walt Disney was fired from his first job for not “being creative”. He went on to creating the ‘most creative company in the world’ – DISNEY. Michael Jordan failed miserably in his first basketball trial and failed to make his high-school basketball team. That never stopped him from becoming the best.

Leaders are not born, they just learn from their mistakes. The great leaders in the world learn from their failure, and grow from it. Everyone can be a leader. Its about digging deep within us and never letting failure discourage us.

Be A Leader.

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

www.leaderonomics.com
5 leadership changing? Does it need to change? Is there a need for a different leadership paradigm in the light of some well-known corporate collapses and the fallout from the Global Financial Crisis of 2008/09 (GFC) that continues to reverberate far and wide?

It seems that leadership literature is beginning to address the importance of ethical or moral leadership as a key piece that is missing in leadership. While there is no need to be critical of classical leadership paradigms that primarily focus on traits, capabilities, skills, and styles, we must have the courage and insight to explore the interplay between leadership, virtues, and performance.

More specifically, we must examine how the presence or absence of virtues in a leader may define his or her character, and the impact this has on performance, both for the leader and the organisation. Over the last couple of years as I have researched this interplay, I have deliberately chosen to use “virtues” over more commonly used terms such as “values”, “morals” and “ethics”.

One important reason behind this is that some of the other terms have become quite commonplace and their significance either diluted or dismissed as being something that is more related to the field of ethics or leadership in a faith-based context.

My hope is that a robust discussion on virtues will be a catalyst for starting a new dialogue on leadership that is often only given superficial treatment: the interplay between leadership, virtues and ethics as Alexandre Havid states, “the content of a person’s character”.

For years, I have been fascinated and inspired by leadership: what it is, what it is not, what people think it should be or should not be, and the variety of emotional responses that are evoked when we see it demonstrated in a range of different contexts: at home, in work environments, sporting clubs, community organisations, churches, in government and schools, and across every culture.

**INSPIRING LEADERS**

As a young child, I remember watching a fireman being interviewed after running into a house to rescue a young infant from the fire that had almost entirely consumed the family home. That took courage, selflessness. It took leadership.

When I was twelve years old, I remember being inspired by a courageous footballer and captain of the Hawthorn Football Club, Peter Crimmins, as he battled cancer and tried to ready himself to return to the team. But his courage and dedication cancer and tried to ready himself to return to the team. But his courage and dedication to his family and to football were devastated.

Elaine Shepherd was exhausted and experienced feelings of loss, but she would not allow this setback to consume her. I remember being impressed by her determination and optimism. Ironically, years later, I would find myself working alongside this remarkable woman in a family mediation centre.

History is replete with examples of leaders who have both succeeded and failed in a variety of fields of interest. They are researchers, social commentators, military strategists, politicians, and business executives from the private and public sectors.

They also include leaders from the social sector or Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) that serve a broad range of humanitarian objectives, some of them religiously motivated. Some well-known examples include: William Wilberforce, Mahatma Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt, St Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, Dr Rev Martin Luther King Jr and President Mikhail Gorbachev.

There have been inventors who have demonstrated great resolve and initiative, like Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell, and business leaders like Warren Buffett and Microsoft’s Bill Gates who have established corporate empires only to give billions of dollars away to humanitarian efforts. There have been military leaders such as Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Genghis Khan, George Washington and Napoleon Bonaparte.

**GIVING LEADERSHIP CONTEXT**

Leadership is often very personal, and very powerful. It is felt by everyone: by those who demonstrate it in a large way or seemingly insignificant ways, and by those who are affected negatively or positively by leaders connected to them, or detrimental by its sheer absence when it is needed.

Leadership is also local, regional, national, and global. As Michael and Deborah Jinkins note, “leadership is always grounded in a particular time and place – in a particular culture. And the effective leader inevitably maintains a connection with this specific time and place, this culture, leading these people in this moment.”

Every person in every culture could mention a list of names of leaders who are more specific to their personal experience, the places or countries they live or work, or the leaders they have been impacted by. In what ways have they influenced your views, your decisions and your own leadership?

Understanding that every organisation has a culture of its own, what type of leadership does your organisation need, and what changes do you need to make to facilitate that change?

Dr Glenn Williams is the CEO and principal owner of Outward Looking International, an organisation that empowers leaders and organisations to grow their leadership capacity. To engage Williams for special leadership workshops for your organisation, email people@leaderonomics.com
The World of Fast Moving Consumer Goods

**Touching Lives Everyday**

**FAST-moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies are behind the biggest brands in the world.** The FMCG industry is all about the products which everyone recognises from trips to the supermarket or from advertisements on television. From the cup of coffee you start your day with, to your toothpaste and the face cream you apply at night time, all these daily necessities are considered “fast” moving goods; they are the quickest to leave supermarket shelves and cost relatively lower than other durable items.

The brands that make up this sector are what you have grown up with, know and love. Think Pepsi, Oreo, Milo and Doi. Also termed consumer packaged goods (CPG), FMCG are perishable, have high turnover and are replaced or used up over a short period of days, weeks or months.

Broadly speaking the industry can be categorised into three large market segments: Food and Beverages (F&B), Household Care and Personal Care.

You will be amazed at the number of FMCG brands you are using and consuming on a regular basis. When you think pharmaceutically, you may think Penadil. In Malaysia, Pampers is synonymous with baby diapers, Nescafe with coffee, Milo with chocolate malt drinks, and Cif with dishwashing.

These are global brands, a fraction of the thousands of brands owned by multinational corporations employing hundreds of thousands of people all over the world.

**A THRIVING INDUSTRY**

While there is no official data on how much the local FMCG industry is worth relative to gross domestic product (GDP), it is one of the biggest revenue contributors to Malaysia’s services sector. The Malaysian FMCG sector has a good representation of both multinational and local companies with big names like Nestlé and L’Oréal Paris, as well as local names like Nestlé, Dutch Lady and Alacta (M), which employs over 2,000 people; and mineral water producer Unza (M), which employs a more than 630-strong employee base.

