ARE YOU NURTURING YOUR FUTURE?

CULTIVATE A CULTURE OF TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR ORGANISATION. PAGES 6-7

Execution critical to success
Great leaders ensure that they execute well and walk the talk. → Pg 3

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POSITIVE WORDS
Unleash the power of words in your workplace and reap the benefits

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HEALTH IS WEALTH
Read some simple pointers on how to stay healthy in the workplace

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KNOW WHAT TO ASK
Ask the right questions in your job interview to leave a great impression

Unleash the power of words in your workplace and reap the benefits

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Ask the right questions in your job interview to leave a great impression
The thought that most often occurs to me is how each driver stuck together in traffic, they may be united in this current location, but invariably have different end goals and motivations? How do you even begin planning a talent management structure that works? As our centrespread article by Elisa Dass explains, it starts with reflection and observation. By understanding employees better (on top of having a clear view of the company’s goals), organisations will be able to make better talent management decisions. In the article, Elisa also provides a handy checklist of issues to consider when embarking on the journey of developing people.

Consulting Corner this week talks about the profound power of words (even over inanimate objects). Joseph Tan on page 10 dishes out interview advice, specifically on what questions to ask and what not to ask during an interview. For students, our intern and scholar LiLy says, it starts with reflection and observation. By understanding employees better (on top of having a clear view of the company’s goals), organisations will be able to make better talent management decisions. In the article, Elisa also provides a handy checklist of issues to consider when embarking on the journey of developing people.

This high-potential three most effective programmes to recruit, train and develop the best employees to excel in multiple platforms and divisions. The three most effective activities to manage talent are coaching, in-house development programmes, and high-potential development schemes. Talent development is commonly reserved for the top management. However, organisations are beginning to realise the importance of career development for the employees and similar programmes are being implemented for various ranks in the organisation.

The best organisations don’t just recruit talent for talent’s sake. They clearly define what they expect of their employees and recruit and train their people accordingly. Having a clearer purpose and goals helps to guide talent management decisions.

Matching the right job with the right person is a win-win scenario. It gives the organisation the best results and provides the individual with personal satisfaction.

Identify the individuals to train and develop. Don’t stick to one particular type of character either. Embrace the power of diversity to make sure the team is well-rounded and versatile.

The company, but it can also give management its biggest headache. How does the leadership of a company steer this group of unique individuals forward in accordance with the vision of the company? How can it develop them to possess the requisite skills and attributes, bearing in mind that just like the drivers stuck together in traffic, they may be united in this current location, but invariably have different end goals and motivations? How important is career development for the employees and similar programmes? Are they merely a way to keep the team satisfied or do they have a larger purpose?

The journey of developing people. Talent development is part of human resource development which entails the process of changing an organisation, its employees, stakeholders, and groups of people within it, using planned and unplanned learning, in order to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage for the organisation.

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It’s not just about building productive employees. It’s also about grooming the next generation of successful leaders who will inherit the organisation. Leadership development inculturates a sense of purpose and ownership in employees, which will help ensure that the company stands the test of time.
EXECUTIVE CRITICAL TO STRATEGY
The number one enemy of any strategy is poor execution. Dell’s business model and strategy is in public property, yet few have been able to replicate it. The reason, according to Michael Dell, founder of Dell, that his “direct business model” continues to work, is because “We execute it. It’s all about execution.”

Southwest Airlines has been profitable every year for over 30 years. Its strategy is known; yet, no one could have predicted it. It started with the idea of a low-cost airline that could fly anywhere in the country, and it did. The airline is now one of the most successful companies in the world.

Execution determines how the rest of the day plays out.

Win the early morning battle daily. Resist the temptation to check emails or waste time on meaningless work. A quick win in the morning sets the right tone for determining how the rest of the day plays out.

Make a list of the tasks you need to accomplish. Assign realistic priorities to each task (e.g., today, tomorrow, next week). Work on your MTS (Most Important Tasks) first.

Work on small portions of each task daily. Don’t wait till it’s near the due date to complete a task. When you hit a wall, stop working on the task and work on another task. Don’t watch TV or go on Facebook. Keep working on another task instead.

Eat the cockroach. Do your most unpleasant task first. If the first thing you do in the morning is “eat a cockroach,” the day can only get better from there on.

Work in intervals and be sure to take a break. Reward yourself with a chocolate (or a healthier snack) and then return to finish another portion of work. Make sure you decide upfront on your intervals and timing for the break and stick with it.

