ARE YOU EMPLOYABLE?

QUALITIES BOSSES LOOK FOR PAGES 6–7

Dealing with workplace vampires
Finding a way to deal with bosses and colleagues that drain your voice and energy. Pg 09

Pg 03

TRANSFORMING FROM WITHIN
Look for hidden gems within your organisation to spur change

Pg 08

PROOF OR POTENTIAL?
Recruiters prefer those with potential over a track record

Pg 10

BODY LANGUAGE MATTERS
Find out what your body language says about you
EMPLOYABILITY FACTOR

IMAGINE what life would be like if we didn’t have to work. Surely, if we didn’t have to work, we could have all the leisure and free time we want.

What bliss, we secretly say, to be able to have passive income flowing in from heavenly places (without having to put in the hard yards to tap and build that passive income source) and spend our days doing whatever we want, whenever we want.

It’s the subconscious premise behind the terrors of Sunday evenings when we realise the weekend is coming to an end, the diagnosis of “Monday blues” and Wednesday as “hump” day.

But Seth Godin puts it like this “… treasure what it means to do a day’s work. It’s our one and only chance to do something productive today, and it’s certainly not available to someone merely because he is the high bidder.

“A day’s work is your chance to do art, to become a gift, to do something that matters. As your work gets better and your art becomes more important, competition for your gifts will increase and you’ll discover that you can be choosier about what you want.

By EVA CHRISTODOULOU

employees value individuals who are adaptable, able to improvise and respond well to anything that comes their way.

Whatever we want, whenever we want, we have to work. It’s our one and only chance to

It is therefore crucial to go beyond only aiming to make your employer happy by doing what you have to do. In the interest of your employer, but mainly for your own good, you should carefully plan the projects and tasks to pursue, so that you can build on your employability.

I am not saying that you become an employee that refuses to do anything that doesn’t seem to add to your employability. That is definitely the wrong attitude.

At the end of the day, all you’ll be left with are the skills, experience and attributes that you have built. So make sure you develop these effectively throughout your working time.

MAKE YOURSELF MARKETABLE

GET MORE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

JOIN US!

TUNE IN

Want practical tips for success on your way home from work? We’re on every Tuesday from 6pm to 7pm.

Long directly to whatever your interests may be. It is important to tackle as secondary, it is important to

TAKE a quick pause in your career progression and evaluate what you do. What is your aim when you make your career choices?

Sometimes, we have to do certain things that will not necessarily help us in the future. Nothing wrong with that – we all have to go through it.

However, when planning our career and making decisions on what skills and attributes to develop and which ones to tackle as secondary, it is important to keep in mind that we do not have life-time employment in one firm like our parents or grandparents did.

Are the days when once you secured a job, all you had to do was perform all the tasks required of you on time and completely, so that you could keep your job. In today’s volatile job market, people change jobs constantly, whether by choice, or because they are forced to do so.

It is therefore crucial to go beyond only aiming to make your employer happy by doing what you have to do. In the interest of your employer, but mainly for your own good, you should carefully plan the projects and tasks to pursue, so that you can build on your employability.

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Read and keep yourself updated on the latest news and developments in the industry that you are interested in. Employers can tell immediately if you have not done your research.

GET THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Most employers value character as much as skills and qualifications. Keep a positive and humble attitude, and demonstrate willingness to learn. You know what they say, you can acquire skills, but it’s more difficult to groom character.

BE ADAPTABLE

The economy and job industry are constantly changing. Employers value individuals who are adaptable, able to improvise and respond well to anything that comes their way.

MAKE YOURSELF MARKETABLE

GET MORE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

By EVA CHRISTODOULOU

evachristodoulou@leaderonomics.com

TAKE a quick pause in your career progression and evaluate what you do. What is your aim when you make your career choices?

Sometimes, we have to do certain things that will not necessarily help us in the future. Nothing wrong with that – we all have to go through it.

However, when planning our career and making decisions on what skills and attributes to develop and which ones to tackle as secondary, it is important to keep in mind that we do not have life-time employment in one firm like our parents or grandparents did.

Are the days when once you secured a job, all you had to do was perform all the tasks required of you on time and completely, so that you could keep your job. In today’s volatile job market, people change jobs constantly, whether by choice, or because they are forced to do so.

It is therefore crucial to go beyond only aiming to make your employer happy by doing what you have to do. In the interest of your employer, but mainly for your own good, you should carefully plan the projects and tasks to pursue, so that you can build on your employability.

I am not saying that you become an employee that refuses to do anything that doesn’t seem to add to your employability. That is definitely the wrong attitude.

At the end of the day, all you’ll be left with are the skills, experience and attributes that you have built. So make sure you develop these effectively throughout your working time.

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Read and keep yourself updated on the latest news and developments in the industry that you are interested in. Employers can tell immediately if you have not done your research.

GET THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Most employers value character as much as skills and qualifications. Keep a positive and humble attitude, and demonstrate willingness to learn. You know what they say, you can acquire skills, but it’s more difficult to groom character.

BE ADAPTABLE

The economy and job industry are constantly changing. Employers value individuals who are adaptable, able to improvise and respond well to anything that comes their way.

MAKE YOURSELF MARKETABLE

GET MORE SKILLS AND EXPERIENCES

By EVA CHRISTODOULOU

evachristodoulou@leaderonomics.com

TAKE a quick pause in your career progression and evaluate what you do. What is your aim when you make your career choices?

Sometimes, we have to do certain things that will not necessarily help us in the future. Nothing wrong with that – we all have to go through it.

However, when planning our career and making decisions on what skills and attributes to develop and which ones to tackle as secondary, it is important to keep in mind that we do not have life-time employment in one firm like our parents or grandparents did.

Are the days when once you secured a job, all you had to do was perform all the tasks required of you on time and completely, so that you could keep your job. In today’s volatile job market, people change jobs constantly, whether by choice, or because they are forced to do so.

It is therefore crucial to go beyond only aiming to make your employer happy by doing what you have to do. In the interest of your employer, but mainly for your own good, you should carefully plan the projects and tasks to pursue, so that you can build on your employability.

I am not saying that you become an employee that refuses to do anything that doesn’t seem to add to your employability. That is definitely the wrong attitude.

At the end of the day, all you’ll be left with are the skills, experience and attributes that you have built. So make sure you develop these effectively throughout your working time.

STAND OUT FROM THE CROWD

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Read and keep yourself updated on the latest news and developments in the industry that you are interested in. Employers can tell immediately if you have not done your research.