Each FMCG multinational have been in Malaysia for more than 50 years and have become household names. These include Nestlé, Dutch Lady and Mondelez International (formerly Kraft Foods) for F&B, Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Johnson and Johnson and Reckitt Benckiser for personal and household care and the likes of GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare (GSK) for healthcare products.

These companies are bringing in larger revenues and profits year-on-year thanks to the increasing sophistication of the Malaysian customer and rising demand, despite the global slowdown.

Nestlé Malaysia, the largest FMCG company in the country, recorded a RM4.6bil turnover in 2012, up 7.3%, over RM331mil in revenue, and employs 5,100 people.

Cosmetics market leader Oréal has a staff strength of 800 while dairy giant Dutch Lady with a more than 630-strong employee base earned a revenue of RM882mil in 2012, a 9% growth compared to the previous year.

Meanwhile, GSK has been in Malaysia for more than 50 years. It employs close to 600 workers and has an annual sales turnover of over RM300mil.

Locally incorporated firms include personal care producer Unza (M), which employs 2,000 people; Julie’s, which has been making biscuits since 1982; and mineral water brand Sipster, whose revenue jumped 20% to RM178mil in 2012.

While these local names may bring in lower revenue compared with multinationals, they are more export-oriented and provide consumers in Malaysia a choice of products and pricing options.

**EVER IN DEMAND**

Mondelez Malaysia is home to iconic brands such as Oreo, Cadbury, Jacot’s, Chipsmore, Twixers and Tiger biscuits and is part of Mondelez International, a global snack food powerhouse. Being the world leader in snacks, Mondelez International aims to build capability, engage employees and strive for high performance at all times.

Employees at Mondelez Malaysia have the chance to embark on regional projects which give them international experience. There are ample opportunities to fulfil career aspirations with added value through coaching and training, and above all, an environment that ensures everyone has fun at work.

**CAREER & INDUSTRY**

**MARKET SEGMENT**

**SECTIONS**

**BRANDS**

**Food and Beverages**

Biscuits, chocolate, dairy drinks

Milo, Oreo, Wall’s, Cadbury, Horlicks

**Household Care**

Fabric care, air care, dish care, pet care

Oral B, Colgate, Gillette, Radox; Palmolive, SK II, Dettol, Procter & Gamble, Head & Shoulders

**Personal Care**


**The ideal candidate to join FMCG is someone...**

**DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?**

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**“THE FMCG INDUSTRY IS FAST-PACED, WITH HIGH ENERGY, HIGH DEGREE OF INNOVATION AND A PERFORMANCE-DRIVEN CULTURE.”** — Sunil Sethi, managing director of Mondelez Malaysia (formerly Kraft Malaysia Sdn Bhd) on why graduates should consider starting a career in the FMCG sector.

Mondelez Malaysia is home to iconic brands such as Oreo, Cadbury, Jacot’s, Chipsmore, Twixers and Tiger biscuits and is part of Mondelez International, a global snack food powerhouse. Being the world leader in snacks, Mondelez International aims to build capability, engage employees and strive for high performance at all times.

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**BEFORE you take the next step towards embarking on a fast-track career in FMCG, here is a peek into what kind of traits these companies are looking for.**

Prime yourself to get hired at some of the world’s best places to work!

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“I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT OUR BRANDS”

Ivy Chia
Trade marketing manager; Nutrition; General Manager Consumer Healthcare.

“I WHO CAN HIT THE GROUND RUNNING?”

Ian Tan Teong Keat
Customer Development manager; Dutch Lady Malaysia.

“I WITH HIGH LEARNING AGILITY”

Nurul Farahana Elmina Abdul Rahman
Assistant key account manager; Mondelez Malaysia.

“I WHO IS RESULT-ORIENTED”

Joel Lim Hsien
Trade marketing manager; Unilever (Malaysia) Holdings Sdn Bhd.
WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN
THE FMCG INDUSTRY

RAHUL COLOCO
Managing director,
Dutch Lady Malaysia

RAKESH MOHAN
Chairman,
Unilever (Malaysia) Holdings Sdn Bhd

ZAINUN NUR ABDUL RAUF
HR & group corporate affairs
director, Nestlé Malaysia

RAHEL FERDINANDO
Vice-president and general manager,
GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare (GSK)

DION LESWARA
Director of human capital and development,
Philip Morris (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd

Susan Weng, on how the company hires for a career and not just for specific roles.

Individual competency and attitude is more important than technical skills at P&G. To illustrate, P&G currently has a manager in a Customer Business Development role with a Bio-Chemical Engineering background and a group manager in Finance with Engineering background.

What P&G is looking for is a build from within company. Many graduates start as candidates with integrity, leadership potential, strong thinking, operation discipline and a passion for winning. As a build from within company, P&G invests in getting the best individuals at the entry level who are then trained to be the next leaders of the company. And that leader could be you!

RAHUL COLOCO, on why graduates should consider starting a career with Dutch Lady Malaysia.

The company prides itself on its investment in its employees, both internally in Malaysia as well as through global career opportunities. In fact, several Dutch Lady employees are currently on short and long term assignments outside the country.

The company’s growth and profits have accelerated over the last three years and it has won many industry awards. So consider a career in the dairy industry. Consider helping Malaysians move forward in life with trusted dairy nutrition!

RAHEL FERDINANDO, on how the company is constantly looking for new ideas and approaches at the workplace.

To foster innovation, GSK has put in place best practices such as creating conversations between senior management and other employees, allowing for different viewpoints and implementing key performance measurements. The company is driven to be the leading fast moving consumer healthcare company which is in line with the company’s global effort to help consumers to do more, feel better and live longer. GSK is on the look out for individuals who feel inspired by their mission and values.

So come join this company which is committed to enriching lives, for your development and to make your personal aspirations a reality!

DION LESWARA, on why graduates should consider starting their career with the company.

At Phillip Morris Malaysia, you will join a company that invests in you and supports your growth through individual development and structured career management. We have in place strong reward and recognition programmes which are designed to encourage your achievements and foster your potential!

