Anyone can be creative

Dreaming of a dream team?
Find out why chasing a dream team will not always be a fruitful endeavour.
Pg 3

THINKING REVOLUTION
Insights on design thinking from Stanford d.School
Pg 4

PURPLE POWER
Eating purple coloured food can make you smarter
Pg 8

GRADUATE PROGRAMMES
7 things to consider when applying for a graduate position
Pg 10
**MAKE TIME TO BE CREATIVE**

You are a creative person. Anybody can be creative because creativity is not only confined to the realms of drawing or other aesthetic-related pursuits.

Creativity, according to the Merriam Webster, refers to an ability to create - to produce things by imaginative skill or to produce something new.

Any type of problem-solving would benefit from creativity. Think about your job. Are there new ideas you can inject into the way you work?

Could you do your project proposal in the form of a diagram instead of a wordy PowerPoint? When you approach a familiar work problem, could you take a moment to consider alternatives before jumping straight to the usual solution? Is there a better way?

I don’t believe anyone is incapable of producing ideas. I think we just don’t allow ourselves the room to imagine what is possible. As Dr Seuss puts it, “Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the things you can think up if only you try”.

So take a moment to try the following exercises to get yourself thinking. Get your imaginative juices flowing.

1. WORD CHAIN

Find a word that is associated with the first word. Continue the chain until you link it to the final word.

Example: Road → Car → Morning → Sun → Spanner

Monkey

PowerPoint → Sky

Elevator → Roller Coaster

2. COMPLETE THE DRAWING

Here’s a suggestion of a line below. Use the shape below as a starting point to draw a picture. Let your imagination guide you.

---

You’ll be amazed at the things you can think up “if you only try”.

I’d love to see what you came up with. Send your answers and drawing to mystarjob@leaderonomics.com, and the team will show you what we came up with! Suggestions and feedback can be sent to the same address.

Check out the rest of our pages this week for more ideas on how to boost innovation and creativity. Remember to check out leaderonomics.com/articles if you are hungry for more content.

Have a great week ahead.

LILY CHEAH
Editor, myStarjob.com

---

**THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE**

Invented by Francesco Cirillo in the late 1980s, the Pomodoro technique is a time management method that helps to keep one focused. Work is broken down into 25 minute segments, and then a five minute break is taken. One 25-minute segment is known as a pomodori (from the Italian word pomodoro, to mean “tomato”). Once four pomodori have been achieved, you are allowed to take a 15 minute break. More info can be found at www.pomodorohave been achieved, you are allowed to take a 15 minute break. More info can be found at www.pomodorocom.

The right brain – left brain dominance theory suggests that people who are “left-brained” are more logical, analytical and objective, while those who are “right-brained” are more intuitive, thoughtful and subjective.

---

**CAREER TIPS**

**EXPLORING YOUR CREATIVE SIDE**

- **TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT** Once in a while, try doing something different. It can be something as simple as leaving memos and messages for colleagues. Instead of just writing them plainly on a post it note, try other means of sending the message.

- **HAVE RANDOM BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS** Gather your colleagues and have random brainstorming sessions on a project. You will be amazed at how many brilliant ideas that can be generated when people are needed to come up with on-the-spot suggestions.

- **KEEP AN IDEA JOURNAL** Great ideas usually come to us unexpectedly, and we tend to forget about them as we go about our daily routines. Keep a small journal, and everytime you think of something brilliant, write it down. Read your journal every few weeks and work on making those ideas a reality.

- **LIMIT YOUR TOOLS** Try working with only the most vital tools. Limiting your tools will challenge you to work much harder and force you to think outside of the box. We give our brains less credit that they deserve. Try coming up with ideas without the Internet. It’s a good start.

- **DO CREATIVE EXERCISES** There are many exercises you could do unleash your creative side. Try activities such as writing a story based on one picture, find new ways to decorate your office, or combine random objects and colours to come up with a brand name.
I

July 2000, Florentino Pérez was elected club president vowing to sign Luis Figo, the world's best player at that time and to build Real Madrid Football Club into the “Los Galácticos,” the dream team of football. He quickly signed Figo, then Zinédine Zidane in 2001, Ronaldo a year later and David Beckham in 2003. He successfully assembled a dream team. All the best players in the world were counted and brought in to the magnificent Santiago Bernabeu, the team never materialised. Barcelona, 2006, Florentino Pérez resigned club president in 2009. He quickly signing Kaka, Cristiano Ronaldo, Xabi and... Today, in spite of the joy of having dream continues to be a dream.

We all love dream teams, especially in sports. The US 2004 basketball dream team had all the stars of the NBA, yet finished third, losing even to Lithuania. At the World Baseball Classic, again the United States fielded a dream team but lost to South Korea, Canada and Mexico. Brazil in 1982 had the best football team in the world, yet failed to win the FIFA world cup.

Why do dream teams never fulfill their potential? After the fall of the Berlin wall, with East and West Germany united, many predicted that Germany would emerge the greatest economic force. Yet, that dream unification never truly materialised the way predicted. Dream teams never seem to succeed.

Dream teams are put together to combine the knowledge and expertise of brilliant individuals. Yet, more often we find 3+3=5 whilst elsewhere in high performing teams, 3+3=7. From our research, team failures usually haven’t do with one of the four key reasons below:

1. Unclear team goals
2. Poor role clarity
3. Lack of guiding processes
4. Deficiency of friendships and interpersonal relationship goals

While working in the United States years ago, I witnessed a flock of geese flying south for the winter. You could clearly hear their voices and see them in a “V” formation heading south in a definite direction. They all seemed very clear about their goal and seemed to have built inner GPS guiding them to their destination.

Goals are the inner GPS of a team, giving direction to both team and individual. This is the preliminary step for teams – to establish where we are now and defining where we ought to go. Unclear goals are the number one issue of dysfunctional teams. If a goal isn’t clear or agreed by everyone on the team, your team will fail.

Goals energise a team and provide the foundations of a good team by establishing the care mission of the team and framing its purpose. Goals unite each individual’s personal effort with the overall goal of the team. However, goals matter only if people are clear about what the goal is and what they need to do to achieve it.

Tom Shoes has become one of the fastest growing shoe companies. Their “one for one” goal creates energy not only with their internal team but also its customers. For every shoe sold, one is given free to the poor. When an organisation has purpose and its goal is clear, there is synergy of action.