GET THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Most employers value character as much as skills and qualifications. Keep a positive and humble attitude, and demonstrate willingness to learn. You know what they say, you can acquire skills, but it’s more difficult to groom character.

BE ADAPTABLE

The economy and job industry are constantly changing. Employers value individuals who are adaptable, able to improvise and respond well to anything that comes their way.
By ROSHAN THIRAN  

DON’T WAIT FOR A SPIDER-BITE  

LOOK INSIDE FOR HIDDEN GEMS TO TRANSFORM YOUR BUSINESS  

By ROSHAN THIRAN  

roshan.thiran@gmail.com  

A  

S my family rewatched the Avengers, I started to think about superheroes and their amazing transformation. Almost every superhero from Spiderman to the Incredible Hulk went through some form of transformation from a nothing into a mighty being.  

Peter Benjamin Parker, my all-time favourite superhero, was just a poor boy with no parents when he mysteriously transformed into the Amazing Spiderman after being bitten by a radio-active spider. His nemesis, Green Goblin, likewise, was transformed by an experimental serum from a businessman into a super-villain.  

Dr Bruce Banner accidentally came in contact with gamma radiation that gave him his incredible superpower.  

Marvel’s recent revival, all point to an internal transformation. Businesses are all looking outside for that new something that will change our lives. We buy diet programmes to transform our bodies. We look for that new something that will change our lives. Yet, all great leaders will tell you that greatness is within you. We just need to find it and leverage it fully.  

Dr Bruce Banner accidentally came in contact with gamma radiation that gave him his incredible superpower.  

Almost every superhero and super-villain got their astonishing transformative powers through an outside force (spider, serum, radiation).  

Ironically, research shows personal transformation happens primarily from the inside. Great leadership and feats are achieved not through external transformation, but internally.  

Not surprisingly, businesses are all looking for that magical “spider-bite” that will transform. Many start their transformation by hiring a new CEO. Others opt to leave their “Superman Industries” and leap into hot new markets.  

AOI and Time Warner decided to merge in the hope that combining two dinosaurs will result in a young tiger. Other businesses decide to introduce new products or copy ideas from outside to “transform” the organisation. Their transformative efforts generally fail.  

The majority of business transformations do not begin from external sources. Many of the most remarkable transformations in history, from Apple’s rejuvenation in 1997 to Old Spice’s recent revival, all point to an internal trigger.  

In fact, Spiderman’s parent company, Marvel Entertainment’s transformation story, clearly spells out that transformation does not come from external sources, but from within.  

In 1996, Marvel reported a huge loss of US$446mil. On Oct 8, 1996, Marvel announced that it would violate specific bank loan covenants due to decreasing revenue and profits. A third of its work-force was fired.  

Then, on Dec 27, 1996, the publisher of Marvel Comics filed for Chapter 13 bankruptcy protection in New York. This was the final nail in Marvel’s coffin after years of looking externally for answers.  

All of Marvel’s early attempts to transform itself were spent looking for the magical “spider-bite”. First, it believed the only way to transform was through acquisition and growing its value chain. It began with the acquisition of Hero’s World, a small comic distributor.  

Next up, Fleer and Skybox Trading, manufacturers of sports trading cards were acquired. Then, a string of acquisitions from Toy Biz, a designer and retailer of children’s toys to Panini Group, an Italian producer of sports and entertainment stickers to Marvel Publishing Group and Malibu publishing.  

Each acquisition got it further away from the transformation it so craved. It even went into the restaurant business with the set-up of Marvel Restaurants in the hope that it would be “the spider-bite” to transform the company.  

All to no avail. So, how did Marvel finally transform itself? By 1999, Marvel finally decided to look inside. And by taking a hard look at itself, it found numerous hidden gems.  

One such gem it found came in the form of a web-slinging teenage misfit, a group of mutants and a scientist who turns green when he gets angry. Marvel had the most amazing collections of superheroes and super-villains, but had never realised the goldmine it was sitting on.  

The Avengers, Spider-Man, Iron Man, Incredible Hulk, X-Men and super-villains like Venom, Loki, Dr Doom and others that accompanied the heroes were a large bed of comic celebrities that Marvel had ignored and under-leveraged for so many years.  

Marvel began to see its internal stable of more than 5,000 comic characters and stories, that many former readers of comic books felt a strong nostalgic attachment to (myself included), as an opportunity to transform itself.  

It moved from being a comic-book franchise to a licensee of characters and stories, turning Marvel’s popular characters into movie stars. By 2005, Marvel made more than US$1.2bnil in profits.  

All along, Marvel’s transformation story was inside the company. Yet, for many years, everyone at Marvel looked outside for that turnaround.  

It is the same for many organisations. Your transformation does not hinge on “spider-bites” from super consultants or getting a new CEO. Mergers generally don’t work.  

Deep inside your organisation are your hidden gems. And most of the time, these hidden gems seldom look like valuable assets. In fact, they are usually hidden right under our noses.  

Take a long, hard look at your business for these valuable hidden assets and you will find them. A 10-year study by Bain & Co reveals that 75% of Fortune 500 companies “face the threat of extinction within a decade” unless they tap their “hidden assets... to redefine themselves.”  

Marvel’s resurrection shows that superheroes are not the only entities with hidden powers. Businesses have them, too, in the form of under-utilised or under-appreciated assets. The key is to discover these gems and leverage them as Marvel finally did.  

But the same can be said about each of us individually. Within each of us lie hidden gems, including hidden talents and aspirations. Personal transformation actually starts from within.  

Instead, we all look for that magical spider that will change our lives. We buy diet programmes to transform our bodies. We look for that new something that will change our lives. Yet, all great leaders will tell you that greatness is within you. We just need to find it and leverage it fully.  

Andrea Jung, CEO of Avon Products, took time reflecting, finding her hidden strengths and purpose before she transformed Avon and its mission from selling cosmetics to the empowerment of women.  

Howard Schultz created Starbucks from a self-reflection moment early in his childhood where he vowed to fix a wrong suffered by his father.  

My friend Jamie Andrew, lost both his hands and legs in a mountain accident, but looked inside and found that he is capable of greatness. He has climbed mountains, done the Ironman triathlon and can juggle balls, without hands or legs.  

There was no spider-bite to transform. It was all from the inside. So, how do we find these hidden gems in our organisations and ourselves? I suggest the following steps:  

1. Start by taking a deep look at your business/self. Ask tough questions. Apply a rigorous diagnostic to your business and really understand the current state of your business and strengths.  