The FMCG industry thrives on employee and customer retention.

Employee investment is a big part of the ethos of the FMCG world. Perhaps it’s because they understand the importance of loyalty. Customer loyalty can make or break a brand. Take Twinings, for example – a century after they entered the top 100 brands list, they are still there and going strong.

So it makes sense for FMCG companies to encourage the loyalty of their employees too.

The FMCG market has been growing consistently over the last few years. Opportunities come about as companies look to drive higher consumption in market segments like male grooming in personal care, foods such as chocolates and fabric softeners in the household care category.

Large multinational companies have been in Malaysia for a very long time. Unilever has been around since 1947, P&G since 1987 and Nestlé since 1912.

The Malaysian FMCG sector has grown in the range of 5 to 7% per annum over the last few years.

The culture in FMCG companies is open and informal. Many companies offer family friendly policies like flexible working hours and the choice of working from home.
FMCG sector is a world of constantly changing consumer behaviors, trends, and product landscapes. To succeed, FMCG professionals must have a strong understanding of the product development, marketing, and distribution processes. They must be able to strategize and implement plans to ensure that their brands stand out in a crowded market.

FMCG attracts people from diverse educational backgrounds. Some have a degree in economics, while others have a degree in marketing or business administration. Some have background in chemistry or biology, while others have a degree in finance or accounting.

Some in FMCG find themselves working with suppliers and distributors, ensuring that the products are delivered on time and in good condition. Others are tasked with identifying new products and improving existing ones. Still others work in customer service, addressing any questions or concerns that customers may have.

While working in FMCG, professionals may also have to deal with challenging situations. For example, they may have to work with difficult suppliers or face customer complaints. However, they find satisfaction in knowing that their efforts are helping to bring products to market.

In conclusion, working in the FMCG sector is a demanding but rewarding career. Professionals who are able to adapt to change, think creatively, and have strong communication skills are well-suited for this exciting field.
**A GEN-Y FRIENDLY WORKPLACE!**

Work-life balance has become an increasingly important factor in career choices. FMCG companies like P&G, Nestlé and Mondelez International recognise this.

The company provides flexibility on the time working location, hours spent in office clocked in, at which you want to start your day and employees are encouraged to work one day a week from home. The company up your work station at home. There are work and sabbaticals, depending on individual and business needs. Working for progressive companies in the FMCG industry that helps you deliver optimum results.

Colin of Dutch Lady says, “Our work culture is inclusive, open and informal. Our policies are family-friendly, such as 90 days maternity leave and flexi-time.”

At GSK, employees say “there is no late-night or early-morning culture and nobody will micro-manage you.”

**“AGILE WORKING HELPS A MARRIED WORKING WOMAN LIKE ME JUGGLE BETWEEN MY CAREER AND FAMILY.”**

**NAME:** Lenny Chua
**DESIGNATION:** Marketing manager
**COMPANY:** Unilever Malaysia

**EMPOWERMENT ON THE JOB**

For those looking for a new challenge everyday, many FMCG companies would be a good fit. Take the case of global snack food giant Mondelez International.

Managing director Sunil Sethi shares the company’s culture of empowerment, where employees are thrown into the deep end to acquaint them with the business.

“As we aim to be a Great Place To Work, we ensure strategic alignment and then empower people to make their own decisions and deliver results.”

By empowerment, he says employees are exposed to various projects cross functionally apart from their day-to-day work, which widens their horizons.

“I’VE BEEN GIVEN THE FREEDOM TO DEVELOP MY OWN WAY, TO FORM MY OWN OPINIONS AND COME UP WITH IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS.”

**NAME:** Naomi Chen
**DESIGNATION:** Shopper marketing manager
**COMPANY:** Dutch Lady Malaysia

**P&G: BUILDING TALENT FROM WITHIN FOR A GLOBAL CAREER**

In 2012, Fortune and Chief Executive magazines named P&G the top company for leaders. JP Donlon, reviewer at Chief Executive noted: “P&G executives are considered the Navy SEALS of management. This results from a razor-like focus on internal succession planning at all levels.”

Susan Wong, who recently took over the P&G Malaysia HR reins, is a testament to P&G internal leadership development practices.

P&G is recognised as a leader in developing talent and grooming world class leaders. As a ‘build from within’ company, we invest in getting the best talents at the entry level and are trained to be the next leader of the company.

“We hold managers accountable for building leaders at all levels in the organisation via early responsibility, training and assignment rotations every few years,” she says. Having spent 10 years in P&G since joining fresh out of university, she is now country HR manager for Malaysia, Singapore and global development market-Asia.

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes help employees look forward to doing more than just a regular job. It adds meaning and gives a great sense of fulfillment.

While FMCG companies are looking to grow, they ensure they interact responsibly with the society at large. Take the example of GSK.

“We have a global CSR initiative that allows staff to take a day off from work to volunteer at a charity in the community,” says GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare vice-president and general manager Rachel Ferdinando.

CSR is another key factor in how you get the best for them, especially as FMCG have global presence and significant impact on the world socially and economically.

Cosmetics giant O’Neal is also committed to an impact beyond beauty! As a market leader in Malaysia, O’Neal helps its employees find fulfillment by giving back to society through science, education and solidarity.

Its yearly “For Women in Science” programme offers fellowships to exceptional female scientists worldwide; while the “Keep In School” scheme helps finance the education of children above 12 who are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS.

Meanwhile, by 2020, the Uniliever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP) aims to improve health and well-being, reduce environmental impact and source 100% of agricultural raw materials sustainably and enhance people’s livelihoods across its value chain.

As it is talent that drives a company’s performance in the market place, many employers realise they cannot keep spending on outbidding other employers. Companies strive to build employee loyalty by investing in their development and career growth through graduate management trainee programmes and internal leadership programmes for young high performing talent.

**INVESTMENT IN LEADERSHIP & TRAINING**

Nora Mahbob, HR director, L’Oreal Malaysia says, “As the world No. 1 cosmetic company, O’Neal provides a graduate with an excellent foundation to their career because they are given exposure to various functions and disciplines in the business.

