HOW TO THINK LIKE SHERLOCK HOLMES

POINTERS FROM THE GREAT DETECTIVE FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

PAGES 6–7
I’ve been looking forward to this Sherlock Holmes issue for months. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s master detective has been a hero of mine from a young age. Sure, he has mood swings, horrid habits, and he makes a terrible housemate, but Holmes’ mind is sharp and he sees things that others do not. He notices the qualities of soil in different parts of London. His mind can recognise different tyre tracks and tobacco ash, and from the posture of a man, he can deduce his occupation.

“The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes,” he says in one of my favourite cases, the Hound of the Baskervilles. Holmes is right, because we all suffer from a disease called mindlessness.

How many times have you driven home from work and suddenly realised that you were already approaching home? You struggle to recall the last five to 10 minutes of the journey. Your body was on auto-pilot, and your muscles knew the curvature of the road. What was happening to you? You were in a state of mindlessness. It’s this concept of mindlessness that is the subject of Dr. Ellen Langer’s research, which has been featured previously in The Leaderonomics Show.

According to Langer, we are more mindless than we think. How mindless are we in our workplaces, I wonder? When a familiar problem pops up, do we automatically revert to the tried and tested solution without considering that there may be better alternatives? When we enter our offices, are we mindful of our colleagues? As we do routine tasks, do we ever glance over or is our mind actively taking in all the details around us? There’s a thought to chew on.

Check out page 4 this week for more on Langer’s work and this concept of mindfullness. Pages 6-7 give seven career tips from the brilliant Holmes. Though a fictional character, Holmes still offers many practical lessons in our career journeys.

On our other pages, we have Mrs Universe 2013 Carol Lee in this week’s Dare to Fail. On page 9, we feature A Day in the Life of a palliative care nurse with Hospis Malaysia. I hope you enjoy this week’s career guide. Remember to keep your feedback coming at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com. Even more articles, check out leaderonomics.com/articles.

Have a “mindful” week ahead!

LILY CHEAH
Editor, mystarjob.com

LEARN HOW TO SPEED READ

One of the activities that takes a lot of our time at work is reading though information that is constantly coming our way. One way to increase productivity levels at work is by learning the art of speed reading. This can save considerable amounts of time and make the workload more bearable.

The great thing is, speed reading can be learned by simply looking for instructions online, or for those more willing to put in the effort, by attending a short class.

This week’s Career Guide Tip – download an app to learn how to speed read. Let’s see how many of you can take the plunge this week.

THE SCIENCE OF BUILDING LEADERS

This Career Guide is Powered by Leaderonomics

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LEARNING FROM SHERLOCK HOLMES

KNOWLEDGE

Besides knowing a lot, Holmes knew where to look for information. Make an effort to be well-read in fields directly related to your job. While you don’t need to know everything, knowing where to look helps.

DEDICATION

Holmes’ passion drove him to be the best consulting detective around. Likewise, if you share the same amount of gusto for what you do, there is very little holding you back from excelling in the workplace.

HAVE A REPUTATION, A GOOD ONE

Holmes was always sought after when it came to cracking tough cases. People wanted to either hire him or get rid of him for standing in their way. Similarly, it pays to be really good at what you do so that employers want to hire you or prevent you from leaving the company.

HAVE A VALUABLE HOBBy

Holmes played the violin to aid himself in thinking; it helped him figure things out. Sometimes, you hit a dead-end and get stumped for ideas at work. Find a hobby or do something that helps you think better.

COLLABORATE

Holmes was a genius on many levels but we all know that he couldn’t have solved those cases without Watson. No matter how good you are, brainstorming or running your ideas through someone really helps put them in perspective.

Roshan Thi RAN
Adviser

eva.christodoulou@ leaderonomics.com

“I SEE IT, I DEDUCE IT.”

BY EVA CHRISTODOULO

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REFRESH YOUR CREATIVITY

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“But I do not...”

BY EVA CHRISTODOULO

“The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes.”

But I do not...
MANY of us can remember “joining the dots” as a child. A maze of simple dots, each numbered but seemingly placed randomly on a page of paper, waiting for someone to join them together so that a picture can come to life.

Somehow, as adults the “game” takes on new complexities as we try to make sense of all the seemingly indiscriminate parts of our lives with the goal of determining the path we want to follow.