In the 90s, McKinsey launched the “war for talent” study. The study concluded that the best companies had leaders obsessed with finding and hiring as many best talented individuals as possible, advising leaders to “bet on the natural athletes, the ones with the strongest intrinsic skills.”

It went further to advise that success required “a deep-seated belief that having better talent at all levels is how you outperform your competitors.”

One company that followed McKinsey’s “blueprint” to the tee was Enron. Enron was the business world’s version of a dream team. Former CEO Jeff Skilling only hired the very best MBA graduates and consultants and “stocked the company with talent” but somehow the Enron dream team blew up and the “best talent in the world” came to naught.

At the same time Enron was blowing up, I worked at GE, where then CEO Jack Welch’s policy was not about hiring talent from top elite business schools. GE looked for moderate talented leaders and insisted they “get their hands dirty” learning while doing.

Yet, 2001, the demand for non-elite GE talent was over-whelming and no one seemed to want to hire the “stars” of Enron. GE did not hire “stars’”. Its system developed “stars”. Unlike Enron and its “star” hiring policy, GE’s system was its star. There was a clear process to develop people.

Interestingly, most people assume that people make organisations great. I would dare to say it may well be the other way around – organisations make people great. And therein lays the next key - great teams have processes and systems that enable their teams to function to their full potential.

At Enron, there were no systems. Enron did have a management system based on core values, but moved its top people so often to new roles, there were never opportunities to evaluate them properly.

Sometimes even if an employee was rated “4” by an evaluation, he was often fired within six months, and there were many cases of lowly rated employees rising to new roles at Enron.

**ROLE**

Enron’s lack of role clarity contributed to its demise. In Gladwell’s “Talent Myth,” he shares a story about Enron employee Louise Kitchen. A 29-year old gas trader, she believed Enron should develop an online-trading business so she worked in her spare time, leveraging 250 Enron employees to help her.

Six months later, Enron CEO Skilling found out, saying approvingly that “they have already purchased servers, started ripping apart the building and have started legal reviews in 22 countries by the time I heard about it. It is exactly the kind of behaviour that will continue to drive this company forward.”

Kitchen did not have the authorisations or knowledge to run Enron Online. She wanted to do it, and at Enron, “stars” did whatever they wanted. With such a lack of clarity of roles, it is no wonder Enron ultimately collapsed.

“Some of the worst teams I’ve ever seen have been those where everybody was a potential CEO,” says David Nadler. There is need for just one CEO.

The same problem happens in a football field when everyone decides to play as a striker. Eleven strikers with a goaliekeeper or defenders will almost guarantee defeat, even if the 11 strikers you have are the best in the world.

One of my favourite TV shows growing up began with these words: “In 1972, a crack commando unit was sent to prison by a military court for a crime they didn’t commit. These men promptly escaped from a maximum security stockade to the Los Angeles underground. Today, still wanted by the government, they survive as soldiers of fortune. If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find them, maybe you can hire... The A-Team.”

The A-Team was a great team because everyone had clear roles – a cigar-graving leader who was a master of disguise, a smooth-talking handsome man, a semi-lunatic ace pilot, a skilled mechanic with jewellery all over his body and a breath-taking van that could soar. Every member of the A-Team had clear roles and played them commendably.

**INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

In “The Apprentice,” when teams are in the “board room” before Donald Trump comes to fire someone, everyone starts protecting themselves by pinning the blame on others. No one takes responsibility and instead sells each other out to survive. The rivalry, bickering and back-biting happens in teams where there are no friendships.

When relationships are competitive, trust is harder to develop. If people think their teammates are insincere, withholding information, suspicious of their motives, or just incept, nothing gets done and teams become dysfunctional. Interpersonal relationships and friendships help establish trust, open communication and feedback.

In most dream teams, everyone is distrustful from the start. Generally, there are no deep friendships. Worst still, most often the same team members are battling for the same career roles, help when there is constant instability or huge egos all vying for the same attention.

**THE COACH**

Dream teams often blow up due to lack of goals, roles, processes and friendships. Real Madrid’s dream team has blown up countless times.

The 1980 US Olympic hockey team that beat the Soviets to the gold medal was built unequivocally on an “anti-dream-team” philosophy. The fairy tale story was documented in the movie “Miracle” where coach Herb Brooks drops many of the US’ best players and instead picks his team based on personal chemistry and friendships.

When questioned why he dropped some top players and picked many unknowns, he responds, “I’m not looking for the best players. I’m looking for the right players.” The coach is the final success element in the dream team conundrum.

Sociologist Elizabeth Cohen found that if kids are put into teams and told to solve a problem, the result is one kid dominating whilst others become totally disengaged.

If you want to take the time to establish norms – goals, roles, and processes, “not only will (the children) behave according to the new norms, they will enforce rules on other group members. Even very young students can be lecturing to other members on how they ought to be behaving in today’s high-tech workplace, it is virtually impossible not to be part of a team. Projects are too big, complex and involved for a single person to do it all. Michael Schumacher didn’t win Formula One races through rugged individualism. He had a high-performance team behind him.”

“Men work together,” wrote Robert Frost, “whether they work together or apart.” Great teamwork is an outcome. To ensure the team flourishes, you need to create the conditions.

Yet far too often, people find team-work to be frustrating and exhausting. It is amazing how many dysfunctional teams we have running around trying to achieve something. If only we take the time to set goals, roles, processes and learn to build friendships with each other, we may just be able to develop a truly dream team. Go on, build your dream team!

Roshan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about transforming the nation through leadership development. For more information on leadership and programmes to help build effective dream teams in your organisation, email people@leaderonomics.com or login to www.leaderonomics.com

By ROSHAN THIRAN
roshan.thiran@gmail.com
DIRECT TO US, AND USE YOUR EMOTIONS

Rather than trying to understand an issue purely through internal discussion or data from reports, physically moving ourselves and reaching out directly to users and stakeholders who are experiencing the problem moves us from just having some knowledge of an issue, to actually “feeling” the problem. Direct contact with these key people also ensures accurate understanding of the problem at hand. “There is only so much you can accomplish by burying your head in the papers. You need to look up and think more about empathising and experimenting as a way to advance your project. Literally get out of the building,” says Utley.