2. Look at each part of your business with a different lens for hidden assets. Remember, hidden assets are not actual assets that are completely hidden. They really are assets that have the properties that allow you to see your business in a way you had not seen before.  

3. Take an inventory of your hidden assets. List down every single possible hidden asset. Often this involves going outside, talking to customers and employees.  

4. Leverage your hidden assets for transformation. Once you have found your hidden assets, build a new business model leveraging on the strength of your assets years ago. A poor man named John was given a gift by his parents at his marriage, a painting. He never really liked it but kept it in the house for 45 years until his parents’ death. He then gave the painting to the garbage disposal man, who decided to re-frame the painting as the framing was new.  

At the frame shop, the shopowner spotted its value and informed the garbage disposal man that this painting was easily worth millions. He immediately sold it off and could not believe his luck.  

For 45 years, John walked passed an amazing asset in his own house, yet never recognised it. In the end, he gave his hidden gem away, never benefiting from it.  

Inside each of us are such gems. Are we going to squash them and ultimately lose them like John? The same gems exist in our businesses. Do we know what they are? Don’t wait to be bitten by the radioactive spider. Transformation is inside you.  

Roshan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about transforming the nation through leadership development. He believes that inside everyone there is a goldmine of hidden potential waiting to be realised and his team at Leaderonomics work hard with children and adults helping them realise this potential. For more information on Leaderonomics, email people@leaderonomics.com or visit www.leaderonomics.com
Roger Fisk uses lessons from presidential campaigns to motivate others

By ANGIE NG
angie@thestar.com.my

ITING THE US presidential campaign trail must send the adrenalin-flowing in huge doses for candidates and campaign workers. To be in the thick of things of the three most recent presidential campaigns, including President Barack Obama’s two successful campaigns, speaks volumes indeed about Roger Fisk’s experience.

“ITING THE US presidential campaign trail must send the adrenalin-flowing in huge doses for candidates and campaign workers. To be in the thick of things of the three most recent presidential campaigns, including President Barack Obama’s two successful campaigns, speaks volumes indeed about Roger Fisk’s experience. A masters graduate in public policy and professional politics, Fisk uses his wealth of “politi-cal talent” as a speaker for The London Speaker Bureau to bring the “lessons of the whole Obama experience” to audiences around the world.

What motivates him is the intention to take the lessons he has learned in presidential campaigns in engaging 10s of millions of people around the world who are “invested and involved in big ideas”.

So how did it all start for Fisk before he was drafted into the “inner circle of the presidential elite team”?

According to the 46-year-old, he did not have a clear sense of what he wanted to do when he was younger. Upon completing high school at 18, he worked for three years in a work crew around Beacon Hill and Back Bay in Boston, “doing a lot of interior and exterior painting as well as other tasks” for a general contractor.

“I loved the hands-on nature of the work,” he shares with myStarjob.com. In particular, he loved watching the conceptualisation of projects which would be broken down into daily tasks, “then over the weeks they would all add up into something amazing, like a renovated church or a brand new addition to a historic home”.

He only enrolled in univer-sity after turning 21 to study his-tory and government at Suffolk University and continued with his graduate studies at the same uni-versity. At the end of his graduate school, Fisk submitted his thesis to Senator John Kerry’s office. He had been exposed to the political environment for years, interning for the senator in 1989, working for his first Senate re-elec-tion in 1990 and briefly being on staff in 1993.

Naturally, Fisk was happy when he received a call from the sena-tor’s office. It turned out that its office manager had left without much warning, and it needed someone to start in that position the following Monday.

“I knew I would not really like being the office manager, but I also knew it got me my foot in the door, and from there I could move up and take on better and differ-ent work. So I took it and started four days later,” Fisk reminisces.

THE STATION MASTER

He basically kept the “trains running” in the Senate office, managing office supplies, systems and operations. His most daunting task was being the IT administra-tor, which he did for nine months before being promoted. Recalling the enduring moments he encountered, Fisk says: “Few things are as sobering as the server for the entire office crashing which happened about six weeks into the job. I only had gone through some very basic IT training so it took me an hour over the hour with the US Senate computer help desk staff to get the server up and running.”

“People were coming up to me every few minutes asking when the system was going to be fixed and I did not have a good answer. It seemed minor in retrospect but when it was happening I was nerv-ous,” Fisk recalls.

He says although the job was not outstanding, it was pivotal to his career advancement “as it got him on the Kerry staff and so I could learn more, do more, and become more useful.”

“I did get me a seat at the table, and that’s all I wanted. I would have washed dishes to get on staff at that point because I knew it was just a question of time until Senator Kerry would run for President of the United States,” he says.

With his promotion as an aide to Senator Kerry, Fisk recalls that he did a lot of “advance work” for the Senator. He also wrote speech- es and issued memorandums to help guide policy and communique-tions efforts on the various issues that the Senator was dealing with in Congress.

“These ranged from labour strikes to health care to early edu-ca-tion for young children to veter-ans and military affairs,” he recalls.

Fisk says the highlights of his first job included his first presiden-tial event work when former US President Bill Clinton visited New England.

“Working those visits took up all my interest in events and politics. To get people involved in big ideas pushed that curiosity and interest into high gear,” he says. “I had to embrace things that did not naturally appeal to me: first and foremost the systems administra-tion process; trouble shooting computer problems, fixing printers and copiers, and hiring outside vendors when needed.”

WINDS OF CHANGE

A few months into the job he took the entire operation from a DOS environment into Windows. And that brought about other changes.

“Everyone had to be trained. Some of the older staff did not want to change, but I pushed through because I knew the more I learned about these responsi-bilities I did not necessarily like, the sooner I could prove myself, get promoted, and leave them behind.”

Fisk says he is grateful for the unexpected and much broader journey that he has travelled in his career that was made possible by his first job.

“I never would have guessed that interning for Senator Kerry and then becoming the office man-ager would somehow lead to me working for his presidential campaign and the two Obama campaigns,” he recol-lects gratefully.

In the course of his work, Fisk says he often looked around at the surroundings, “whether I was in a corn field in Iowa, a Baptist church in St. Louis or a mas-sive sports arena in Ohio, I kind of giggled to myself that I had ended up there.”

Now that he travels the world for The London Speaker Bureau to share lessons from the presi-dential campaigns, Fisk bemuses that he still experiences those same moments in different parts of the world, such as Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok and Sydney.

