HOW MUCH DO I GET?

EMPLOYERS REVIEW THEIR BENEFITS STRATEGY AS JOBSEEKERS HUNT FOR THE RIGHT “PACKAGE”
PAGES 6–8

Take a chance on the less experienced
Need to fill a role? Instead of hiring someone who has the required experience, why not offer it to someone who doesn’t?
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LEADING HEARTS
Tata Sons director R Gopalakrishnan says great leaders lead both the heart and the mind
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BEHIND THE WHEELS
A dedicated bus driver shares about his job and the interesting perks that come with it
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YOU BECOME THEM
Stop and assess who you spend most time with, because you will be their combined average
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ARE BENEFITS THE KEY TO BECOMING A FAVOURITE EMPLOYER?

JOBSEEKERS can be a picky bunch, especially those who possess sought-after qualifications, skills and traits. Plus, it’s easier than ever to be picky today. Just tell the search engine what you want to know, or send a message out to friends and contacts, and chances are, you’ll find the information you’re looking for.

How high is the demand for in-house graphic designers today? (High, by the way, according to most recent Hays Quarterly Report) What’s the average pay for this role? Are there interesting work opportunities overseas that I can pursue? Why is there a sudden influx of interest in software developers? What is the appeal of the “remote” job trend? What are the benefits given by companies. Here are just a handful of the 50:

- Death benefits including five years’ salary for your spouse spread over 10 years (Google)
- Access to secret tunnels reached by movable bookcase (Weebly)
- Unlimited vacation days (Weebly)
- Free housecleaning twice a month (Evernote)
- A running tab at the coffee shop (Jetsetter)
- Dog-friendly office (Airbnb)
- Free meals for employees and visiting family (Facebook)
- A running tab at the coffee shop (Jetsetter)
- Twelve out of the list of 50, were Google perks. And incidentally (or not?) Google is one of the most talked about employers today.

In our centrespread this week, we dig further into benefits strategies of companies in the Asia-Pacific. One in five employers don’t have a benefits strategy still, but that’s a great improvement from 33% in 2009. Do read pages 6-7 for more.

If you’re a leader in a company looking for someone to fill a vacancy, or in need of a project leader for a new initiative, you’ll want to read Be A Leader on page 3. Whilst experienced people may be the first ones that come to mind, this could be a great opportunity for younger blood to have a go.

Everyone needs an opportunity to be developed, and rightly so, because studies also show that the demand for leaders and potential leaders is outpacing supply. Page 9 has that story.

When it comes to how to become a favourite employer? The company that is offering higher pay may not necessarily be the best employer to work for. Offering compelling compensation and benefits is one key component of the strategy to attract and retain the best talent. It’s not just about the money either. Employers are increasingly paying attention to the benefits they offer.

Last year, Yahoo! Finance published a list of the most amazing benefits given by companies. Here are just a handful of the 50:

- What if you believe deserves a place on a list of “Amazing Benefits Offered by Companies”, we want to hear from you. Write to us with details to read on page 3. Whilst experienced people may be the first ones that come to mind, this could be a great opportunity for younger blood to have a go.

Evaluating your compensation package

LOOK AT THE WHOLE PACKAGE Different companies offer different compensation and benefit packages. Compare the different packages in their entirety. Take into account the direct financial compensation (including salaries, bonuses and commissions), indirect financial compensation (benefits, annual leave and the like) and non-financial compensation (your work environment, opportunity for growth etc).

IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT PAY The company that is offering higher pay may not necessarily be the one where you would keep you passionate. It would be easier for you to choose a career as well, as you would understand where your passion lies.

Furthermore, it would guide you to find out what you are good at, and what mind blowing self-discoveries you can make this week.

The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.
Almost every business leader I meet complains to me about the same issue—they don’t have enough good talented people to take their businesses to the next level.

Talent has become the prime source of competitive advantage. Yet, most of us unknowingly “kill” our talented people.

How are we “killing” our talent? By not allowing our people to fulfill their potential. And we do this by curtailing their experiences.

Talent can only be developed through experiences and failure. You cannot send a person to a three-day classroom programme on swimming and expect them to become great swimmers.

To learn to swim, you need to practise in the pool. No matter how much you listen, read or watch about swimming, without pool practice, you won’t be able to swim. Real learning happens when applied in the workplace.

Nehru learnt to become Prime Minister of India through the school of hard knocks and experience. Even if he was sent to a “Prime Minister School” (if that existed!), his learning would still ultimately come from doing the job.

When you block your people from the roles they crave because of their lack of experience, you ensure they never learn.

I recall going through succession planning reviews with a number of senior business leaders in my capacity as HR leader. Each year, these business leaders would highlight specific talent they had in their teams.

Much to my dismay, every single year, those highlighted were deemed “not ready” to take on bigger roles, claiming they needed a few more years to become “ready”.

Four years later, the same excuses rang. The story never changed and never will. As long as we hoard our best talent and never allow them to grow through new experiences, they will never be ready.

Thomas Edison correctly stated that “genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.”

Based on research done by Anders Ericsson, we now know just how much “perspiration” is required to become a genius—apparently three years at a job or 10,000 hours.

Ericsson’s research indicates that if you are at your job for about two to three years (depending on how many hours you put into your work), you will master the role. But once you have mastered it, your learning subsides. And for you to keep growing, you need to learn something new.

The most talented people have figured this out and so if you do not give them challenging “new” work to them, they leave.