Reflect. During your break, reassess where you are and see if there is a new perspective you can bring to the work.

Always keep track of your progress. Cross off the list as the tasks are completed. It will give you a sense of achievement and motivate you to complete all other tasks.

Be clear about your end goal. Reassess your execution list daily. Revise and reprioritize as needed. The clearer the end goal is, the easier it is to get moving. Always ask yourself “What needs to be done next to move this project forward?”

Leverage on technology to complete tasks quickly, efficiently or accurately. There is always a shorter and better way to get things done. Look for the fastest option which will give you the best results.

Be passionate about your work. Passion brings energy. If you don’t actually care about what you’re doing, it’s very likely you will not do it.

Roshan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about transforming the nation through leadership development. He believes that everyone needs to learn to execute better and has devised programmes to ensure this is a skill that is mastered by all. For more information on Leaderonomics programmes, email people@leaderonomics.com
LIFE AT WORK AWARD
BEST PRACTICES IN PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE TOP 3
WOMEN-FRIENDLY EMPLOYERS
MEMBER that childhood ditty, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me”? Well, it turns out our younger selves were gravely mistaken! The older wiser you must realise by now that while physical wounds are painful, they heal and fade — both from the body and mind. But the damage done by words cut so much deeper, and sometimes never go away.

Words are incredibly powerful. They have the power to build up or tear down, heal or destroy. Words affect our lives in such a deep, powerful and pervasive manner. A positive, cheery encouragement can keep people going through a bad day while a negative exchange can weigh down even the best of us.

Consider the 17-minute speech by Martin Luther King Jr, delivered on Aug 28, 1963, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The speech titled “I Have a Dream” was a defining moment for the American civil rights movement that sought to bring an end to racism. Over 200,000 civil rights supporters listened to the words that alluded to a new dawn in America, where all its citizens would be free and equal. The speech led the then US President John F Kennedy to push through the civil rights bill that promised equality to all. Even today, it continues to inspire people all over the world. Even science concurs the power of words. In his research, Dr Masaru Emoto took samples of water droplets and exposed them to various words, music and environments, before freezing them for three hours. The Japanese scientist then examined the water crystal formations beneath a dark field. But if you said “I love you” and “thank you”, formed beautiful, perfectly aligned hexagonal crystals.

Conversely, samples that were treated with negative words, such as “I hate you” and “fool” displayed disarrayed, fragment-making molecular structures instead of crystals. Similar results were found even when the words were merely written on labels and stuck to containers of water. Can you imagine if inanimate water droplets can have such a strong and varied response to words, what about humans? But it isn’t just choice of words that matter; it is also the manner in which we say those words.

Research reveals that body language and the tone used while speaking constituted 55% and 38% respectively, of the overall message impact. The words used supplied the remaining 7%. A classic example is a sarcastic-laced “Why are you so smart?” A positive, encouraging set of words thoroughly corrupted by bad intentions, hurtful tone and likely, hostile body language.

Of course, we don’t need to be told our words have power; we know it for a fact. It’s for this reason one manager will hurl abuses at his staff and another will use motivating words. Both recognise that their words will affect their staff. They just have different beliefs in which set of words work better.

Motivational maestro Tony Robbins offers another insight: How our words affect us, in particular, are the ones we habitually use. “Transformational vocabulary is about how you can take control of your habitual vocabulary to change the quality of your life. Simply by changing your habitual vocabulary – the words you consistently use to describe the emotions of your life – you can instantly change how you think, feel and how you live,” he writes in his website.

Most people have a limited vocabulary when it comes to expressing their thoughts and feelings. Although the English language has some 750,000 words, apparently we only habitually use 5,000 to 2,000 of these words – and often, not the right ones at that! Labels we use can physically alter how we feel about an experience, according to Robbins. “For example one person may feel ‘frustrated’ while the other just feels ‘a little confused.’ It amounts to a huge difference in the way we feel, and when we change the way we feel, we change the way we behave.”

Imagine how your work environment will be if everyone consciously chooses a better, habitual vocabulary! What if, instead of saying “I’m so pissed with her,” you rephrase to “I’m so annoyed”? Just saying the words out loud will confirm that the first requires a lot of agitation and energy than the second. Your entire body reacts quite differently.

How about “I could use some help” versus “I can’t cope”? Or “I’ve got quite a bit on my plate” instead of “I’ve swamped, stressed, overwhelmed.”

