BE INTENTIONAL WITH YOUR INFLUENCE

ONE of the requirements of my job is to ensure this pullout is ready for publication on a weekly basis. Each edition entails coordination, planning, visualising, editing and writing, among other things. Deadlines fill every week of the year, and when you throw in other aspects of my role, there is just a lot to do.

This is the reality of work for all of us. There are always things to get done, people to meet, reports to finish, emails to respond to, ideas to conjure up and projects to execute.

With your phone with you all the time, it’s tough to forget the phone calls and messages to attend to as well. This doesn’t change when we get home, does it? There are meals to prepare, house to clean, cat to feed, dog to walk and errands to run.

These are natural elements of daily life, but therein lies a big trap. It’s an invisible trap you take in quietly. There are no scary sounds. You won’t scream as you fall into it. You may even be reading this today whilst unknowingly sitting in that trap.

What is it? It’s the trap of becoming so fixated on doing tasks that you stop being intentional in your relationships. It’s the trap of becoming so focused on your daily to-do list, that you stop thinking about the effect you have on others around you.

A teacher can deliver lessons and unleash a river of information to his or her students. But beyond the task of sharing information, what kind of effect is the teacher having on the young minds?

What kind of influence is he or she on their lives?

As you go about your daily tasks and get them done one by one, consider the influence you have on those around you. How do they perceive you? Do they follow your instructions by one, consider the influence you have on those around you.

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As you go about your daily tasks and get them done one by one, consider the influence you have on those around you. How do they perceive you? Do they follow your instructions purely by virtue of your job title? Do you influence them negatively?

Do you really influence them at all? If words like legacy, impact, inspiration and motivation fall anywhere in the articulation of your life goals, then you need to think about your influence.

This week’s career guide examines various aspects of influence, and includes practical tips on how to increase your influence on others. I hope you get great points out of Roshan’s influence, and includes practical tips on how to increase your influence on others. I hope you get great points out of Roshan’s influence.

TRY THIS!

SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND, AND THEN BE UNDERSTOOD

THIS ranks as habit No.5 in Stephen Covey’s book on personal change, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People.

“We have such a tendency to rush in, to fix things up with good advice,” writes Covey. “But we often fail to take the time to diagnose, to really deeply understand the problem first.”

He gives the example of a child telling the mother that he doesn’t like school anymore. Before giving his reasons, the mother explode into the sacrifices that she and the father have made. She drums on about the fact that the child does not apply himself. This, she says, is why he doesn’t do well and therefore doesn’t like school.

But how effective is this approach in addressing the problems and concerns of the child? “Unless you’re influenced by your uniqueness, I’m not going to be influenced by your advice,” says Covey.

To influence effectively, you have to build the skills of empathic listening on a base of character that inspires openness and trust.

And you have to build the Emotional Bank Accounts that create a commerce between hearts.

In essence, before trying to make ourselves understood, we need to make sure we have made the effort to fully understand the other’s viewpoint. And this comes not by simply listening to their statements, but by prodding for more information, and for deeper sources of frustration and reasoning. This creates an environment of trust, and projects a sense of value to the individual. Only then will they be open to what you have to say.

This week, try to listen and communicate more effectively – try to “understand first” rather than rush to the “be understood” part. Try to inspire openness and trust, and create “a commerce between hearts”.

People are more likely to agree with something if they are nodding their heads while listening to information.

Studies also show that if you nod your head when talking to someone, they are more likely to nod their head too.

If you’re trying to persuade someone, first get them to agree with you on something. This increases the likelihood of them being swayed by your pitch.

A 2008 study published in Communication Studies concluded that information is slightly more persuasive when written positively as opposed to negatively. “You’ll be more energetic” has a stronger influencing effect than “You don’t exercise enough.”

People are more likely to attract something if there is a perception of exclusivity.

This creates an environment of trust. And this comes not by simply listening to their statements, but by prodding for more information, and for deeper sources of frustration and reasoning.

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This week, try to listen and communicate more effectively – try to “understand first” rather than rush to the “be understood” part. Try to inspire openness and trust, and create “a commerce between hearts”.

With my best,
Lily Cheah
Editor, myStarjob.com

LILY SAYS

The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.
In London, a new campaign kicked off to – the best example being the Gangnam Style. We tend to dress like others. We tend to enjoy songs that others listen to – the example being the Gangnam Style. We tend to enjoy songs that others listen to. People love to follow the crowd. No matter how much you believe that you are not influenced by others, the truth is we are influenced by what others are doing and saying. We tend to enjoy songs that others listen to.

Influence is critical for our success in life and in business. So, how do you influence? There are numerous parts to influencing effectively. According to research done in Harvard by Nalini Ambady, it takes only six seconds for people to judge us.

Ambady provided university students six seconds worth of footage (with no audio) of professors teaching and asked these students to rate the teachers. She kept the ratings and at the end of the semester, compared the six second ratings to the ratings from students who actually attended the full semester of classes of these professors.

She found that even with six seconds, the students evaluations of the professors were amazingly similar (and accurate) to the ratings of students who attended a full semester of classes. These six seconds are our window of influence. Body language, words, your appearance, harnessing the power of story-telling and using various means of concessions are all part of the influencing arsenal.

But before we delve into how to influence, we need to understand what influence is.

WHAT IS INFLUENCE?

According to Eric Lau, the foremost authority on influencing in Malaysia in my opinion, “Influence is the ability to move others into action.”

Whenever we can change someone’s thought process and convince them to pursue a course of action, we have exercised influence, hence demonstrated leadership. The heart of strategic influencing is to gain willing cooperation instead of mere compliance. It’s about getting others to follow us because they want to and not because they have to.

Influencing moves work from being merely transactional to relational. The most effective way to influence others is first to build a relationship of trust. On Sept 18, 1978, in Jonestown Guyana, 909 followers of the People’s Temple, led by cult leader Jim Jones, died by cyanide poisoning in what is called the largest mass-suicide in modern history.