They may claim they leave for money or other reasons, but in reality, if you truly give them challenging work which forces them to learn, they hardly leave (it may be also because they are so busy being challenged, they have no time to do up their resume!).

However, the less talented employees, who love being in their zone of comfort, will stay on (maybe forever). The job becomes easy making it “wise” to continue in this zone of comfort.

The real talent, however, know that if they don’t keep getting new experiences and developing themselves, they may never achieve their dream. And so they pack their bags to gain new experiences if you don’t provide them those at your company.

I am not at all advocating that experience has no place in our business. Experience is necessary for big roles where failure should be minimised. However, one cannot attain that experience unless someone gives these people a break. We cannot gain experiences unless given a shot at the big stage.

What I want to emphasise is that this “talent disease” which is plaguing our nation, can somewhat be curtailed if we build in talent development as part of our business agenda. So, what are some practical things you can do:

1. Demonstrate your commitment to employees by preferring to develop from within versus hiring from the outside. Give your “inexperienced” people a chance. Sure they may take some time to learn the job, but in the long-term, it will be better for your business.

2. Keep pushing your people outside their comfort zone. They need experiences. Give them projects outside their silo. And when they fail (which they will!), help them get up and learn from their failures.

3. Empower your employees – make them partners in their own development. Make sure they understand the importance of hard work, learning and pain.

As my five-year-old son always says, “no pain, no gain.” The same goes for all of us.

We need to go through the pain and struggle of new experiences to keep growing. And business leaders need to go through the pain of pushing their best people out to new roles and to take chances on the less experienced.

Someone, after all, took a chance on you previously. I am going to end by quoting from the last few lines of ABBA’s famous song which I believe may be the plea of your top talent:

“Take a chance on me, Gonna do my very best and it ain’t no lie. If you put me to the test, if you let me try. Take a chance on me (That’s all I ask of you). Take a chance on me.”

Go on, take a chance on your people. All they need is a chance. They may just surprise you.

Roshan Thiran is a firm believer that talent is developed and not genetic, and has made it his mission to build leaders in Malaysia through his social enterprise, Leaderonomics. For more information on how you can partner with Leaderonomics to grow people into leaders, email people@leaderonomics.com or visit www.leaderonomics.com.
I SAW A MONKEY; OR WAS IT MONEY?

My brother, an architect, once told me a story about the development of a mountain region. Developers from all over the world were invited to transform this remote mountain into a holiday destination cum casino. Many of them found the dense virgin tropical jungle and rugged terrain insurmountable, rendering the venture an unviable proposition. Some of them even ranted “All I can see is money.”

However, when the late founder of the now very successful hilltop resort hopped on his helicopter and while circling the rainforest, instead of seeing the mountains, he saw huge potential. He is rumoured to have uttered, “All I can see is money.”

This story led me to my career reset when I switched from finance to human resources. It wasn’t the money that spoke to me, but the possibilities that the entrepreneur saw in a venture that everyone else thought futile and untenable.

POSITIVITY RULES!

Imagine with me. After much encouragement from his colleagues, a man named Raynoo decides to apply for a marketing director role advertised in his company’s internal job portal. It is a strategic role covering a string of countries in Asia-Pacific, promising travel opportunities and cross-cultural experience.

In the previous two years, he has not been successful in a couple of internal job applications and he is banking on this job as the meal ticket to the leadership level.

Rushing back to his office after a quick lunch, Raynoo sees an invite in his Outlook calendar asking him to attend a final interview with HR at 5pm that day. The company rumour mill has been predicting that the job would go to Adrian, a long-serving employee.

Let’s look at the two possible scenarios that could take place after this:

Scenario 1
Raynoo starts to prepare for the meeting but takes a negative turn. Pessimism pervades his self-talk: “Adrian has more marketing experience. He is an old hand” at change, having survived numerous mergers and acquisitions. He would be better for the position.

“Gosh, why did I let them talk me into this? If I don’t get the promotion this time, it will be the second rejection in two years. How do I break the news to my girlfriend?”

“I am stuck in this dead end job, which I have been doing for the past five years. My peers have moved to bigger and better things. New Year is just around the corner. With all the family gatherings, what would my relatives say? My dad will be so ashamed of me.”

By the time the clock strikes five, Raynoo is a nervous wreck and certainly not in the right frame of mind for the important interview.

Let’s do a retake with Raynoo approaching the interview with optimism. Taking positive actions can also mean doing something different from what you have already tried, and did not work.

It may require you to look at the issue from another angle or try another strategy. Raynoo also decides to downplay how others might judge him. He rationalises, no matter how sensational his failure is, that it will soon become yesterday’s news. Look at Tiger Woods!

Scenario 2
Raynoo has mixed feelings: he is excited and anxious at the same time. He starts to prepare for the meeting:

First, beginning with his accomplishments, he lists down the skills used to achieve them. Secondly, he identifies his contributions, and finally, he incorporates a couple of negative incidents.

Whilst positive experiences are usually the ones you are proud of and fondly recall, negative ones or failures will show how a person overcomes adversaries and builds resilience in the process. Recalling these key experiences gives Raynoo’s confidence a boost shot.

When the clock strikes five, he feels at ease and comfortable “selling” himself at the interview. As he makes his way to HR, it is positively and his stride has a spring to it.

ONE DOOR SHUTS, ANOTHER DOOR OPENS

Career change—sometimes it happens by chance and sometimes, the decision is made for you. It’s never easy to change careers mid-stream especially after a job loss, no matter how talented or gifted you are. Let’s take a look at my friend, Misha.