Even as leaders, we sometimes find ourselves confused with all of the options and different scenarios we have before us, that it can be challenging to know which one to choose or how to prioritise.

Returning from an intensive leadership programme, I was asked to run a global leadership team with participants from Africa, Asia and the United States. I couldn’t help but be intrigued with how challenging it is for many of us to find time to reflect on life’s connections.

In other words, taking time to consciously evaluate the significance or purpose of those connections, whether they are opportunities, problems, projects or networks, and their relationship to where we are now and how they might be instrumental in shaping our leadership experience for the future.

Here are how some leaders described their experience during the programme:

- “It’s nice to look back at my journey and identify people and incidents that helped me turn into who I am now.”
- “I saw how the same skills and strengths I have used and developed in three very different positions.”
- “I managed to clarify my passion and motivations and so have a renewed sense of energy to do what I must. I have refocused myself.”
- “The process has been very helpful and caused me to think about parts of my professional journey that I have not before.”
- “I saw the connection between the personal and the professional.”

Some cultures allow us to think informally about these things, but often it’s not a natural process for most of us, and we either don’t prioritise the time to reflect on these things or there is the absence of a structured thought process to guide us. This can get us into some trouble.

This is why Michael Watkins, author of The First 90 Days, encourages leaders to adopt a framework that will help them accelerate their learning and match their strategy to their situation so that they can adapt to the changes they are likely to confront in their current position as well as their next position.

This challenge is just as relevant for the organisations where we provide leadership, as much as it is for our personal leadership journey.

Recently, I had the privilege of meeting Nicholas Barnett, the author of an outstanding book called GPS for your Organisation. Ken Blanchard, co-author of the best-selling book The One Minute Manager, wrote the foreword.

As I stated earlier, we often lack a structured thought process to help us understand important connections that lead us to setting clear and concise outcomes. Barnett has produced such a process here. His GPS framework provides the foundation for an organisation to develop its strategic plan, business plan and budget, and actions.

GPS for your Organisation is as profound as it is simple. I have learned over the last 20 years that there is an art in planning. One shouldn’t need a plethora of templates, or a process that is so complicated. Motivation to complete the task would soon wane with those. Strong outcomes are rarely achieved in this scenario.

Whether you are a leader with a large corporation, a small to medium enterprise, a not-for-profit organisation, or a sole-trader, GPS for your Organisation is an excellent place to start.

Having relocated from Colorado to Melbourne and then to Queensland, I soon realised how helpful a GPS is. The ability to identify key landmarks, arterial roads and major highways makes driving much more enjoyable. It should be no different in running a sustainable, high-performing business.

Essentially, Barnett argues that there are five GPS points:

GPS 1: ASPIRATION
The way you would like your organisation to be regarded by others in five to 10 years.

GPS 2: CORE PURPOSE
Your organisation’s core reason for being and the reason it wants to achieve it.

GPS 3: CORE VALUES
The values that are absolutely essential for your organisation to adopt and continue to uphold if its aspiration is to be achieved and its core purpose is to be fulfilled.

GPS 4: GOLDEN GOAL
The single most appropriate inspirational goal for your organisation.

GPS 5: TAGLINE
The description in a few words (normally five or less) of what is special and unique about your organisation and what it provides.

JOINING THE DOTS FOR YOUR LEADERSHIP JOURNEY OR YOUR ORGANISATION DOESN’T NEED TO BE COMPLEX. IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE TIME TO REFLECT ON HOW YOU GOT TO WHERE YOU ARE, BE ABLE TO ARTICULATE THE DIRECTION YOU WANT TO TAKE, AND KNOW WHAT RESOURCES YOU NEED TO GET THERE.

WHAT’S THE BOTTOM-LINE?

The best lessons in life are those which we’ve actually decided to stop long enough to reflect on what just happened, to see if there are mid-course corrections that need to be made that will benefit us going forward. Organisations are no different. Below are some questions to ask:

- What is one thing I have learned from a previous experience that has the potential to change the way I look at my business? Relationships? Family?
- Do I own a skill or have a strength that I am not currently using, that could prove extremely helpful?
- What is one thing I can do to refocus my efforts to clarify the potential to change the way I look at my business?