How did Jones come to command such enormous influence over his followers’ thoughts and actions? How did over 700 adults willingly feed themselves and 200 of their children with poison at the request of their leader? Social psychologists identified the ability to build relational trust as a key factor for cult-leaders’ massive influence.

Jones was often described by his followers as someone who was loving and was deeply concerned about his followers well-being amidst his dominating and controlling personality. They loved him and trusted him completely.

Here lies the powerful truth about influence: The level of influence you have on others is directly proportionate to the level of trust they have in you. And trust does not happen automatically. It is something you need to work on.

INFLUENCING SECRETS

There are a number of other “secrets” to enable you to become better at influencing.

Alex Pentland, a professor at MIT, conducted an experiment where he attached digital recording devices to business leaders to monitor their speech and body language over the course of a social dinner.

A week later, he was able to predict with 87% accuracy how these leaders would fare in a business presentation which was rated by judges. He did this without listening to a word of the presentation. How did he do it? A key part to influencing others, especially judges or interviewers, is not what you say but how you portray yourself.

Are you confident, passionate, single-minded and committed to the cause you are presenting? The delivery of your message may be much more important than what is said.

Remember, Ambady’s earlier research showed us that people only need six seconds to make pretty an accurate judgment about you. So, how do you learn to ensure your body language and the signals it sends help you to influence better?

SMILE MORE?

Surprisingly, many believe that smiling makes no difference to your ability to better influence (although the strength of a person’s smile has a positive effect on customer satisfaction in the service industry). Neither does body posture. Nor hand movement. So, what are factors that make a difference?

The most important body part for influencing is your eye. Research from the University of Toronto stipulates that “eye contact is magnetic.”

Eye contact with each other signals attraction and creates a link that pulls people together. So, while trust may take time to build, having eye contact with people you interact with at work and socially is something that can be easily done.

Yet, many of us shy away from having a conversation with each other and ensuring eye contact. So, start this new year by using your eyes to start influencing others.

FINAL THOUGHTS

All of us are influencing people or are being influenced in some way or form every day of our lives. Building trust gives you the seed of influence. But more than that, your body language plays a big part in how people view and judge you.

Learn to use your eye contact and learn to include stories into your presentations and discussions. Everyone needs to influence every day. Learning to influence will only help you to become a better leader. Warm wishes for this new year from all of us at Leaderonomics!

Roshan Thiran, CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about transforming the nation through leadership and youth development, wishes you a very blessed New Year.

Be a Leader video series is now available for free. To watch these videos, go to www. leaderonomics.tv and click the Be a Leader icon.
THE STRENGTH OF AN APOLOGY

BY JOSEPH TAN
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

We have forgotten the art of making a proper apology. There is no time for this “mushy and gushy” stuff today because there is so much work and key performance indicators (KPIs) to meet.

If people get hurt in the process—then, it is just too bad. We expect others to be mature enough to understand our aggressiveness and if they complain—then, they are not emotionally prepared for pressure in the real world.

Do not apologise for it? It is a sign of weakness.

Consider the consequence of not apologising:

What is not apologised for is soon counted as a weakness. If I am consistently late for meetings and do not apologise for it, then others will view it as a habit trait—something to be expected.

However, if I apologise promptly—then, others see my commitment to change. This is counted to my favour as character strength.

What is not apologised for becomes a bitterness “backlog”.

An unresolved conflict can always be traced back an unresolved conversation.

Why are conversations difficult? It’s because no one is willing to come out of their stronghold of pride and arrogance. Every day, the dust beneath the carpet piles up until one day, we trip over this growing pile!

What is not apologised for increases the level of misunderstanding. Silence is a strange language that can be interpreted in many ways.

When we are quiet about a burning issue, the other party will view it only to their favour and may even misrepresent us to the detriment of our good reputation.

Herein lays the strength of an apology. The faster the apology is made, the stronger the restoration process will be.

Many talk about the speed of execution—I would rather emphasise the speed of a sincere apology which in today’s world is so sorely lacking. Show me a team that is lacking in morale and I will showing you a group of people who is not humble and courageous enough to apologise.

By meeting felt needs. Identify what the other person is lacking—is it finances, practical assistance or helpful referrals? Do it willingly for the good of the other.

We live in an imperfect world with imperfect people—this is the perfect situation for plenty of opportunities for apologies!

Making sincere and humble apologies regularly will only make you stronger—why? This is because every time an apology is made, you understand yourself and others much better and become a better person in the process. Isn’t this what growth is all about. Think about it.

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

WHY READING NOVELS IS GOOD FOR YOUR BRAIN

“A NOVEL IS A DIRECT IMPRESSION OF LIFE.” — HENRY JAMES

GOOD point.

Reading fiction, it turns out, is a great way to develop your social brain. Research shows that reading novels, for example, shapes our brains and moulds our social skills.

A study by Keith Oatley and Raymond Mar found that reading fiction improves your ability to connect with others. The study demonstrated that people who read fiction perform better on tests of empathy. This result held up even when they controlled for the variable that empathetic people might naturally choose to read fiction.

The study found that the more fiction a person read, the stronger the ability to make mental models of others. Another study in 2010 found that children who are exposed to lots of fiction material a person can acquire. To interact with Small, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

WHY DOES THIS HAPPEN?

It seems that reading fiction allows you to “live in other people’s brains.” The result is a stronger theory of mind.

That is, the ability to take the perspective of another, to understand that person’s mental model, to see issues and ideas in terms of other people's experiences.

Think about these practical benefits:

Better relationships
Improved leadership skills
Increased collaboration skills
Greater emotional intelligence—greater income (P. Saliwary, Yale)
Excellent, inexpensive entertainment
A greater understanding of human character
When you put the book down, you are better prepared for the world

Remember—your brain is wired to see what is essential, not what is real. Reading fiction intervenes in your cognitive processes. It can even change your personality.

fMRI scans show the brain responding to fiction as if the reader were feeling and acting just like the characters.