As a Management Trainee, we have a graduate programme called the Young Entrepreneur Programme (YEP) where one will be given training on all relevant divisions to gain a good perspective from strategy development right up to route-to-market execution.

The YEP focuses on building strong future executives that have solid foundation in sales, retail and trade, with further development and exposure in their field of choice. Excellent candidates will have the opportunity to participate in the Asean Exchange Programme, where they will be placed in a selected Asean country for a short-term assignment for three months.

Dutch Lady Malaysia managing director Rahul Colaco adds, “We offer the graduate trainee Dutch Lady Associate Programme (DLAP), a great platform for fresh graduates to start their career.”

GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare (GSK) vice-president and general manager Rachel Ferdinando says GSK uses “differential development” by customising training to the individual across three areas:

- On-the-job experiences (70%) – stretch assignments, increasing the scope of their roles, new projects within their roles or secondment.
- Developmental relationships (20%) – opportunities to get support and feedback from managers, peers, mentors or coaches.
- Formal development (10%) – via e-learning, coursework, programmes, class-room-style training, articles or books.

**“DEFINITELY ITS PEOPLE AND WORKING CULTURE.”**

Khairul Anwar Ab. Ghani, executive corporate affairs at Philip Morris Malaysia held the title of HR Excellence Manager.

“Definitely its people and working culture.”

**NAME:** Vanessa Ong
**DESIGNATION:** Senior key account manager
**COMPANY:** Procter & Gamble (P&G) Malaysia
“It feels good to be back home and to be able to contribute to Malaysia’s growth (my children can now enjoy the unique cultural diversity that epitomises Malaysia), and be able to share my vast global experiences and knowledge working in the United States, Asean, Australia, India and Greater China to groom more Malaysian talents to be able to compete globally.”

JENNY CHEW
Sales director, Procter & Gamble (P&G) Malaysia
Returning Expert Programme (REP)

After more than nine years of working overseas, Chew grabbed the opportunity to return home when a senior position opened in P&G, a leading global FMCG company in Malaysia. She was motivated to return at the thought of being able to contribute to the development of this nation by sharing the expertise, skills and experience she gained during her time abroad. Incentives under TalentCorp’s REP programme helped made it easy for Chew to plan her homecoming.

The REP is part of a host of initiatives designed to enable the establishment of a Malaysian world-class workforce through the facilitation of returning talent within key sectors of the Economic Transformation Programme (REP). Whereas previously applications for the REP were only made by returning individuals, this was changed last year to encourage greater industry participation and to complement Malaysian employers’ existing talent acquisition efforts, by enabling them to apply for the initiative on behalf of the Malaysian professionals they target to recruit from abroad.

The REP incentive is now an important enabler for leading Malaysian employers to attract top talent. To know more about REP log on to http://rep.talentcorp.com.my/

RESIDENCE PASS - TALENT (RP-T)

“L’Oréal always has and will continue to contribute towards Malaysia’s human capital development efforts for many years to come.”

ASHWINI RAIGOPAL
Managing director, L’Oréal Malaysia
Residence Pass - Talent

With the Government’s Economic Transformation Programme, Malaysia continues to enjoy strong growth in investments and is opening its doors to top global talent including Malaysians abroad and foreign talent. The Residence Pass – Talent (RP-T), which was introduced in April 2011, offers foreign talent and their families the opportunity to live and work in Malaysia for up to 10 years.

L’Oréal is the No. 1 cosmetics group worldwide and is also the market leader in Malaysia. Today, L’Oréal Malaysia employs over 800 employees and is an active graduate employer. TalentCorp is collaborating with L’Oréal and other leading FMCG companies to improve awareness of the diverse and exciting career opportunities in this sector. To apply for RP-T, log on to https://www.expats.com.my/RP

GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY MANAGEMENT SCHEME (GEMS)

“The GeMS programme helped me discover my strengths and enabled me to launch my career in a leading food and beverage company in Malaysia. From doing media audit to writing scripts for social media marketing, I am learning and growing in my job at Nestlé, Malaysia every day.”

NURUL FARIHANA ASMAWI
Major in Communication, International Islamic University of Malaysia
Employability Management Scheme (GEMS)

In 2012, TalentCorp acquired GEMS Malaysia Sdn Bhd from Khazanah Nasional Bhd. Under TalentCorp the newly revived GEMS is more sector focused and demand driven. The GEMS programme incorporates classroom training with an attachment which includes bringing them on a tour of the manufacturing facility, warehouse or retail stockist. They will be mingling with the young talent at these companies who will share their own experiences. Graduates will also participate in knowledge-sharing sessions and get to interact with the senior leadership at the company, including face time with the CEO.

They will participate in activities within the company as well as get a feel of the CSR programmes. They will get to experience first-hand the informal work culture.

So join in an exciting day out with the FMCG sector! To know more about this programme or to participate, please visit http://events.my/worklife.my
By DR JOHN SULLIVAN
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

Your “six seconds of fame” enough to land you a job? As a professor and a corporate recruiting strategist, I can tell you that very few applicants truly understand the corporate recruiting process. Most people looking for a job approach it with little factual knowledge. That is a huge mistake. A superior approach is to instead analyse it carefully, because data can help you understand why so many applicants simply can’t land a job.

If you can bear with me for a few quick minutes, I can show you using numbers where the job-search “roadblocks” are and how that data-supported insight can help you easily double your chances of landing an interview and a job.

YOUR RESUME WILL FACE A LOT OF COMPETITION

Although it varies with the company and the job, on average 250 resumes are received for each corporate job opening. Finding a position opening late can’t help your chances because the first resume is received within 200 seconds after a position is posted. If you post your resume online on a major job site so that a recruiter can find it, you are facing stiff competition because hundreds and thousands of other resumes can be posted on job sites each and every week.

UNDERSTANDING THE HIRING “FUNNEL” CAN HELP YOU GAUGE YOUR CHANCES

In recruiting, we have what is known as a “hiring funnel” or a yield model for every job, which helps recruiting leaders understand how many total applications they need to generate in order to get a single hire.