You might also realise that the first sets of sentences are likely to inspire action more than the latter. If you lament that you “can’t cope,” you’re not actually pushing yourself to think of a solution; you’re merely dwelling on the situation and sense of helplessness.

But it isn’t just choice of words that you could use some help, you’re activating your mind to think about where and how to get help. Start simple. Try this: The next time someone at the office asks how you’re doing, reply with something like “outstanding”, “fantastic” or “top of the world” rather than a boring, blah “I’m ok.” Not only will you feel better, the other person might catch your positive vibes and have a better day too!

Victor Loh believes that all of us have super powers. We can change the work with the words we use. When he is not engaged with his management consultancy clients or conducting training, he is working on completing his second book, The Power of Words.
IS YOUR ORGANISATION TALENT-READY?

BY ELISA DASS AVIN
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Talent management is an area that every organisation needs to consider carefully. All organisations, big or small, need to ensure that they have the right talent in place to drive their success. In my experience, one of the biggest challenges faced by organisations is how to get the buy-in from the organisation’s top management, especially from the CEO. It is important that the head of the organisation champions this cause of building a talent pool in the company, as talent management needs a commitment from the organisation in terms of time, people resources, financial investment as well as support from the top management.

TOP-DOWN APPROACH. IS IT NOT JUST AN HR-EFFORT?

Talent management initiatives often put themselves under the HR department, believing that it is the HR department’s responsibility to take charge of talent management. This is not new, and many organisations have the HR department responsible for talent management. One of the most common reasons given for this is “HR is responsible for talent management as per our organisation’s policy.”

One of the reasons for this is that the HR department is often responsible for managing staff turnover, which is why they are often seen as the go-to people for HR-related matters. However, this approach is not sustainable in the long term. Talent management is not just an HR-effort; it requires the involvement of all stakeholders in the organisation. Talent management is an organisational strategy that involves everyone in the organisation. It is not just HR’s responsibility to manage talent, but all levels of management from the CEO and above need to be involved in the process.

STAKEHOLDER BUY-IN MINIMISE THE “UNWANTED CHILD SYNDROME”

When initiating any element of a talent management programme, it is important that the management, as well as the key stakeholders such as the department heads, are aware and fully understand the framework. Ideally, some heads should be part of the talent management planning to ensure that buy-in is not just seen as a top-down process. It is important that everyone understands the importance of talent management and its role in the organisation’s success.

TALENT SUCCESS PROFILE AND TALENT IDENTIFICATION: DEFINE YOUR PEOPLE

Often times, organisations spend a lot of money on identifying the talent in their organisation. However, some organisations may not have a clear idea of what the talent is or what they should be doing about it. It is important to identify the talent in the organisation and make sure that the talent is being utilised to its full potential.

TALENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: BE READY FOR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Growing employees does not stop at organizing a series of training programmes. It is a long-term commitment that requires the top management and HR to have a thorough understanding of talent management. A clear talent management framework is in place that should include a competency model, talent assessment approach, talent development plans, talent retention plans, and succession planning, as well as performance management and talent management planning. It is important that the organisation has a talent management plan that is aligned with the organisation’s strategic goals and objectives.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT PLANS: HAVE A WHOLESOE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Some organisations that run a namesake talent programme often have a pretty well-structured talent management framework as well. However, experienced HR practitioners and talent experts understand that training is only one small part of developing employees. Development of employees should be holistic and include various initiatives such as experiential learning through organisation development, learning through mentoring, learning through coaching, and learning through self-reflection.

TALENT APPRAISAL PLAN: HAVE MULTIPLE CHECKS

As part of the talent development plan, a review with the mentor and supervisor should be scheduled for every quarter or half-yearly. This review is a good time for the employee to check in to review his/her progress and receive some honest feedback on his/her development.

Mentors and supervisors who are trained in coaching and appraisal techniques will be able to add value to the assessment process. This allows for a more in-depth understanding of the employee’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as areas for improvement.

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TALENT RETENTION: DECIDE WHICH TO KEEP

Talent management can be very exciting, but it also requires careful planning. Talent retention is a critical element of talent management. It is important to decide which employees to keep in the organisation and which ones to let go.

TALENT DEVELOPMENT PLAN: WHOLESOE approach

Talent development plans are the backbone of talent management. They should be designed to help assess the competencies outlined in the profile. An objective and appropriate assessment programme is necessary for your talent management framework. This assessment programme often have a poorly-structured talent management framework, where the HR department has a lot of control over the talent development plans. However, experienced HR practitioners and talent experts understand that training is only one small part of developing employees. Development of employees should be holistic and include various initiatives such as experiential learning through organisation development, learning through mentoring, learning through coaching, and learning through self-reflection.