Scientific American Magazine recommends these nine novels to sharpen your mind:

1. The Sorrows of Young Werther — Johann von Goethe
2. Pride and Prejudice — Jane Austen
3. The Scarlet Letter — Nathaniel Hawthorne
4. Madame Bovary — Gustave Flaubert
5. Middlemarch — George Eliot
6. Anna Karenina — Leo Tolstoy
7. Mrs Dalloway — Virginia Woolf
8. Beloved — Toni Morrison
9. Disgrace — J.M. Coetzee

I used to feel slightly guilty when reading a novel. Thinking I should be reading something “real.” Not any more. 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 FASTER THE APOLOGY IS MADE, THE STRONGER THE RESTORATION PROCESS WILL BE

WE HAVE FORGOTTEN THE ART OF MAKING A PROPER APOLOGY. THERE IS NO TIME FOR THIS “MUSHY AND GUSHY” STUFF TODAY BECAUSE THERE IS SO MUCH WORK AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) TO MEET.

IF PEOPLE GET HURT IN THE PROCESS—THEN, IT IS JUST TOO BAD. WE EXPECT OTHERS TO BE MATURE ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND OUR AGGRESSIVENESS AND IF THEY COMPLAIN—THEN, THEY ARE NOT EMOTIONALLY PREPARED FOR PRESSURE IN THE REAL WORLD.

DO NOT APOLOGISE FOR IT? IT IS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS.

A SINCERE APOLOGY HAS ONE IMPORTANT COMPONENT— A WILLS TO MAKE RESTITUTION. FOR EXAMPLE, IN ADDITION TO APOLOGISING FOR BEING LATE FOR THE MEETING, I WILL ALSO VOLUNTEER TO TAKE THE MINUTES FOR THE NEXT SESSION AS AN INDICATION OF MY COMMITMENT TO CHANGE.

CONSTANTLY CHECK YOUR CONSCIENCE BY ASKING—“IN ADDITION TO SAYING SORRY, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I CAN DO TO COMMUNICATE MY COMMITMENT TO CHANGE?”

DO NOT FALL INTO THE DANGER OF WAITING FOR THE RIGHT FEELINGS TO COME FIRST BEFORE RIGHT ACTION IS TAKEN.

GO THE REVERSE—DO WHAT IS RIGHT FIRST, THEN THE VIBES WILL COME ALONG.

CHARACTER IS ABOUT MAKING RIGHT CHOICES DESPITE MY NATURAL INCLINATIONS.

HERE ARE THREE TYPES OF RESTITUTION YOU CAN TAKE:

1. By giving due recognition. Express praise and gratefulness publicly. Many are bitter because their sacrifices are not recognised and noticed.
2. By meeting felt needs. Identify what the other person is lacking—is it finances, practical assistance or helpful referrals? Do it willingly for the good of the other.
3. By offering a gift. A gift given in sincerity minimises anger. The reason why presenting a gift is powerful is because you cannot buy something for someone without thinking about the recipient.
I n the role of a leader, it’s common to have to ask your people to change the way they do things, and even change their attitudes. A great leader and influencer would know just the right way to do so without creating resentment or offending.

Dale Carnegie in his long-standing best seller How to Win Friends and Influence People, explains how this can be done.

His nine principles of how successful leaders can influence their people and change their attitudes and behaviour are astonishingly simple, yet powerful and an eye-opener, whatever your circumstances are.

**START WITH PRaise**

Carnegie starts by explaining his first principle for doing this right: “Begin with a praise and honest appreciation.” Everyone loves a compliment. It is easy to get caught up in your fury and disappointment, and forget all the good things about the person you are about to criticise.

However, starting your discussion by stating the good points of the person and drawing attention to areas you are honestly happy with, will encourage the person to take criticism in a more constructive way rather than dwell on their flaws.

Compliment him or her for something they have done wrong, guiding them towards the small step which may only take you one day, make it look easy and that you trust that they will do their best to achieve the target.

**MAKE THEM HAPPY**

Carnegie’s final principle on influencing change in people without offending them is to “Make the other person happy about doing the thing you suggest.”

This is less straightforward than the rest of Carnegie’s principles, and perhaps seems the hardest to master.

So how can we achieve this? By ensuring they understand your rationale. For example, the role might be too menial for them, or they are too important to be seen doing something like this, or even by offering a substitute role/project to force them to start thinking about that rather than dwell on the disappointment of a turn-down or a reprimand.

Carnegie explains that an effective leader, when in the midst of changing attitudes or behaviours, should aim to be sincere (not make promises that cannot be kept).

The leader should clearly outline what they want the other person to do or achieve. They should also understand what the other person wants to get out of this situation, and consider the benefits the person will receive by implementing the suggestion.

When the request for correction is made, it should be made in a way that emphasises the personal benefit to the person rather than to the leader or the company.

Carnegie wrote his book back in 1936—almost 80 years ago. It’s interesting how some things in life never change despite the advances our societies have made.

When influencing the people around us, it is important to remember that the key is positivity. All the principles emphasise the positives of a person rather than dwell on their flaws.

It is not easy when things get heated and timelines are coming dangerously close to an end to remain this calm. But instead of throwing a fit, consider if we focus on a person’s positive attributes and their ability to do better.

Remember, shouting never solves anything. Rather than nurturing resentment and making others feel offended, aim to make a change through encouragement and honest interest in the other person’s perspective.

The most influential and well respected leaders in history managed to master this and this is what made them great.
**BE A POWERFUL INFLUENCE**

**HOW TO INSPIRE, MOTIVATE AND COMPETE WITH OTHERS TO GO YOUR WAY**

**INFLUENCING** is a gift of curiosity. It’s the ability to be curious about why people do what they do, understand perspectives and inspire actions.