Having had such an illustrious career since earning his first pay cheque as a choir boy at age five, Fisk has some interesting advice for his younger compatriots.

“Top on his list is: ‘You should try as hard as you can at what is in front of you at that moment in time. Grand designs can take shape in a number of ways but don’t wait until you have the per-fect job with the perfect team to try your hardest.’

“Just pushing through tasks you don’t like will benefit you in ways you may not have expected. Prove to people that you are will-ing to see something through even if it is not the subject that interests you a lot,” he advises.

Next is a reminder on the need to be attentive and to be “very aware of listening to people”. Fisk says if people take the easy route and think that by absorb-ing information they are commu-nicating “then the already frayed social bonds that hold families and communities together will suffer even more”.

“In many ways we have more information competing for our time and attention. This makes it all the more important to be con-scious of listening to each other and really trying to understand what each of us is saying,” he concludes.

Roger Fisk is available for speaking engagements through The London Speaker Bureau in Kuala Lumpur. For further information, email myStar-job@leadernomics.com

Fisk was involved in the three recent US presidential campaigns, including Obama’s (left) two successful campaigns.
HELP SHAPE OUR NEXT GENERATION

WE’RE HIRING

Blueprint Delivery Directors, Managers, and Executives

- Role requires supporting delivery of the Malaysian Education Blueprint initiatives
- Experience in Strategic and Corporate Planning, large scale transformation programs, organisational and performance management required
- Strong problem solving and facilitation skills
- Strong planning, organisational and analytical skills
- Good communication skills, Bahasa and English required
- Strong drive and leadership with a passion and excitement for education

Corporate Functions Directors, Managers and Executives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change Management and Stakeholder Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Responsible for internal communications within the Ministry, including execution of a comprehensive change management strategy for the delivery of the Malaysian Education Blueprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good interpersonal and communication skills, and stakeholder management ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong creative, strategic, and organizational skills required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Responsible for overseeing financial budgeting, accounting and auditing, financial reporting, payroll and treasury services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing and managing financial controls and processes for procurement, contracting, and claims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experience in finance and accounting required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Oversight for program and data management for all Blueprint initiatives and projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong analytical and organizational skills, technical knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Experience in performance management, KPI setting and monitoring, initiative tracking required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talent Management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Design and implement Talent Management process, including recruiting, on-boarding, professional development and retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Responsible for workforce planning and annual HR plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strong interpersonal and communications skills, planning and organizational abilities required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education is the bedrock of development. As times evolve, so must our education system, not only to keep up but also to keep ahead. PADU is a newly incorporated Delivery Unit set up to support the Ministry of Education to deliver deep transformational change to our education system in line with the Malaysian Education Blueprint released on September 6, 2013. PADU will be staffed with exceptional talents from the private and public sectors. We offer market-competitive compensation, excellent networking exposure, and the opportunity to shape the future of our nation through education reform.

Please send your complete curriculum vitae (including position applied for, complete academic record, description of work experience and expected salary) to recruitment@padu.edu.my. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.
WHEN EMPLOYERS TALK ABOUT THE SORT OF PERSON THEY WANT — a SELF-CONFIDENT, ‘ENTHUSIASTIC’, THEY ARE LISTING ATTRIBUTES RATHER THAN SKILLS.

MALAYSIAN LABOUR FORCE

The majority of those in the labour force are Malay (78%), followed by non-Malay (22%), and of these, employees and employers (3.8%).

EMPLOYED PERSONS IN MALAYSIA

55.4%

67.0%

n

n

n

n

n

Compared to the national employment rate, the percentage of employed in the labour force is relatively low (55.4%). This is mainly due to the limited opportunities for employment, especially for the non-Malays.

EMPLOYMENT IN MALAYSIA

The employment rate in Malaysia is relatively low, at 67.0%. This is due to several factors, including the high cost of living, limited job opportunities, and the preference for higher education among the youth.

TRENDS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

The trends in the labour market in Malaysia indicate a positive outlook for employment. This is mainly due to the government’s efforts to promote the development of the economy and create job opportunities for its citizens.
PROOF OR POTENTIAL: WHICH WOULD YOU PICK?

By SU ANN CHIEN
suann.chien@leaderonomics.com

Y ou’re looking for a candidate to fill a position in your office. You’ve shortlisted two potential candidates and gone through the resumes before deciding to call them. Both have impressive qualifications but one seems to picque your interest a bit more.

Perhaps you’re on the other side of the fence. You’re the candidate looking for a job, and you’ve been sending out resumes. How can you make sure that out of all the other candidates out there, the interviewer becomes intrigued by you the most?

When the need to be impressive arises, it is the intuitive action for us to pull out a list of accomplishments. We bring up our prestigious schools, leadership positions, volunteering efforts, community work. However, that might not be as helpful as you think.

A recent paper by researchers from Harvard University and Stanford University (Zakary L. Karmarkar and Jason S. Ia) has discovered that the potential for achievement is more attractive than the achievement itself. This creates the tendency where the potential to do something is perceived as more intriguing than demonstrated achievements.

For example, one of the experiments played out a scenario in a hiring context. Naturally one would assume that experience and qualifications play a major factor in this decision. Backgrounds and qualifications were identical save for one aspect: candidate A had two years of relevant experience and scored highly on a test of leadership achievement, whereas the other had zero years of experience but scored very highly on a test of leadership potential.

Results showed that, surprisingly, participant employers gave greater belief in the candidate with potential rather than the candidate with achievement.

How can the knowledge of these facts change your approach to the interview? Let’s find out as we dive into the research and practical advice.

Given that the study placed established several measures in place to ensure that the attractiveness was not just a bias towards youth, it presents a reality that is highly counter intuitive for employees and employers alike.

Yet this phenomenon can hardly be considered breaking news, given that multimillion dollar contracts have been awarded to fresh young athletes who’s to decide when you have reached your fullest potential?

By BRENDA BENCE
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

PERSONAL BRANDING QUIZ: HOW ARE YOU DOING?

1. Do you work on less important, easier tasks before tackling the tough ones?
Successful personal brand builders define their priorities every morning and stick to them. If you do easier tasks first, you will most likely find yourself so tired at the end of the day that you won’t have energy to complete the more challenging tasks later on – and those tasks are probably also the most important tasks for your career. You need to be fresh and clear-headed for the jobs that require more from you, so the best time to tackle them is first thing in the morning.