Talent Management Framework: Be ready for long-term commitment

Talent development plans: Have a wholesome development plan

Talent appraisal: Plan for milestone checks

Talent retention: Decide which to keep

Talent succession plan: Milestone checks

Top-down efforts: It’s not just an HR effort

TALENT MANAGERS: ‘THE UNWANTED CHILD SYNDROME’

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TALENT-JOURNEY

THREE TYPES OF TALENT

First, Break All The Rules

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TALENT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK: BE READY FOR LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Growing employees does not stop at organizing a series of training programmes. It is a long-term commitment that requires the top management and HR to have an extensive framework in place that should include a competency model, talent assessment approach, talent development plans, talent retention plans, and succession planning, as well as performance management. Talent management planning is important and needs to be aligned with the organisation’s strategic goals and objectives.

Review your framework periodically to reflect the elements in your company’s areas of improvement.

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Diligence is defined as ‘investing time and energy into each task assigned’. Success is as much about working hard as it is about working smart. The danger of over-focused on working smart is the over-reliance on ‘connections’ as the basis for success.

While it is true that having the right network of relationships will help you to close the business deal, it is the character quality of diligence that will help you maintain and grow this business deal.

It is easy to tell whether someone is not diligent, i.e. slothful. Here are the symptoms to identify when it is up to someone else to take up the plight.

**SYMPTOM 1: THE COMPLAINING MOUTH**

When the tongue says, “I cannot” – it reveals a ‘I will not’ in the heart. The benefit of complaining is this: it is not diligent, i.e. slothful. Here are the character qualities of diligence that will help you to close the business deal, it is the network of relationships that will help you to combat the effects of work, but nobody steps up to do it!

A diligent person focuses on the completion of the work rather than on who gets the credit.

**SYMPTOM 2: THE FEAR OF PEERS**

What is the purpose of turning up for work? To make friends? It may come as a surprise to you that your job in the company is not to make friends, but to make your boss look good.

This may sound strange but there are those who fear to work too hard for fear of being seen as the boss’ favourite! Re-examine your fundamental purpose of working. Who is paying your salary? Who has the authority to determine your career progression?

Certainly not your peers! Be bold to do what is needed and keep the company’s reputation and good name ahead of you all the time (instead of thinking about what your friends will think of you).

Remember that most are followers and it takes a leader to be willing to stick out like a ‘ sore thumb’ among his or her peers.

Be diligent to protect the reputation of your employers and work towards their goals. Otherwise, you will be constrained by the wishes of the majority and fail to soar as a leader.

**SYMPTOM 3: THE ENERGY ZAPPER**

A diligent person invests energy to complete each assigned task. Besides complaining, negative energy is also generated when there are attitudes of self entitlement, blame, finger-pointing, work avoidance, and ‘playing politics’. Everybody is concerned about who gets the credit and who will do the work, but nobody steps up to do it!

A diligent person focuses on the completion of the work rather than on who gets the credit. Often, you may end up taking up a responsibility beyond the normal scope, but isn’t that what growth is all about?

Beware of being an energy-zapper; instead be seen as someone who is an energy-giver!

Diligence is the quality of doing what needs to be done especially when the boss is not around! The key to diligence is not in the beginning of the task, but in its completion. Check yourself on a regular basis – Do I regularly complain about others, the boss and about the task?

Diligence begins with keeping our mouth shut and directing the energy instead to keeping our hands busy.

Think about it.

Joseph Tan is a trainer that aims to equip leaders to achieve consistent results at work, at home and in life through the development of personal character and the discovery of unique strengths. If you are interested in attending one of his courses, email people@leaderonomics.com
ENJOYMENT IS IMPORTANT IN CAREER GROWTH

LET ENTHUSIASM LEAD YOUR DEVELOPMENT PATH, SAYS TAYLOR

By ANGIE NG

E VERY experience in life has its merits and lessons to be learned, even toilet cleaning! Innovation and brand management guru Hamish Wilson Taylor knows this only too well as he goes down memory lane recalling his first job at consumer products group Procter and Gamble (P&G).

“I started in brand management with P&G, first, as an assistant on Fairy liquid (a dish wash liquid brand) and my first brand manager role was on Vorte (a bleach brand used in the UK for toilet cleaning),” he shares with myStarjob.com.