THE ARTS AREN’T THE ONLY WAY OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION, WE’D LIKE TO SEE HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS DESIGNING THE PATIENT CARE EXPERIENCE.

Once students have gone through boot camps and are familiar with design thinking techniques, they are exposed to different organisations where they have to drive innovation. The best individuals, say Klebahn and Utley, work their way out of the catalytic role. “The good leaders that use design process raise other leaders,” says Klebahn. “They try to work themselves out of the innovation role. As they play the role of the catalyst, they try to find other catalysts and spark something greater.”

Students are graded on how successfully they have been in igniting this “spark.” The final presentation isn’t done by the student, but by the organisation they have partnered with. So if the student has not succeeded in sparking a change, it will be obvious.

As to application of design thinking in various contexts, Utley explains that it should influence methods more than the substance itself. For teachers in schools, for instance, Utley says that design thinking isn’t a “what to teach” but a “how to teach.” It can be implemented into everyday teaching by creating a level of creativity and mindfulness into the learning experience. It could be as simple as encouraging experimentation and getting students to actively engage with what they are learning. Klebahn gives a simple example for rapid prototyping. For an assignment, get them to write a summary in pencil in five minutes, then have them to critique each other’s work. “This is a principle of good design thinking,” says Klebahn.

Klebahn and Utley were in Malaysia recently for the Design Thinking Bootcamp that will be held annually at HP School of Design Thinking @ Genovasi.
ERIC QUAH
eric.quah@leaderonomics.com

YES, everyone can be creative. In fact, being creative is necessary, no matter what field you are in. Ever since the business world has become a red sea saturated with brands, products and media messages, yesterday’s run-of-the-mill method of just “working hard” no longer holds water.

Furthermore, the typical idea of creativity has enlarged from the traditional concept of merely being associated to arts. Today, creativity has been unleashed from its humanities confines and has become part and parcel of all industries.

Increasingly, employees are encouraged to be more creative in their job functions — whether a sales manager or an app developer, we are expected to find new and novel ways to engage clients or users. Creativity has enlarged from the traditional concept of merely being associated to arts. Today, creativity has been unleashed from its humanities confines and has become part and parcel of all industries.

According to TED Talks founder and curator Chris Anderson, “Being a leader in the 21st century requires creativity, storytelling ability and the ability to cope with complexity. Relying solely on logic, analysis and problem-solving skills is insufficient if the goal is to compete globally based on value rather than price.”

CREATIVITY DEFINED

But then, what is creativity if it is not just in the humanities and the arts? In his book Human Motivation (3rd ed.), author and Emeritus professor of human motivation Robert E. Frankensof defines it as “the tendency to generate or recognise ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others.”

With that in mind, the application of creativity certainly extends its influence on our professions or humanities. It becomes an integral way we humans view ourselves.

Creativity is the way we transform deep-seated anxieties stem from the fear of judgement. Perhaps as nursery rhyme says, “Don’t drink the pink lemonade.” It is the way we approach problems. If we are faced with tasks that are unconventional, they walk away believing they are not creative at all.

English author, speaker, and international adviser on education Sir Ken Robinson suggests an even more radical reason why most of us feel at a loss when it comes to creativity. It is because schools are killing creativity.

In his presentation at TED2006, he explains that the current education system was devised to cope with the needs of industrialisation. As such, what we have in all education systems around the world is the heavy emphasis on the sciences and technology, with the humanities and arts being relegated lower down the scale.

He suggests that there should be a change where students are taught not only to engage the right side of their brains, but to also fire up the left side. And it is only with both the sides of the brain working in sync that we get the creativity that leads to innovation and efficiency that are both lacking today.

CULTIVATING CREATIVITY

In an article called Seven Secrets of Highly Creative Cultures (CW Bulletin - International Association of Business Communicators, 2013), speaker, workshop leader and writer on creativity-related topics and presentation skills Sam Harrison identifies seven organisational cultures that promote creativity.

A CREATIVE ORGANISATION NOT ONLY RECOGNISES GOOD IDEAS, IT ALSO KNOWS THAT THOSE WITH CREATIVE IDEAS SHOULD BE TRAINED TO COMMUNICATE AND SELL THEIR IDEAS EFFECTIVELY.

1. GENEROSITY

Firstly, generosity promotes creativity. Organisations that are magnanimous tend to welcome healthy debates. It also dispenses with judgement and promotes a healthy atmosphere for ideas to flourish without any hierarchical barriers standing in the way.

Actor, director and producer Robert Redford says his Sundance Institute for filmmaking strives to achieve an “atmosphere of generosity” where people are generous in giving and receiving ideas.

2. CONTROLLED DEVIANCE

Unlike most organisations, those with creative cultures condone deviance. How many times have we been told to “think out of the box”? Though traditional views of a deviant are mostly negative, true innovation always involves some form of deviation.

On the other hand, organisations with creative cultures practise controlled deviance — they welcome flexibility change, and a level of constructive chaos. They will however, stamp out anarchy. An example of this is General Electric, where CEO Jeffrey Immelt allows employees to adopt a “healthy disregard for history.” By looking towards the future and upcoming trends, he is encouraging them to unshackle themselves from legacy practices.

3. CREATIVE WORKING SPACE

While encouraging their people to be creative, organisations should reflect a creative look. By changing the environment to reflect the culture of the organisation, the management is reminding the employees of its management style.

4. AN OPEN EYE

Leaders in creative organisations always keep an ear to the ground, because the best ideas can come welling up from the lower ranks.

Curtis Carlson, SRI International CEO in an interview for SFGate.com said, “In a world that is moving faster and has become increasingly more competitive, the sweet spot for innovation is coming down in the organisation, not up.”

5. FREEDOM TO EXPLORE

Organisations that emphasise creativity recognise the importance of exploration. In order to be creative, there must be some form of exploration, sights, sounds and stimuli to trigger that “Eureka!” moment.

6. ACCEPTANCE OF FAILURE

Part and parcel to every success is of course the act of failing. While the fact that failure due to half-hearted attempts is unacceptable, creative organisations allow failures despite committed efforts, as they regard that as part of learning.

CEO of Virgin Sir Richard Branson said, “Virgin would not be the company it is today if we had not taken risks along the way. I never see a setback as a bad experience. For me it is a “learning curve.”