A bright, vivacious and articulate medical director, she was helming the medical department of a mid-size pharmaceutical company for the longest time. She enjoyed her work and colleagues liked her collaborative and positive approach.

When a “big Pharma” acquired her company, she lost her job. Naturally, she was sad but being the realist optimist she was, she saw it as an opportunity to consider career change options.

Here’s what she told me, “I am feeling sad about this but I am also quite grateful for this opportunity. I am confident my talents can be stretched, I am considering going into media to cover medical issues and topics.”

“So tell me, what do I have to do to get into media? I must admit that I do have stage fright but I guess I can start by practising my public speaking skills.”

With her optimism cap on, she gave a shot at a new career and direction. She soon found work in a different industry utilising the skills she already had.

Losing a job can either be a boon or bane. Depending on how you look at it, your thinking habits can permanently shut a door for good or open another one. In Misha’s case, it was a door to many possibilities and opportunities.

Of the world’s most successful people have been fired from their jobs, and have used the experience to become even more successful. Sallie Krawcheck, a senior leader at the bank where I used to work was quoted to say “I was grateful when I got fired.”

Since paring way with the bank, she has re-launched her career with aplomb. She now leads 85 Boards, a professional women’s network founded with the main purpose to advance the careers of women.

Krawcheck is an influential leader and in the league of “Who’s Who” in thought leadership. Her articles on LinkedIn provide great information and tips on dealing with failures, networking and women in careers.

ON A POSITIVE NOTE

We, humans, are driven by an instinct to survive. How we react in any given situation is likely to be influenced by our negative experiences.

Over time, we develop a defensive mecha-

nism, which defaults to the negative mode or looking at the glass half empty. Pessimism is contagious and so is optimism. So when we consciously frame our mind to embrace positivity, we start to appreciate what is working.

When things don’t work out the way we envisage, we can be grateful for the learning opportunities they provide. When we speak and radiate possibilities, we connect with people and create goodwill.

If you have what you read resonates and appeals to you, go ahead—give optimism a chance. Realise the full potential of each day and be the possibility that you are!

Anna Tan is a bean counter who found her calling in HR. Her journey in corporate HR has led her to pen “STRETCHED! Unleashing Your Team’s Potential” by Coaching the Rubber Band Way where she likened human potential as flexible and agile at the rubber band.

LEADING ECONOMICS

CONSULTING CORNER

EAFING through the classifieds one Saturday afternoon, my atten- tion turned to an eye-catching headline, “Is this glass half full or half empty? If you see it as half full, we’re interested in you.”

As chance would have it, the job adver- tisement was placed by a company where I worked as a resident change manager a good 10 years ago.

At that time, a full-time change manager job was a rare breed and not standard fare in an organisation’s job family.

The then leader helming the company was not your average “business as usual” manag- ing director either. Spearheading a massive transformation programme, he was a virtuoso in vision shaping and culture building.

Today’s increasingly complex and uncertain environment presents us with many challeng- es and opportunities never before experienced. It can be both daunting and exciting depending on how we see opportunity or obstacles in the unknown. In short, do we see a “glass half full or half empty?”

Optimism is a subject which has attracted much attention and research efforts. One particular topic which interests me greatly is positive psychology.

Dr Martin Seligman, founder of positive psychology, has discovered that people with a positive outlook create opportunity and don’t give up as easily as pessimists, hence are more likely to achieve more success because of it.
FADING BOTH HEART AND MIND

TATA SONS DIRECTOR TALKS SELF-AWARENESS AND BALANCE

By CINDY YAP
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

When The Leaderonomics Show asks for his take on leadership, Gopal comments that “a leader is a person who can gain followers.”

“There is no leader without followers and no followers without a leader. And to get people attracted, a leader should touch hearts.”

People follow you when you touch their hearts. People listen to you when you become increasingly aware of yourself. Gopal says, “as you become more aware of how people receive your messages, others receive less.”

People who speak to the mind are many. But leaders who can touch your heart are fewer,” shares Gopal.

As for how leaders can touch the hearts of people, Gopal says that self-awareness is fundamental.

“The key issue is to become self-aware without becoming psychotic or a ‘God-man’. We are not talking about ambition, dreams, hang-ups, phobias. They are mine, they stay with me and never get expressed, though others may notice them.”

“Leaders who can touch your heart are capable of becoming in one way or another, if I sit back, reflect and express concern about how people disliked Winston’s way of talking. She wrote: “My dear Winston, nothing in the world I love more than you. I don’t want bad people to say bad things about you. Would you please mend your ways?” So your husband or wife will always tell you what’s wrong with you!”

Gopal laughs.

LIVING IN THREE WORLDS

Gopal shares thoughts on what it takes to maintain balance and succeed in his book When the Penny Drops: Learning What’s Not Taught.

Published in 2010, Gopal delves into the three worlds of a manager – the inner world, the world of relationships and the world of getting things done.

“I think of the three worlds as three overlapping and interconnected circles,” he says, explaining the three worlds as follows:

1. MY OWN WORLD

In my world, I’ve got my own ambitions, dreams, hang-ups, concerns, anxieties and phobias. They are mine, they stay with me and never get expressed, though others may notice them.

2. THE WORLD OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

No human being is an island. Everyone has to relate and talk to someone, even if you are an unfriendly person. You have to get your food from someone. There is a constant connection. Some people receive more messages, others receive less.