As an applicant, this funnel reveals your chances of success at each step of the hiring process. According to Talent Function Group LLC, for the specific case of an online job posting, on average, 1,000 individuals will see a job post, 200 will begin the application process, 100 will complete the application, 75 of those 100 resumes will be screened out by either the applicant tracking system (ATS) or a recruiter, 25 resumes will be seen by the hiring manager, four to six will be invited for an interview, one to three of them will be invited back for final interview, one will be offered that job, and 80% of those receiving an offer will accept it.

SIX SECONDS OF RESUME REVIEW MEANS RECRUITERS WILL SEE VERY LITTLE

When you ask individual recruiters directly, they report that they spend up to five minutes reviewing each individual resume. However, a recent research study from TheLadders that included the direct observation of the actions of corporate recruiters demonstrated that the boast of this extended review time is a huge exaggeration. You may be shocked to know that the average recruiter spends a mere six seconds reviewing a resume.

A similar study by Behiring found the review time to be five-seven seconds. Obviously six seconds only allows a recruiter to quickly scan (but not read) a resume.

We also know from observation that nearly four seconds of that six-second scan is spent exclusively at four areas, which are: job titles, companies you worked at, start/end dates and education.

Like it or not, that narrow focus means that unless you make these four areas extremely easy for them to find within approximately four seconds, the odds are high that you will be instantly passed over.

And finally, be aware that whatever else that you have on your resume, the recruiter will have only the remaining approximately two seconds to find and be impressed with it. If you think the information in your cover letter will provide added support for your qualifications, you might be interested to know that a mere 17% of recruiters bother to read cover letters.

A SINGLE RESUME ERROR CAN INSTANTLY DISQUALIFY YOU

A single resume error may prevent your resume from moving on. That is because 63% of recruiters will automatically dismiss a resume because it contains typos, according to Careerbuilder. In a similar light, 43% of hiring managers will disqualify a candidate from consideration because of spelling errors (Adecco). The use of an unprofessional email address will get a resume rejected 76% of the time, found Behiring.

You should also be aware that prominently displaying dates that show that you are not currently employed may also get you prematurely rejected at many firms.

WHY YOU CAN’T LAND A JOB

RECRUITMENT METHODS EXPLAINED
A CUSTOMISED RESUME CAN NOT BE SCANNABLE

Most corporations use a computerised system that presents relevant information where recruiters expect it to improve the rating of a resume by a whopping 60%, without any change to the content (a 6.2 versus a 3.9 usability rating for the less-professionally organised resume). If you make that common mistake of putting your resume in a PDF format, you should realise that many ATS systems will simply not be able to scan and read any part of its content (meaning instantaneous rejection).

WEAK LINKEDIN PROFILES CAN ALSO HURT YOU

Because many recruiters and hiring managers use LinkedIn profiles either to verify or to supplement resume information, those profiles also impact your chances. By-tracking technology used by TheLadders revealed that recruiters spend an average of 19% of their time on your LinkedIn profile simply viewing your picture (a professional picture may be worthwhile).

The research also revealed that just like resumes, weak organisation, and scanability within a LinkedIn profile negatively impacted the ability to “process the profile” (TheLadders).

50 SECONDS SPENT MEANS MANY APPLY FOR A JOB THEY ARE NOT QUALIFIED FOR

Recruiters report that over 50% of applicants for a typical job fail to meet the basic qualifications for that job according to Wall Street Journal. Part of the reason for that high “not-qualified” rate is because when an individual is looking at a job opening, even though they report that they spend 10 minutes reviewing in detail each job which they thought was a “fit” for them, we now know that they spend an average of just 76 seconds (and as little as 50 seconds) reading and assessing a position description that they apply for (TheLadders).

Most of that roughly 60-second job selection time reviewing the position description is actually spent reviewing the narrow introductory section of the description that only covers the job title, compensation, and location.

As a result of not actually spending the necessary time reviewing and side-by-side comparing the requirements to their own qualifications, job applicants end up applying for many jobs where they have no chance of being selected.

BE AWARE THAT EVEN IF YOUR RESUME FITS THE JOB POSTING, YOU MAY STILL BE REJECTED

To make matters worse, many of the corporate position descriptions that applicants are reading are poorly written or out of date when they are posted. So even if an applicant did spend the required time to fully read the job posting, they may still end up applying for a job that exists only on paper.

So even though an applicant actually meets the written qualifications, they may still be rejected (without their knowledge) because after they applied, the hiring manager finally decided that they actually wanted a significantly different set of qualifications.

A FORMAT THAT IS NOT SCANNABLE CAN CUT YOUR ODDS BY 60%

TheLadders’ research also showed that the format of the resume matters a great deal. Having a clear or professionally organised resume or form that presents relevant information where recruiters expect it to improve the rating of a resume by a whopping 60%, without any change to the content (a 6.2 versus a 3.9 usability rating for the less-professionally organised resume).

Because four out of the five job-related factors that recruiters initially look for in a resume involve work experience, recent graduates are at a decided disadvantage when applying for most jobs.

Their lack of experience will also mean that their resume will likely rank low on the keyword count. To make matters worse, the average hiring manager begins with a negative view of college graduates because if a full 66% of hiring managers report that they view new college graduates as “unprepared for the work place”, according to Adecco.

NO ONE READS RESUMES HOUSED IN THE BLACK HOLE DATABASE

If you make the mistake of applying for a job that is not currently open, you are probably guaranteeing failure. This is because during most times, but especially during times of lean recruiting budgets, overburdened recruiters and hiring managers simply don’t have the time to visit the corporate resume database (for that reason, many call it the black hole).

So realise that recruiters generally only have time to look at applicants who apply for a specific open job and who are then ranked highly by the ATS system.

SOME APPLICANTS HAVE ADDITIONAL DISADVANTAGES

Because four of the five job-related factors that recruiters initially look for in a resume involve work experience, recent graduates are at a decided disadvantage when applying for most jobs.