**DIFFERENT INFLUENCING STYLES**

Once you’ve established the way you interact with others, it’s useful to understand the three styles of influencing behavior: passive, assertive and aggressive. The table below describes each style in detail and how people with these tendencies can be perceived.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passive</th>
<th>Assertive</th>
<th>Aggressive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unbothered or in the zone</td>
<td>Always stress well and Preparing well</td>
<td>Always stress well and Preparing well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-image</td>
<td>Assertive posture</td>
<td>Positive posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May be liked by others but not necessarily respected</td>
<td>Great respect from others</td>
<td>Low respect from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for others at the point of personal discomfort</td>
<td>Concern for others at the point of personal discomfort</td>
<td>Sincere concern for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not welcome confrontation</td>
<td>Leaders are effective when being directed to work</td>
<td>Takes personal responsibility for work while others accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactful and non-confrontation</td>
<td>Sincere and has no reason for others</td>
<td>Sincere and has no reason for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looks for opportunities to collaborate</td>
<td>Helps others understand and follow directions</td>
<td>Helps others understand and follow directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect, quiet and reserved. Does not welcome confrontation</td>
<td>Direct, honest and appropriate communication that gets clarity</td>
<td>Direct, honest and appropriate communication that gets clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most likely to avoid conflict</td>
<td>Pat others along the way</td>
<td>Pat others along the way</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**THE ART OF DELEGATION AND IMPROVEMENT**

If you’re looking for a team, delegation of tasks and commitment is a key part of your role. So how do you go about it? Your team’s performance and success depends on your influencing power. You will face challenges where the team’s goals and the individual’s goals don’t align. As a team leader, you can avoid these conflicts and move the team forward.

1. **Agree on performance standards**
   - Identify the task
   - Plan the delegation
   - Hold an official meeting
   - Create an action plan
   - Review and agree on action plan

2. **Influence the person**

   - Translate your vision of the future into action steps, and let the Go-Getter go.
   - Align yourself with the group and ensure they are on track to achieve the picture.
   - Acknowledge the value of the group and the importance of each member.

   - How to get the task done?
   - Make it clear to the group what’s expected of them.
   - Identify the person who will take the lead on urgent tasks.
   - Split tasks clearly and give them order priority.
   - Align yourself with the group and ensure they are on track to achieve the picture.
   - Create an action plan
   - Review and agree on action plan
   - Follow up and monitor.

3. **Influence the individual**

   - Consider the way they tick, and what they need.
   - Understand the way they tick, and what they need.
   - Observe their progress and provide feedback.
   - Keep the individual motivated and engaged.
   - Help them to achieve their goals.

4. **Influence the team**

   - Consider the way you work in a group setting.
   - Identify the contributions of each team member.
   - Recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the team.
   - Encourage collaboration and communication.

5. **Influence the situation**

   - Consider the current situation.
   - Assess the potential outcomes.
   - Identify the key influencers.
   - Develop a strategy.

**FLX-400**

**How to Influence Team Mates**

- **Passive**
  - Consider the situation carefully.
  - Understand the other person’s perspective.
  - Be open to other people’s ideas.

- **Assertive**
  - Be clear about your expectations.
  - Set clear goals and objectives.
  - Communicate your expectations.

- **Aggressive**
  - Be direct and straight to the point.
  - Set high expectations.
  - Be confrontational.

**How to Engage Different Personalities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSON</th>
<th>FUTURE</th>
<th>GO-GETTER</th>
<th>COORDINATOR</th>
<th>ANALYST</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>As a Futurist:</strong></td>
<td>Your role is to see the bigger picture. Consider planning meetings.</td>
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**IF YOU’RE A FUTURIST AND LIKE TO FOCUS ON LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES, YOU MAY CLASH WITH A GO-GETTER, BUT YOU JUST WANT TO FIGURE OUT THINGS DONE TO GET THE GO-GETTER ALONGSIDE YOU.**

**THE BIG PICTURE YOU SEE INTO STEPS THAT CAN BE TAKEN TO REACH YOUR GOAL.**

**FLX-400**

**Delegation**

- **Passive**
  - Identify the task
  - Plan the delegation
  - Hold an official meeting
  - Create an action plan

- **Assertive**
  - Identify the task
  - Plan the delegation
  - Hold an official meeting
  - Create an action plan

- **Aggressive**
  - Identify the task
  - Plan the delegation
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  - Create an action plan

**FLX-400**

**Go-Getter**

- **Passive**
  - Identify the task
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- **Aggressive**
  - Identify the task
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**FLX-400**

**Coordinator**

- **Passive**
  - Identify the task
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- **Assertive**
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**FLX-400**

**Analyst**

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**FLX-400**

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**FLX-400**

**WHAT IS YOUR STRONGEST PERSONALITY?**

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**FLX-400**

**IF YOU ARE A FUTURIST, YOU MAY HAVE AN AGGRESSIVE PERSONALITY.**

- **Passive**
  - Identify the task
  - Plan the delegation
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- **Assertive**
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**FLX-400**

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  - Plan the delegation
  - Hold an official meeting
  - Create an action plan

- **Assertive**
  - Identify the task
  - Plan the delegation
  - Hold an official meeting
  - Create an action plan

- **Aggressive**
  - Identify the task
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**FLX-400**

**WHAT IS YOUR STRONGEST PERSONALITY?**

- **Passive**
  - Identify the task
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INFLUENCING IN CONFLICTS

By EVA CHRISTODOULOU
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CONFLICTS are a natural element of human interaction. Individuals differ in their opinions and approaches, so it’s only inevitable that clashes occur. How can you influence in conflicts? Here are three things to bear in mind.

1. CHOOSE YOUR RESPONSES WISELY

When faced with a conflict, we choose our responses. Naturally, different responses produce different outcomes. Here are the nine response options in conflicts and the effects they bring about.

- IGNORE: When you feel that the battle is not worth fighting for and when other issues take priority, use this response. However, be wary as using this option all the time can result in more dissatisfaction and breed more conflicts.
- ACCOMMODATE: This approach can be used when one party has clearly more to “lose” in a particular discussion. Use this only when appropriate and consider revisiting the same issue some time later.
- COMPROMISE: This is a proactive approach where we negotiate to ensure that there is a win-win outcome. It’s about give and take. Don’t focus on what you “gave up” and move on with the decision.