3. A WORLD OF GETTING THINGS DONE

There are seven billion people on this planet. All of us have to get something done to be economically useful. Those who don’t, don’t survive. Even a sweeper has to get something done - to collect his/her broom and cleaning materials from the store.

Gopal explains that we are constantly moving from one world to another without being aware of time. Each of us, regardless of our level of education, religion or colour of skin, move in and out of these worlds in a unique way. Each of our unique pathways account for our distinct personalities and determine our style of leadership.

According to Gopal, managers learn through the experiences of managing situations in each of the three worlds. A company’s and an individual’s development depends on how well these lessons are learned and the balance maintained between them.

For leaders aspiring to be truly great, Gopal has a piece of advice: “It’s what you do and encounter that makes a leader, not how you are born. Your DNA has an influence, but it’s not the sole determining element.”

Quips, “We are all born the same.”

“Of course, if I was born very poor, without access to education, school or health, it can be a severe disadvantage, but it is not the single biggest determining factor.”

“When you go through life experiences, you are influenced by these experiences and that’s how you learn what nobody has taught you.”

Gopal likens it to getting the “aha” feeling – when the penny drops and you finally understand. At the end of the day, these experiences and “penny drop” moments matter most in moulding a successful leader, he concludes.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL AT SIME DARBY

By PREMA JAYABALAN
prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com

Sime Darby is a diversified multinational involved in key growth sectors, namely, plantations, property, motors, industrial equipment and energy & utilities, and employs over 100,000 employees operating in more than 30 countries.

The Sime Darby brand has been a key part of the Malaysian economy for more than 100 years.

In line with its vision, “To be a leading multinational corporation delivering sustainable value to all stakeholders”, it has taken steps to drive holistic, practical and business focused learning solutions to developing its employees.

“As one of the active members in the GLC Transformation Programme under the Khazanah Nasional’s Orange Book on Strengthening Leadership Development initiative, launched in 2004, we are focused on creating potential leaders who will be able to take the organisation to many great levels,” says Nadiah Abdullah, head of Learning and Talent, Sime Darby Group.

This led to the introduction of Sime Darby’s Core Executive Programme (CEP) in 2009, a series of mandatory programmes dedicated to the leadership development of Sime Darby executives at all levels of the organisation.

CEP aims to develop consistent level of competencies to improve individual performance whilst driving common language, culture and values across the group,” adds Nadiah.

For example, the Core Executive Programme (CEP) aims to develop the leadership skills of our executives and senior executives through increasing their self-awareness and personal mastery to enable them to perform effectively at their level.

CEP has recently expanded its horizons to the Group’s overseas counterparts in Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore and China as the Group believes it is imperative to drive consistent skills and expectations across the countries it operates in.

“We have been running this programme in Malaysia for three consecutive years and we realised that there is a need to further scale this programme to our operations outside Malaysia,” explains Nadiah.

CEP1 was launched in Thailand on Oct 14 with great success. According to Nadiah, there was a mixture of employees from diverse backgrounds, skills and experience.

“I saw many positive changes in my staff within just two days after the programme,” shares a happy Natchamon Worakritjivan, head of Human Resources, Sime Darby Power Co. Ltd., Thailand.

“We saw an improved change in her behaviour and communication skills. She has transformed into a completely different person in just two days”.

CEP is one of the many high-impact leadership development initiatives to align the Group’s talents to Sime Darby’s strategic thrust of instituting a performance and value-driven culture.
One-third of employers are planning to increase the number of benefit programmes. Furthermore, the number of employees planning to introduce or increase flexibility in their benefits is set to double over the next year. Thirty-two per cent of employers plan to increase flexibility in the next 12 months, and 23% plan to introduce it.

The number of employees that have a corporate benefits strategy has jumped from 51% in 2020 to 91% this year.

One-third of employers are beginning to think more holistically about their health programmes, particularly in the area of wellness. Employers are looking to their total health management approach rather than just their medical, health, disability and life benefit programmes. They seem to be moving towards a holistic approach to health and wellness. Employers have reviewed their strategy in the last 12 months, confirming that benefits are high on employers’ agendas. Looking at individual countries, employers in Malaysia and Singapore do not have a documented strategy.

China and Taiwan are ahead in the region, with close to 50% of employers in China and 48% in Taiwan having a documented benefits strategy.

The 2009 Towers Watson’s Asia Pacific Benefits Study found that 39% of respondents did not have a corporate benefits strategy in place, and 36% last reviewed their benefits more than 12 months ago.

The dramatic shift in both numbers in the 2013 study indicates the importance of employers placing on their benefit programmes.

The study found that across Asia-Pacific, benefits are continuing to grow in importance as a reward lever. The majority of employers have revised their ongoing benefit decisions in the last 12 months. The number of employers that have reviewed their strategy in the last 12 months, confirming that benefits are high on employers’ agendas. Looking at individual countries, employers in Malaysia and Singapore do not have a documented strategy.
LEADERSHIP development is at the top of the minds of business and human resources (HR) leaders all around the world, according to the 2013 Resetting Horizons Global Human Capital Trends 2013 Report by Deloitte.

The report surveyed over 100 business and HR leaders in 59 countries: 582 from Asia-Pacific, 315 from the Americas and 412 from EMEA. Fifty-six per cent of respondents in Asia-Pacific, and 55% globally, cited developing leaders and succession planning as their most pressing talent concern.