According to Taylor, one of the great hallmarks of P&G training was early responsibility.

“Even as a new graduate trainee, you were expected to lead your boss in your key areas of responsibility. For me, this was primarily the analysis of customer and market data, and reaching conclusions that could be used to drive the brand forward,” he recalls.

He reminisces about receiving an early introduction to promotions management and advertising, and learned the invaluable lesson that communication with customers is as important as the quality of a product.

“Taylor says the dish washing detergent was not a success following its launch and as a result, his team was asked to perform a ‘rescue job’ on the brand ‘where no-one else in the organisation knew the right answers’.

He saw this as a great opportunity for him to do something outstanding and quickly got down to work.

‘This was a fantastic break — we got to lead! We were very junior but the organisation looked to us to come up with the answers. This created a kind of crisis mentality, great focus and a strong team. We had to try lots of new ideas and not be afraid of the occasional failure along the way,’ he exudes with enthusiasm.

After so many years, the day the team finally moved the brand into profitability still ranks as one of the best moments of his career.

“We had spent two to three years as the ‘failure’ brand and yet managed to turn cleaning,” he says.

Taylor looks at his previous portfolios, contributed towards a trend of significant business growth, ‘triggered by a willingness to challenge the normal way of doing things’.

 Upon graduation from St Andrews University, he was awarded a Boozy Jones Scholarship to read Masters in Business Administration at Emory University in Atlanta (USA).

He says the MBA graduate programme was very useful in introducing him to the world of business. “It would certainly have been even more valuable if I had a few years work experience prior to it,” he says.

Though his ambition (as a youngster) was to be either an Olympic athlete (he was a sprinter and long jumper) or to play soccer for Scotland, he is nevertheless happy with what he has achieved.

‘Of course I truly enjoy what I’m doing, or I wouldn’t be doing what I do now. However, I would probably be a few kilos lighter if athletics had worked out!’ he says cheekily.

Taylor has a sentimental view of success. And his greatest inspiration is enthusiasm.

‘Success for me is always about doing something you enjoy. Anytime you stop enjoying your job, it’s time to move on. I have enjoyed every job I have done and been lucky enough to be able to move on when the time was right.

Are there other experiences that he would still like in the future? Yes, absolutely, there is much more to go for in the future, he believes.

His next goal is to provide more support to smaller businesses, which collectively make up the core of any economy, “and yet we tend to focus the majority of development activities on the large corporations”.

He is looking to use his wealth of “fantastic, training, insights and experiences in the large corporate world” to provide these same learning experiences to smaller businesses.

Taylor does not see himself going back into a major corporate role. However, he sees potential in developing both the events and television work he does.

“If you want a breakthrough, look outside your current environment!” he advises.

He says when he was looking to move on from Sainsbury’s Bank, he spent a day with an old friend who had volunteered to help him shape his future.

‘He asked me three simple questions: One: Tell me about a really good day at work when you enjoy your job the most? Tell me about a bad day? Two: “Tell me what you like/don’t like”, and three: “Tell me what you are good at/not good at”.

His friend then listed all the good points and announced that this was the design for Taylor’s new business.

‘And that is why I do what I do today — because I enjoy it!’ he beams.

He confesses that his enjoyment comes from public speaking and in-house facilitation with different organisations and industries, and his goal is to spend as much time as possible doing this.

The charismatic guru of innovation and change now works with organisations, teams and individuals around the world to inspire performance step changes and innovation by placing the customer at the core of all activities.

He has been dubbed the “master thief” by the Inspired Leaders Network due to his record of stealing ideas from one environment to another, including the use of yacht designers for aircraft interior, and Disney World to help with airport queuing.

Taylor is recognised as one of the world’s leading experts on innovation and brand management. He has an award winning record of driving innovation and change in a number of different environments.

His recent high profile appearances include a masterclass session for the finalists of Ernst & Young’s India’s Entrepreneur of the Year Award in Mumbai. The candidates comprise the Who’s Who of India’s most successful and high profile business leaders. It was the subject of a CNBC documentary.

Given his illustrious career profile, young career aspirants will benefit from Taylor’s wealth of expertise. He offers the following advice:

Don’t bother trying to map out a career plan in advance — do what feels right at the time!

Choose job opportunities based on what you will enjoy the most and who you will enjoy working with the most — that way you will perform better.

Be true to your own personality and don’t try to mould yourself into what you think your organisation is looking for. If they want it is not you — then get out!

Choose your first role for the quality of the training you will get — this will set you up for the rest of your career.