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

By RACHAEL SHALINI FRANCIS
mystarjob.com, Saturday 12 October 2013

“BEING MINDFUL” is certainly not a common expression that is often heard in everyday conversations. However, in the world of psychology, it has become a topic of great interest. Langer, a Harvard professor of psychology, has been studying the concept of mindfulness for over three decades. She has conducted numerous experiments and studies to understand how mindfulness can influence our lives. In this article, we will explore the concept of mindfulness and its importance in our everyday lives.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the practice of being present and aware of the moment. It involves paying attention to what is happening without judgment. Langer explains, “Mindfulness is something that comes about without evaluation, meaning there’s no right or wrong; it’s just noticing, and the very action feels good and is engaging.”

Langer points out that mindfulness is different from the concept of meditation. She stresses how it’s actually an uncomplicated process. “It’s the very simple process of noticing new things. It couldn’t be easier. It doesn’t matter if what you notice is simple or silly, as long as it’s new,” she clarifies.

Langer addresses how some may find it difficult or time-consuming. “(If) you want to have a cookie, actually taste it. I don’t think it takes more time to do things better or are even unaware that there are alternatives. “(If) you want to have a cookie, actually taste it. I don’t think it takes more time to do things better or are even unaware that there are alternatives.”

Promoting Innovation

We become mindless when we do things over and over again and begin to accept it as the way it is meant to be done. We stop looking for ways to do things better or are even unaware that there are alternatives.

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

That to an extent is a hazard in any organisation. When we mindfully approach our work, we become aware of other ways of approaching something. We are unlikely to miss out on opportunities for growth.

Engaging Attention

In Langer’s early studies, she had elderly people in nursing homes make simple decisions. These decisions eventually resulted in fewer deaths among the residents. “In making a decision, you’d have to think about options and you think about different aspects that you hadn’t thought about before.”

“Mindfully than mindlessly. Everything can be improved by doing it mindfully in organisations, we have ways of doing things, but people never question why we are doing them this way.”

Promoting creativity

Langer observes that when people are given experiences of mindfulness, they appear to be more creative, productive and happier. As a result of mindfulness, people become more invested in what they do and end up producing work that is better.

“Affective Perspective

Langer advises to be less evaluative. “Right now, we have a very strong sense of right and wrong, this is the way you do it and this is not the way you do it. And we need to recognise that that’s based on perspective. So, some things look right from one perspective but if you shifted it, it wouldn’t look right,” she remarks.

Langer concludes, “Mindfully than mindlessly. Everything can be improved by doing it mindfully in organisations, we have ways of doing things, but people never question why we are doing them this way.”

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**THINK LIKE SHERLOCK HOLMES**

**TIPS TO HAVE AN EXCEPTIONAL CAREER LIKE THE GREAT DETECTIVE**

By Dr. Nooruddin Hashim

Sherlock Holmes is the world’s greatest detective. He is a man of many talents and skills, but the most remarkable of all is his exceptional deductive ability. His keen powers of observation and his logical reasoning skills are unrivaled. He has the remarkable ability to connect seemingly unrelated facts and draw meaningful conclusions from them.

1. **Observe More Than Meets the Eye** — As a highly talented detective, Holmes can often see what others cannot. He has the remarkable ability to piece together facts and connect them in ways that are not immediately obvious.

2. **Pay Attention to Details** — Holmes can easily tell where someone has been, what they ate, and even their physical condition. His keen powers of observation are unparalleled.

3. **Have a Great Partner** — Holmes’s trusted confidant Watson is not just his partner in crime-solving; he is also his partner in life. They complement each other perfectly, and their partnership is the key to their success.

4. **Perspective Matters** — With his eye for detail, Holmes has no trouble solving crimes on his own. But his partnership with Watson certainly gives him an extra edge above others. They bring different perspectives to the table, which helps them to view the same case in multiple ways.

5. **Think it Through** — Given Holmes’s brilliant mind and the speed of his analytical skills, he usually makes a quick conclusion. But for Holmes, there is always more than meets the eye. He takes time to ponder on his findings and make sure it is the right conclusion.

6. **Practice, Practice, Practice** — Holmes is well-known for his depth of knowledge. More importantly, he is a perfectionist in his work, which results in him learning from every single case, no matter how easy or simple.