Chief executive officers (CEOs) in The Conference Board’s CEO Challenge 2013 report similarly cited leadership development as one of their most critical challenges.

“Perhaps this indicates that the high demand for new leaders is outpacing the supply,” according to the Deloitte report, hinting at a deeper issue. There aren’t enough individuals who possess the requisite leadership skills to lead in these volatile times.

Having a strong leadership pipeline is a global predicament. On the one hand there is the issue of “supply,” raising questions about whether educational systems are churning out graduates that can be successful leaders in the workplace.

At a panel discussion at the recent Malaysia’s 100 Leading Graduate Employers Conference, Shell recruitment manager Haria Ahli said universities must play their part to ensure that young Malaysian graduates not only join the job market with certification, but also skills to thrive in a work environment where they can hold their own on a global stage.

Qualities like initiative, creativity, language and communication skills immediately come to mind. Roshan Thiran, CEO of Leaderonomics and fellow panelist at the conference, added that all organisations must acknowledge their responsibility to groom individuals into leaders. The onus is on all to ensure there is both abundance and quality in the pipeline.

ADAPTABLE LEADERS NEEDED FOR VOLATILE TIMES

On the other hand, there are also the demands on today’s “ideal leader” to consider. A recent presentation in Kuala Lumpur on The Future Asian Leader by The Conference Board said the future is characterised by “volatility and change.” The presentation summarised results from an UnConference, held in Kuala Lumpur in June this year.

Adaptability and agility are needed to lead and produce business results in this era of constant change and uncertainty.

With technology and the speed at which new concepts can materialise, market dynamics can change overnight. Leaders must also be able to lead across a range of markets, adds the 2013 Deloitte report.

“Although many companies continue to pursue a singular vision of the ideal leadership style, the humbling truth is that tomorrow’s leaders should be able to thrive across multiple complex environments.”

These include “hyper-growth in emerging economies; value-harvesting or turnaround in mature markets and product segments; entrepreneurial innovation in start-up categories; and enterprise re-engineering for end-to-end value chain optimisation,” write Geoff Helt and Bill Pelster, respectively senior manager and principal of Deloitte in the United States, and authors of the leadership chapter of the report.

MEETING TODAY’S DEMANDS

Consequently, Helt and Pelster cite the importance of diversity in leadership today. There must be facilitation of different styles, skills and experiences, they say.

Leaders must also have the ability to disrupt, and have the courage and space to be creatively abrasive. They should be able to challenge one another and voice their opinions “without pouting or shutting down if they lose.”

According to Roshan, the key to developing the kind of leaders organisations need today is to expose individuals to different experiences.

The Conference Board’s Future Asian Leader results affirm this experiential route for the best results. When asked to identify which proposition has had the most impact on accelerating leadership in their company, “action learning initiatives” was the top answer for Asian respondents.

Interestingly, “social learning” received a mere 2% of the vote.

Using the analogy of a person learning to swim, Roshan explains, “You can’t learn to swim by sitting in a classroom and watching videos of people swimming. You have to get thrown in the pool. If you want to accelerate the process, throw a crocodile in too.”

The simulations have a duration from four hours to two days and can simulate up to eight years of business operations. The number of participants can vary from a couple to more than 1,000.

If you’re looking for business simulations, Leaderonomics runs a full series of Silega simulations where learners can experiment with different scenarios and see the consequences of their actions. Participants receive immediate feedback as well as practical and easy to apply ideas for the business world.

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Author of the book LiftOff: Leadership: 10 Principles for Exceptional Leadership, Betty Shotton believes that leaders have as great an impact on the outcome of people's lives as a pilot in charge of a plane full of passengers. The consequences of both a leader and a pilot's actions are powerful in determining the outcome of any individual's life.

As much as it is up to the pilot that we stay up in the air, don't come crashing down and land safely in our destination, it is also up to our leaders to ensure that we stay aloft, don't come falling down but fulfill our purposes and potential in life.

KNOWING WHAT COUNTS

According to Shotton, the starting point in leadership is knowing what really counts. It takes more than just knowledge and expertise to be a good leader; it also calls for courage, integrity, vision and faith. The character of the leader makes a big difference, and is defined by the values and principles that he or she holds on to, both in life as well as in leadership.

As a leader, you can choose to:

- Be profitable and yet, provide meaning to those who do the work;
- Be accountable and require those who work with you to do the same;
- Create a work environment that encourages collaboration and cooperation;
- Inspire others and spur them on to reach their potential;
- Create a culture that delivers excellent customer service at all levels;
- Make a day, life, organisation, community better because of your leadership.

OR YOU CAN CHOOSE NOT TO

You can also choose to be so absorbed and focused on numerical measures and financial reports that you lose sight of the big picture. You can get so bogged down by details and micro-managing that you lose your enthusiasm.

You can choose to be so overly concerned with bottom line profits so much so that you forget that your role can be bigger than that – as a leader, you have the potential to move mountains and inspire others to achieve more and blossom into their fullest potential.

In this book, Shotton shares 10 leadership values that she describes as the most powerful values she has experienced in her 35 years as a leader and consultant:

- Vision
- Altruism
- Courage
- Accountability
- Possibility
- Resolution
- Faith
- Integrity
- Balance
- Awe

Just like a professional pilot who has a pre-flight checklist, Shotton advises leaders to have a checklist of our values. Check them on a regular basis because they are like our compass.