Hamish Taylor will be in Malaysia on Sept 3 for a full-day masterclass on Transformational Leadership. For more information, please email evelyn@stan- dardspeakerbureau.my
ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

ACE THAT INTERVIEW BY KNOWING WHAT TO ASK AND WHAT NOT TO

By EVA CHRISTODOULOU
eva.christodoulou@leaderonomics.com

Congratulations! You made it through the initial selection process and landed an interview with the company you want to work for.

You have even made it through the tough competency-based questions, and managed to appear eloquent, dynamic, and determined.

Then you reach the point when the interviewer asks you “Do you have any questions?”

Sadly, many do not adequately prepare for this last part of the interview.

A study conducted by CareerBuilder in December 2012 that surveyed more than 2500 employers reported that 32% of hiring managers saw not asking questions at the end of an interview as one of the most detrimental mistakes applicants could make – it shows that they are not interested in the position, or that they lack confidence.

Having your very own list of questions to ask, indicates to the interviewer what kind of an individual you are, and it conveys the following attributes:

- It demonstrates your enthusiasm and interest.
- Having a list of questions to ask the interviewer indicates that you are excited to be there and you are keen to find out as much about the job and the organisation as possible.
- You can even make a list of questions you would like to ask and bring it along on a piece of paper with you. Don’t be shy to do that – it indicates that you are a well organised, methodical person.
- It shows that you are well prepared and knowledgeable.

Remember that interviewers expect you to ask questions. To them, it indicates that you are serious about the position, and that you have done thorough research before going there.

Take this as an opportunity to show that you have been following the news on the organisation and the economy, and that you are aware of potential ripple effects of any news that directly or indirectly relate to the organisation.

Show them that you have done your homework, and that you have found out as much as possible for the company and the position.

At the end of the day, a job interview is an opportunity for you to find out as much as possible about the employer as well. Just like the interviewer is trying to assess your fit in the company, at the same time you should also be trying to assess whether the organisation is a good fit for you in terms of values, goals, and career progression.

Moreover, as this stage of your interview is towards the end of the process, you should aim to finish strong and leave a lasting positive impression on your interviewer.

By shying away and not asking the right questions, even if the rest of the interview went well, you may begin to question whether you are the person they are looking for.

So make sure that you take advantage of the opportunity by asking the right questions. Ensure that you use each question to your advantage. Just remember to come off as confident, but at the same time avoid seeming pushy.

Below are some useful questions you should be thinking about asking at the end of your interview, and some that you should avoid asking:

As for how many questions you should be asking, I’ll leave that to your discretion – you should sense the interviewer’s tone and patience, as well as their interest in what you are talking about or asking.

QUESTIONS NEVER TO ASK

- Information that can be easily found online – Do your research before going for the interview.
- Pay, time off or any other benefits – Wait for a later stage in the process.
- What does the company do?
- Who is doing the background check or monitoring Internet usage.
- What are the requirements of the job or any background questions.
- How fast you can change positions after being hired, or how quickly you can be promoted.
- Too many questions about the interviewer’s background.
- Whether you got the job – wait to find out! 

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Ask about the responsibilities your potential position entails, and how a typical day usually goes.
- Ask whether it is a new position. If it is a new position, find out how it fits within the organisation or department, what it aims to achieve, and how much influence it will have on the overall performance of the department/organisation.
- Ask about the people who held the position you are applying for before you – what was the difference between someone very good and someone who was really great? Ask for the reasons why they left (if applicable).
- Ask what the typical career trajectory is for this position.
- Ask whether travel is a possibility, and how much of it should be expected, as well as whether you might be required to relocate at some point.
- Ask about the company’s management style.
- Ask about prospects of growth and advancement – this indicates your interest in your future within the organisation.
- Ask about the members of the team you would be joining – how many of them are there, what their roles are, and what the team dynamics are like.
- Ask what the company’s plans are for the future. Once again, it would indicate your interest in a long term commitment.
- Ask how your performance will be measured, and what kinds are offered for improvement (development, mentoring, coaching, etc).
- Ask the interviewer to describe their ideal employee. Asking this, you seem interested in improving yourself.
- Ask how much influence you can have from the position you are applying for.
- Ask how your role would change within a year. You want to be seen as someone that constantly improves and moves forward, as opposed to some one satisfied with doing the same job.
- Ask whether the position you are applying for has any pressing concerns that you would need to tackle straight away.
- Ask whether they have any pressing concerns that you would need to tackle straight away.
- Ask what the company’s plans are for this position.
- Ask about expected challenges you would be facing in this position.
- Ask about anything you have heard in the news about the company – for example, if they have recently merged with another company, how has the merger affected the products/culture/management approach.
- Ask about people who were really great? Ask for the reasons why they left (if applicable).
- Ask whether the position you are applying for has any pressing concerns that you would need to tackle straight away. By asking this question, you show that you understand the urgency of certain issues, and that you are willing to delve into the work straight away.
- Ask about prospects of growth and advancement – this would indicate your interest in your future within the organisation.
- Ask about expected challenges you would be facing in this position.
- Ask about anything you have heard in the news about the company – for example, if they have recently merged with another company, how has the merger affected the products/culture/management approach.
- Ask about projects you would be working on.
- Ask about the largest problem facing the employees in this line of work.
- Ask whether this position is at this point in time, and whether you would be allowed to help resolve this.
- Ask how best you can contribute to the department’s success.
- Ask the interviewer why they like working there.
- Ask whether there is any reason why they wouldn’t hire you.
- Ask how you can exceed your employer’s expectations in the role you are applying for.
- Ask about moving forward – how long will they take to get back to you, and if they want you to join, when they are expected to start.
HOW TO WIN A SCHOLARSHIP