7. **Always Keep on Pushing** — This aspirational aspect of Holmes is his drive for excellence. He finds it thrills him to push his limits and seek new challenges. For Holmes, the thrill is not just in solving the crimes but also in the process of creative problem-solving.
Failure knows no boundaries and not even the rich and famous are spared. The more successful and famous a person is, the greater the likelihood that he or she has dared to take on more risks and overcome more failures than the average person. As the saying goes: No risk, no gain. In other words, the more risks one is willing to take, the higher the chances of securing bigger success in life.

Failures have a tendency to worsen people up; the secret is to learn from it, soldier on and continue to live life with enthusiasm. One such example is the recently crowned Mrs Universe 2013 Carol Lee, a good role model of a famous person who has been humbled by her earlier failures.

An up close and personal meeting with Lee reveals that beyond her captivating beauty and talent, Lee also has a big heart of gold to reach out to help others. Her latest passion is lending her fame and support to raise awareness and to help victims of domestic violence.

Lee says: “The biggest failure for me was the time when I participated in the Miss Chinese International pageant in Hong Kong in 1995. After reflecting on what went wrong, I realised I did not make enough effort and did not fully prepare myself to clinch the crown.”

Lee admits that she was nervous when she had to answer “the all-important question on-stage” which was posed to her in Cantonese, and that she did not do justice to her answer.

“To be honest, I suffered stage fright and my mind went completely blank. The answer that I finally managed to muster was rather incongruent and stupid,” she bemuses.

Recalling that fateful moment, Lee says her answer could have cost her the top three position in the beauty pageant and she only managed to make it to the top 10 list.

Instead of brooding over her failure, Lee started taking action to overcome stage fright by signing up for Toastmaster classes and acting as master of ceremony at events.

“I realised there was no use crying over spilled milk and it is more beneficial to look for ways to channel my energy to overcome my weaknesses and improve myself. Ultimately, what is important is to dedicate 100% of my efforts into whatever I do,” Lee says.

On how she feels about failure, the 39-year-old Lee says: “It is true that no one would want to fail but I have come to accept the fact that failing is part and parcel of life. To err is human. I take failure as a lesson in life and it has made me much wiser and more mature in my thinking.”

Lee also believes that it is not the failure that changes a person but rather the change in one’s mindset. “Explainling herself, Lee says: “If I were to fail and not reflect upon the reason for my failure and learn from it, I could still make the same mistake over and over again.”

Judging from what she has achieved since that disappointing outcome in Hong Kong, Lee has indeed overcome setbacks. She has donned two beauty crowns since – Mrs Malaysia Universe 2013 in October 2012, and Mrs Universe 2013 in August this year.

Lee made the country and the region proud by becoming the first Asian to be crowned the coveted Ms Universe title since its introduction in 2007.

Lee says she was motivated by her renewed self-confidence to have a second go at an international beauty pageant after the “fiasco” at the Ms Chinese International pageant more than a decade ago.

“This time around, I was fully prepared, which took up a whole good 10 months. I have always wanted to do something for my country,” Lee says.

She had initially considered joining some kind of sport but scrapped that idea, because of the age factor.

“Taking part in the Mrs Universe pageant gave me a chance to help promote Malaysia as a tourist destination, and to get to know so many people from around the world. It is truly an honour to be the first Asian woman to win the title,” she beams with pride.

Lee believes in dedicating 100% of her efforts into whatever she does.
Market Creation Not Market Competition

UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre on Capturing the Uncontested Market Space

Why is Blue Ocean Strategy still relevant today?
Blue Ocean Strategy is still relevant today because it addresses three main challenges often faced by companies which are 1) Profitability 2) Sustainability and 3) Growth Rate. The challenge is to ensure your company achieves all three.

We use the principle of “Value Innovation” (value up, cost down) to help companies achieve profitability while we use the principle of “Non-Customer” or “Non-Buyers” to address the issue of sustainability and lastly a “Reconstruction” approach to ensure a high growth rate.

The UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre helps companies tackle these challenges through three different approaches. First is the short-term approach where we conduct an embryonic Blue Ocean Ideas. Second is the mid-term approach where we set up “Blue Ocean Labs” to address various innovation and strategy-related issues for our clients. The last stage is the long-term strategy formulation to develop insightful game changing strategic moves.