7. COMPPELLING COMMUNICATION

A creative organisation not only recognises good ideas, it also knows that those with ideas should be trained to communicate and sell their ideas effectively.

It is a myth that ideas will sell by themselves; most of the time, ideas like all things in a business environment, need to be properly packaged and presented. As marketing expert Seth Godin says, “There’s no correlation between how good your idea is and how likely your organisation will be to embrace it — it’s not about good ideas. It’s about selling those ideas and making them happen.”

Organisations that embrace creativity as part of their business plan tend to report a more motivated and productive employee, and lower turnover rates. With such potential for greater growth, it is about time more companies reflect on how they can become more creative.

WHO IS MORE CREATIVE? ASIANS OR WESTERNERS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF THOUGHT</th>
<th>EAST</th>
<th>WEST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>The East has made many scholarly, scientific and technological breakthroughs. China and Japan have a full spectrum of inventions such as the gunpowder, compass and the paper.</td>
<td>More evidence has shown that enlightenment in the West owed much to its exposure to the late Middle Ages and Asian achievements via the Silk Roads and Indian Ocean trade routes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Eastern management styles stress conformity and the importance of teamwork.</td>
<td>Western management styles tend to prefer the freedom of expression as an important element of individualism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Eastern art is all about adhering to a certain code. Asia, though, has had its fair share of original artwork with contemporary performers like Zhu Yu and Cai Guo-Qiang, even John Woo.</td>
<td>Western art encourages the artists to find new ways to express themselves better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Eastern thought puts more emphasis on usefulness of a certain creative thought.</td>
<td>Westerners tend to prefer novelty of a certain creative thought.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FASCINATE: In 1829, granulocyte the Swiss union Grand Cross Master, played a game against “Deep Blue,” the AI supercomputer of the time. Kapaner won easily.

When asked by media what his competitive advantage was, he added two things: intuition and the ability to fascinate. And this, from a master strategist for us ever encouraged to be both.

Yet, and yet, such fascination is how break through ideas get to take off. Some mavericks, flakes, or daredevil entertaining the seemingly impossible.

I try to encourage the business owners want their employees to come up with fantastic ideas or solutions. But they don’t think they can fantasize. And yet, the word “fantastic” and “fascinate” come from the same iambic cuo, meaning “to use the imagination Think of a current challenge of yours. What would a fascinating idea to this challenge look like? What does this fascination idea give you?

DEFINE THE RIGHT CHALLENGE AND TRENDS

There are many people who make their living from the pattern recognition businesses. Historians, detecting, critical research, and stockbrokers just to name a few. And while they are highly trained for their work, they have to be able to see the challenge. To make sense of these patterns correctly for us the right thinkers.

If you want a breakthrough idea, begin by coming up with a breakthrough question – one that introduces the essence of your thinking to create. “What is the greatest inspiration you have to your inspiration? The act of creation, or “fascinate,” is “first of all an act of destruction.”

Breakthrough thinkers often hit the gray zone by challenging old patterns and ways of thinking. To see beyond the obvious.

By asking, “What is the real story? What is the truth outside of the four walls of their laboratories? The only difference? Breakthrough thinkers get to notice patterns and then interpret them creatively. They value their opinions, their perspectives, and their nation and development of breakthroughs.

And while their success rates may not be as impressive as you think, their impact is profound and the potential for huge breakthroughs is immense. Breakthrough thinkers are often regarded as the innovators.

Brainstorm

Breakthrough thinkers have the ability to notice small, new, and unseen things that it is the art of noticing a broader, that happens accidentally — the act of discovery. The genius, for example, for a new concept — or one who is. Ask them.

Keepers of the innovation flame

Breakthrough thinkers prefer the left-brained world of rationality. They value their opinions, their perspectives, and their nation and development of breakthroughs.

And while their success rates may not be as impressive as you think, their impact is profound and the potential for huge breakthroughs is immense. Breakthrough thinkers are often regarded as the innovators.

Brainstorm

Breakthrough thinkers have the ability to notice small, new, and unseen things that it is the art of noticing a broader, that happens accidentally — the act of discovery. The genius, for example, for a new concept — or one who is. Ask them.

Keepers of the innovation flame

Breakthrough thinkers prefer the left-brained world of rationality. They value their opinions, their perspectives, and their nation and development of breakthroughs.

And while their success rates may not be as impressive as you think, their impact is profound and the potential for huge breakthroughs is immense. Breakthrough thinkers are often regarded as the innovators.

Brainstorm

Breakthrough thinkers have the ability to notice small, new, and unseen things that it is the art of noticing a broader, that happens accidentally — the act of discovery. The genius, for example, for a new concept — or one who is. Ask them.

Keepers of the innovation flame

Breakthrough thinkers prefer the left-brained world of rationality. They value their opinions, their perspectives, and their nation and development of breakthroughs.

And while their success rates may not be as impressive as you think, their impact is profound and the potential for huge breakthroughs is immense. Breakthrough thinkers are often regarded as the innovators.

Brainstorm

Breakthrough thinkers have the ability to notice small, new, and unseen things that it is the art of noticing a broader, that happens accidentally — the act of discovery. The genius, for example, for a new concept — or one who is. Ask them.

Keepers of the innovation flame

Breakthrough thinkers prefer the left-brained world of rationality. They value their opinions, their perspectives, and their nation and development of breakthroughs.

And while their success rates may not be as impressive as you think, their impact is profound and the potential for huge breakthroughs is immense. Breakthrough thinkers are often regarded as the innovators.

Brainstorm

Breakthrough thinkers have the ability to notice small, new, and unseen things that it is the art of noticing a broader, that happens accidentally — the act of discovery. The genius, for example, for a new concept — or one who is. Ask them.

Keepers of the innovation flame

Breakthrough thinkers prefer the left-brained world of rationality. They value their opinions, their perspectives, and their nation and development of breakthroughs.

And while their success rates may not be as impressive as you think, their impact is profound and the potential for huge breakthroughs is immense. Breakthrough thinkers are often regarded as the innovators.

Brainstorm

Breakthrough thinkers have the ability to notice small, new, and unseen things that it is the art of noticing a broader, that happens accidentally — the act of discovery. The genius, for example, for a new concept — or one who is. Ask them.