2. Do you act like you understand something when you really don’t?
One of our worst fears is to look “stupid,” isn’t it? Worried about looking like a fool, we often don’t ask questions. Assume you’ve been given a task to complete, but you’re not sure of the objectives – and you don’t ask for clarity. You might end up doing nothing at all because you don’t know what to do, or you could end up doing something that isn’t appropriate for that task. So, there you are – exposed for not understanding it anyway! Bottom line: Asking for clarification is actually quite a smart thing to do!

3. Do you underestimate the importance of proper eye contact?
Proper eye contact is critical to your personal brand. Staring at someone makes you appear as though you’re trying to dominate him or her, while looking down conveys low self-esteem or be seen as a sign of nervousness. Find a happy medium between an intimidating “stare-down” and averting your gaze. Watch, learn, and model television interviewers to see how well they vary their eye contact.

4. Do you think how you “look” to others only means your person or office?
Your look doesn’t stop with your clothes, body, face, or even your office. It extends to every place where you are responsible for its “look.” If you walked out to a parking lot with a well-respected top executive, only to discover that the backseat of his car is filled with dog hair, old bottles, and trash, his personal brand would certainly be busted in your eyes, wouldn’t it?

5. Do you ignore the importance of silence as a powerful “sound”?
Without the pauses in music, there would be no rhythm. Speech has rhythm too. So, sometimes, just sitting back and listening is the best “sound” you can make. Done well, it can actually convey confidence, intelligence, patience, and reflection.

BRENDA BENCE is a branding expert, certified executive coach, professional speaker, and author of several award-winning corporate and personal branding books. After a 20-year career developing mega brands across four continents and 50 countries for Fortune 100 corporations, Bence started her own company, Brenda Bence Associates International. Based in Singapore, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies on how to achieve greater success through creative yet practical corporate and personal branding. Visit www.BrendaBence.com

HOW is your personal brand? Are you presenting “sound” you can make. Done well, it can actually convey confidence, intelligence, patience, and reflection.

BRENDA BENCE is a branding expert, certified executive coach, professional speaker, and author of several award-winning corporate and personal branding books. After a 20-year career developing mega brands across four continents and 50 countries for Fortune 100 corporations, Bence started her own company, Brenda Bence Associates International. Based in Singapore, she travels the world speaking, training, and coaching individuals and companies on how to achieve greater success through creative yet practical corporate and personal branding. Visit www.BrendaBence.com
ToMMY, a talented software developer, is usually a confident and likable composed employee. However, after a catch up meeting with the CEO (HRD) via an email invite, he was visibly shaken and upset. He had earlier booked a meeting with the HR director (HRD) via an email invite with a rather worrying subject titled “Verbal abuse”.

The HRD decided to do homework before the meeting. Reaching out to a trusted colleague, Li Ann, the HRD became even more anxious.

In a rushed email, Li Ann cautioned, “This CEO is a serial emotional vampire, super malignant, sucks and drains the self-esteem and makes you feel like a piece of useless and unimportant wretch. He is an egotistical bully and is hell bent on making a bad situation worse when he senses a helpless victim, he never takes ownership of a problem even when he is in the wrong.”

Li Ann commented that the most worrying thing is he always gets away with murder, never found out for his true evil colours.

CORPORATE VAMPIRES

In my line of work, I have encountered many horror stories of energy-sapping bosses or colleagues who are champions of leadership behaviours at their worst.

There are bosses who make work hell, those with a superiority complex where every idea is their own, simply shot down according to their whims and fancy.

These are the people who thrive in drama and theatrics – stomp, yelling, swearing, arm-finger-waving in your direction (sometimes, all of it at the same time!)

VAMPIRE STORY No.1

It was a particularly good day for Kamal. He had just launched the company’s new flexible benefits programme and was feeling very pleased about his work. It was also a joy to see the excitement and openness from the employees towards the change.

Obviously, he did not expect his colleague, Vampire One, to march in to tell him how much the programme “sucks” and that he should fix it.

One proceeded to tell him how to do his job followed by an even more condescending reprimand which felt like the biggest 10 minute rant of Kamal’s life. Concluding the monologue with a dismissive wave, Vampire One marched out of the office as quickly as he crashed-landed.

VAMPIRE STORY No.2

A HR colleague, Xian, had a discussion on expat compensation with a senior manager, let’s call him Vampire Two. The chat quickly digressed into a demeaning and belittling altercation.

When Xian explained that the final approval has come from her boss, who is the head of global HR, Vampire Two sneered and spat his venom with his fangs “You are doing a valiant job at delivering a lousy message. And just so you know, your boss reports to my boss.”

Xian half expected him to stick his tongue out, as a kid would when feeling superior in petty battles.

Because many bullies can “possess high levels of social ability,” they see “able to strategically abuse co-vampires with their power in some way, including being evaluated positively by their supervisors.”

Li Ann, a talented manager in a career, confirmed her unpleasant experience with the CFO; “Offer him and you will be squashed if he doesn’t know quite what to do with you! This sent a chill through the HRD’s spine during the sunny afternoon.

EMOTIONAL VAMPIRES DEFINED

“Emotional Vampires,” coined by Albert J. Bernstein in his book Emotional Vampires: Dealing with people who drain you dry, “are typically people that are extremely critical, controlling, narcissistic, or generally very negative and manipulative.”

According to Bernstein, vampires fall into three types: antisocial, narcissistic, obsessive-compulsive and paranoid.

Whilst these may sound technical, they are characters and behaviours, which I am sure you have come across on a daily basis at work.

This article explores the phenomenon of vampires at the workplace and lays out ways of protecting yourself from their venom and constructively dealing with them.

CORPORATE VAMPIRES IN OUR MIDST

Whilst many companies pay homage to shaping a respectful workplace, free of bullies and workplace incivility, the reality is that “emotional vampires” are in our midst.

Many are left to roam freely and inflict harm on everyone they come across. Victims don’t have to absorb the vampires’ negativity or put up with life-force-depleting or predatory personalities. You don’t have to be at your wits end or feel trapped in a corner.

Emotions are contagious; when one feels superior, the bully know that you felt demeaned and belittled. Ask if it was his/her intention to make you feel that way. This takes courage and is easier said than done.

But in life, we have to be courageous at times and take calculated risks. Let your perpetrator know that his or her behaviour is not acceptable and be firm about it.

Make it very clear that you will not hesitate to report the matter to a higher authority if the abuse continues.