What are some examples of UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre having helped companies move into uncontested market spaces?
We have numerous excellent client testimonials on our website. While I cannot reveal too many client details, one of our customers was a leading multinational company size, we have had clients ranging from SMEs to global conglomerates.

THE STRATEGIST: Being the senior director of Strategy and Innovation at UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre has given Raj Kumar and his team more opportunities to help businesses re-strategise and find ‘blue oceans’ of uncontested market spaces.

We have heard from our clients that there are parties who claim to be experts, but the UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre is the only official regional authority for this – our team goes through a very rigorous certification process that is on par with the other Blue Ocean Strategists around the world.

Q: Since even a ‘blue ocean’ can eventually become a ‘red ocean’, how does Blue Ocean Strategy address this?
The question is, how easy is it to imitate the blue ocean strategy and when should a company create a new blue ocean?

A good example would be Old Town White Coffee. When they first started out, their concept of merging the traditional ‘kopitiam’ with a modern, comfortable ambience really hit a ‘blue ocean’ of uncontested market space. Like any leading idea, it is bound to get mimicked and now the market is becoming a ‘red ocean’. So using Blue Ocean Strategy, it is time to think – what is next? How do we reconstruct the existing framework again?

Another client who was very pleased with us is a respected bank in Cambodia. Although they had years of experience and a firm customer base, they wanted to reach out to the younger customers. In a way, the management was already using Blue Ocean Strategy in their thinking because although they were leading the industry, they knew that it would become a ‘red ocean’ one day. So we conceptualised a new strategy and they are now making their presence felt among the younger generation.

In the logistics industry, we helped a major player create new value-added services, effectively expanding port facilities and integrating operations along the value chain.

Even in the strictly regulated healthcare industry, we have helped our client come up with innovative ways to market their services while remaining within the confines of regulations.

Q: Lastly, who should adopt Blue Ocean Strategy?
Everyone organisation should! In terms of company size, we have had clients ranging from SMEs to global conglomerates. Sometimes, companies think that Blue Ocean Strategy is something only needed when the company is not doing well. As I have previously mentioned, a fast-growing company will know that even ‘blue oceans’ can eventually become ‘red oceans’. That is why companies must always seek new ‘blue oceans’.

The new ‘blue oceans’ do not have to be pursued immediately, but it is important to identify them and have the framework in place to pursue them.

Many senior management leaders also have the misconception that implementing Blue Ocean Strategy is disruptive and risky. On the contrary, Blue Ocean Strategy actually minimises this risk because it can be applied for the business today in terms of maximising opportunities but at the same time you can plan for future breakthrough strategies where the implementations can be managed progressively.

To contact Raj, please email raj@ucsi-blueoceanstrategy.com. For more information, visit ucsi-blueoceanstrategy.com or drop by the UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre at UCSI University North Wing Campus, Jalan Choo Leng Kung, Taman Teynton View, 56000 Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
WHEN you’re 22, the world is your oyster. The job market is prime territory for energetic, impressionable young adults with impressive resumes, desirable to all organisations and industries.

The opportunities are endless and the invitations are convivial. But it seems to be that the welcome mat grows shorter as the years go by. At your 40s, the invitations suddenly become limited. For current Gen X-ers and Baby Boomers, the decision to switch jobs or companies becomes riskier as recruiters are not as enthusiastic to accept older individuals. The truth is that there is much apprehension amongst those who are not considered the typical employable age, and that apprehension is also present within those looking to recruit.

But instead of subscribing to the stereotype that older workers are inflexible, outdated and due for cold storage, let’s examine the strengths of the 40 and above and the value that they can bring to organisations.

REDUCING RISKS

The greatest advantage of recruiting an older worker is that the risk of a bad hire is reduced. When hiring new employees, there is always the concern that the individual does not meet the expectations set. That anxiety can increase when the employee is young, naive and has yet to understand the culture switch.

Given that the older employee has been in the job market for a longer period of time, their work output has a greater chance of having more credibility and quality. An understanding of corporate culture is not something that can be taught, but rather caught through experience. For older workers to sustain in the economy, they must also possess good work ethics and a number of transferable skills.

Fortunately, older workers have passed the loyalty and commitment test. According to the Business Insider, “the length of time a worker remains with the same employer increases with the age at which the worker began the job.” The tenure with current employers for workers aged 45 to 54 is an average of 7.6 years.