They have no chance of being selected. So even though an applicant actually meets the basic qualifications, they may still be rejected because a resume that is not customised to the job will seldom include enough of the required “keywords” to qualify for the next step, a review by a human.

Even if you are lucky enough to have a live recruiter review your resume, because recruiters spend on average less than two seconds (of the total six-second review) looking for a keyword match, unless the words are strategically placed so that they can be easily spotted, a recruiter will also likely reject it if not meeting the keyword target.

ONE REASON TO AVOID THE LADDER DATABASE

During this next stage of review, the recruiter will have more time to assess your resume for your accomplishments, your quantified results, your skills, and the tools you can use.

Unfortunately, the recruiter is usually looking for reasons to reject you, in order to avoid the criticisms that will invariably come from the hiring manager if they find knockout factors in your resume.

If no obvious knockout factors are found you can expect a telephone interview, and if you pass that, numerous in-person interviews.

Even if you do everything right, the odds can be less than 1%

Because of the many roadblocks, bottlenecks, and “knockout factors” that I have highlighted in this article, the overall odds of getting a job at a “best-place-to-work” firm can often be measured in single digits.

For example, Deloitte, a top firm in the accounting field, actually brags that it only hires 3.5% of its applicants.

Google, the firm with a No. 1 employer brand, gets well over one million applicants per year, which means that even during its robust hiring periods when it hires 4,000 people a year, your odds of getting hired are an amazingly low 4/10 of 1%. Those unfortunately are painfully low “lotto type odds.”

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Final thoughts

Unfortunately, much of what is written about “the perfect resume” and the ideal job search approach is based on “old wives’ tales” and is simply wrong. However, when I review the numbers that are available to me from internal company recruiting data and publicly through research done by industry-leading firms like TheLadders, Adecco, BellRing, staffing.org, and Careerbinder, it doesn’t take long to realise that the real job search process differs significantly from the ideal one.

Rather than leaving things to chance, my advice both to the applicant and to the corporate recruiting leader is to approach the job search process in a much more scientific way. For the applicant that means start by thoroughly reading the position description and making a list of the required keywords that both the ATS and the recruiter will need to see.

Next submit a customised resume that is in a scannable format that ensures that the key factors that will matter most are read initially (job titles, company names, education, dates, keywords, etc.) are both powerful and easy to find during a quick six-second scan. But next comes the most important step: to literally “pre-test” both your resume and your LinkedIn profile several times with a recruiter or HR professional. Pre-testing makes sure that anyone who scans them for six seconds will be actually find each of the key points that recruiters need to find.

My final bit of advice is something that only insiders know. And that is to become an employee referral (the highest volume way to get hired).

Because one of the firm’s own employees recommended you and also because the recruiter knows that they will likely have to provide feedback to that employee when they later inquire as to “why their referral was rejected,” resumes from referrals are reviewed much more closely.

I hope that by presenting these 35+ powerful recruiting-related numbers I have improved your understanding of the recruiting process and the roadblocks that you need to steer around in order to dramatically improve your odds of getting a great job.

Dr John Sullivan is an internationally known HR thought-leader from the Silicon Valley who specialises in providing bold and high business impact, strategic talent management solutions to large corporations. He’s a prolific author with over 900 articles and 10 books covering all areas of talent management and an engaging corporate speaker who has excited audiences on all six continents.

MakINg IT THROUGH: A KEYWORD SEARCH REQUIREs A CUSTOMISED RESUME

The first preliminary resume screening step at most corporations is a computerised ATS system that scans submitted resumes for keywords that indicate that an applicant fits a particular job.

I estimate more that 90% of candidates apply using a standard resume (without any customisation). Unfortunately, this practice dramatically increases the odds that a resume will be instantly rejected because a resume that is not...
DURING my primary and secondary education in Malaysia, I remember the struggle of writing several essays about travelling, and how teachers said it was important because it enabled one to meluaskan pengetahuan (broaden one’s knowledge). Although I wrote all those essays espousing the advantages of travelling, in hindsight, I didn’t really understand how the concept could actually benefit me.

Fast-forward 5½ years after SPM, in 2009, and here I am in Santiago, Chile, close to the end of my second study abroad in Buenos Aires, Argentina, having just visited a Chilean friend I had befriended during my study stint in Barcelona in 2007. For me, the past five years have been an incredible eye-opening journey as I travelled through 20 countries, lived in five countries across four continents, and met people from over 100 different countries.

I hope that detailing my experiences here would inspire others who have similar dreams to reach for the stars and also shed light on how to make these aspirations a reality.

Given the experiences I have had, one might think that I come from a super-wealthy family. The reality is that I grew up in a household where both my parents were government servants for many years, and would have not been able to fully fund any of their three children to foreign universities for higher education.

In academics, I was good, but not great, and rarely ranked within the top 10 in my class. However, I did eventually manage to obtain excellent SPM results and record notable achievements in extracurricular activities, all of which were important in helping me secure the opportunities for the next phase of my education.

After SPM, I applied for several scholarships and was fortunate enough to be awarded a 75% scholarship to study at the United World College-USA (UWC-USA), in addition to a full scholarship by the Public Services Department (PSD) to Germany. For those who are not familiar with UWC-USA, it is one of 12 international boarding schools around the world that focuses on promoting international understanding by bringing students from dozens of countries to live and study together.

Although the PSD scholarship seemed the more lucrative and secure option at that point, I defined the advice of friends and relatives to opt for UWC as I felt I was able to challenge and grow myself more in a completely unfamiliar environment.

That gamble certainly paid off. In UWC-USA, I had an incredible learning experience living together with students from over 90 different countries. Through UWC, I also found out about the concept of financial aid, and every year, many Malaysians manage to secure necessary funding for tertiary education there. This is largely still a secret among most students in Malaysia but every one who desires a tertiary education and cannot afford it should know that the United States is the only country in the world where financial aid and scholarships are made available to a large number of international students on a wide-scale basis.