VAMPIRE BUSTER No.1

Practice gentle and polite confrontation. Let the bully know that you felt demeaned and belittled. Ask if it was his/her intention to make you feel that way. This takes courage and is easier said than done.

Rather than wasting time with people who bring us down, focus on the people who are uplifting and who can help us move forward. Ask how we feel about you, but how we pick ourselves up.

The phrase “half-empty or half-full” has been a helpful guide to me. Focusing on what is working can lead us to find new solutions and possibilities that we would not be able to find when frustrated.

Anna Tan is a bean counter who found her calling in HR. Her journey in corporate HR has led her to pen “STAYING ALIVE: Unlocking your Team's Potential by Coaching the Rubber Band Way,” a book which likens human potential to be as flexible and agile as the rubber band.

GOOD AT MANAGING UPWARDS

The HRD interjects, “What about his boss? Doesn’t she know?” What Li Ann went on to say confirmed the HRD’s fears: “He’s very good at managing upwards and pulling the wool over his boss’ eyes.”

Reminded of research done by Dr Judith Orloff in her bestseller book Emotional Freedom: Liberate yourself from Negative Emotions and Transform your Life, the HRD recalled that “Many bullies thrive by charming their superiors and manipulating others to help them get ahead, even while they abuse their co-workers.”
It is fairly easy to spot the newbies from the big shots in a company. Even without speaking to them, you can tell just by looking at their body language. Our body language plays a very important role in how people perceive us. It is also a very useful communication tool. Here are a few tips on how to make the best out of any situation.

1. **SMILE**
   You walk into your client’s room, all equipped with your sales pitch presentation on your computer, but suddenly, technology fails you. Your computer buffers and your presentation is interrupted. Put on a smile and tell your clients to give you a few minutes while waiting for the computer to get back on track. Your smile shows that you are confident of your pitch, that this slight technical error is not going to stop you from making this sale. It conveys confidence and positivity; and can reassure others you know what you are doing.

2. **DON’T SLOUCH**
   Whether you are in the midst of a really long and dull seminar or meeting, or your chair is extremely comfortable, do not slouch when you’re working. Always maintain a straight back posture. Sitting up straight projects laziness. For some of us, this doesn’t come naturally, so mentally take note of your sitting postures. If you find yourself slowly sliding into slouch mode, immediately straighten your posture. Keep doing this and soon it will come naturally.

3. **STOP FIDGETING**
   This is something most of us do subconsciously. Fidgeting and twirling one’s hair reveal an excess of energy, which signals discomfort or anxiety. That isn’t exactly what you want people to think when you’re making a presentation or chairing a meeting. You can practise keeping your hands to your side, avoid touching your clothes, hair, or ears. Ideally, your hand should only touch the other hand, or point at something, for instance, your visual presentation.

4. **NOD IN AGREEMENT**
   You want people to know that you are listening. Avoid checking your text messages and e-mails while you’re in a meeting or discussion. Look up straight to the person who is speaking and nod every once in a while to indicate that you agree with his or her points. This shows that you are supportive, and it is something your co-workers would highly appreciate.

5. **FIRM HANDSHAKE**
   In the workplace, physical touch is established through handshakes. Handshakes reveal a lot about a person’s personality. Weak handshakes signals lack of authority and confidence. A handshake that too firm, on the other hand can make you seem aggressive or over confident. When giving a handshake, grab the other person’s hand firmly and confidently. Don’t linger on the handshake too long.

6. **KEEP YOUR HEAD UP**
   Lowering your head and looking down while walking shows that you may be uncomfortable with making eye contact and do not want to engage in any conversation. Practice walking with your head up, and keep your eyes forward. Don’t be afraid to look and smile at others when they pass you by. This will make you seem friendly and approachable, and it’s a great look, especially for networking events and conferences.

7. **MAKE EYE CONTACT**
   Making eye contact is important. Eye contact increases the effectiveness of communication. It shows that you are focused on the conversation, and helps to build rapport. Making good eye contact also helps to build positive relationships between co-workers, customers, and clients. People will naturally feel more comfortable with you.

8. **WALK CONFIDENTLY**
   Pay attention to the way you walk. You don’t want to be seen scurrying or sneaking around the room. A confident stride tells people that you are sure of yourself, and shows authority. Take large steps, and make sure you keep a straight posture, with your shoulders back and as mentioned above, keep your head up and eyes forward.

9. **STAND TALL**
   Whether you are in the midst of a really long and dull seminar or meeting, or your chair is extremely comfortable, do not slouch when you’re working. Always maintain a straight back posture. Sitting up straight projects laziness. For some of us, this doesn’t come naturally, so mentally take note of your sitting postures. If you find yourself slowly sliding into slouch mode, immediately straighten your posture. Keep doing this and soon it will come naturally.

By HYMA PILLAY
hyma.pillay@leaderonomics.com

Don’t Slouch

It’s not alarmist to say that all this sitting may be killing us. Research shows that long bouts of sitting causes serious physiological responses related to chronic disease and a shortened life span. The University of Queensland found that people who stood frequently had lower levels of C-reactive protein (a marker for blood fat). They also had smaller waistlines. It was the frequency of standing not the duration that counted. One study found that a woman’s risk of developing metabolic syndrome increased 26% for every extra hour of sitting. Prolonged sitting in an upright position can strain your back resulting in chronic pain. Blood clots are another risk of being inactive. None of this is good for your brain.

Periods of standing throughout the day can improve circulation, muscle tone, and vitality. Standing benefits the lean and overweight alike. Standing frequently keeps blood flowing free to your head. I have been telling people in my live presentations for years that standing is important for brain health. It is also important for your heart. Remember, what’s good for your heart is good for your brain.

It seems that when you sit your body pretty much stops working. You and your brain were meant to move. Consider:

- Taking more short breaks to stand and stretch (or to walk). Maybe set a timer.
- Having your meetings standing (you will save lots of time on this).
- Standing when talking on the telephone (studies show you will be perceived as having a better attitude).
- A standing desk (or just raise your old one).
- Setting your office up so things aren’t within arm’s reach.
- Reading standing (I do a lot of this).
- Plus, you will remember more.

Standing for just two hours during an average workday can burn an extra 280 calories. In a year, that might provide a weight loss of 8 lbs.

Standing while you work improves concentration by increasing blood flow to the brain. Many who stand state that their thinking is clearer and they have an increased ability to pay attention and focus.

I think the key here is to be mindful and make standing a habit. It just becomes how you are.