It can be especially frustrating when organisations invest time, energy and resources in screening and training employees only to find that they leave for “greener pastures.” Older workers have less of a flight risk because they understand that attractions such as a higher pay, a more senior title or other aspects that young employees chase after may not provide as much qualitative benefits as loyalty does, resulting in better work retention.

FICKLENESS SCRAPED

Older workers are less likely to jump ship because they recognise the value of staying put. Organisations tend to offer more rewards to loyal employees in the long run, such as better working hours, flexible working conditions, lucrative opportunities for advancement and even retirement schemes. For example, Harrods (the famed British department store) offers discounts and even retirement schemes.

Mature workers are also less fickle in their commitments because they recognise their personal aims in the short and long run. Younger employees, though ambitious, may have yet to form a clear picture of life goals and thus are more inclined to see the benefits in short-term rewards.

Meanwhile, mature workers are more inclined to see the benefits in short-term rewards. Without making a blanket statement, mature workers are more adapted to remain calm under pressure because of the years already accumulated in their career belts. They can better ascertain what is important in precarious conditions.

THE MATURITY FACTOR

Forbes.com published an article in September 2012 which highlights a study done by Swiss human resource giant, Adecco. The results of the study indicate that its respondents were three times more likely to hire a mature worker (50 years and above), with reasons being that these mature workers were more reliable, more professional and had better working skills.

One study is not the end all for your recruiting decisions, nevertheless the study shows that older workers are not headed for cold storage and redundancy in the workplace. In fact, they are able to contribute maturity to the office. During moments of crisis, they can hold the fort due to their vast experience.

Without making a blanket statement, mature workers are more adapted to remain calm under pressure because of the years already accumulated in their career belts. They can better ascertain what is important in precarious conditions.

EXPERIENCE POINTS

No matter how talented and energetic the young new hire may be, skill does not substitute experience. Older workers are better equipped at problem-solving and decision-making in the workplace due to their extensive history, as young employees only have internships to simulate a working environment.

EMBRACING OLDER WORKERS

There are several actions that can be taken to further accommodate and motivate mature workers in your workplace. For instance, allowing flexible work hours enables more time for those with families and dependents to spend with their loved ones. However, one must accept the fact that the cost of hiring a mature worker may be higher due to remuneration or health expenses. Nevertheless, the tradeoff would seem fair in view of their quality input.

The point is not to classify workers or potential employees based on age or background; instead opportunities should be given based on merit and the quality of a person’s work. The young and the older should not view each other as competition, but instead, move towards sharing strengths and talents for the benefit of all.

THE NO.1 HOT WEATHER BRAIN DRINK

By TERRY SMALL
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

IS there such a thing as memory in a cup? Yes there is. The next time you are experiencing “brain fog”, brew yourself a refreshing glass of iced green tea. It is a cognitive boosting brew and it’s my No. 1 choice for a drink in hot weather.

Neuroscientists aren’t exactly sure why green tea is so good for your brain, but it may have something to do with the extra L-theanine. This compound seems to jump start the areas of your brain responsible for attention and memory. And who couldn’t use more of these?

Make sure you brew your own, though. Commercial ice teas don’t seem to produce the same benefit. You get one brain, so be kind to it. Tea has other amazing benefits going for it as well. Well, what are you waiting for... start brewing!

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 easier, better, faster, and that learning to learn is the most important skill a person can acquire. To interact with Small, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com
The key here is to focus on developing your communication skills. Don’t be discouraged if you are not a natural speaker as these skills can be learnt and polished over time.

1. COMMUNICATION
A good leader is able to clearly explain what needs to be done. Honing your communication skills is crucial if you aspire to be a leader. Sir Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group incorporating more than 400 companies, used to be so shy that he refused to talk to adults and would cling to the back of his mother’s skirt.

One day, one the way back from a shopping trip his mother stopped their car and asked him to find his way back, which involved talking to people! He arrived home 10 hours later but that experience made Branson more comfortable in interacting with adults. At school, you can hone your communication skills by joining clubs that promote effective public speaking, such as your neighbourhood Toastmasters Club or Gavel Club if you are below 18 years old.

2. CONFIDENCE
Leaders are confident and are able to express their opinions without shying away from the spotlight. Leaders should be confident in making decisions and commit to executing those decisions. At school, you can boost your leadership qualities even in class by not being nervous to ask questions. Sometimes we are not able ask questions because we are afraid of judgments that we may receive.