After UWC-USA, I gained admission into Dartmouth College with a generous financial aid package that required me to spend even less than a student in a Malaysian public university would pay. Dartmouth provided me with all the resources necessary to achieve my dreams, in areas as diverse as food and lodging to health insurance and pocket money for study abroad programmes.

The first reaction people usually have when I relate my experience to them is to tell me that I am really lucky. I acknowledge that being blessed has definitely played a part in the success I have had on this path.

However, from my personal experience, grit and the willingness to work hard is equally, if not more important, as well as the fact that opportunities are abundant if one is willing to work hard enough.

I have met many Malaysians in the United States and abroad who are pursuing a variety of their own dreams, even if they were originally from less privileged backgrounds because they were willing to make it happen.

While you do need a little bit of luck, it really boils down to passion, hard work and initiative that will provide the desired results in the long-term. In short, you can shape your own unique experiences too.

Back in the airport, I reflect about my recent stay in Argentina, where I studied their political history and learnt how it and other Latin American countries had huge immigration waves also in the late 1800s and early 1900s like Malaysia. However, it seemed to have done much better in fostering a national identity that supersedes the various ethnic identities that existed after immigration.

Instances like these help me critically reflect upon my multi-ethnic experience growing up in Malaysia, and even after being exposed to such an incredible amount of new knowledge over the past five years, I still feel like I am only beginning to experience the tip of the iceberg of how meluaskan pengetahuan (travelling) can help one meluaskan pengetahuan!

Ng Eng Han, 26, considers himself fortunate to have studied across the United States, Spain and Argentina. He wrote this article in 2009, and today is a management consultant, continuing to travel for work. This article was extracted from the “What’s After SPM” book published by Leaderonomics Publishing.

By NG ENG HAN
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

THINGS YOU DIDN’T KNOW ABOUT YOUR BRAIN

Here are six things you probably didn’t know about your brain:

1. Your brain is a 1.3kg universe... wrapped in tissue and bone... it is proportionately larger than in any other creature on earth.
2. Your brain is just 2% of your body weight... yet demands 20% of your blood flow and 20% of your oxygen.
3. The number of physical thought pathways that your brain can potentially create is the number one followed by 10.5 million km of standard font zeros.
4. The one hundred million neurons in your brain can create more ideas than the number of atoms in the known universe.
5. Your brain’s total capacity for data storage is a terabyte of terabytes (you can look this one up... I did!).

Congratulations on learning something about your brain today! The Brain Bulletin is committed to help do just that.

REMEMBER: “You are a genius!”

By TERRY SMALL
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

WHAT’S AFTER SPM
O you’ve got a degree and you’re looking for a job! The problem is, most of the jobs you see have that depressing line about needing job experience. But, how do you get job experience without getting a job first? With this seemingly hopeless dilemma, fresh graduates and even those who would like to make a drastic career switch may find it easier to just give up. Don’t panic, and don’t give up! There are many others in the same boat. Those with internships under their belts may use those as the job experience needed, if applicable. But if you didn’t have any internship opportunities, or the job position you’re eyeing is vastly different from any job you’ve ever done, here are some tips on getting that sweet job without prior work experience!

**TIP 1: HARVEST YOUR GOOD QUALITIES FROM YOUR SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY DAYS**

Transferable skills are your secret weapon! Did you lead a club in school? That is leadership. Were you in a sports team? Teamwork. If you’ve ever handled an event, that is event management. Are you starting to look through your resume with different eyes?

Everything that you’ve experienced creates an impact in your life. Your skills as a fresh graduate can include proof-reading, with knowledge; they also indicate that you are someone who is willing to learn and is committed to improving yourself. Of course, learning isn’t a substitute for actual hands-on experience, but it’s a good step forward!

**TIP 2: VOLUNTEER**

Organizations that need volunteers do not quibble over work experience and the like. While waiting for potential employers to respond to your application, it’s time to get busy! Volunteering offers you a great way to explore and develop skills, likes (and dislikes) that you may have never known you had. If you were planning to apply for a job that involves children, it could be a good idea to volunteer at an orphanage first. Not only will you gain valuable working experience in dealing with children, you also get a first-hand glimpse at how an organization is run, funds are managed, and definitely learn to multi-task.

For some ideas on where to volunteer next, check out Do Good. Volunteer at dogoodvolunteer.com!

**TIP 3: LEARN**

If you’re lacking in work experience, then knowledge is your friend. You don’t have to get a second degree, but certificates in skills, whether soft or technical, could go a long way towards impressing potential employers. Certifications go beyond equipping you with knowledge; they also indicate that you are someone who is willing to learn and is committed to improving yourself. Of course, learning isn’t a substitute for actual hands-on experience, but it’s a good step forward!

**TIP 4: WORK SAMPLES**

They say “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” If you have samples of your skills that could impress your potential employers, display them! Add samples of your designs to your application if you’re applying for a position as graphic designer, and samples of your writing if you would like to be a writer. Make a video of yourself giving a sales pitch if you would like a job in sales, and draft a marketing plan for a fictitious product if you would like to start your career in marketing.

Work samples give employers solid proof of your abilities and can help give you more consideration. Remember, applicants with job experience already have proof in terms of their achievements in their previous jobs, so you would need to have something extra to hold your own and not lose out.

**TIP 5: STAND OUT!**

This is no time to blend into the woodwork; this is the time to grab the spotlight and, most importantly, the job. If there are competitions, take part! Jazz up your resume with an awesome cover letter! If necessary, call the company about a week after you’ve submitted your resume, and enquire about your application’s status – this is also a good opportunity to have a quick chat with the person on the other line: if you can impress the person in five minutes, your chances of getting an interview could be that much higher.

**TIP 6: NETWORK**

Sometimes, it’s not just what you know, it’s who you know. Make the most of your circle of friends and acquaintances! If your mother has a friend who might need an extra employee, it won’t do you any harm to get more information about that job from the friend. Who knows, you could get that work experience that you need.

