BOLDLY GO
WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE
LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM STAR TREK. PAGES 6–7

Gratitude for success
Knowing and acknowledging those that contribute to your success makes you a better leader, writes Roshan Thiran in Be A Leader, Pg 3

Gender discrimination in the workplace. Does it really exist? Pg 8

Executive presence can be cultivated by anyone. Find out how. Pg 11

Use social media to elevate your company to new heights. Pg 11
**LILY SAYS**

**WHAT MURAL OF THE STORY IS?**

ProPENSITY refers to our natural behaviours and tendencies. Someone with a propensity to criticize will always look at the glass half empty, another with a propensity to be generous, will find it natural to give to others.

My question today is about our propensity to learn. How naturally do we learn? Do we have a tendency to search for learning points? Do we search for lessons and insights in the situations we find ourselves in or in things that we observe?

I’ve been spending a lot of time with my young niece lately, as this period is one of the rare times that we are in the same country together. These three-year-olds, they love listening to stories. Their current favourite includes Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks and the Three Bears. Unsurprisingly, they constantly ask me to tell them stories. I try as best I can to recount these well-loved tales as faithfully as I can (though admittedly I struggled with the details of Jack and the Beanstalk last week).

Through this whole process, I noticed again how every childhood story is geared towards a thought for the child to take away. At the end of the story, we say “And so, the moral of the story is...” and proceed to explain the learning point.

Interestingly, we seem to do this easily when telling stories to children. We are able to extract the crucial life tip, whether it be not talking to strangers, or being respectful of property that doesn’t belong to you.

However, as working adults, how often do we say this to ourselves? After a difficult and stressful project at work, instead of just forcing ourselves to continue charging forward, do we have a propensity to identify the “moral of the story”? The moral could be needing to be more thorough in risk assessment, or being a better listener.

Stopping to consider the learning point is a simple thought. Yet we can often be too caught up with the next thing to do, that we fail to stop to reflect.

That’s in the work context. What about asking ourselves what the “moral of the story” is after reading a book or watching a movie? We may discover powerful life-impacting learning points where others only see entertainment value.

Take Captain Kirk of Star Trek for instance. His rebelliousness plays out in ways to help us see when going against the grain is a good thing, and when it is unproductive. Sometimes, breaking the rules is a fantastic thing to do. Other times, it can jeopardise the stability of an entire organisation. Great things can be learned by observing Kirk’s successes and failures.

It’s for this reason that we push our Movie Wisdom column once a month in our career pullout. Movies provide illustrations of dynamics that parallel our realities. Even better, they can demonstrate the interaction of these dynamics and the consequenc-es that can flow.

Our centrespread pages this week dive much deeper into the iconic sc-fi movies, Star Trek, listing five leadership lessons we can learn.

Whether you’re a fan of the movies (and series) or not, the beauty of films is that they are natural analogues, making learning points easier to capture and to retain.

I hope you get something valuable out of this week’s pages. Do continue to write to us at myStarjob@leaderonomics.com with your suggestions and feedback on our content.

If you have any films that you would like to see covered in our regular special film editions of the career guide, do write in and let us know.

I challenge you to use this well-used phrase on yourself all work this week. “The moral of this story is...”

Happy learning.

Until next Saturday,

LILY CHEAH
Editor, myStarjob.com

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**THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS?**

**THOUGHT OF THE WEEK**

**DISOBEDIENCE, in the eyes of any one who has read history, is man’s original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.” Well, Oscar Wilde was not the most conventional of characters, but he does make a valid point.

It is not easy, in an environment heavily regulated, for individuals to shine and come up with outstanding, original ideas. Under “autocratic” leadership, it is hard if not impossible for individuals to think outside the box and come up with new ways of solving problems.

We are in luck though, because more and more employers are now looking for individuals that are creative, and are willing to come up with new, innovative ways of tackling old problems.

A little bit of disobedience, when carefully orchestrated, can be successful and will be rewarded.

History has ample examples to prove that disobedience is what makes the humanity progress.

What if Galileo Galilei followed the scientific thinkers of his time and carried on believing in geocentrism rather than advocate heliocentrism? Or what if Archimedes followed what was known during his time and never bothered to question anything? Would we have the Archimedian screw, or the principle of buoyancy?

Or, if Leonardo Da Vinci was not fascinated with the flight of birds and did not initiate the study of its mechanics in search of a machine that would allow people to do the same, would we have aeroplanes and helicopters today?

It is unfortunate that rules are always there to control our actions, keeping us from doing things that may have a significant impact in our lives and the lives of others around us.

However, there is always a way to break the mould. By being methodical, putting thought and dedication into an idea, there is always a way to achieve something extraordinary.

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**BREAK THAT MOULD**

**THE CHAIN METHOD, TO BOOST PRODUCTIVITY.**

**BREAK** a project down into simple daily actions. For example, if you are planning an event, research may be a good first step.

For every day that you complete the listed action(s), mark an “X” on that day in the calendar. The trick? Don’t break the chain. Keep at your tasks daily and try to get the “chain” of activity continue for as long as possible.

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**CAREER TIPS**

**CAREER TIPS FROM STAR TREK**

**BOLDLY GO WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE**

The Enterprise crew had to leave earth to go out to explore different worlds. You can do that too, from your very own office. Just be bold enough to think out of the box. Venture into possibilities and ideas that are different from the ordinary.

**EMBRACE DIVERSITY**

Captain Kirk and his team consist of people of different races, species and origins, yet they are able to successfully work together. Our Malaysian workplaces are just as diverse.

Sometimes, there are colleagues that sometimes seem like they are from a different planet, aren’t they? Embrace the differences and appreciate the joys of working together. Diversity, when managed well, is a strength.

**TRUST YOUR COLLEAGUES**

Whenever the Enterprise was in trouble, Captain Kirk consulted and relied on his team to find a solution. Each of your team members can bring different information and ideas to the table, so work closely and trust them.

**TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS**

Captain Kirk exposes the Enterprise ship to a group from a primitive civilisation to save Spock’s life. When held accountable for his actions, he makes tons of excuses instead of accepting responsibility, which results in him being demoted from Captain of the Enterprise.

It is normal for us to make mistakes at work, but accepting responsibility earns us more respect.

**TAKE THE LEAD**

At the end of Star Trek Into Darkness, Kirk sees that someone needs to turn on the power manually and he takes charge and fixes it. At work, there will always be occasions where someone needs to take charge. Don’t be afraid to stand out and take the lead. It could also be a great learning opportunity.