2. APPLY THESE PRINCIPLES

When attempting to influence both people and the situation in a conflict, apply the following principles:
- Check your own motives
- Deal with the person face to face if possible
- Meet on mutual ground
- Clearly define and agree on the problem
- Get hold of all critical information
- Be factual and not emotional
- Avoid “finger-pointing”
- Refrain from harsh words
- Display good body language
- Be a good communicator
- End on a positive note

3. MASTER THE ART OF WORKING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

If the conflict happens to involve a difficult person, remember the following:
- Avoid arguments
- Be constructive in your feedback if you disagree
- Be friendly
- Ask questions instead of giving direct instructions
- Allow others to talk more
- Put yourself in the other person’s shoes
- Keep an open mind but not prejudging
- Appeal to their heart
- Sell your ideas creatively
- Challenge the person appropriately
- Let the other person know how important they are
- Be willing to compromise and negotiate for a win-win
- Get involvement by giving the person an official role

Navigate conflict situations with care, as bulldozing your way through can serve only to aggravate the situation. Exercise your influence in a way that brings about a win-win situation for both parties. Good luck.

- Do your employees need help managing conflict? For information on our training programmes, contact people@leaderonomics.com

By SIMON SINKE
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The economy is in a shambles. There is a total lack of leadership. Hope is at a minimum. The people feel out of control and, without a sense of optimism for the future, they lash out at anyone who is different from them. These are the conditions that existed in the 1930s that gave rise to Hitler and an extremely xenophobic Nazi Germany. The problem is, I’m not describing pre-war Germany, I’m describing modern day Greece. Societies, like individuals, need to know where they are going. We all need to feel like the work we are doing is advancing some cause or purpose.

To feel that the lives we lead and the jobs we toil have meaning and value beyond the daily act of breathing or monthly routines of paying the bills.

Great societies, like great companies, have a bold sense of the future and back it up with the population to help build it.

When that bold sense of the future is absent, however, we become obsessed not with building our future, but with attacking those who, we believe, would prevent us from doing so. Instead of taking responsibility for our own state, we blame others for the state we are in. Worse still, there are opportunists who would capitalise on the rallying crowds to consolidate their own power.

They feed the frenzy, they stir the paranoia not because it’s the right thing to do, but because it helps them get elected or gives them a leadership position they have not earned.

This is exactly what happened in Nazi Germany. This is what has happened countless times in many Arab dictatorships and this is what’s happening in Greece. Worse, this is not a tail of foreign problems.

These are also the conditions in America. Democrats blame Republicans for everything. Republicans blame Democrats for everything. Both sides seize opportunities to feed public furor and consolidate power.

They talk about serving the people with terms like “winning” and “defeating.” Last I checked, service had nothing to do with winning and defeating — those are words reserved for games and wars.

Greece needs a leader, from inside or outside politics, to paint a bold, optimistic view of what the country could and will be. Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action. An optimist, he believes in a bright future and our ability to build it together.

- Simon Sinek is a trained ethnographer and author of Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone To Take Action. An optimist, he believes in a bright future and our ability to build it together.

We Find An Enemy
BY PREMA JAYABALAN
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HINK farmers and we all imagine strong, tough men who are used to working hard in the farms for hours under the scorching sun or pouring rain. However, in my case, I was quite surprised when I was assigned to interview an organic farmer. Expecting to write about a man, it came as a nice surprise when the farmer was a friendly-looking lady. Norizan Othman is an organic farmer who owns land in Lanchang, Pahang. She started in 1990 and has been going steadily ever since.

“It has been more than 20 years now since I started this organic farm. I grow vegetables here,” she shares.

“Well, I did not pursue a higher education during my younger days. After that, upon considering the notion of providing a much better life for my family, I ventured into farming with the help of my husband,” reminisces the mother-of-three.

LESSONS THROUGH EXPERIENCES

“I did not get any formal education in agriculture but I attended many short courses to increase my knowledge.

“At these courses, I was taught how to grow vegetables, control insects and to market products. Besides that, I always get advice from other seasoned farmers if I have any doubt. The rest is through experiences of course. I have learnt many things through the experiences I gained as a farmer,” explains Norizan.

Norizan and her husband grow vegetables such as cucumbers and egg plants on their farm. As their method is all natural, Norizan uses garlic and white onions to control insects and other pests that try to ruin their crop.

“I make my own fertiliser as it is much better this way. I buy the ingredients needed from the local market and produce my own fertiliser. It is safe, healthy and chemical free.”

Norizan markets her products at the local markets in Lanchang as well as at the pasar borong in Selayang, Kuala Lumpur.

SOWING AND REAPING

This hard-working farmer’s job requires her to firstly prepare nurseries that house her crop. Then seedlings are prepared along with fertiliser and planted in the nurseries. They are given proper care and attention to ensure healthy growth. One week after that, the crop is transferred to the ground. Fertilising is done once a week and this goes on until it is time for harvesting. The time to harvest takes place between day 45 and 60. Once harvesting is done, the plants are graded accordingly and sold.

“My day starts at about 7:30am. After a quick breakfast I go around my farm to check on my plants. I have to make sure that they are not damaged by insects,” explains Norizan.

“I then spray organic fertiliser on the plants and prune them until 11am. After that, it is time to water the plants and this takes about two hours.

“I take a break for lunch and some rest. Work continues again at 3pm and I repeat the routine until about 6pm. Then, my day at the farm ends. During the time I am at the farm, people come and buy my products.”

A PASSION FOR THE GREEN

Norizan doesn’t see farming as a job because she loves what she is doing. Being able to produce organic plants which are healthy and being surrounded by the greenery motivates her to get through each day at the farm.