When your teacher asks a question, don’t hesitate to answer. Even if your answer is incorrect, your teacher will acknowledge the courage and the confidence you displayed.

3. COMMUNITY
To be a leader you should always come forward to make a difference, be it at school or your local community. Always be interested in volunteering to help people as this goes hand-in-hand with leadership. You can volunteer at orphanages, old folks homes or even tutor your juniors at school. The opportunity to volunteer is just endless. Check out www.wolvolunteer.com for opportunities.

As a student, you should also remember that your main priority is your studies. Only commit yourself to activities that you can reasonably juggle.

4. COMMITMENT
Leaders are committed to tasks given to them and they execute them with responsibility. A good leader leads by example. At school, when you get homework or assignments from your teachers, you should hand them in on time. When it comes to club meetings, you are expected to be on time. Paying attention to small details consistently will lead to excellence in the long run.

5. COLLABORATION
To be a good leader, you should learn to work together with those around you. In collaborative leadership, a person has the responsibility to guide and coordinate the process by which the group decides and carries out actions to accomplish its goals. To learn to collaborate with people, join activities that involve a team, such as the football club or even the choir if that’s your interest. Being a team player is a valuable skill, as the saying goes, two heads are better than one.

All in all, leadership is indeed a learnable skill if you are motivated to do so. Attempt at least one of the many steps above and you will be on your way to becoming an excellent leader!

By TARCAYANI PREBAGARAN
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D O you want a brighter and successful future? If yes, then start by setting goals. Goals are useful to help you focus on what you want. Without them, you would have no direction or control over how you pave your life path. Goals also help you determine if you’re actually succeeding.

To accomplish your goals, you need to know how to set them. It is not just a matter of saying “I want” and not doing anything at all but rather making the effort to get it right. So to help you set goals, here are some useful tips to follow.

1. GOALS THAT INSPIRE YOU
Make sure you set goals that mean something and that inspire you. This way, you will be motivated to achieve them with a “I must accomplish this” attitude.

Ask yourself this question: “If I were to share my goals with my friends, would I be proud to tell them why I am doing it? If the answer is yes, then the goal is right for you!

2. WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS
Why? Because when you write down your goals, it makes them real. Use the word “will”. So instead of writing, “I would like to have a new job by 2014”, write “I will have a new job by 2014.”

Post the goals in places you can see to remind yourself of them. You can pin them up on your wall, desk, bathroom mirror or computer monitor.

3. MAKE AN ACTION PLAN
This is the most important step in the process of setting a goal. Write down how you plan to achieve the goal.

By writing these steps and crossing them out when you complete them, you will be motivated by the fact that you’re one step closer to your goal.

4. STICK TO YOUR GOAL!
It is one thing to set goals and another to actually stick to them. Keep reminding yourself of your goals. Revisit and review your goals monthly to see where you are.

Adapted from Ready4work.my, Driven by content from top employers, Ready4Work.my is a one-stop portal to enhance employability of young talents entering the job market.

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HONE YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS BY JOINING CLUBS THAT PROMOTE EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING, SUCH AS YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD TOASTMASTERS CLUB OR GAVEL CLUB IF YOU ARE BELOW 18 YEARS OLD.

SET YOUR GOALS RIGHT!
DEAR CAREERONOMERS,

I have been with the same company for three years and have held the same role for just over a year. I enjoyed it at first – lots of travelling, interesting and challenging projects, and good people to work with. Over time, my new team changed its focus and got stuck around by management. I find myself dismissing my job more and more and know it’s just a matter of time before I plan on leaving.

Somebody from another division of the company said if I was ever looking for a change, he had a position for me and I just have to let him know. I’d be doing the things I like with people I have enjoyed working with. It would be more challenging and would have better, long-term opportunities. Here’s the kicker; I just moved cross-country less than three weeks ago, and this opportunity would have me move back. I’m not sure what to do – I’m a bit intimidated to market my skills to other companies.

At the end of the day, I’m not passionate about what my company does, but the best day of work I’ve had is doing the things I would be doing every day if I take this opportunity. I don’t want to do this.

I need your advice.