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**SPECIALS**

**MYSTORY MATTERS**

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**PRoMENITY**

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**DIVERSITY**

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**LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES**

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**THE SCIENCE OF LEADERSHIP**

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**ADVANCEMENTS**

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**DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

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**THEORY**

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**ROBUST**

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**ABILITIES**

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**METRICS**

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**USER EXPERIENCE**

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**CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

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**IS THERE AN END TO THE MYSTERY?**

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**THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS?**

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**THOUGHT OF THE WEEK**

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WHOM PACKS YOUR PARACHUTE?

GRATITUDE KEY TO YOUR SUCCESS

BY ROSHAN THIRAN

recently read the ordeal of US Navy jet pilot Charles Plumb whose plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile on his 75th combat mission. He parachuted out but was captured and spent six years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the nightmare and now teaches leadership.

A few years later, when Plumb was at a restaurant, a man came up and said, “You’re Charles Plumb? You flew jetfighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!”

“You in the world did you know that?” questioned Plumb. “I packed your parachute,” the man replied.

Plumb was taken aback by this man. The man looked at him and said smilingly, “I guess it worked!” Plumb quickly responded, “I sure did. If your chute hadn’t worked, I wouldn’t be here today.”

Plumb couldn’t sleep that night as he thought about the man who possibly saved his life. He wondered if he had done anything to help others when they were in the army. He was a fighter pilot but that man was just an ordinary soldier who had not thought much of him back then.

Plumb thought of the many hours the pilot must have spent in the bowels of the ship, carefully entwining the shrouds and compacting the silks of each chute, holding in his hands the destiny of someone he didn’t know. Then he felt thankful he had someone in his team who packed his parachute so well that it worked.

This led me to ask myself, “Who’s packing my parachute?” Each day, there are numerous challenges in business and life and we need the help and support of many people to ensure that our ‘parachute’ works when a pivotal moment arrives. It may be ensuring our presentation looks professional or not displaying our faults is slide above; or, our proposals or our ideas are appreciated or a result.

Various companies and organisations have myriads of ways to show gratitude to the people that pack our parachutes and show how we appreciate their efforts. CEOs and leaders appreciate and celebrate their company’s employees who are the backbone of the business. It makes the employees feel supported and appreciated.

Sir Richard Branson loves people. He claims “the people factor is the basis of many entrepreneurial successes and, because many business leaders discount it, innumerable failures result.”

The entire business model of his Virgin Group is centred on people. Branson has built Virgin to become one of the biggest brands in the world simply by listening to and caring for people.

Early in life, he started his student magazine because he felt that the big newspapers didn’t care for young people and their music as they charged exorbitant prices. He did the opposite and showed he cared. Similarly, Virgin Atlantic was set up because he realised that people had bad service during flights and he sought to change that.

“Having a personality of caring about people is important. You can’t be a good leader unless you genuinely like people. That is how you bring out the best in them,” he claims.

In 2009, he always launched a secret campaign that harked into Virgin Atlantic’s computer system to steal their passengers.

BA’s so-called ‘Helpliners’ overstepped boundaries by using Virgin’s passengers that their flights were canceled and that they should re-book on BA.

This went on for months before Branson realised the route. He sued BA, which settled the case, awarding £500,000 to Branson and a £200,000 to Virgin, plus £3 in legal fees.

With that conclusion, Branson divided his “BA bonus” compensation among his employees as a “thank you” token for supporting Virgin. How many leaders today are like Branson sharing their “limelight” with the team?

Branson has developed a level of trust with his team by showing gratitude. He knows “who packs his parachute” and makes time to acknowledge and recognise his employees. By being a good listener, lavishing praise to “parachute packers” for a job well done constantly, and never openly criticizing people, you can also display gratitude, he shares.

Branson adds, “To be a good leader, you’ve got to concentrate on bringing out the best in your people. People are no different than flowers - they need to be cared for and watered all the time. If not, they will shrivel and die. This is true whether it’s a switchboard operator or the chairman.”

How would you rate yourself? Do you care about those who support you or do you only care about what they can deliver? Employees aren’t just resources working in the business; they are the business.

An effective business is not the product, service, supply chain or its magnificent business plan. It is the group of enthusiastic and passionate people called employees who carry out your well-developed business plan.

One of the most successful soccer coaches in the world, Jose Mourinho clearly believes that all jobs are important.

While coaching at Chelsea, he treated the cleaning lady with the same respect and gratitude as he did Didier Drogba, its star player. He believes if one person was ineffective in his/her role, the whole team suffers and he would ‘lose’. He thus ensures everyone on his team shows gratitude to all in the ‘family’, regardless of his rank or position.

As a leader, I am indebted and extremely grateful for those I have the honour to work with daily. But how do I show my gratitude? Simply say “Thank you”. Treat your people with respect and acknowledge their contributions.

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S you manoeuvre the corporate terrain, I am sure there are many instances when you have had your hot buttons pushed. Think of a time you felt unjustly criticised or dealt a harsh reprimand which did not commensurate with your mistake. What did you do and how did you react? Did you brush it off, walk away or fight back? What makes you react the way you do?

**FIGHT OR FLIGHT?**

Our emotional response to perceived attacks or threats boils down to our “cave- man” instincts which tell us to fly or fight — both of which do not serve us well in a complex modern urban jungle.

Uma, an experienced project manager, was summoned to the corner office of the finance head, Looi. She was nervously anticipating trouble for a substantial budget over-run. Five minutes into the discussion, Looi was obviously very upset and he started berating Uma.

“...I am very sorry my comment has upset you. I was upset and under a lot of pressure to deliver cost cutting measures. Whatever it is, your initial reaction is what is possible your ability to respond to an emotional situation in a constructive way. Whatever it is, your initial reaction is rarely your best. Do not make a bad situation worse even if your brain goes into overdrive and asks you to fight it. Often, this plays right into the offender’s hands. Your habitual fast thinking may perceive criticism as attacks or threats; hence warrant a rejoinder to put the offender in his or her place. I encourage you to use the tips in this article to stay calm and better equip yourself to deal with criticism better.”

**FINGER POINTING AT LARGE**

Wilson, marketing extraordinaire and his team, were taking stock of the quarter’s performance after launching their latest product which was to steal a march on their competitor. Alas, the quarter’s numbers were grim.

Barbos, his boss, was making an impromptu visit to KL. From the grapevine, Barbos was on the warpath. Wilson was not surprised when Barbos unleashed a torrent of emotionally charged comments about how bad the advertising was and how slow sales have been. “I deal with criticism better. Hence I have replaced it with Autocrats.”