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

ALWAYS REMEMBER: “You are a genius!” Enjoy your brain.

By TERRY SMALL
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

Is sitting the new smoking? The analogy may not be far-fetched. Scientists and medical experts believe that sitting is not great for you and your brain. So many of us sit for long stretches at work and at school. And when we get home we sit some more. Prolonged sitting is bad for your health.

It’s not alarmist to say that all this sitting may be killing us. Research shows that long bouts of sitting causes serious physiological responses related to chronic disease and a shortened life span. The University of Queensland found that people who stood frequently had lower levels of C-reactive protein (a marker for blood fat). They also had smaller waistlines. It was the frequency of standing not the duration that counted. One study found that a woman’s risk of developing metabolic syndrome increased 26% for every extra hour of sitting. Prolonged sitting in an upright position can strain your back resulting in chronic pain. Blood clots are another risk of being inactive. None of this is good for your brain.

Periods of standing throughout the day can improve circulation, muscle tone, and vitality. Standing benefits the lean and overweight alike. Standing frequently keeps blood flowing free to your head. I have been telling people in my live presentations for years that standing is important for brain health. It is also important for your heart. Remember, what’s good for your heart is good for your brain.

It seems that when you sit your body pretty much stops working. You and your brain were meant to move. Consider:

- Taking more short breaks to stand and stretch (or to walk). Maybe set a timer.
- Having your meetings standing (you will save lots of time on this).
- Standing when talking on the telephone (studies show you will be perceived as having a better attitude)
- A standing desk (or just raise your old one)
- Setting your office up so things aren’t within arm’s reach
- Reading standing (I do a lot of this)
- Plus, you will remember more

Standing for just two hours during an average workday can burn an extra 280 calories. In a year, that might provide a weight loss of 8 lbs.

Standing while you work improves concentration by increasing blood flow to the brain. Many who stand state that their thinking is clearer and they have an increased ability to pay attention and focus.

I think the key here is to be mindful and make standing a habit. It just becomes how you are.

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

ALWAYS REMEMBER: “You are a genius!” Enjoy your brain.

Terry Small is a brain expert who resides in Canada and believes that anyone can learn how to learn easily, better, faster, and that learning to learn is the most important skill a person can acquire. To interact with Small, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com
What the School and Office Have in Common

By SU-ANN CHIEN

HEN you start working, things will be different, they say. But what is the difference between school and work? Both certainly have their own benefits and disadvantages. Students want to start earning a steady income, while working adults want their school holidays back.

But there are similarities. Both environments require the participants to complete a set of tasks while under the supervision of a superior; both environments have interactive elements and both environments facilitate teamwork, commitment and growth. So whether the school and office have much more in common than we previously thought.

Regardless of whether we are in school or in the office, we are fighting for the top spot. Reward and recognition go to the cream of the crop while the average ones are lost in a sea of faceless numbers.

Schools and educational institutions consistently reward outstanding achievers with certificates of excellence, leadership positions, opportunities for development and even scholarships.

Correspondingly, these “indicators” of academic success are usually chased after by students (and sometimes even parents) because they often translate into visible advantages in the workplace.

Fresh graduates hoping to secure a job in the 21st century need not only a degree, but a steady income, while working adults want the perks of working in teams for a common goal. School is a highly individualistic system where students study for personal value: exams and assignments are completed individually and the credit is given respectively.

Office spaces usually require the involvement of several parties and it’s an essential skill to learn how to cooperate with others to achieve bottom-line results.

The rewards of school are for the virtue of one, but the employee needs to learn to share credit with his/her team for the glory of the organisation, not just his/her own.

The biggest difference between work and school, however, lies in the fact that school is about you, the individual. School is about the student: his preferences, abilities, development, strengths and weaknesses. It’s a time for self-discovery and the maturing of a personality.

The educational experience helps you discover your individual passions, voice and interests.

Work, however, shifts that focus from the individual to the entity. The responsibility is now to the team, the allegiance to the organisation, skills and talents for the benefit of the client.

Regardless of the numerous differences, however, one similarity remains and holds the greatest importance regardless the environment: Character. Character counts, whether one is in the office or the classroom. Ethics and integrity is upheld from young, as can be seen from the way plagiarism is not tolerated in educational institutes. Similarly, the office aims to instill positive work ethics and reduce cheating as much as possible.

Character is of greater worth to any institute or organisation than talent can be, because it is not revenue that determines its staying power, but the calibre of its leaders.

ADJUST YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF WORK

Most of us think of work as, well, work. However, sometimes switching our point of view to a less bleak perspective is all it takes to get us motivated again. Visualise how your small contribution in the office create harmony in the bigger picture. The work that you’re doing now is part of the long-term plan for achieving your long-term lifelong goals.

UTILISE YOUR LEAVE DAYS

Some workers prefer not to claim leave days because they have nothing planned. Accumulating leave may seem like a good idea at first, but most companies have a “use by” date so they either end up being wasted or have to be utilised at an inconvenient time. Take a day off to travel, bring your folks out for lunch or just to sleep in! Take a break.

TALK TO PEOPLE AT WORK AND OUTSIDE OF WORK

Nurture relationships wherever you are. Build friendships so that there won’t be any disarray or jealousy in the workplace. In the meantime, make the effort to properly connect with loved ones when at home. Spend quality time and have quality conversations with your family members to ensure that they don’t feel disengaged from you. That will also help them to be more understanding when you go through stressful periods at work.

GET ENOUGH SLEEP

We can’t change the fact that work begins at 8:30am or 9am, so avoid being nocturnal. Ensure that you get your regular seven hours of sleep every night so that you don’t feel sluggish before 11am. This will also help you make full use of your time in the office, thus reducing the need to work past office hours.

DON’T BRING WORK HOME

Compartmentalise to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Create a space at work that is mentally conducive to increase productivity, but balance it out by ensuring that your space at home is emotionally and mentally comforting as well.

MANAGE TIME WISELY

In relation to the point above, one way to ensure that your work doesn’t cut into after office hours (or worse, weekends) is to make sure you get as much done as possible while in the office. Stay focused and productive so that no one can fault you for leaving work at 5:30pm.

10 ADJUST YOUR PERSPECTIVE OF WORK

Most of us think of work as, well, work. However, sometimes switching our point of view to a less bleak perspective is all it takes to get us motivated again. Visualise how your small contribution in the office create harmony in the bigger picture. The work that you’re doing now is part of the long-term plan for achieving your long-term lifelong goals.