VISION

“Who can we be?” is the question that generates passion and purpose for organisations and teams of people who work together. When we know our potential – it gives hope, meaning and motivation. Leaders who are visionaries are good at providing answers to this basic question. They have a clear idea of the desired future, and more than that, they are able to captivate the interests of others to join them towards this goal.

Good examples of simple yet effective vision statements are like Nike’s “To bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world or Walt Disney’s “To make people happy.”

Such simple yet clearly defined vision statements can inspire and get a whole workforce going towards a shared and common purpose.

We long for leaders with vision. There is something within us that makes us desire to be part of something greater than our own selves.

Leaders must also remember that at the heart of vision is their belief in it. The effectiveness and power of our vision is only as great as our conviction of the vision. A vision is not something that you can just pull off the shelf and apply, nor something that you convey to your organisation through a hired consultant.

A vision is only authentic when the leader truly believes in it and is able to passionately cast that vision across to the members of the organisation.

From her many years as a leadership consultant and CEO, Shotton knows that people are not motivated by their company’s desire to make money.

When you tell people that they are working for a number, nothing much happens. It does not give true inspiration. People are inspired by the hope and promise of the vision of who they can be, both as individuals as well as a team within an organisation.

When people know the future they are working for, they are more willing to make sacrifices. Numbers alone do not inspire.

A visionary leader needs a combination of skills:

1. Ability to project into the future
   - A visionary leader has the ability to look at whatever reality confronts them and instinctively see a way to successfully assimilate today’s situations with the opportunities of tomorrow.

2. Teamwork
   - Leaders who are visionary are also not top-down people. While they may be the primary drivers of the vision, they work together with others who will be part of the team that will see to the realisation of the vision.
   - A visionary leader is able to rally others together towards a common understanding and direction.

3. Focus on the vision
   - Leaders need to be alert to the danger of getting lost in the trees. Many things can obstruct a leader’s ability to see the forest in the midst of the trees.
   - It is important not to micromanage others or be too concerned and involved in the details.

4. Delegation
   - It is important to empower others: micromanaging people will cause people to lose interest in the big picture because they don’t feel valued and trusted as your employee.

Shotton believes that in leadership, the runway is the goal. The runway is the place your vision brings you to.

You need to keep the runway in sight, scan your environment, assess the organisation’s health, and most importantly, stay on the runway and stay on course.

And like a pilot, let others know when you are on the path to the future, and always let them know you are on target to the final destination - touchdown. Successful landing. Vision accomplished!

Koh Earn Soo and his team take the best books and summarise them into shorter, readable content in the hope of inspiring people to read more and learn more. To read the rest of this summary and summaries of other bestsellers, subscribe to www.thebestbooks.com.
**THE CHALLENGES**

“Apart from the massive traffic jam in KL, I guess the biggest challenge I face in my job is dealing with incon siderate and problematic passengers. Some of them can be very rude.”

“I have had passengers who stop the bus by using their legs, passen gers who have thrown rocks at my bus shattering the glass, as well as ones who have been downright crude while talking to me,” he sighs.

Besides that, there is also the scenario of uncertain weather changes. Anuar says that on some days, it just rains unexpectedly and this causes delays. This will result in anxiety among passengers who will get agitated while shouting at the bus driver for arriving late. They fail to realise that the driver is caught in traffic due to the weather, he says.

“In this line of job, you meet various people ranging from the young, old, and the disabled. You also come across a diverse form of characters, some with whom you can be friends with and some with whom you can’t.”

Nevertheless, being a friendly and jovial person, Anuar loves what he is doing as it enables him to widen his network of contacts.

**FORTUNATE CONNECTIONS**

“In my job, I have the privilege of getting acquainted with people from all walks of life.”

It has given me the opportunity to make new friends and build good connections. Most of these connections have worked out very well for me.

“I remember speaking to a particular passenger once about my brother who was desperately looking for a job. This person told me to ask my brother to come see him.”

“I passed the message to my brother and what do you know, this guy was actually a job recruiter who managed to hook my brother up with a company in no time,” says the cheerful father-of-five.

Anuar also believes in the importance of good social skills. He says that developing people skills is imperative to provide a comfortable environment for the passengers. He always wants his passengers to feel that a journey in his bus is worth their money.

“Lastly, love your job. Never say you are bored of your work because that is an indication that you are not sincere in your career. When you are not sincere, then you will never do justice to your work.”

**WHAT IT TAKES**

“People might think that driving a bus is easy and all it takes is a driver’s licence and the knowledge on how to handle the vehicle but there is more to it than that.”

“You also need to be very patient as you are dealing with people with all sorts of behaviours each day. You cannot afford to love your temper as it could cause you your job.”

At the same time, you have to be firm in order to ensure that the passengers do not do as they please on the bus. So you have to be very practical and careful while managing your passengers,” he says.

Anuar also feels that a journey in his bus is worth their money.

“Lastly, love your job. Never say you are bored of your work because that is an indication that you are not sincere in your career. When you are not sincere, then you will never do justice to your work.”

To watch this video and for more A Day in the Life videos, visit www.leaderonomics.tv
YOUR CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

WE BECOME THE COMBINED AVERAGE OF THE FIVE PEOPLE WE HANG AROUND MOST WITH.

By RAINA RADZIAF
myStarjob@leaderonomics.com

WHILE browsing through the Internet this morning, I came across a powerful statement by Jim Rohn, an American entrepreneur, author and motivational speaker. According to Rohn, we become the combined average of the five people we hang around the most with.