“Barbos unleashed a torrent of emotionally charged comments about how bad the advertising was and how slow sales have been. “I deal with criticism better. Hence I have replaced it with Autocrats.”

**C.R.A.P.**

Corporate life has its fair share of emotional challenges, setbacks and adversity. To be successful, according to Richard St John, best-selling author of the book called It to Be Great there are eight traits which successful people have in common. One of the traits John said claim to is the ability to, well, persist! To do that, one must be adept at dealing with C.R.A.P., as follows:

- **C** = Criticism
- **R** = Rejection
- **A** = Autocrats*
- **P** = Pressure

*In Richard St John’s book, It stands for something which is not appropriate for newspaper readership, hence I have replaced it with Autocrats.

In this article, let’s talk about Criticism (at the top of the C.R.A.P. list), in the context of office interactions. I unearth some tips to help readers deal with criticism better.

**RELATIATE OR RESPOND?**

Being put in the hot seat and blamed for something not entirely his fault naturally made Wilson angry and intuitively, wanted to retaliate. Controlling our responses takes a real effort of will.

With this in mind, Wilson decided to ignore the attack and calm down. Instead of thinking about how unfair it all sounded or how severe the criticisms were, he started to consider the situation from Barbos’ point of view. With a calm head, he started to form a structured line of questioning to address the outbreak.

**HELP YOURSELF**

Looi: “Let’s be realistic Uma. She needs to get better at responding to Looi’s disparaging remarks. Her first step is to recognise that Looi’s behaviour is not within her power to change. She can, however, change how she views the situation.

Rather than belabouring the notion that managers, by virtue of their positions, should know how to speak to people in a respectful and engaging way, she suspends her high ideals and judgement.

**ANALYSE THE SITUATION CALMLY**

First she analyses the situation. What was Looi’s intention? Was Looi trying to help her or trying to belittle her? As she does not know, she is glad she didn’t say anything during the first meeting.

When we are “hijacked” by our emotional brain during times of intense pressure, our rational thought process and decision-making prowess are compromised.

**CLEAR THE AIR**

Secondly, Uma decides to clear the air with Looi. This takes courage and I assure you it is worth doing, especially when you know the criticisms is unjustified.

**STEPS**

- **STEPS**
  - Ignore the attacks.
  - Step thinking about or treat the criticism as a direct failure on your part.
  - Treat the criticism as a temporary setback.
  - Think rationally and ask questions.

**OUTCOME**

- **OUTCOME**
  - Calm down or stay calm.
  - Depression - it’s about the situation, not you.
  - Ability to see situation or light at the end of the tunnel.
  - Asking questions is a first step to finding solutions.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

Criticism and workplace inviclity are common like traffic jams in KL. It is something you can’t do much about. Similarly, it is also not within your control to change other people’s behaviour. But what is possible is your ability to respond to an emotional situation in a constructive way.

Whatever it is, your initial reaction is rarely your best. Do not make a bad situation worse even if your brain goes into overdrive and asks you to fight it. Often, this plays right into the offender’s hands. Your habitual fast thinking may perceive criticism as attacks or threats; hence warrant a rejoinder to put the offender in his or her place. I encourage you to use the tips in this article to stay calm and better equip yourself to deal with criticism.

Remember, you have a choice — either give in to your “cave-man” or respond in a constructive way where both parties win.

**By ANNA TAN**

mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

**mystarjob.com, saturday 17 August 2013**

**TOPIC:**

**FIGHT OR FLIGHT?**

**RESPONDING TO CRITICISM**

**STEPS**

- **STEPS**
  - Tell the person how you feel.
  - Ask if that was his or her intention.

**OUTCOME**

- **OUTCOME**
  - Suspended judgement and refrain from making personal assumptions or beliefs.
  - Alignment of approach.

**FINISHING TOUCH**

Lisa Tan is a bear counter who found her calling in HR. Her journey in corporate HR has led her to pen STRETCHED! Unleashing your Team’s Potential by Coaching the Rubber Band Way, a book which likens human potential to be as flexible and agile as the rubber band.
THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS
TURN OFF AUTO-PILOT FOR GREATER SUCCESS

By PREMA JAYABALAN and LILY CHEAH
prema.jayabalang@leaderonomics.com
lily.cheah@leaderonomics.com

You are never going to go far in the company if the only job you care about is your own. The practice of service requires that you look beyond just meeting your own KPIs and think from the bigger perspective of advancing the organisation’s reputation and interest. It is a paradox: the more you care about your own success, the less success will come your way. Instead of looking for single answers, “Be curious,” says Langer. “It’s a misconception that being mindful is tiring. It becomes more productive, healthier, and more creative if you live mindful. As a result of being more engaged, there will also be fewer accidents and fewer occurrences of burnout.”

Langer shares the outcome of a study she conducted in a nursing home. She divided residents into two groups. One group was left to their own devices, but the other group was actively engaged in decision-making, forcing them to think about different factors and take ownership of consequences.

“I know that it’s hard to accept, but all you need to do is notice new things. To notice new things, you have to be aware that you don’t know the things that you think you know,” says Langer. “As you notice, more neurons fire. It indirectly improves your health. It’s the essence of being alive.”

While vigilance is not the same as mindfulness, she argues. “Mindfulness is the very simple process of noticing new things, no matter how small or silly. It makes you sensitive to context and perspective,” she continues. “In this noticing, you become engaged in what you are doing. It becomes literally and figuratively enlivening.”

It’s a misconception that being mindful is tiring, explains Langer. “Thinking itself has gotten a bad name,” she offers. “What is tiring is when you begin worrying that you’re not thinking the right way.”

Studies show that you will live longer, become more productive, healthier, and more creative if you live mindfully. As a result of being more engaged, there will also be fewer accidents and fewer occurrences of burnout.

Langer specialises in the theory of mindfulness, having done in-depth studies on topics like the illusion of control, perceived control, successful aging and decision-making.

“We’re more mindless than we think,” says Langer. “A lot of the time, we’re not there.” The phenomenon of driving and arriving at a destination wondering how we got there is, in fact, a small indication of this.

Mindlessness isn’t, and can’t be, the same as a habit. “Mindlessness comes about by default, not by design. It’s when you assume you know, and believe there is no reason to pay attention,” she explains.

“But things are constantly changing, and they are different from different perspectives. As a result, we are frequently in error but rarely in doubt.”