Keepers of the innovation flame

Breakthrough thinkers prefer the left-brained world of rationality. They value their opinions, their perspectives, and their nation and development of breakthroughs.

And while their success rates may not be as impressive as you think, their impact is profound and the potential for huge breakthroughs is immense. Breakthrough thinkers are often regarded as the innovators.

Brainstorm

Breakthrough thinkers have the ability to notice small, new, and unseen things that it is the art of noticing a broader, that happens accidentally — the act of discovery. The genius, for example, for a new concept — or one who is. Ask them.
FEEDBACK AS A TOOL

By SU-ANN CHIEN
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

THE COLOUR PURPLE

And, of course, some of these are great as juice. When you are planning your meals and snacks be sure to put purple on your plate and in your glass. You brain will thank you.

Ten Ways to Improve

1. SUGGEST WAYS TO IMPROVE
Whether the feedback is positive or negative, employees need to be challenged to improve. Commenting on something unsatisfactory without providing an alternative will give the impression that the employer is also unsure of how to initiate progress.

2. CRITICISE THE ACTION, NOT THE PERSON
This can be tricky with ethical dilemmas among certain personality types, but highlight an employee’s actions rather than character flaws. This project could have been better executed with more research, “raises positive responses compared with ‘you were too lazy to put more time into this’.

3. BUILD RELATIONSHIP
Try not to focus on just work and reviews when talking to an employee. Building a relationship will cause the recipient of a feedback to be less defensive while giving the employer credibility. Trust needs to be maintained so that nobody feels threatened or sabotaged.

THE COLOUR PURPLE

These are all a regular part of your diet:
• blueberries
• grapes
• plums
• purple kale
• beef
• kidney beans
• red cabbage
• acai berries
• eggplant

By TERRY SMALL
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

WHY does your brain need a steady diet of purple?
Your brain craves purple foods. They are good for your heart and your brain. Remember, what’s good for your heart is good for your brain. Poor nutrition and lack of dietary knowledge can inhibit your ability to reach maximum cerebral achievement.

Purple foods are packed with polyphenols. That’s what produces the beautiful rich colour. Polyphenols help keep your arteries and blood vessels healthy and flexible. This reduces your risk of Alzheimer’s and heart disease.

Adding purple foods to your diet enhances brain function. Studies have shown that eating a cup of blueberries daily can improve the way your brain cells communicate with each other. The result is a better memory!
UNLEASHING THE GENIUS WITHIN

JAMES BANNERMAN PROMOTES LATERAL THINKING TO BRING OUT THE BEST IN US

By ANGIE NG
angie@thestar.com.my

TAKING the path less travelled by being self-employed since leaving university is not for the faint-hearted. It takes guts, ingenuity and self-confidence to be able to independently eke out a decent living in the absence of a regular pay cheque.

If more among us knew the “little secret” that each and every one of us has the seeds of a genius and “divine power” within us to achieve whatever we set our mind to, then the fear of failing would not have stopped so many people from pursuing their dreams.

Taking it as his personal crusade to share this invaluable knowledge, British “lateral thinking” expert James Bannerman has remained self-employed under the banner of James Bannerman Creative Services since he left university back in 1989.

He says he deliberately took this path because it gave him the freedom to do all kinds of “work engagements”, rather than jobs.

“It demonstrates how ‘careers for creative types’ (or portfolio careers) invariably flow and morph from one thing into another, and it often involves doing several things at the same time,” Bannerman shares with myStarjob.com.

His creative and independent streaks must have something to do with this.

As a young boy of three, Bannerman was already taking to his guitar and by eight, he was writing his own songs.

He ended up touring France and Belgium with his school band at the age of 12. Years later when he was in his 20s and early 30s, he was writing music professionally for television, films and pop songs for stars from around the world.

He says one of the hit songs he wrote, Love Is Different Everytime, was translated into the track Apabila Impian Menjelma, sung by Ning Baizura back in the 1990s.

“And, in a roundabout way, as a result of those early childhood experiences, I have always been fascinated by creative thinking, innovation, and how people come up with ideas. That’s essentially what I do now, specializing in lateral thinking,” he observes.

Not one to shy away from failures, he believes it is possible to fail repeatedly and yet eventually succeed.

He says: “Sometimes the reason we fail is not because we’re not any good, it’s simply because we’re not ready.”

Looking at virtually anyone who’s achieved great success in life—from Walt Disney to Albert Einstein, he says there is a good chance of finding a history of setbacks and failures they had to come to terms with, and the obstacles they needed to overcome.

From failing in his first book attempt, Bannerman “took the bull by the horns,” persisted in his endeavours and transformed himself to become a renowned author and business consultant, trainer and speaker following the success of the launch of his book, GENIUS deceptive simple ways to become instantly smarter.

CREATIVE PERSONA

Relating his experience as a “rookie” book author, Bannerman says it was in 2005 when as a wide-eyed lad, he was signed up by a major UK publisher who liked the book proposal he sent in.

“I was ecstatic! I felt like Charlie in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory who’d won the last ‘golden ticket’ and that was the problem. I got so carried away and foolishly ended up racing ahead in all directions, and started writing a book on creativity that had everything in it, from creative neuro-science in Australia to creative-justice in the United States. It simply didn’t work. In 2006 I lost that deal,” he recalls regretfully.

However, that experience taught him two profound lessons about book writing.

“Firstly, if you are going to write a book then make sure you write in a reader-focused way, and not in a writer-focused way. Keep asking yourself, who are you writing for, and what benefits will it bring to them?”

Secondly, be mindful of the fact that whatever you write you’re never going to please everyone all of the time. The best you can do is find your own voice, make it as interesting and useful as possible, and avoid being bland as you’re never going to appeal to anyone,” he says.

The invaluable lessons helped him to re-focus and to go back to the drawing board to start out over again.

Out of the ashes of his first book, Swordfish Thinking, he ended up signing a new deal with the same editor and the same publisher several years later which gave rise to his best-seller, GENIUS deceptively simple ways to become instantly smarter.

It went on to become a UK best-seller during the London Olympics last year.

The book is now being translated into numerous languages from Chinese to Italian, and is set to be launched in the United States in January 2014 under the title Brain Boot Camp.

Published by Pearson, GENIUS shows how lateral thinking can help people to achieve “genius moments” in business and life.