“Sure there are many obstacles along the way. For instance, the weather. This is a main factor that can spell trouble as sometimes it may be too hot and the plants will dry up. “Other times, there might be too much rain and this might cause damage to the plants as well. These scenarios may result in plants not growing well and this can hit us bad, financially,” she replies when asked about her main concerns.

However, the benefits organic farming brings to Norizan is much greater. Through her vocation, she has learnt a lot about plants and the growth processes, which for her, is by far the most precious.

“I am most happy during the harvesting season when I see how well my plants have grown. I am delighted when it comes to marketing the products to buyers as I see the wonderful outcome from all the hard work my husband and I have invested.”

Besides farming, this enterprising woman has also associated herself with government agencies to produce fertilisers for other farmers. She feels that this is very useful to farmers as it helps them cut cost. Norizan was also a recipient of the Hari Peladang Kebangsaan award from year 2004 to 2009.

“I have also received an award at the national level for organic farming by the Agriculture Ministry, which is the best thing that has ever happened to me in my organic farming career.”

PLAYING YOUR PART

Organic farming requires a lot of hard work and dedication. Moreover, a lot of patience is needed as issues can crop up from day one of planting right through to harvesting and marketing.

Norizan feels that the best way to handle problems is by following procedures and gaining as much knowledge as possible to know how best to respond.

However, she says it is a career worth pursuing. “I would encourage people to take up organic farming as it is a beneficial career. Sure, it can be tough, but with hard work and knowledge, you will reap profits and become successful. “Using organic products can save the environment and it is imperative for us to play our part to save the world. It is so much cheaper and safer if we can produce ourselves.”

“All you need is diligence, dedication, hard work and the attitude of not giving up easily,” she concludes with a smile.

To watch the video with Norizan Othman and for more A Day in the Life videos, visit www.leaderonomics.tv

Norizan, an award-winning organic farmer, runs a farm in Lanchang, Pahang.

REAPING THE NATURAL WAY

CHOOSING THE PATH OF ORGANIC FARMING

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POSITIVE INFLUENCING
WAYS TO INSTALL GOOD VALUES AT A TENDER AGE

By PREMA JAYABALAN
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PARENTS always look for only the best for their children. They want their offspring to have good characteristics and values. Positive behaviour ensures a fulfilling life. As the first step towards moulding one’s character begins at home, it is crucial for parents to instil good values into their children through proper influence. Influencing good behaviour in children is not a difficult task at all. It just requires simple methods such as these:

WALK THE TALK
Be an example to your child. Display all the positive values and behaviour that you would like for your child to have by practising it. When your child sees you behaving in a positive manner, they are more likely to pick it up. Never forgetting your pleae and thank you’s, and always staying calm while interacting with others will eventually influence your child’s behaviour.

KEEP TO YOUR PROMISES
Don’t promise your child things that you can’t carry out. For example, if you promise your child to take him/her for a day out on a particular day, make sure you adhere to it. Your child will appreciate your ability to keep to your word and this will influence him/her to keep to his/her word and be a trustworthy individual.

MEDIA MONITORING
According to a study by the University of Michigan, children who often watch media that exhibit good values will be influenced by these messages. Always monitor what your child is watching as it plays a big part in shaping your child’s character.

CURIOSITY IS GOOD
If your child is one that asks a lot of questions, never discourage him or her. Instead, answer the questions. If it’s something that you don’t know the answer to, make it a point to look it up with your child. This will encourage an eagerness to learn and the ability to use resources well. In this era, this is a valuable skill which will take your child far in life.

WHEN YOU THINK YOU HAVE TIME

By ZAID MOHAMAD
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When was the last time you really spent time with your children? Did you know that many older parents miss taking care of their children? Are you aware of how much time is left for you to do just that? The answers to these questions can provide a new perspective in balancing your life. Let me highlight this with a personal story. Recently, I took my youngest son, Adam, for a haircut. He is nine years old and dislikes going to the barber as he prefers his mother to do it. I persuaded him to join me for the trip by saying that he is now a big boy and besides, a professional hairstylist would make him look more handsome.

He reluctantly agreed but went through the process without any problem. After the cut, I was impressed at how neat and nice he looked. So I gave him a spontaneous compliment, “Wow Adam. You look so cute!” His response was not what I expected. He wasn’t very happy with that comment. I asked him, “Why? Are you not cute anymore?” His candid reply was unexpected. “I know I’m still cute, but please don’t call me that anymore! I’m a big boy now.”

That comment left me smiling. But it also reminded me of how fast he has grown up. Being the youngest, he has always been “a baby” in our family. Apparently he has begun to feel uncomfortable with that status and is trying to move on to another phase of life. It is quite common for kids at this age to start being independent. They may also begin to feel uncomfortable when treated like a little person. Parents may find them reluctant to be hugged and kissed especially in public. However, this does not mean that they love us less than before. It just means that they want to be treated like an older boy or girl.

This is a great reminder to all of us working parents. First of all, it is normal to wish that our kids will never grow older. Many parents want their little angels to stay cute forever. This is because their little ones provide an endless source of entertainment. They gave us lots of funny and memorable moments during their growing years. They never resisted us when we wanted to give that quick hug or a peck on the cheek.

Because of this, parents can sometimes feel that they have all the time in the world. They postpone spending time with the kids because they will do it some other time. Many spend a disproportionate amount of time at work thinking that there will be a break coming soon. But guess what? The days turn into weeks and months, but the break never comes. On the contrary, we are getting busier than ever as our careers or businesses flourish and grow.

In the meantime, our children at home are also growing at a faster rate. They no longer like to be hugged, cuddled or called “cute”. When that happens, parents lose a significant amount of parenting joy. There’s no amount of money that can buy back the lost time. Let’s not become one of those parents. Looking back, there really isn’t that much time. Try to look back at your children’s photo albums, and you will know what I mean.

Once our young ones go to school, we will be missing the days when they fell asleep on our chest. We will wish that we had just one more night to bathe them, dress them up and read them a bedtime story.