The cure for mindlessness is mindfulness. It’s remarkably simple, Langer shares. Yet, many of us spend most of our lives “without being there.” She terms it being “trapped in an un-lived life.” We don’t stop to think about things we perceive as “norms.”

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Langer uses the example of someone mindlessly riding a horse. The rider is fixed on avoiding branches, but vigilance is not the same as mindfulness, she argues.

While vigilance is pure focus on one thing, mindfulness takes into account the whole scene. The rider who concentrates on the branches, omits to notice the big boulder that the horse eventually trips over.

Mindfulness naturally has its implications in organisations.

We do everything either mindlessly or mindfully. “Everything can be improved by doing it mindfully. In organisations, we have ways of doing things, but people never question why we are doing them this way. What you do may be based on decisions taken in an earlier time that may not be relevant any longer. If you are mindful, you’ll constantly keep updating. If not, you’ll just accept that that’s the way it should be done.”

“When you take ordinary people and give them these experiences of mindfulness, they are evaluated as being more charismatic, more genuine, more trustworthy. People notice when you’re mindful. When you’re there, you feel alive, and all the products you produce are just better,” she beams.

THE LEADERONOMICS SHOW
By JOSEPH TAN
myStarjob.com, Saturday 17 August 2013

WHEN I typed the word ‘leadership’ in Amazon.com, it gave me a listing of 70,594 possible book titles. Another word, “servanthood”, yielded only 267 titles.

There is something that sells when you are promised the potently valuable: rising up the ranks and attaining the success you desire.

WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP?

Author Jim Collins says, “the key to successful leadership is a matter of intense professional will and intense personal humanity.”

Many desire to enjoy the fruits of authentic Leadership?

Many desire to enjoy the fruits of authentic leadership. The practice of service can never be equated to equip leaders to achieve consistent results at work, at home and in life through the development of personal characteristics and discovery of unique strengths. If you are interested in attending one of his course, email people@leaderonomics.com
LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM STAR TREK

By IRBAH MAHAD
 mahad@leaderonomics.com

1 SURROUND YOURSELF WITH SMAR PEOPLE AND LISTEN TO WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY

In the beginning, Kirk is mostly a solo act, a rebel against the system. Spock, Scotty, Bones and the rest of the crew are his advisors. He makes the final decision, but they give him the advice he needs. It is worthwhile to note that Kirk had to seek their advice as they have a great deal of responsibility.

2 DO YOUR HOMEWORK

In the movie, the crew of USS Enterprise is usually guided by their advisors. From the Romulan to John Harrison/Khan, more often than not the crew has to rely on their expertise. It is important that we always consider our options before taking a leap into battle. Kirk and Spock normally would take some time to research their enemies before confronting them head-on. For one thing, the Enterprise is primarily a research vessel, not equipped for combat/missions. The crew is usually made up of scientific personnel. An expert opinion is just as valuable as one from front-line battle hardened personnel.

3 IMPOSE AND FOLLOW THROUGH

When Kirk takes command of Starship Enterprise and goes all the way to Romulan, upon his promotion to captainship, Kirk assumes command of Starship Enterprise and continues to report to Admiral Pike. In Star Trek III: The Search for Spock, Kirk carries the Prime Directive (forbids intervention in the affairs of other planets through the use of technology), so he is quick to point out that the Romulan is the problem, not the other way around. He is quick to take advantage of the situation.

4 HAVE A MENTOR AND BECOME ONE

Before he started with Starfleet, young Kirk was an engineer, and was known for his inquisitive nature (he is fully aware of his duty and simply being a curious and adventurous spirit). Kirk is an example of someone who is willing to take his mentor’s advice and become one. It is best to learn from those who have gone before you. It is highly important that you take advantage of the wisdom and guidance from your mentor to learn to succeed. Additionally, you cannot let your mentor be the only one who teaches you. You must develop your own ways to learn to succeed.

5 SOLICIT WHERE NO ONE HAS SPOKEN BEFORE

Star Trek is a series that is well-known for its unique combinations of characters and situations. What makes Star Trek so special is the attention to detail and the relationships between the characters. What makes Star Trek so great is the cast and the characters.

In the new movie, Star Trek Into Darkness, Kirk takes the Enterprise on an unexplored mission to destroy and bring back John Harrison after a crime he committed. The planet is out of bounds for the Federation as it is home to Harrison’s home planet. The mission must be undertaken to stop Harrison from carrying out his plans. Harrison takes with him a small landing party, encouters with Starfleet, and has to overcome his fear to bring him to justice.

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Kirk is inherently a serial rule breaker; Spock on the other hand is a rule follower. Both Kirk and Spock are more capable, he takes full responsibility for their actions. He may not lead every single mission, but he is an extremely valuable asset to his team. Kirk knows that he has to listen to what everyone has to say. Leaders should listen to their team before parting their money into investments (and it almost always makes positive returns).

6 EMPLOY A DIVERSE SET OF PEOPLE

It is also important to hire a diverse set of people. Leaders should hire knowledgeable people is critical, but also to have a diverse set of people. Leaders should hire a diverse set of people as they bring different perspectives and unique skills to the team.

Kirk is inherently a serial rule breaker; Spock on the other hand is a rule follower. Both Kirk and Spock are more capable, he takes full responsibility for their actions. He may not lead every single mission, but he is an extremely valuable asset to his team. Kirk knows that he has to listen to what everyone has to say. Leaders should listen to their team before parting their money into investments (and it almost always makes positive returns).

7 WHERE NO ONE HAS SPEAKEN BEFORE

In “The Cage”, the opening scene alone sets the stage for things to come. In “Space: The Final Frontier”, the story begins with Kirk and Spock running away from an attack that left them with only a few options. They are faced with a number of challenges, but they manage to overcome them with the help of their team.

Kirk and Spock normally would take some time to research their enemies before confronting them head-on. For one thing, the Enterprise is primarily a research vessel, not equipped for combat/missions. The crew is usually made up of scientific personnel. An expert opinion is just as valuable as one from front-line battle hardened personnel.

In order to play the role of a good leader, you must do your research to determine what the best advice is. You must have a mentor and become one. It is best to learn from those who have gone before you. It is highly important that you take advantage of the wisdom and guidance from your mentor to learn to succeed. Additionally, you cannot let your mentor be the only one who teaches you. You must develop your own ways to learn to succeed.