Informal enquires about available jobs may reap great opportunities as well! Asking friends of friends about their jobs, and about the jobs available in their workplace may give you a clearer picture of how a workplace is like and whether you are the right person for the job.

Going to career fairs also helps with the networking because you get to know the people who really matter in your job hunt: the HR team! Above all, be patient. Keep submitting those resumes and don’t give up! If there is one way to ensure a 100% failure rate, it is to not try at all.

Keep improving yourself, and striving to move onwards and upwards. Do research on the companies you’re applying for and tailor your resume and cover letter accordingly. You may not get the first job you applied for, but that happens to almost everyone, regardless of work experience. Hang in there, and while you’re waiting to be employed, work on your skills.

There is no such thing as being “pro” or being the best. Everybody could do with more knowledge, life experiences, and contacts. Make new friends and keep an eye out for prime job openings that you could submit your application to! You can do it!
DEAR CAREERNOMERS,

I have been at my current job for eight years now, as a sales analyst in retail. My job has been getting more and more mundane and routine. The eight years would have provided you with a very solid ground of the job and a good appreciation of numbers. There are a few routes which you can do immediately to elevate your role.

1. Embrace change and take advantage of the situation. Get to know your bosses and the new HR folks. You mentioned that your work is mundane and that you are bogged down with loads of paper work. Study the work-flow and suggest new processes so that everyone who is in the sales or business development team can support you and still allow you to extract real-time data to support the firm and the business. I can only assume that this data is used to help monitor achievement of targets, strength and weaknesses of the sales pipeline and also for redeveloement of strategies.

2. You highlighted that you like writing. Depending on your current capability, writing is used in many parts of an organisation. With the advent of digital marketing and social media, you can actually start by doing:
   - sign up for a social media programme and understand how writing is used in the new era
   - develop a new blog by yourself and write on topics that you are keen on. By starting a blog, you will compel your superiors to review into these topics a bit more and enforce the discipline of making your blog popular. I mentioned research and this is key to writing.

After completing the social media course and starting your own blog, you can then talk to your HR or Marketing head and enquire if they have an opening in your company for a role in PR, advertising, market research. Apply internally first. Some jobs are never advertised. Writing alone has limitations. Remember this is the digital age, so you need to package yourself and pitch your skills to include not just writing, but other skills too. An editor looking for a writer would look for someone who is creative and also responsible. If you are tight financially, there are many free online courses on social media.

3. For in-depth information on the job, try to understand the various routes which you can do immediately to elevate your role.

4. In the eight years, you would have worked for numerous bosses. Do you have any idea how to get along with them? How can they help you? Connect with them and see if they will give you a chance. You will be surprised how much networking and old bosses can help.

Lastly, you mentioned that financial stability is important for you. Changing jobs and changing employers is always risky. But you should start by converting yourself today. I would like to quote Ziglar: “where you want to be, the seed is already planted where you are standing.” Steve Jobs in his famous Stanford speech said: “sacred experiences will have bearing on your success and you just need to link up the lines. I hope you find what you want Stephanie. Good luck.”

NANCY S-Y SIM-LIM

DEAR CAREERNOMERS,

There is always uncertainty with any change of management, and this may require a period of adjustment from both the employee as well as the management. Have a meeting with your superior to convey your expectations for a more challenging task or role complimentary to your skills and capabilities.

Some people enjoy expanding their knowledge in these areas of expertise, while others seek to give breadth to their knowledge by exploring different fields of work. If there is any opportunity for you to apply for lateral movement across departments in your company, take it. It would be an opportunuity for you to experience new challenges and practical experiences.

You may also want to volunteer for special projects at your work place if there are any. Sign up for stretch assignments or special projects to accelerate learning and to minimise any skill or knowledge gaps.

You mentioned that you enjoy writing, you could pitch yourself out to your communications team to support them through your writing skills. You could write and contribute articles for your in-house newsletter; if there is none at the moment, consider starting one for your organisation. Opportunities might arise from such endeavours.

Any change can be frightening and painful. It would be difficult to walk away from a secure, stable job and pay. At the same time, as we spend a great amount of time at work, it is important that we do something meaningful and rewarding.

Regardless of your current status, time will come when you will project your contribution in the organisation. Is that what you want for your career? Does it allow you to do what you are really good at? Does it help you to grow professionally? In summary, the following may be used as a guide:

1. WHAT ARE YOUR REAL INTERESTS AND SKILLS?

Look back on your successes over the years; review your roles, projects and tasks to identify your skills and what you really like to do. Make a list of what your ideal job would include, for example:
   - less administrative work
   - more writing-based assignments and opportunities

2. ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR CURRENT JOB?

Be clear of why you want to leave your current job. You can do this by:
   - keeping a log of your current job and responsibilities
   - identifying which part of the job you like/dislike
   - asking if you are satisfied/dis-satisfied with the job/responsibility or your company or the people you work with?

3. ARE THERE ANY CAREER ALTERNATIVES?

Be honest with yourself and ask what you do and do not like about your current job. Ask yourself what would it take to make your working life more pleasant. Take time to explore all options and alternatives before you make any decisions. Think of the implications they may have on you and your family. Perhaps you may want to:
   - Discuss your ideas and plans with family, friends and your net-work of professional contacts
   - Read and evaluate your different areas of interest
   - Find a second opportunity

4. HOW DO YOU RE-LEARN AND DEVELOP NEW SKILLS?

Make a list of your experiences, skills, accomplishments and challenges. Do this:
   - Check out and learn new skills which could help you pursue your career in a new direction
   - Sign up for in-house programmes, if available
   - Find a second opportunuty or get involved in projects which could help you broaden your knowledge and skills

5. WHO CAN YOU SHADOW TO OBSERVE THE JOB FIRST-HAND?

Learn from the current player. Arrange to spend time shadowing people whose jobs interest you for insights into the job itself. Personally find this very inspiring and educational. Most importantly, be curious and enjoy every learning experience. Remember to also focus on family, friends and hobbies. Aristotle says, “Where the needs of the world and your talents cross, there lies your vocation”.

Good luck.

EMILY WONG