Now that they are busy with their school work and activities, we will be wishing for some quiet time just to have a decent meal together. Talk to any parents with grown up kids; they will tell you a thousand more memorable stories. Chances are, they would no longer complain about the hardship; in fact, many would not want to do it any other way.

This hindsight forms the valuable learning we can fast forward to our situation today. Stop complaining about our children’s antics because it will be for only a short time.

Never miss another dinner together because many necessary distractions will be coming soon. Stop pondering about whether to take that holiday; just pack and go instead.

Time is shorter than we think. We only have about five years to hold and cuddle them before they politely push us away. The next seven years will be spent in primary schools. The teenage years will be even worse. Many teenagers would prefer to spend time on their own or with friends instead.

As it is, time does fly indeed. One of the best measures of how much our kids have grown is to see how easy it is now to hug and kiss them, as their height is catching up fast! Now that you are aware of the limited time, let’s start doing more things together as a family. Stop holding back on love and love because things will never be the same once today is gone. Take that break and go on that vacation. Read that book and play that game with them. Laugh at their jokes and feel the stresses melting away while the bond is renewing.

Don’t worry about putting work on hold once in a while because time with the family is much more limited. It will be time well spent because we don’t really have much of it.

— Zaid Mohamad is a certified parental coach and the bestselling author of Smart Parents, Brighter Kids and Smart Parents, Richer Kids. To find out how you can engage Zaid for your organisation, email people@leaderonomics.com

NEVER FORGETTING YOUR PLEASE AND THANK YOU’S, AND ALWAYS STAYING CALM WHILE INTERACTING WITH OTHERS WILL EVENTUALLY INFLUENCE YOUR CHILD’S BEHAVIOUR.
MORAL COURAGE IN LEADERSHIP

By RAINA RADZAIF
mystarjob/leaderonomics.com

WHEN each of us lies an invisible divine compass called conscience. God concealed this compass somewhere within us to allow us to differentiate between right and wrong and help us lead an honest path in life.

Appreciate this compass, because logic and reason alone are insufficient resources to determine the right path.

People sometimes reason themselves into a completely opposite path than what their conscience points to, leading to the painful and heart-breaking question, “How did we get into this mess?”

But is conscience a practical approach for leaders? No one ever talks about conscience in school or around the workplace.

Many of us have been taught to decide based on “facks” not “gut feelings.” Many are taught to discount cash-following flows, and apply Porter’s Five Forces instead of doing what they feel is right.

But what should a leader do when the facts point in one direction and the gut points in another?

How many of you have had the chance to work with someone that you would follow no matter where they go, simply out of your devotion, e.g., for who that person is?

Often, I can’t help but ask myself, “What does this person have that creates in others a willingness to follow them for who they are, not just their position?”

My bet is that the answer to that question is “Integrity.”

But what exactly is integrity?

Some describe integrity as “doing what you say you’re going to do,” or, “integrity is what you do when no one is looking.”

According to Lee and Lee in their book Courage: The Backbone of Leadership, integrity is “acting for what is right.”

It means sticking to your principles. It is basically “doing the right thing because it’s the right thing to do.” It means leading from the “moral centre within.”

Integrity surely means acting with honesty and sound moral principles, and integrity definitely is important for a leader.

When a leader acts with integrity, his or her team learns to believe and have faith in his or her decisions, resulting in improved performance, results, and finally with everyone improving.

This in fact is the very purpose of leadership, to help people become a better version of themselves.

Take an example: What would you do if a key client or your supervisor asks or demands you to do something that you know is wrong?

The urge far too many people succumb to is to rationalise. The most common rationalisation is to convince yourself that your utmost responsibility is to your family and that you owe it to them to not risk any career promotion prospects.

The drawback is that it ignores a much bigger duty and responsibility to your family: to embody courage and good character.

This reasoning, on any day, trumps any argument of duty and responsibility to your family, yourself, your company and the society to do what is right and not take the convenient path.

The risks of asserting integrity to a client which prefers blind cooperation or a boss who prefers obedience are certainly real.

They might retaliate when they do not get what they want, which might make our life somewhat more challenging.

Nonetheless, moral courage is the much-needed guardian of conscience and character. The personal costs of putting your integrity on the line are so high, that looking at the long run it is worth taking the risk.

Once you go down the slippery slope of moral compromise, it becomes impossible to prevent the inevitable slide:

It’s like going just one degree off your internal compass. After some time, you’ll find yourself hundreds of kilometres away from where you intended to be.

THREE ACTS OF INTEGRITY

The three acts of integrity, according to Lee and Lee are:

1. Discerning right from wrong.

Go to others for advice, particularly those who have demonstrated a level of wisdom greater than our own.

These people can be experienced teachers, mentors, colleagues or trusted friends who can help us to see and reflect about what is right and what is wrong.

At the same time we should also listen to our conscience. Doing actions that do not gel with our internal compass is a definite sign that those actions are wrong.

In addition to honouring our conscience, we also need to be mindful that our own personal needs are not the only basis to justify actions and decisions. We must constantly keep ourselves in check.

2. Acting for what is right regardless of risk to self.

Too often we see decisions made that are clearly not in the best interests of the people at large. Rather, they serve the interests only of certain individuals.

Leaders of integrity continuously let others know what they think the right decision should be.

These leaders never force others to make decisions that clash with their sense of right and wrong.

They seek to promote integrity in others. They allow others to express their doubts and hesitations, and challenge the decisions being made.

They are also open to being persuaded that they could be making wrong decisions too. They value integrity and expect nothing less of those they lead as well.

3. Teaching others from that act of integrity.

By displaying acts of integrity, we communicate to those around us that integrity is important.

We are sending this message that doing the right thing is the best thing to do and we should expect it from those we lead.

Mahatma Gandhi, the father of India, never held an official position. Instead, he led via moral authority.

He lived by his principles to garner the respect and confidence of others. Gandhi had the vision of India becoming an independent country and the people identified with him.

In our learning institutions and workplaces, leaders and managers may have formal authority by virtue of their position.