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Leaders should hire knowledgeable people is critical, but also to have a diverse set of people as they bring different perspectives and unique skills to the team.
THE dawn of the 21st century saw a new breed of stronger, smarter and inde- pendent women. Financial and emotional independ- ence have become a norm in the world today. While we haven’t yet had a female Prime Minister in Malaysia, the list of powerful women around the world includes Chancellor Angela Merkel in Europe, Oprah Winfrey in the media world, India’s Narendra Modi, and Sheryl Sandberg of Facebook and Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar. These women serve as pioneers in the key roles of politics and executive management. These are women who have fought through the bar- iers that their industries and situa- tions posed to them.

Women’s contribution to any economy is often rarely regarded as a driver of economic growth even though female employment has direct implications on household income and savings, providing a positive effect on education and health. This cycle subsequently leads to greater social cohesion, reduced inequality and fulfilment. Discrimination in the workplace is based on characteristics such as age, gender, race, marital status or ethnic background. In gender discrimina- tion, an employee earns more money compared with another of the oppo- site sex, despite possessing the same expertise. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the gender pay gap still exists, with women’s wages being on average 70% to 90% of men’s. The “glass ceiling” – invisible barri- ers that prevent women from clim- bin g the ranks of male-dominated management – still persists. Sexual harassment is still a major problem in workplaces with young, financially dependent, single or divorced women being the most vul- nerable. As for mothers, discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity is still common. Gender discrimination is a phenom- enon that still prevails in society today. Though education and opportunities have eradicated most of the discrep- ancy, a degree of bias in the working world still exists.

It is more pronounced in certain industries that are more male-domi- nated, such as politics, investment banking and especially in executive board rooms. The factors for the disparity between the genders include educa- tion, economic incentives, family plan- ning and opportunities. That said, today’s age of Internet and equal rights movements have been catalysts in bridging the gap. This limited access to education and training causes a discrepancy between male and female work participation. This goes on to stagnated career pro- gression in women. For every 100 boys who go to school in the Organisation for Economic Co- operation and Development (OECD) economies, 95 girls accompany them, compared with only 84 in low- income countries – the ratio being par- ticularly low in India and Sub-Saharan Africa.

This discrepancy is similar for terti- ary education in these developing countries, whereas in the mature economies, women outnumber men by 15% at universities. Women also experience pay dif- ferentials and missed opportunities for promotion due to the fear of them prioritising family over their careers. Based on data from 27 UK finan- cial services companies in the FTSE 100 and FTSE 350 (that responded to Cranfield University’s annual Female FTSE Board Report survey in 2012), more than half of their employees at a junior level are women, but this dwind- les to 28% at a senior management level and to 13.5% at board level, indi- cating that the average female head- count for these companies (47%) is skewed heavily by younger employees. However, the Internet has been an enabler and should create more opportunities for women going for- ward.

This is true for female employees in industries where the amount of travel or the number of hours that must be spent at work has decreased thanks to the flexibility that the Internet provides. For women as consumers, online retail has brought more choices and, more importantly, greater conven- ience, something that works to its flexible, time and location-indifferent nature.

Workplaces that look out for their female employees are gaining recognition as a diverse environment with a bigger pool of talent. The key question for our society today is – what can we do? We recogni se that part of the problem is that there aren’t enough women in the higher ranks of organi- sations for female interests to be looked out for.

As women progress in the pro- fessional careers, mentorship and increased awareness will be fostered. Companies and policy makers should enact legal protection against discrimination, arrange for training programmes to build up the skill levels of female workers and encourage flex- ibility in the work environment. Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg’s best-selling book, Lean In, has helped spark many discus- sions about career ambition, parent- ing and the state of women in the workplace. These conversations are surprisingly difficult to have in one of the places where they matter most. In the office, between bosses and staff.

Many managers, especially men, shy away from such discussions due to fear of saying something inaprop- riate, or worse, illegal. Sandberg advises managers, both men and women, to have an open door policy, to invite workers to talk about any concerns on how child-read- ing or pregnancy may affect their career paths. Workplace laws are often a murky area, but one thing is clear: employers should not discriminate against staff based on gender or whether they are pregnant or planning to have children.

That means managers should not make job decisions or deny staff covered assignments based on those factors.

In conclusion, a more diverse workforce will reduce inherent bias, provide employers with access to a broader talent base and a bigger pool of ideas. For businesses that are increas- ingly competing and acquiring globally, being more inclusive and employing women helps build relationships and integration.

Although the role of women in Asia-Pacific economies is growing, most of them have had to over- come significant barriers to get where they are today. In the years to come, the need for inclusion of both sexes will be more important than ever.

Christine Yoong is an investment banker at Goldman Sachs. Born and raised in Malaysia, she con- tinued her studies in London and is now based in Los Angeles. She is the founder of Inspire Yourself (www.inspireyourself.com), a non-profit organisation aimed at empowering Malaysian youths.
ENSURING PUBLIC HEALTH SAFETY

By PREMA JAYABALAN
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From a young age, Norhasniza Mohamad had always known that she wanted to do a law enforcement job. Born and bred in the historic state of Malacca, Norhasniza—the youngest of three siblings—obtained her bachelor of pharmacy from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in 2005. A few years later, she decided to further her studies. This time, she decided to do something entirely different. Her interest led her to complete a master’s degree in enforcement law from Universiti Teknologi Mara in 2012. She is now a law enforcement officer with the Malacca state health department.

DUTIES OF AN OFFICER

As a law enforcement officer, Norhasniza’s job requires multitasking. It seemed daunting at first, but seven years later, it is something which she has now mastered. The main part of her job consists of carrying out inspections at licensed premises such as pharmacies, pharmaceutical factories and also any factory licensed by the Healty Ministry that deals with poisons.

“I also inspect registered premises such as private clinics and hospitals. Besides that, my surveillance also extends to unlicensed premises such as grocery stores, supermarkets, spas, gyms and medicine shops. The main objective is to ensure that premises that deal with drugs and medicines abide by the law enforced by the ministry.”

In addition to these, Norhasniza can be called to conduct sudden raids at any time of the day. Sometimes, this includes days when she is off duty. Usually, after a raid is conducted, an investigation follows.

“As head of the investigation and prosecution unit, I am responsible for checking the investigation papers before they are passed to the deputy public prosecutor to be registered in court. The main concerns are whether there is enough evidence to convict the perpetrator, whether the charge is correct and the investigation papers are in order.”

Norhasniza is also head of internal audit for MS ISO 9001:2008 for the Department of Health, Malacca. Her responsibility is to ensure that the internal audit is carried out twice a year and the standard operating procedures are adhered to by all the employees.