The people we spend our time with ultimately influence the conversations that dominate our minds, and are the source of observations, attitudes and viewpoints we repetitively are introduced to. Your circle of influence doesn’t push you in one direction. Rather, it nudges you ever so gently over time, and eventually, as Rohn puts it, “You will have the combined attitude, health and income of the five people you hang around the most with.”

Identify your circle of influence into the following three groups:

1 DISASSOCIATION - There are people with certain negative influences that you might need to break away from completely. It may not be an easy step to take, but it’s important. You’ve got to make the call and let the negativity affect you anymore. Determine the quality of life you want to have. Then surround yourself with the people who can support and help you achieve that.

2 LIMITED ASSOCIATIONS - There are people who you can spend a few hours with, but not a few days. Others you can spend a few minutes with, but not a few hours. Decide how much you can “afford” to be influenced, based on how those people carry themselves.

3 EXPANDED ASSOCIATIONS - Seek those who represent the success you want. It could be those with the skills, relationship and lifestyle improvement that you seek. Spend more time with them. Join activities and associations to connect with them.

I paused to reflect on Rohn’s statement and my journey so far. I have always imagined my life as being made up of peaks and valleys with long stretches of roads.

I started to think about “what” I was doing, the choices I have made, and “who” I surrounded myself with, in terms of highs and lows.

I applied Rohn’s idea of combining those individuals’ income, health and attitudes and ta-daa! I got a clearer image of where my thoughts, energy and actions were focused during those peaks and valleys.

I realised that while in the valley, I often shut down, deserted my circle and went inward, focusing on everything that was not going my way (and believe me, there is no cheese down that tunnel!). Now it’s your turn to apply yourself. “What is the combined average income, health and attitude of the five people I spend most of my time with?” Note your answer, reflect on it and if need be, change it! I have managed to come up with some ways that helped me get out of my “funk” and live a purposeful life.

WAYS TO EXPAND YOUR CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

1 Quit the blame game: This victim mentality is a sure route to staying stuck, because you end up feeling as if everyone is against you, when really it’s just a matter of your perception on choosing to react to life.

2 Instead of asking “Why is this happening to me?” ask, “What can I do to change this situation?” Keep your eyes focused on your purpose and what YOU can do to overcome your challenges.

3 Ditch the haters: Stop spending time with people who pull you down, demotivate you and simply don’t want to do anything to get ahead. Believe me, haters are like water going down a drain. They will pull you down.

4 Seek success: Look around you. Who is successful (in your eyes)? Who could be your role model? What are they doing? Where do they live, work and play? What book do they read? You can quickly find success when you open your eyes and start looking. Start recognising success and adjust your daily habits accordingly.

5 Get passionately curious: The fastest way to feel empowered is to gain insight, wisdom and perspective. Get out there and learn something new! Read a book, attend a seminar or webinar, or travel the world. Don’t be content with what you know today. Always seek to broaden your horizons.

6 Find a mentor: Identify the people who best reflect the life you desire and communicate with them. It could be through LinkedIn, Facebook or social gatherings. Don’t be afraid to seek their advice on how to get ahead.

Roll up your sleeves: It is time to get hold of your future. If you want something, you’ve got to go out to get it. Ignore the cynics and push yourself to change your life.

Tune out the noise: If other people’s negativity is pulling you down, stop listening. If your friends are dragging you down, get new ones (or at least spend less time with them).

Think about all the people, places and things that you come in contact with each day. Ask yourself, “Is this helping or hindering my success?” If it’s not helping, abandon it.

The path to success is going to be filled with ups and downs. To stay on top, start by looking at your circle of influence. Is it time to expand it, grow it or change it?

Nothing could be more essential to living than doing what matters to us most. You’ve got only one life, make it worthwhile!

Raina Radziaf is a learning and development practitioner. She completed successful stints in an international higher educational institution and a leading legal practice in Malaysia, in corporate planning and business development and legal respectively. Currently, she is in the corporate world with a leading Malaysia-based multinational corporation.

THE ONE INTERVIEW QUESTION EVERYBODY DREADS

“Can you tell us a little about yourself?” These little words can be terrifying if you’re not sure what to say.

1 What do you talk about your last role? Hobbies? Work style? Preferred management style? All of the above? Relax – here are six tips to help you answer this important question well.

2 1. What do they really want to know? Keep in mind that the interviewer is reading the resume you’ve just run through your resume again – your interviewer already has it.

3 Limit your answer, reflect on it and if need be, change it! Have managed to come up with some ways that helped me get out of my “funk” and live a purposeful life.

4 What is the combined average income, health and attitude of the five people I spend most of my time with? Note your answer, reflect on it and if need be, change it! Have managed to come up with some ways that helped me get out of my “funk” and live a purposeful life.

5 Ways to expand your circle of influence

6 Find a mentor: Identify the people who best reflect the life you desire and communicate with them. It could be through LinkedIn, Facebook or social gatherings. Don’t be afraid to seek their advice on how to get ahead.

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DEAR CAREERNOMERS,

I recently joined a team in a new company. The job is great and so are the salary and prospects. I love my job, and I believe it is what I am meant to do. However, I find myself not wanting to go to work on some days because of my team mates at work. There are four of us in the team, and the others in the team are extremely negative people. They are constantly complaining about everything and everyone.

They don’t like their jobs nor the company. They are always saying how the bosses are horrible and that they are treated unfairly. They gossip and talk bad about other colleagues.