According to Bannerman, the book delivers a treasure trove of simple, powerful techniques to help anybody to be instantly ingenious and increasingly mentally skilful.

“The book shows you how to channel the life-changing principles of creativity to help you achieve more, to achieve success and become instantly smarter. You will learn to creatively solve problems, generate brilliantly original ideas, use clever tactics to persuade and influence and look for once in a lifetime opportunities to shine, succeed and really stand out,” he adds.

UNDETERRED DETERMINATION

Following the success of GENIUS, Bannerman has been given the green light by the book publisher to write a sequel to GENIUS that will be entitled BUSINESS GENIUS deceptively simple ways to excel at work, which is scheduled to be out in 2014.

The book’s success has been keeping Bannerman busy with GENIUS talks and seminars around the world, from Singapore to Saudi Arabia and Florida, to inspire organisational creativity and business innovation.

He also works with clients like Aston Martin on innovation and leadership development programmes, and lectures on organisational creativity at business schools like Warwick Business School and Oxford Brookes University in the UK.

Not one to rest on his laurels, he is exploring the opportunity of turning GENIUS into a TV series on creative thinking, alongside completing his PhD thesis on lateral thinking.

Bannerman admits he continues to find the world of creativity and psychology a never-ending source of fascination, and loves the interesting people he gets to work with in all kinds of companies and countries.

“I still view my professional life as a work in progress, and I’m hoping many more happy moments lie ahead,” he professes candidly.

He still has a number of goals and targets (both professionally and socially) linked to building the GENIUS brand and creating a portfolio of GENIUS products (from TV education documentaries to recording more pop songs). On what inspires him most, he says that his over-arching vision is to “help the world think more laterally”.

“Admittedly, that sounds very grand, but it really is what drives me. I genuinely believe that so many of the world’s problems are either caused by, or perpetuated by, a lack of lateral thinking, and by helping people – in businesses and beyond – to unleash more of their creative potential in a positive way, I sense that a great deal more can be achieved!” he enthuses.

James Bannerman is available for future speaking engagements through The London Speaker Bureau in Kuala Lumpur. For further information, visit www.londonspeakerbureau.com

A young Bannerman wrote songs professionally for television, films and pop songs for stars from around the world.
These women know how to look sure of what she is doing. A woman who portrays an appropriate ment.

Women who command long distances, or your accessories too time be able to get your hands dirty high that you find it difficult to walk one. Beat the stereotype, keep the turn? You can choose to dress statute and communication come intoance and make yourself stand out during prospective employer

The great thing about programmes like these is that they employ graduates from all disciplines.

The two most famous fillers are “uhm” and “uuh.” Too much even usage of “uhms” and uhs can make it appear that you are not confident with what you are saying. minimise fillers by limiting distractions. Fillers can represent the bridge linking between planning what to say and executing it. They can also be caused by distractions; for example you might be thinking about something at home or work while you’re giving a presentation. Focus your mind on just what you are speaking on, and natu- rally your fillers will be minimised, or maybe even eliminated.

Here’s something else you can do to help improve your speaking skills. Although it is natural for us to let loose and speak comfortably while ignoring almost every rule in grammar, you can try practising articulating your sentences with confidence. Practise forming full sentences, and of course, remember to put aside the “lahs” and the “mahs” for a little while. Also avoid using words that inter- ject feeling and uncertainty and use words that project confidence, for example, instead of saying “I think this would be a great investment for us”, try saying “this would be a great investment for us”.

When speaking, especially in busi- ness meetings, always articulate your sentences well. Try to eliminate at or at least mini- mize the use of fillers. Fillers are those empty extraneous words that pad our sentences without adding additional meaning to it. Examples of common fillers are “well…”, “I mean…”, “like…”. A fish hooked doesn’t mean you need to look for a spot interviews. There may be opportunities for on-the-early stages of the interview process, your profile will be evaluated and placed in three categories. Red for a no-go, amber for a “call her/ him in-and-get-the-person-fast!” Try to highlight parts of your profile that set you apart so that you would be more interesting than a woman who is content and comfortable in her own skin. Don’t have to try too hard to impress the people around you; being confident in yourself is impressive enough. Also make sure that you don’t neglect your own responsibilities by focusing too much on other projects. Don’t allow other people to take the blame by finishing your work. Always finish your work on time and give 100% effort in everything.

EVEN in this century, there are many women who feel that they are not receiving the respect they deserve from men at their workplace. Here’s the thing about respect – it is something that has to be earned. If you don’t feel that you are getting respect, it is not just because you work hard. You have to claim the respect you deserve. Here are few suggestions on how you can do that.

1. LOOK RESPECTABLE

Although work ethic and knowl-edge should be the only determining factors when an employee is striving for influence and respect, we are all social creatures and so both appear- ance and communication come into play as well. So, dress to impress. What if I told you that you don’t need to dress sexy to make heads turn? You can choose to dress statu-tance and communication come into ance and make yourself stand out during prospective employer

There are women who command women who still feel that men at their workplace.

By HYMA PILLAY

By JASON LEE

According to the Department of Statistics, 26 private and 20 public universities in Malaysia send out more than 180,000 graduates into the workforce every year. This does not include graduates from uni-versities abroad who are job-seeking in Malaysia.

Graduate programmes allow fresh gradu- uates to undergo job rotations, formal/infor-mal training and the potential to fast-track their careers in a structured-learning pro cess. They are usually 12 to 24 months in duration and have a high selection criteria including, grades, co-curricular activities and communication skills.

1. Find out which industry you would like to be in and why

Just because you studied accounting doesn’t mean you need to look for a graduate programme in accounting. Do an online search and figure out which industry you would like to be a part of. The great thing about programmes like these is that they employ graduates from all disciplines.

2. Make a list of all the graduate programmes you are interested in

The best way to start is to attend a career fair. Before going for a one, make a top 10 list of preferred graduate programmes and make sure that the first 30 booths you visit are those on your list. Be sure to come prepared, as there may be opportunities for on-the-spot interviews.

3. Try to get into the green zone

There isn’t an exact format but usually during the early stages of the interview process, your profile will be evaluated and placed in three categories. Red for a no-go, amber for a “call her mayor” and green for “get-him/her-in-and-get-that-person-fast!” Try to highlight parts of your profile that set you apart so that you would likely be placed in the green zone.