A TYPICAL WORK DAY

It is difficult to say that a law enforcement officer has a routine because the scenario depends on whether sudden situations arise. However, on a typical day that has no sudden situations, as a law enforcement officer has a routine because the scenario depends on whether sudden situations arise. Moreover, on a typical day that has no sudden situations, Norhasniza begins work at 8.30am. She checks her planner on her tasks for the day. She then goes through her emails and responses to them, focusing on the ones that need immediate action. Meetings and discussions with superiors and colleagues are usually scheduled in the morning. If there are meetings that require her attendance, that would take up most of her morning.

“After that, I am busy with inspections. Audits and inspections involving pharmaceutical factories, pharmacies and clinics are scheduled on a monthly basis. These inspections and audits can sometimes take a long time to complete, especially when discrepancies are found. ‘Reports need to be written for all inspections and audits. If a raid is carried out, then an investigation file is prepared. This file will then be handed over to an investigation officer who will do the necessary to complete the investigation.’

“If the investigation leads to a court case, then more time will be required as the trial for the case will take at least two days. Most days, after all these, Norhasniza’s time will be taken up by conducting exhibitions and giving talks to the public about the quality of medicines and how to recognise the registered products and those that are sold illegally. Amidst all of these, she will also be closely monitoring advertisements that deal with medicines and licensed drugs. ‘I receive complaints from the public on certain products from time to time. In order to verify these complaints, I need to purchase these products for analysis in our forensic laboratory. Sex stimulants and slimming products are the most popular items on the complaint list.’

Applicants applying for licences to sell medicines tend to drop by the office occasionally for updates on their application. They need to know when their premises will be inspected, prior to getting an approval. Applicants usually comprise community pharmacies, factories and wholesalers. Norhasniza’s day usually ends late in the evening. If an emergency arises, she has to settle that before heading home.

MANAGING OBSTACLES

Every job has its own challenges and this one is no exception. According to Norhasniza, like all other public departments, her department also faces a shortage of manpower and resources. There are still a lot of unregistered products being sold everywhere. As long as there is demand for them, they will continue to be available. Thus frequent checks are necessary. Another challenge she faces is the struggle to change the consumer mindset. Educating the public is an important step towards eradicating unregistered products from the market. Norhasniza believes this can be done only through raising awareness—hence the need to hold talks and exhibitions.

Managing obstacles

“The most challenging part for me is facing perpetrators during raids and prosecutions. You never know how they will react. One incident I will never forget is when we raided a house in a kampung; the father of the perpetrator became very angry and took out a panjang. Thankfully his wife calmed him down,” reminisces Norhasniza.

The dedicated officer is optimistic that her department can achieve greater heights as they all work hard as a team. Being able to contribute to the department and watch it progress and keep moving forward gives her much satisfaction and motivation. Norhasniza believes good leadership, willingness to be bold and accepting responsibilities will drive her department forward.

AN IMPASSIONED VOCATION

“I have learned that one has to be sensitive towards the needs of the public. Enforcement work is not a ‘likeable’ job because it involves confiscating products from traders and business owners and ultimately prosecuting them in court. Losses to them can sometimes be quite substantial. Thus, enforcement officers need to be professional and at the same time respect others. Upholding integrity is absolutely necessary as it is expected by the public.”

Norhasniza feels that an enforcement officer has to be assertive and effective. She emphasises that officers should never abuse the power bestowed on them and should make the right decisions at all times. “Though my job tends to get hectic at times, I am very contented with it as it gives me the satisfaction of knowing that what I am doing will help save lives and the public is assured that someone is looking out for them.”
Coaching Demystified

By Michael Heah
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

Coaching is still in a “confused” state as to its actual identity. I have been in many situations where I have had to come to its defense to prevent it from losing its integrity as a replacement name for training, mentoring, consulting and counselling.

“It is the same thing, only with a different name,” is a common remark I receive. After so many experiences with this, I found that the most common thread that runs through the minds of these ‘misguided’ perceptions is that coaching is nothing more than a common activity of teaching and advising people on how they can improve their competencies by doing a task in a predetermined manner.

But is this what coaching really is? Far from it! Coaching is packed with many more ‘ingredients’ than what many experience.

Defining Coaching

The clearest meaning of coaching is a “deep learning partnership that empowers a person to gain courage, competencies and commitment to achieve their full potential.”

Going by this, it means that the coach is the “deep learning (and not any ordinary) partner” who has the ability to deepen partnerships with people.

Coaches have the capability to enter into the closest of these ‘misguided’ perceptions is that coaching is nothing more than a common activity of teaching and advising people on how they can improve their competencies by doing a task in a predetermined manner.

The important of knowing and understanding emotions, feelings and inner motivations of people cannot be underestimated because they are the true generators of action in people. For instance, it is not being unable to wake up early that causes a person to be late, but his/her dislike for the work itself or the lack of congruency in the working environment.

So if a manager only advises this employee on time management or dishes out a punishment for coming to work late, the same problem will recur as long as the deeper-seeded issues are not addressed.

Furthermore, trust and intimacy can only be built through these deep conversations. So when managers are only concerned about getting work done, this will not help to improve their relationships with their team members.

The Effective Coach

This finally brings us to the coach himself who is at the epicentre of a coaching relationship. Let’s get it straight. The coach is not just an “ordinary” person with seniority and years of experience.

A coach must be passionate about helping people excel in their lives. Only then can coaches lead people to a state of self-awareness in order to make sense of what is not said as well as what is said to make full and accurate sense of their meaning.

Powerful listening helps the coach to become a powerful facilitator as well. He/she is armed with the right questions to help people search in places of their minds that they did not know existed.

Using his/her questions as the ‘searchlight’ helps the person gain insights and self-awareness to find resources, options and opportunities to move forward in a faster and better way to his/her goal in the most fulfilling manner.

It is hoped that by demystifying coaching, the coach, leaders and managers will look at gaps in their coaching skills to be filled so that they can fortify their ability to lead and inspire people to greatness.

Dr Michael Heah is the CEO of Corporate Coach Academy and is a professional certified coach who trains and certifies leaders of all backgrounds to become true blue coaches.

BY NALLENA DEVENDRAN
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After years of grind in the university for a diploma or degree, fresh graduates are ecstatic to embark on their career journey and express their capabilities in the working world.

Being new and inexperienced can be a rather tough challenge for “freshies” to prove their skills at work. The various hurdles that they encounter during this period may cause great frustration.

Nevertheless, to support the new in the idea that “nothing is impossible,” here are five essential work ethics that can make you stand out as a newbie while increasing your success rate at work:

1. **Be Organised**

   The first step to being a successful employee is to be organised. Make sure all work documents are neatly and accurately arranged in folders; that includes your electronic documentation as well. Store all important emails in folders that are easily accessible when requested for.