9 UTILISE YOUR LEAVE DAYS

Some workers prefer not to claim leave days because they have nothing planned. Accumulating leave may seem like a good idea at first, but most companies have a “use by” date so they either end up being wasted or have to be utilised at an inconvenient time. Take a day off to travel, bring your folks out for lunch or just to sleep in! Take a break.

8 TALK TO PEOPLE AT WORK AND OUTSIDE OF WORK

Nurture relationships wherever you are. Build friendships so that there won’t be any disarray or jealousy in the workplace. In the meantime, make the effort to properly connect with loved ones when at home. Spend quality time and have quality conversations with your family members to ensure that they don’t feel disengaged from you. That will also help them to be more understanding when you go through stressful periods at work.

7 HAVE A BIT OF FUN EVERYDAY

Schedule happy activities such as a weekly futsal session or a coffee meet up with a friend during the weeknights. Such activities rejuvenate you after a long day. Definitely a cure for weekend withdrawal symptoms.

6 UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “URGENT” AND “IMPORTANT”

As much as we try to control them, certain circumstances will require us to disregard the whole concept of segregating work and home. In those cases, try to identify which errands require your attention now (these matters are “urgent”) versus which things carry weight but are not pressing (these are “important”).

5 GET ENOUGH SLEEP

We can’t change the fact that work begins at 8:30am or 9am, so avoid being nocturnal. Ensure that you get your regular seven hours of sleep every night so that you don’t feel sluggish before 11am. This will also help you make full use of your time in the office, thus reducing the need to work past office hours.

4 ALLOCATE TIME FOR EXERCISE

Don’t underestimate the power of exercise. It’s not just about getting in shape, but also maintaining health, improving mental acuity and self-esteem too. Don’t limit yourself to just going to the gym – working out can be fun: go for a swim or a dance class, or organise a badminton night once a week.

3 PURSUE A HOBBY, PREFERABLY ONE THAT ISN’T WORK-RELATED

Much of our time in the office requires using a specific kind of knowledge and staring at texts and screens all day. Being passionate and diligent about something not work-related can help you feel more pur- poseful outside of your work goals. Activate other parts of your brain or skills by indulging in hobbies that enhance your other talents such as cycling, photography or even wood-work.

2 DON’T BRING WORK HOME

Compartmentalise to achieve a healthy work-life balance. Create a space at work that is mentally conducive to increase productivity, but balance it out by ensuring that your space at home is emotionally and mentally comforting as well.

1 MANAGE TIME WISELY

In relation to the point above, one way to ensure that your work doesn’t cut into after office hours (or worse, weekends) is to make sure you get as much done as possible while in the office. Stay focused and productive so that no one can fault you for leaving work at 5:30pm.

Top 10 Ways To Achieve Work Life Balance

- Make the effort to properly connect with loved ones, especially when at home.
- Spend quality time and have quality conversations with family members to ensure they don’t feel disengaged from you.
- Help them to be more understanding when you go through stressful periods at work.
- Schedule happy activities like futsal sessions or coffee meets with friends on weeknights.
- Identify the difference between urgent and important tasks.
- Get enough sleep to ensure you’re not feeling sluggish at 11am.
- Allocate time for exercise to maintain health and improve mental acuity.
- Pursue hobbies outside of work to maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- Manage time wisely to ensure you’re doing as much as possible while in the office.

Cunning or Top Spot
Dear Li Ling,

I empathise with you. The truth is, it is not a straightforward decision. Hopefully, these factors – return on investment, personal development and choice of MBA programme – will help you make a decision.

Return on investment

You asked whether it’s worth taking a year from work and if employers will value your MBA. It is an investment proposition as you are potentially forgoing income for a year and incurring the cost of pursuing an MBA, with the expectation of higher income later.

At a macro level, a research has been conducted by World Bank on Malaysian income data and it suggested that return on education (investment) is particularly strong in pursuing a first degree but not conclusively so for post graduate programmes.

This suggests that whilst Malaysian employers by and large expect employers to have a first degree for higher income jobs, it is not across the board that there is a large income premium for master degrees.

In contrast, particularly in the US, individuals supply substantial investments to pursue an MBA at prestigious universities, which do translate into significant income premiums.

In my interaction with Malaysian employers, I am not sure which category your current employer falls into. If you need help with the financials and earn enough to make the financials work and earn strong MBAs.

Choice of MBA

There is no shortage of MBA programmes, both locally and abroad. It goes without saying that you need to choose the programme that best meets your situation – not just financially, but especially in terms of the development areas that you wish to pursue.

Go for an international and diverse course, which offers potentially new and frontier ideas. This doesn’t mean you have to go overseas.

A colleague is pursuing an MBA on a part-time basis but has a class that includes a diverse mix including expatriates. They make contact calls to classes conducted overseas.

A key value of an MBA is to broaden perspectives and that is achieved not just through the curriculum, but the network and diversity of your coursework and the different perspectives they bring from their own experiences.

Given you are concerned about taking time off, especially with the telco industry being fast changing, perhaps you should also research part-time courses that are available. It might work for you.

In conclusion, an MBA is not a silver bullet that will magically transform your career. It may not necessarily pay off financially in the short-term. What’s more important is to pursue an MBA if it helps you grow as a professional and broaden your perspectives in line with your future career plan.

Johan Merican

Dear Li Ling,

I applaud your initiative in wanting to pursue an MBA. In my opinion, the fact that you’re even entertaining the notion of going back to school is admirable. Not many would risk taking a break in their careers especially in an industry as intense and competitive as telecommunications.

As such, any concerns you may have on this aspect can be mitigated, with the right support and assistance from colleagues and bosses.

If you have a coach or trusted mentor, they can help prepare you for your re-entry into the organisation and assist you in going back to the same company after you graduate.

As such, any concerns you may have on this aspect can be mitigated, with the right support and assistance from colleagues and bosses.

I sincerely hope that this helps put your mind at ease. Again, as mentioned previously, it’s the journey and not so much the destination. Having said that, believe me when I say, crossing that finish line will make a world of difference. Best of luck to you!

Nur Haryati Hisham

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

Also next week

What do TalentCorp do? How can it help you?

How companies manage their talent pipeline

How your belief system impacts your potential

Do’s and don’ts while waiting for your interviewer

If you have any suggestions or feedback on our content, get in touch with the Leaderonomic team at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com.

For advertising and advertisers, contact ian.lee@leaderonomics.com - 016 974 7087