4. Stand out from the crowd by having a hook factor

Like a fish hooked on bait, think of a memorable story during your student days that would ‘hook’ your prospective employer during the interview process. This will help you stand out during the interview.

5. Learn to interact and mingle with people from all positions and ages

As a part of a graduate programme, you will have a good chance to engage with senior leaders in the organisation. Take this golden opportunity to make a positive impression by being well read about matters in the industry or being sure about how you can contribute to the organisation.

6. Practise, practise, practise

The high supply of graduates in the workplace means there will be a strong competition getting into graduate programmes. Sharpen your interview skills and understand the organisation you are applying to. Find out about their values, core functions and plans for the future.

7. Try again

Don’t be disappointed if you fail to get in the first few times. Use these experiences as learning points and get ready to try again. You may be rejected at the interview stage or when you are one signature away from a new challenge. Every failure can become a stepping stone in the process of securing a place in a great graduate programme.

The three women on the right are women who command respect.

The three women on the right are women who command respect.

By HYMA PILLAY

How to earn it in the workplace

By JASON LEE

According to the Department of Statistics, 26 private and 20 public universities in Malaysia send out more than 180,000 graduates into the workforce every year. This does not include graduates from universities abroad who are job-seeking in Malaysia.

Graduate programmes allow fresh gradu- uates to undergo job rotations, formal/infor-mal training and the potential to fast-track their careers in a structured-learning pro cess. They are usually 12 to 24 months in duration and have a high selection criteria including, grades, co-curricular activities and communication skills.

1. Find out which industry you would like to be in and why

Just because you studied accounting doesn’t mean you need to look for a graduate programme in accounting. Do an online search and figure out which industry you would like to be a part of. The great thing about programmes like these is that they employ graduates from all disciplines.

2. Make a list of all the graduate programmes you are interested in

The best way to start is to attend a career fair. Before going for a one, make a top 10 list of preferred graduate programmes and make sure that the first 30 booths you visit are those on your list. Be sure to come prepared, as there may be opportunities for on-the-spot interviews.

3. Try to get into the green zone

There isn’t an exact format but usually during the early stages of the interview process, your profile will be evaluated and placed in three categories. Red for a no-go, amber for a “call her mayor” and green for “get-him/her-in-and-get-that-person-fast!” Try to highlight parts of your profile that set you apart so that you would likely be placed in the green zone.

4. Stand out from the crowd by having a hook factor

Like a fish hooked on bait, think of a memorable story during your student days that would ‘hook’ your prospective employer during the interview process. This will help you stand out during the interview.

5. Learn to interact and mingle with people from all positions and ages

As a part of a graduate programme, you will have a good chance to engage with senior leaders in the organisation. Take this golden opportunity to make a positive impression by being well read about matters in the industry or being sure about how you can contribute to the organisation.

6. Practise, practise, practise

The high supply of graduates in the workplace means there will be a strong competition getting into graduate programmes. Sharpen your interview skills and understand the organisation you are applying to. Find out about their values, core functions and plans for the future.

7. Try again

Don’t be disappointed if you fail to get in the first few times. Use these experiences as learning points and get ready to try again. You may be rejected at the interview stage or when you are one signature away from a new challenge. Every failure can become a stepping stone in the process of securing a place in a great graduate programme.

In conclusion, take note that even when you are looking for the best organisation to work in, organisations are in turn looking for the best graduates to work for them. Enjoy the process and all the best in being part of a graduate programme of your choice!
TIPS FOR THE FRESH GRADUATES

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN AN INTERNSHIP?

If you used to be able to look forward to your semester holidays, but these days, due to increased competition amongst fresh graduates, vacations seem to be the perfect time to complete an internship. In fact, some universities make it a course requirement. But why such a fuss over an internship? Is it really beneficial?

Most companies offer internships as a future employee, but also a person. That can help you develop not just as a future worker, but also a person. But why such a fuss over an internship? Is it really beneficial?

Get out of your shy zone!

If the thought of networking, interviewing or even meeting new people overwhelms you, then you need to read this to get tips on how you can overcome shyness. Social anxiety. Shyness. Introversion. Call it what you wish but it’s all the same – the fear of expressing yourself. Unfortunately, being shy can be a challenge in a job hunt. Can you imagine clamming up when the interviewer asks you questions? Not a good start to your job search! Plus, to get a job, you will need to make phone calls, talk to people, and express yourself wel. Being embarrassed and anxious won’t help one bit. The good news is that shyness can be overcome. How? Try these ideas.

1. PRACTICE
One way to overcome shyness? Rehearse. Whether it is going for a job interview or cold calling, practise with a friend how the conversation will go. Frequent practice will make the situation less daunting and make you more confident. Ask a friend to act as an interviewer or practice in front of a mirror. Record yourself so you can evaluate and improve.

2. START SLOW
There is no way you’ll change from being an introvert to an extrovert overnight. So don’t put too much stress on being someone you’re not. Open up to a few friends first. Next, make it a habit to start a conversation with an acquaintance before you take the plunge with strangers. Before you know it, making small talk and meeting new people will come easily to you.

3. STAY CALM, RELAX!
This is especially useful at job interviews – relaxation techniques. Prior to the interview or the situation where you’re expected to talk to others, take slow, deep breaths to relax. Loosen your shoulder to release tension. Close your eyes and try to remove the anxiety. Just remember this – the person you’re meeting could also be just as nervous as you are.

4. FOCUS ON THE OTHER PERSON
When you are focused on yourself, being shy may be the only thing you’ll think about. Instead of focusing on how shy you are, why not make a point to find out more about the other person? Be interested in what they have to say. Practise asking other people about themselves.

MEANINGFUL WORK AND INCLUSION

Again, clarify the job scope before deciding on the place of your internship. When possible, check if you are able to speak to the head of department or the supervisor you will be directly reporting to. Volunteer to join the meetings or brainstorming sessions, do all you can to be included in all types of tasks that a full-time employee would typically have to execute. Cer tical tasks and grunt work are acceptable for casual employment, but not as an intern, though you should never be too proud to perform seemingly lowly tasks.