Initially I didn’t really care, but since we have to work together, it has become really tiring. I find it exhausting to be around so much negativity on a daily basis. I have thought about quitting several times, but I feel this is the best place for my career. How should I deal with this? I am tired of feeling so bad at work. I do plan to stay on in this company for a few years. Please advise.

Thanks,

ELIZABETH

DEAR ELIZABETH,

It sounds like you have landed your dream job and are actually where you want to be. This is more than what many other people in the workplace can say for themselves.

It is indeed unfortunate that you are surrounded by negativity and sentimentality that drain your positive energy and enthusiasm for work. Especially so, if the source of this negativity is coming from those you are supposed to work closely with on a daily basis.

When I first started working in the corporate world, I was quite shocked at the initial experience of office politics and negativity.

I soon realised that this is part and parcel of the dynamic of being at work.

One piece of advice that I have received and until today works for me is, “Office politics, negativity and drama is everywhere, it’s up to you how much you allow it to get into your system and affect you.”

Having said that, you have an unusual situation as it is amplified in your current job which necessitates that you work with three others who are affecting your life in your role.

Gallup surveys show that organisations typically have one in six employees who are actively sabotaging the functioning of others in their workplace. So this is not new or unique to your organisation or your team.

The question is how you can ensure you are not a collateral damage in the face of this intense negativity.

OVERCOMING NEGATIVITY

Some people exude negativity. They either don’t like their jobs or they don’t like their company.

Their bosses are always incompetent and customers are worthless.

The company is always going down the tube and customers are worth nothing.

On the other hand, sometimes people that are usually positive can also be negative personalities. They have legitimate reasons for their negativity.

You will take a completely different approach with these occasionally negative people. In your case, the three co-workers surely are varied in their degree of negativity.

DEALING WITH OCCASIONAL NEGATIVITY

Negative people are a challenge until you are certain that your team member feels listened to. Sometimes people repeat negative sentiments over and over because they don’t feel like you have really listened to them. Ask questions. Clarify that they are speaking to you if you believe your team member has legitimate reasons for their negativity.

If you decide definitively, ask if they’d like your help to solve the problem. If they ask for help, provide advice or ideas for how the coworker can address the reason for their negativity.

Short term advice that points a person in a positive direction is welcome. But, your role is not to provide therapy or counseling. Nor, is it to provide personal career or long term recommendations.

Don’t consider yourself as a problem solver as opposed to a team member who likes to indulge in negative talk.

DEALING WITH HABITUAL NEGATIVITY

Sometimes your team member may just want to complain to a friendly, listening ear. They don’t want your advice or assistance to address the situation. Listen, but set limits so the team member does not over-talk his or her welcome. Long term complaining saps your energy and positive outlook. Don’t allow that to happen.

Walk away. Tell the team mate you’d prefer to move on to more positive subjects.

If you listen to your team members’ negativity, and decide the concerns are not legitimate, practice personal courage.

Tell your team members you care about their concern and about their happiness at work, but you disagree with their assessment of the situation. Back this gracefully with additional considerations.

Some people are occasionally negative with legitimate reasons, while some are genuinely negative.

Nothing affects your morale more insidiously than persistent workplace negativity - especially if your job requires collaboration with such colleagues.

For whatever reason, you must address the issues. Ignoring the negativity may work temporarily, but eventually you need a strategy for dealing with these colleagues.

Without a defence mechanism, you may find negative thoughts taking over your mind and decreasing your productivity at the office.

Here are some ways to deal with these negative coworkers.

1. Set limits with genuinely negative team members.

Don’t impact your positive outlook by listening to the stories, or reviewing the history and the background about the grievances purported to cause the negativity.

Negativity mongers need a new job, a new company, a new career, a new outlook, or counselling. They don’t need you.

If all else fails, talk to your team lead about the challenges you are experiencing in dealing with the negative team members.

Your team lead may be willing to address the negativity (or not) but at the very least he/she will understand that you are at risk of losing your zest of work because of the circumstances that you have been placed in.

If the culture of your workplace is positive and this group’s behaviour is not reflective of the bigger picture, I am certain that things will only get better for you in the long term, so take this as a lesson to hone your ability to manage and thrive in spite of negativity in your work team. All the best.

RUPA SIVANOLI

DEAR ELIZABETH,

Negativity is an increasing problem in the workplace and is often the result of a loss of confidence, control, or sense of belonging.

Some people are occasionally negative with legitimate reasons, while some are genuinely negative.

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RUPA SIVANOLI

DEAR ELIZABETH,

Choose to ignore them (with a smile). Most critical people are not critical with malicious intent but it is a way of life. There are also the types who like to get a reaction.

In this case, the best thing you can do is ignore them. The more you respond, the more likely they will continue to be negative and the cycle will continue. You can’t stop these people from talking, but you have the power to shorten the conversation.

5. Detach yourself. Genuine negative attitudes won’t go away overnight. Overtime, you must learn to detach yourself emotionally from the negative situation so that it doesn’t affect your attitude.

Your own enthusiasm and positivity can help improve the overall attitude in the team. You’ll also show the negative team members that they won’t get a reaction out of you every time that it is what they want.

It’s important to remember that we are ultimately responsible for the way we feel. Work on your own attitude and build a stronger fort.

No one can make us feel anything unless we allow them to bring us down, take our energy, or steal or joyous moments. “No one could drive your car but you gave them the keys.”

SHOBA KESAVAN

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

Also next week

Spotlight on the rise of women leaders around the world

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What if you could write a letter to your 15-year-old self?