However, more often than not, they lack moral authority, which results in a broken culture.

If you live by your principles, despite having no formal authority, you can still influence the people around you and bring out the best in them.

If a person asks or expects you to do something inappropriate, the best (and most effective) way to safeguard your integrity is to refuse immediately, firmly and as tactfully as you can (without appearing self-righteous).

Instead of worrying about what that person might think of you, turn the table and let them worry about what you might think of them and how their request compromises their own reputation and integrity.

Raina Radzaif is a learning and development practitioner with a leading Malaysia-based multinatio

nal corporation.
DEAR MELIA,

Your e-mails sound very much like advice encouraging you to take up the challenges of audit training when you’re young. You’ve sent in your application and have not had a favourable response, but don’t let this erode your confidence.

I can assure you that you’re not alone – professional services firms receive a high volume of resumes and only a small percentage gets shortlisted. I would encourage you to resubmit your application and make the effort to do better on your second attempt.

FIND OUT WHY YOU WEREN’T SHORTLISTED

Try to get in touch with the human resources (HR) team by sending them an email and following up with a phone call. Be sincere in explaining that you’d like to know your areas of improvement. It’s also useful to understand the hiring timeline and process, as some firms have specific intake dates for the year. You may have to wait for the next cycle if you’ve missed these dates.

RESUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION

You can consider some of these suggestions in preparing to resubmit your application:

- Do some research
  - Find out what professional services firms look for in their candidates. I would encourage you to visit readywork.my which has relevant articles and videos with content from leading employers such as PwC, EY and Accenture.
  - Check out a section called ‘Build your Resume’ which has tips from recruiters and hiring managers who point out some of the common pitfalls in the resumes they receive.
  - You will also find short videos featuring corporate leaders and young graduates working in these firms under the ‘Meet the People’ section which will help you prepare your application.

- Enhance your resume and cover letter.
  - Get help to proof read your resume and cover letter. It is common to receive cover letters which are addressed to a different organisation or resumes with inappropriate photos, email addresses or salutations.
  - Another common roadblock is incomplete information, which will be a put-off for recruiters.

- Be open to various options within the organisation.
  - You can highlight in your cover letter that you’re prepared to consider various options, for example a position in Kuala Lumpur.
  - To cast your wider net, be open to take the road less travelled and consider opportunities in other lines of service.

- You’ve seen young graduates who were brave to opt for the unconventional and excelled in other departments like taxation, systems and process assurance, internal audit and risk management.
  - It’s also worth mentioning in your cover letter that you’re prepared to start at entry level.

- Many candidates with experience in smaller firms have expectations to be given an audit senior role, but this may not be what you’re after. If that’s the case, you’ll need some time to understand the methodology in a big firm and adapt to a new environment before you’re ready to lead junior auditors.
  - It’s evident that you’re determined and are proactive in seeking guidance.

This may help to get you an answer about the reason why you have not been called by them. If you still don’t get a reply, I believe it is best to move on for the time being.

2 LET’S TALK ABOUT AUDITING

I know of many successful professionals in finance who started their careers in an auditing role.

As you said, you are young and this is the time to learn as much as possible and take on many challenging auditing assignments.

An auditing career will provide you with the following opportunities:

- You will have the chance to learn about a variety of businesses, as you will most probably be assigned to conduct audits for a variety of clients.
- You will be in contact with people from different backgrounds and levels as your audit job will require you to interact with clients.
- You will learn important non-technical skills like attention to detail, project and time management and negotiation skills.

3 SHOULD YOU WORK IN PENANG OR MOVE SOMEWHERE ELSE?

Penang is a vibrant and progressive city. I don’t see why you should not consider remaining in Penang and still be able to have a successful career.

I believe what is most important is for you to understand what organisations have in Penang, and the type of career opportunities that are available for people with your qualifications and experience.

Do some research first and then make a decision about what your preferred work location should be.

4 YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER

You have mentioned a variety of very positive things about your employer and work. Not everyone in your position can say the same. You also mentioned that you don’t see the career prospects that you desire being offered by your employer. It is perhaps too early for you to come to this conclusion.

You have been in the job for a very short period of time. You must probably don’t know how the organisation operates well enough, and how they promote/develop people. Do more research, talk to your colleagues and the senior members of the team.

Start by performing and delivering to the firm’s expectations. You may be surprised how far you can go if you give your best.

If after doing your best, and understanding the things work in the firm, you still feel that you won’t be able to get what you want professionally, then you may want to consider moving to a different job.

Give this company and yourself a chance, don’t rush into conclusions.

FINDING THE ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE

As for your interest in finance, it is worth noting that auditing will certainly give you opportunities to enter into the finance arena.

You will be able to go deep into balance sheets, profit and loss, and other fundamental financial matters which organisations manage in their regular course of business.

This is clearly a very good way of entering into the finance world, understanding it and perhaps determining if what you thought it would be in theory is really what it is in practice.

Seek these opportunities within your current job scope and organisation. Good luck!

CLAUDIA CADENA

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

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2 Gear up for insightful wardrobe lessons from suits

3 A commercial photographer determined to make it big

4 What captures your attention controls your brain and life

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DEAR CAREERMONERS,

I am a fresh graduate with an Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) degree. I have started sending out my resume to the Big Four accounting firms in August but I am still waiting for their replies. I’ve been telling myself to be patient but I’m afraid I’m losing my self-confidence. I am currently working in a small audit firm in Penang. It is tough but I think at 21 years of age, I am prepared take on the challenges of auditing.

I have no problems with my current firm as it is dealing with colleagues in the working environment. I will never see myself being in this job for long.

In addition, many of my seniors told me that they provided great opportunities and exposure, although I am interested in finance as well.

I believe I deserve greater things after finishing ACCA and my current employer does not offer career prospects. How can I attract the attention of the Big firms? Should I send in my resume again after the first attempt? Please advise if I should seek opportunities outside of Penang or remain patient.

Thanks and best regards,