   Having a clean and clutter-free work station also keeps your mind clear. A clutter-free workstation ensures you have easy access to everything and this will make you an efficient and productive employee.

   Besides that, you may also be setting a good example for your colleagues by spreading good habits; a crucial ability to help you go further in any of your future career ventures.

2. **Take on Assignments**

   Stand up and raise your hand! Volunteering for projects and assignments at work is a key step to prove that you are a proactive person and willing to take up challenges.

   However, do make sure that you will be able to carry out the task successfully and that it is not something above your league!

   Once you have agreed to do an assignment, make sure you see it through and don’t back off midway.

3. **Manage Your Time Wisely**

   Time management is significant in every aspect of life. You should be able to identify which tasks are most important and address them with the appropriate sense of urgency.

   Have a checklist with you so you do not leave any task incomplete. Saying “I forget” is very unprofessional and shows lack of discipline. Forgetting to complete tasks may also label you as lazy and inefficient, which is a bane in your career growth.

4. **Be Courteous**

   Being courteous may seem paltry, but actually plays a major role in determining your career. As a newbie, always remember your manners.

   Greeting your colleagues, regardless of their position, can help you sustain yourself in the organisation. Everyone would like to work with someone nice and friendly, and if you are that someone, you would see yourself given more responsibilities.

   When you are nice, people tend to go out of their way to help you and this is imperative when you are new in an organisation, trying to gain knowledge, skills and experience.

   So remember your Ps and Qs, do not forget to smile, and always greet your peers!

5. **Be Positive**

   When you are new to the working world it is normal to feel down and de-motivated. You tend to make small scapes here and there which might hurt your pride more than once throughout the day, but this should not discourage you.

   Remember your mistakes, learn from them and don’t repeat them. To do this, a positive attitude is important. Mistakes are bound to happen, but always be optimistic and get back on track.

   A positive mindset also makes you more productive and leads you to making wiser decisions. Positivity is most crucial when there is a problem at work.

   Nobody wants an employee that laments over a situation. They would prefer one who finds a solution. If a problem arises, be optimistic, find a solution and do not let apprehension conquer you.

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**Coaching for ‘Freshies’ to Boost their Careers**

**Starting Young**

5

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Develop Your Executive Presence

Byeva CHRISTODOULOU
eva christodoulou leadon economics

WHAT makes people’s heads turn when they see certain individuals? Why do certain people tend to attract the attention of their colleagues, superiors and employees despite their position, while others seem to be invisible despite having some brilliant ideas?

It all boils down to how we carry ourselves, behave, and mould people’s perception of us. It comes down to our ‘executive presence’. 

Executive presence is our image and personal brand. It is through this image or brand that people form opinions of us. They judge our professionalism, seriousness, character, strengths and everything else that may sway them towards giving us more attention.

‘Executive’ is a term often used without a clear understanding of what it means. In Malaysia, for example, an ‘executive’ position usually refers to one at the beginning stages of the career ladder. However, executive presence, according to coach, speaker and writer of the book The Next Level, Scott Eblin, may be defined as ‘your ability to get results, especially when the expectations are high’.

In an increasingly demanding work environment, you need to have the ability to carry yourself in a way that others would want to listen to you, have you lead their teams and organisation, and would trust that you can make an impact on clients, collaborators and competitors alike.

Suzanne Bates, executive coach and CEO of Bates Communications, argues that there are seven elements to executive presence. Let’s have a look at each of them individually, and by the end of this article, you can perhaps evaluate yourself and see how you can improve your executive presence.

SUBSTANCE

Even though this is the most obvious attribute of a strong leader and a successful professional, it is often not mastered. Substance means having the expertise and knowledge to carry out a specific role and, ideally, go beyond that. It entails being able to communicate this knowledge to your team in a manner that they can easily understand and that is professional, well-documented, and convincing.

PERSONAL STYLE

Personal style is crucial in improving your executive presence. Image does matter, and it is important to dress for the role we hope to one day hold. Dressing in professional attire that exudes power, after all, gives us the push we need to also act as more powerful.

PHYSICAL PRESENCE

The way you come across to others influences your executive presence immediately. This includes the way you greet people, shake hands, use eye contact, smile, and the way you deliver your message (enthusiasm and energy being of course preferred to a lifeless narration), to the way you sit, eat, and move, you make impressions on the minds of those around you who then classify you as someone that is sophisticated, composed, energetic, enthusiastic, full of ideas and charm, as opposed to someone who is shabby, boring, pessimistic, and difficult to deal with.

VOCAL SKILL

Your voice has much to say about what kind of person you are. Clarity and tones are very important, as well as the ability to convey and control emotions when necessary through the voice. After all, having a confident and engaging language and tone of voice may send out mixed signals.

MANNER/Etiquette

Manners and etiquette at work are not much different than in our everyday lives. Like for any form of interaction between well-behaved humans, make sure that you treat everyone, no matter what level they are at, as equals.

The help and opinions of everyone around you, be grateful for help that is offered to you, and make sure you do as much as you can to help those around you as well. In simple words, be a nice person.

RECEPTIVITY/LISTENING

The importance of listening to those around you, no matter what their rank or status, cannot be overstated. Listening means really taking in and processing what your colleagues are telling you, discussing with them and understanding their viewpoint irrespective of whether you agree with them or not.

WORKSPACE

A person’s desk can say a lot about the kind of person he/she is. It is tidy and well-organised and clutter-free desk indicates someone composed, calm, organised and grounded. The opposite would indicate a person who is constantly in a state of chaos and disorder – not a great image to portray to your colleagues and bosses.

GET STARTED

How do you improve yourself now that you have read this? Maybe some time to think through the different areas discussed here. Which of these are you actually doing, to some extent, and which are you not?

Speak to trusted friends and colleagues, someone who would be honest with you, and listen to how they perceive of you. And one at a time, work towards cultivating your executive presence. Before you know it, people will start to notice the difference you’re making, you’ll be turning their heads and listen to you more.

Top 10 Ways to Maximise Social Media Impact for your Business

1. RAISE AWARENESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

According to the Harvard Business Review, the most effective users of social media have top level management who prioritise social media in branding and marketing efforts. These result in allocated budgets and people, capitalising on the potential of these media streams. It’s important to get key people on board the social media train so that it does not seem like a superfluous activity.