HUI MEI

There are a few parts to your question and I will try to address them in various sections:

1. PAST WORKING EXPERIENCE

Three years is a good time to spend in one division and one does have the tendency to get attached to colleagues, especially when the assignments are enjoyable and challenging. The three years you spent in the company is a good record and hopefully this has given you the opportunity to do deep assignments and build a good network of friends and colleagues. This is also good for your resume.

2. ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

I sense some pain and frustration when organisational change took place, and you used this word – “jerked around”. Depending on the organisational culture, sometimes the human resources (HR) division and the line manager are able to establish and communicate change well, but nevertheless it can cause apprehension in the workplace.

Having said that, the ideal state is not found in most organisations and that’s why in today’s working environment, many organisations expect us to be agile, flexible so that we can adapt, embrace change and move forward. Employees who does this well is often more successful.

Organisations also like to sometimes pilot change by moving teams around and challenge individuals with new assignments so that performance can hopefully be optimised and also allow for learning and growth to take place.

Change can also be caused by mergers and acquisitions, expansion of a company, regulatory requirements and so on. This is especially so when an individual has gone past the initial years in a firm.

So, I urge that you learn to adapt to change and see the benefits of change, i.e., meet new people, acquire new skills and also learn new systems.

3. NEW OFFER VERSUS CURRENT OUTSTATION ROLE

It is flattering that there is a new offer for you that could provide the same experience that you are seeking for. However, you are now in a new location and just taking on a new assignment, and I can only assume that it is within the same firm.

The advantage of the new role is that you will be stretched, see and learn new things, meet new people, and challenge yourself in a new environment. If you do so well and also succeed, this will be a plus for your career and also will look good on a resume.

However, if you do go back to the other offer – a position which your friend will make for you, please note that you will face challenges which only you can answer.

Questions you should ask yourself are – are you taking over someone’s role? How will the division view you? Will your current boss in the new location or HR division be upset? How will you be positioned in the new division? Did you commit to any major assignments?

You added that you find it intimidating to market your skills to other companies. You have not explained if you have attempted and if you have experienced rejections, so I will not attempt to deal with that in my answer.

My advice would be to stay put and face the new challenge. It would be the responsible thing to do and if you do well, all things being equal, you will be recognised in due course.

Your bosses will appreciate your maturity as well. In my opinion, the risk of staying on is not high and will give you a chance to get to know yourself better and also know your limits and tolerance level.

In summary, always remember that things are never ideal in most organisations, and bosses may not always have time to engage and explain their every decision or course of action. The same goes for the HR division.

Sometimes, change happens and communication follows. Consulting books and textbooks will give you the ideal solution but in reality, we must embrace change, challenges and also be willing to be mobile in our careers. Managing your career is a “shared responsibility” and we must do our best to manage our own brand.

I hope this helps.

NANCY S Y SIM-LIM

HI HUI MEI,

The journey to grow, is much like the weather here - it comes with sunny days and rainy ones – some you love and some you utterly don’t!

As you grow in your professional career, you will find that the cycle of learning is such that you will have a season of much joy and comfort with what’s familiar and another season where you may find change and learning new things difficult, challenging and sometimes a nuisance! This can sometimes be misconstrued as unhappiness.

I encourage you to take time to think through the things you dislike most about your current role/team. There is a possibility of change and uncertainties as the team’s focus has shifted. People who are change-orientated may welcome this with open arms. However, for those who find safety in structure and plans, these changes may rock their boat a little more.

Other possibilities could be the team dynamics, rewards and beliefs in the job. You mentioned that you are not passionate about what your company does and seem to dislike how the management is handling the changes.

If so, you may have to gather up courage and start applying for a job elsewhere. While the thought of something new and unknown can be a little scary, ask yourself “what’s the worst that can happen?” There may be some good factors arising from a new challenge and environment.

If you decide to stay on in the organisation, I suggest to make the best of it. Find a renewed sense of motivation and excitement for the job.

Whichever you decide upon, find a friend whom you can confide in for advice, support and encouragement.

If you are uncomfortable with change or the unknown, find friends who had gone through these challenges successfully and let them share some tips with you!

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

Delve into the realm of social media and career opportunities in this line

Summary of The Tipping Point written by Malcolm Gladwell

Pointers on how to dine with confidence during a work meeting

Are we too obsessed with using Social media?