By TARCAYANI PREBAGARAN
myStarjob@leaderonomics.com

UPON completing SPM, tough decisions regarding your future plans await. These range from what courses to enrol in, to your college choices.

A significant influencing factor would be cost. Scholarships serve as a great assistance to deserving students to embark on their academic journey soon after high school. Setbacks in your finances should not be a hindrance for you to complete your formal tertiary education and work your way towards career success.

Government, corporate and university scholarships are available for you to achieve your dreams and aspirations. Just like everything else in life, an effective strategy can assist your way through. Here are some key tips on how you can obtain them:

GRADES, GRADES, GRADES!

As obvious as this may seem, your grades are your “passport” towards securing a scholarship. Extra-curricular activities and being a holistic person are absolutely vital but keep in mind that grades come first.

Extra-curricular activities and being a holistic person are absolutely vital but keep in mind that grades come first.

So, ensure your grades are consistent.

RESEARCH

Many of us are unaware of scholarship opportunities out there. Always be on the lookout for scholarship opportunities that suit you!

There are ample resources out there to get you going. For instance, afterschool.my/scholarship or www.malyasiascholarships.my

TALK TO FRIENDS, SENIORS, COUNSELLORS

While browsing the internet and reading books on how to secure a scholarship are essential, you should also talk to people who have been through the entire process.

This could be a senior who has obtained the scholarship or an academic counsellor who has assisted many students in the past.

Don’t hesitate to drop by at your counsellor’s office and ask for further information.

Applying for a scholarship is evidently a challenging task. However, it is worthwhile to put in the effort and time into it. It is an excellent way to learn skills and gain application experience.

When your finances are not in the way, you can also focus on other crucial areas of your life. I bid you good luck in your pursuit to obtain a scholarship. Be persistent and never give up!

Remember, when a door closes, a window opens.

BY EVA CHRISTODOULOU
eva.christodoulou@leaderonomics.com

IMAGINE this: If you had a chance to speak to the whole world, what would you say?

I actually found some answers to this online – but most of it was profundity and bitterness.

Think about it for a few minutes. You have 30 seconds to make an impact – how would you do this? How do you want to be remembered? Would you use the 30 seconds to complain and mean about how society has become? It is not easy, really, to come up with an answer to this. But take a minute and think of the greatest speeches in history – despite who gave them, they all had something in common. They were inspiration, and they were optimistic.

Imagine if Gandhi gave a speech grumbling about those that kept PUTTING him in prison. Even if he did, those are not the speeches we remember him by.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour and the United States and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared war on Japan, despite the catastrophe that preceded and the imminence of yet another bloody affair, Roosevelt ended his unforgettable speech in optimism: “We will gain the inevitable triumph, so help us God”.

The question is, do you want people to remember you? And if so, how do you want them to remember you?

So take a few minutes and think: what is it that you stand for? What is your purpose in life, and how do you want to influence others around you?

Then, you might be able to answer the question of how you would address the world.