2. EDUCATE, ORGANISE AND TRAIN

Once social media is recognised as a priority, execution is crucial in determining its success. Those who have been assigned to tend to these public profiles are equipped with the necessary communications and public relations skills.

3. IDENTIFY WHICH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM SUITS YOUR NEEDS

Different social media platforms would have different purposes and functions and not all of them would suit your organisation’s needs or image. For example, Instagram focuses on mostly visual or pictorial feeds.

4. GET YOUR AUDIENCE TO PARTICIPATE, GET INVOLVED

Don’t just post notices or updates, but conduct activities to get your target audience involved in your social media platform. Ask questions, conduct general surveys, host competitions and other interactive tools to engage the crowd. That way, the public will feel more connected to the business, leading to better public relations for your company.

5. REPOND PROMPTLY!

Do ensure that if you open a forum for questions, there is a skilled person who will be able to answer enquiries. In an age where everything is instantaneous, customers expect a certain amount of promptness in replies. Anything more than a day or two would be considered unprofessional.

6. DEAL WITH NEGATIVE COMMENTS PROPERLY

Social media is an interactive tool and (potential) customers may post enquiries or complaints on your products so do ensure that you respond in time to avoid angering them. This also means that there are bound to be negative customers who will criticise your business or your products publicly. Learn to handle these people tactfully to avoid looking unprofessional in an arena where everyone is watching.

7. TRACK AND QUANTIFY WHICH ONLINE ACTIVITY LEADS TO ROI

It’s difficult to explain to other people the potential of social media if there’s no evidence to back that claim up. Relate your social investments to bottom-line objectives such as the return on investment or ROI, increase in sales corresponding to social media blasts and other more tangible methods of measurement. Capitalise on what works for your business and eliminate redundant profiles.

8. DON’T UNDERSTATE THE POWER OF GOOD GRAMMAR

There is a reason why grammar ‘Nazis’ exist in the cyber world, so do ensure that your posts and tweets are screened to avoid grammatical or lexical errors. Well-articulated posts would also help the public to distinguish your social media account from any other potential imposters.

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11. COMMUNICATE IN A MANNER THAT THEY CAN EASILY UNDERSTAND

When you communicate this knowledge to your team, do it in a manner that they can easily understand and that is professional, well-documented, and convincing.

12. UNDERTAKE THE POWER OF GOOD GRAMMAR

There is a reason why grammar ‘Nazis’ exist in the cyber world, so do ensure that your posts and tweets are screened to avoid grammatical or lexical errors. Well-articulated posts would also help the public to distinguish your social media account from any other potential imposters.
DEAR CAREEROMERS,

My husband is a diploma holder in graphic design. He started in graphic design 20 years ago, and has experience in web design programming. He can design solutions based on web applications and has acquired project management skills.

He has exposure in the IT, mobile and oil and gas industry. Although some of his bosses were willing to overlook the fact that he did not have any degree in terms of compensation, he was discriminated against, as his juniors received a higher salary. He has been trying to find a job, but it seems that two factors are against him; the lack of a degree, and age.

One of the companies he applied to – a large oil and gas corporation – responded by saying that he did not have a degree and hence his application would not be considered.

I admit that I was fibbogasted, and when I read that employers are complaining about today’s graduates, I wonder why they do not give diploma holders or people with relevant work experience a chance.

I attended the flexfair recently, and asked some of the corporate figures if a degree was a key requirement. Most of them, who claimed that they would be equal opportunity employers, gave the standard response that their recommendations would be considered on the basis of skillsets and experiences.

My question here is, what are the steps or initiatives being taken by the private and public sector to employ diploma or non-diploma holders who have the required experience? And how can people, who are nearing middle age, be integrated into the workforce effectively?

Thank you.

RACHEL

DEAR RACHEL,

Thank you for your question and also thank you for attending TalentCorp’s flexfair, which we held on July 8 in conjunction with the launch of www.flexworklive.my, a portal working in partnership with leading employers to share best practices and enable Malaysian employees achieve work-life integration.

I am surprised that your husband faces difficulties because he does not have a degree. In my experience, the significance of paper qualifications diminishes with the number of years of work experience.

For experienced hires, paper qualifications matter less. Especially in areas of design and web design, it is really one’s portfolio and past projects that secure the job. There are CEOs in Malaysia, for example, in the creative fields and also ICT, who do not have degrees.

Perhaps one challenge in applying to large organisations is that the human resources departments that filter CVs may not be familiar with the domain experience that your husband has. Especially with the number of years of work experience that he has, one should speak directly to the hiring manager and eliminate the resumes.

After 20 years in the industry, your husband should leverage on past organisations and colleagues to help identify possible opportunities and recommend as well as help link directly to those hiring in areas relevant to his field of expertise.

I am confident that you are jobs out there, which are relevant and open to your husband’s extensive experience.

Therefore believe that the issue is not so much the lack of degree. It may be a combination of age and also, not being in a currently job. Malaysians tend to secure their next job whilst still in employment. In fact, the longer you are not in employment, the more difficult it is to secure employment. There are organisations that view the period of not being in a job as an indicator of employability. TalentCorp is looking into this area, particularly in assisting women on a career break to return to work.

We are working with leading organisations to develop “return” programmes that look to re-skill women on a career break and/or provide “handholding” to ease them back to work. It is a challenging area as despite the talent shortage faced by many employers, many are averse to recruiting those that have been on a career break.

This is partly a mindset issue, which TalentCorp hopes to address through a combination of advocacy, awareness and implementation of successful pilot programmes.

Our work in relation to www.flexworklive.my is particularly relevant, as other countries, especially developed countries, have found that flexible work arrangements help facilitate integration and retention of talent, whether women who seek to balance work life commitments, or older individuals with lots of work experience.

Best practice talent policies and human capital management practices used by those that have acquired over time, it would be best if he could focus on how his acquired skills, industry exposure and experience would place him as the best fit for a job.

On this note, perhaps your husband could review his resume. Focus on showcasing his past industry exposure, assignments, achievements and skill-sets he has accumulated throughout his career in his chosen field. I notice that your husband’s specialisation is in design solutions, a field that generally demands a practitioner to continuously keep abreast with the latest technological trends and advances. It would be helpful if your husband could highlight the following in his resume:

- State the total years of experience and the type of experience in the different industries.
- List any professional certifications undertaken to up-skill himself.
- Highlight achievements, such as:
  - a. Past projects which were successfully implemented.
  - b. Examples of IT solutions he has helped develop and implemented.

Also next week

Dazzle your interviewer by asking the right questions at the end of your job interview.