GUIDANCE, SUPERVISION AND FEEDBACK

Take note of the person that you will be reporting to as the intern, and be prepared to readily answer when he or she asks you “What are you hoping to get out of this internship?” Most employers look for independent workers but also desire a measure of accountability. As the newbie, constantly run through your ideas and tasks with your supervisor and get them to give you constructive criticism. If possible, look for a chance to shadow someone. Your mentor’s expansive knowledge will enrich your overall internship experience.

Here are some questions from the Sam Nunn University Career Center to help you get the answers you want during an internship interview.

• What will be the top three priorities for me in this internship?
• What projects, reports, or presentations could be assigned?
• Will I have an opportunity to work on a start-to-finish project?
• What are the challenges that an intern may face in this role?
• What sort of training and supervision will be provided?
• What career-specific skills can I expect to learn from this internship?
• What strengths should an intern have to succeed in this role?
• What percentage of my time will be on clerical tasks?

One final thing you should consider when deciding on an internship is whether you would want to complete the internship in an established firm or a start-up company. Well-known firms that have been in operation for a long time would add credibility and prestige to your CV. They may also be better equipped to handle and provide a more established internship. However, don’t underestimate the value of working at a start-up company. In small firms, you would have a chance to wear many hats and explore different departments given the fewer number of employees.

Re-employment and promotion opportunities are also greater compared to that of an established firm. Nevertheless, regardless of which type of firm you choose, ensure that your internship provides you with holistic and educational experience that will help boost your career in the right direction in the future.
DEAR CAREER NOMERS,

I was in sales for 2½ years. I switched to quality and later regulatory affairs in the pharmaceutical industry for three years. I am a biotech degree holder although pharmacy is the preferred degree in my current job function.

I am interested in a consulting/training/marketing-related function. My question is, will I face obstacles in getting a consultant/trainer/marketing job since I do not have the relevant background?

I have tried to apply for a transfer to a relevant department in my current company but the marketing managers told me frankly that I need to have experience in the relevant field.

I am not sure if I should just stay put in my current position, which has limited career progression, or move on to something which I am passionate about. If I choose to follow my passion, where do I start?

YANG HUEI YEE, HR manager, Tupperware Brands and Elisa Dass Avin, head, Talent Assessment from Leaderonomics answer our reader's question.

Dear Person who needs help,

First of all, let me commend you for taking the initiative to speak with people in the marketing field—an area of your interest. If you have not spoken to training or consulting experts, a good start is to do so.

You need to find out more information about the nature of these roles and the challenges. The three fields you have identified are very different in nature and require specific skills.

Before you move into a career of your choice, you need to identify your passion. Are you interested only in training, consulting, and marketing? In most recruitment, companies would prefer to hire candidates with experience in the relevant field as the chances of setting an experienced candidate for success is higher, especially those with a proven track record.

If you do not have the relevant skills, chances are higher for a move within the organization as part of your career development. I would suggest that you explore opportunities with your manager to expand your role to interface with your external customers in order to understand their needs and the market. This will open doors for a role in marketing.

To quote a real life example, I have seen a lab chemist progress into the role of a product manager. The chemist’s role was expanded into providing technical service to the external customers. This enabled him to understand his customer needs, and at the same time, provided him exposure to the market.

He eventually moved into a sales and marketing role within a few years.

Of course he equipped himself with a post graduate diploma in marketing.

A transition into training or consulting role would be an easier route with your background and experience in quality and regulatory affairs.

A good start is to hone your training skills and to take every opportunity to conduct training in your area of expertise or interest.

If the opportunity to train is not available in your current role, you will need to create the opportunity. Be a volunteer trainer in your organization. Start to network with people in this industry and make your name known. If there is a local pharma quality group, be a member and participate in its activities. Assess your readiness and line opportunity before you take on these roles. There is always demand for good trainers and consultants in management systems.

To answer your question if not having the relevant background is an obstacle in getting the role of your interest, I would say no, but not having the relevant experience and skills is definitely an obstacle unless you are willing to start at the management trainee level.

You need to be very clear whether training, consulting or marketing is your passion or whether there is a higher purpose of finding solutions to people’s problems.

On the question if you should continue in your current role or move into an area of your passion, I would advise you to move into an area of your talent which would allow you to serve a higher purpose.

There is so much hype and emphasis on finding the career of passion by career counsellors, career guide books and the media. It makes sense to a small group of people because they have the talent and a clear passion in that direction.

In reality, how many of us in the workforce are actually performing a job of our true calling? One cannot find sustainable motivation or passion in a job from an external source or environment but from within oneself. Cal Newport, author and professor of Georgetown University has a career philosophy based on this simple premise. The traits that lead people to love their work are general and have little to do with a job’s specifics. These traits include a sense of autonomy and the feeling that you are good at what you do and are having an impact on the world. To quote Newport, “Passion is not something you follow. It’s something that will follow you as you put in the hard work to become valuable to the world.”

May success and passion follow you in your choice career!

YANG HUEI YEE

DEAR PERSON WHO NEEDS HELP,

We all reach a crossroad at different times, we have shared your dilemma. On the question if you should continue in your current role or move into an area of your passion, we would definitely get to meet a different perspective on finding the career of passion by choosing one of these options to explore further and to help you transition into your new area of interest. In some cases, this may take place quickly; sometimes it may take longer. If you wish to explore how to be a trainer, please consider the following:

Volunteer to be an in-house trainer to the new or younger employees. That will help build confidence and discover if this is truly what you want to do. Also, when you decide to move on from your company, it will give you the credentials to apply to train or consult elsewhere.

Get trained to be a trainer. There are many public courses as well as those from the HR department that will help you get a feel of what it means to train and at the same time, show future employers how serious you are in your desire to change fields.

Ask for a mentorship. That will be an opportunity to get guidance.

Speak to recruiters. Share with them your desire to switch job focus. Then wait for them to match you to the right job.

Don’t give up. While you may not have all the desired qualifications now, work on equipping yourself and at the same time, keep applying for jobs. You may come across someone who is willing to give you an opportunity to grow.

Never think it’s too late to pursue what you are passionate about. Be certain of your passion and persevere!

All the best!

ELISA DASS AVIN

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

Also next week

Find out how to make yourself employable

Look within your organisation for a transformation miracle

How to deal with workplace vampires – colleagues and bosses that drain your energy

What is the difference between work and school?