I hope that everyone is able to leave bitterness and pessimism behind and find a way to inspire those around them when it matters the most – be it the whole world, your community, workplace, or family.
DEAR CAREEROMERS,

I am 34 years old and married with three children, aged one to six. My wife is a full-time housewife. My childhood dream was always to become a medical doctor. In form four, I managed my mind and decided to become an accountant. So I changed to the commerce stream instead. I scored nine As in my SPM to study accounting as a degree. When I was at university, I knew that accounting was not my passion but I still continued with it.

I was a scholarship student and was bonded to work with my sponsor. At that time, it had very few finance/account related job vacancies.

I was sent to work in the IT department although my IT literacy at that time was not very good. I learned to become a good IT worker, however.

Over the next few years I tried several times to get an internal transfer to accounting or finance departments but to no avail.

I then decided that due to the vast difference between my role and my qualification, my career would not develop any further if I stayed on in the company. I quit to join a small company owned by my friend, but it was not a successful venture.

After a few months I left the company. Ironically, my next job was as an IT worker in a multinational company. I was desperate for income at that time and if it was the only thing I was good at.

I am a good and responsible owner of a few assets and well-managed liabilities. However, deep in my heart I still know what I am doing now is not my dream. I have lost passion in my current job. I have decided that I need a change in my life before it is too late.

I am planning to start all over again by taking a second SPM next year or the year after. The major stumbling block is I am afraid how this decision will affect my family financially.

I have taken many risks before when I was single but this time, the risk is so much higher. This is probably the biggest decision in my life. I am in a dilemma. Please advise.

Thanks.

ZAYYID

DEAR DEAR CAREEROMERS,

WE have experts on career management, HR and office issues who will answer your questions weekly. We refer to them as careeromers – experts in career matters who will help you in your career journey.

So if you have burning questions, send them to dearcareeromers@leaderonomics.com and we will get the panel to answer your questions.

This week, Nur Haryati Hisham, head of maintenance and managed services and former head of HR at Mesiang, and Ang Hui Ming, co-founder of Leaderonomics, answer Zayyid’s question.

DEAR ZAYYID,

Firstly, I have to admit that your dilemma is deeply personal. I can only hope that my advice does not put lightly what you must be going through right now.

Based on what has been shared, it looks like you are considering a complete reboot of your entire life plan. Changing careers while juggling a full set of responsibilities is a daunting task. Whether one does it voluntarily or out of force, such a decision can have a wide-ranging impact, not only on you but also on your young family.

You did not share the reasons that prompted your original ambition of becoming a medical doctor in the first place. I would first advise that you go out to a trusted friend or confidante about this. Make sure this is someone who can help probe your thought process around the subject.

You need to uncover the primary reasons for wanting to pursue this path. More importantly, you need to identify up front what this will mean to you, once the dream is achieved.

What will it allow you to do? How does it make sense for you and your family?

Have you considered full-time work while studying part-time? Is it a feasible way to pursue your dream while keeping your job? Have you exhausted all options?

What about full-time study with part-time work? Have you worked out a plan where you can still earn an income without a full-time job?

Freelance consultants are highly sought after if you have a marketable skillset. So you wouldn’t necessarily have to maintain a full-time job while pursuing your studies.

Do you have financial security for the whole duration of your intended study and change in career? Your own financial securities, residual income, family support etc.

If all your answers lead you to still believe you need to take that leap of faith, then by all means, after proper consultation with your wife, extended family, and close confidantes, do it. Know that you have to give it all you’ve got with the motivation that your loved ones are also making sacrifices for you to pursue your new life and career.

ANG HUI MING

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

DEAR ZAYYID,

GIVE yourself a pat on the back for having ridden the waves of uncertainty and challenges over the last few years since you started work. It obviously wasn’t an easy path with many decisions being out of your control due to your bond. You did well in learning a completely new area of expertise and getting to be where you are today.

Today, more and more young adults go through this phase in their early 30s to 40s where they get bored, start asking questions about why they are doing their current job, and re-think their hearts desire in terms of what they want to do.

They see the clock tick by as they contemplate whether or not to make a change in their career path before it’s too late.

There is a lot at stake if you opt to follow this path. Your life will change in dramatic ways and it will affect almost everyone around you.

I understand the primal urge to pursue one’s dreams, but I ask that you consider all that is near and dear to you.

If your current job does not satisfy you, there may be other options that you can take that can provide more meaning in your working life.

I advise that you reach out to a coach or a trusted mentor who can help you rationalise your thinking around this subject. It is not a matter to be taken lightly and there may be other options available that could give you that satisfaction you seek similar to becoming a medical doctor.

NURHARYATI HISHAM

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