CONQUER YOUR GIANTS
HOW TO TRIUMPH IN SPITE OF THE ODDS
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Accustomed to average
Many giants fail because they fall into the trap of being average
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LIFE AT MALAKOFF
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JUST SAY “HELP!”
The road to success necessarily involves accepting help from others
Pg 09
I just can’t grasp what Helen Keller’s learning journey must have been like. She was both blind and deaf, yet succeeded in learning how to read braille, write, and became the first deaf and blind person to graduate with a bachelor of arts. She wrote passionately and beautifully on her areas of interest, and even learned to speak. The accomplished author and lecturer passed away in 1968, but the triumphs of her life have lived on beyond her.

There will be challenges in all our lives, though they may come in different forms. For Keller, the inability to hear and see would have been two big obstacles. For others, they may come in the form of a fierce competitor, stereotypes or fear of people. Metaphorically, these are giants to overcome.

Like Goliath for David, the old story that anchor’s Malcolm Gladwell’s latest book, these giants stand in the way of achieving our goals, whether or not we’re building our businesses, being a better leader, or protecting the wellbeing of a group.

This week’s stories examine all aspects of what it takes to triumph. How do the seemingly weaker individuals or entities win? You’ll find that on our centrespread pages, as well as in our Starting Young Column on page 11.

How can you lead and triumph in the face of the giant called “culture” (page 5)? What lessons on this can we learn from Google (page 8) and Napoleon (page 9)?

Page 3’s Be A Leader looks at it from the giant’s perspective. After you’ve won and become a giant yourself, it’s easy to feel secure with your size. But beware the danger of becoming average become, because this is how giants fall.

I hope our stories serve to encourage you in your journey to achieving your goals. For me, if there’s one common thread I see in people who have extraordinary abilities to overcome challenges, it’s focus on purpose. David had a purpose: to protect his nation. Keller had a purpose: to advocate for people with disabilities.

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If we all set our purpose before us, and keep our eyes on the prize, that may very well help to diminish the size of giants on the way, at least in our eyes, and provide the courage we need to continue moving forward.

On page 6, we feature employees from Malakoff, who share why they enjoy working at the power giant. We also continue moving forward.

The problem with this social construction is that we are bound by this “convention” and we are forced into this mould that everyone falls in. We all become standardised. This is evident in the way we take exams, the way we are expected to answer interview questions and the way we are expected to react to different circumstances.

To a certain extent we all, unfortunately, have to play the game and follow conventions. We get a job, get married and have a family (except the true rebels that decide to go against the current), but there is some room to be different and break the mould.

There are many ideas that we all tend to follow blindly – one of them, is that the majority is right and we somehow have to fit in, by either changing our mindset to fit that, or by pretending we agree and go on as if nothing is “wrong”.

The radicals, however, the unreasonable ones, the heretics, the rebels, the pioneers, are the ones that moved us throughout history and progressed our societies to where we are today.

When we have an idea that is “radical”, we perceive ourselves as unreasonable, and soon we are pulled back in line, convincing ourselves that it is best to keep quiet.

The radicals, however, the unreasonable ones, the heretics, the rebels, the pioneers, are the ones that moved us throughout history and progressed our societies to where we are today.

It seems utterly unreasonable, contradictory and entirely misleading that even in this era, we are encouraged, in theory, to think outside the box, yet we are still put back in place and forced to follow the herd.

How can we change that? Well, it’s a challenge. Depending on the area and the degree of your “unreasonableness”, you might be risking too much.

I can say to that is only the truly courageous will make it through and emerge triumphant on the other side.

Really think about your idea, and if it’s worth it, dare to go the distance!
A few months ago, I read Malcolm Gladwell’s David & Goliath which showcased how underdogs beat giants. His book chronicles numerous stories of how “underdog” sports teams and business teams out-wit much bigger opposition to win. And we all have seen how small little Google, in a span of a few years, became mighty Google, outhitting the big boys in their industry. As I was thinking through the myriad of reasons why giants crumble, one thought started percolating in my mind. And as I started researching this, I stumbled upon a key reason why giants start to fall. All giants were at one point tiny start-ups. Microsoft was a small company in the 70s struggling to make it back then. Every company started small. But it grew and became successful and managed to scale. In fact, most great individuals were the same way. Many great leaders were not recognised as leaders at birth. They worked hard, grew up, failed, tried harder and slowly built a legacy. As you look back at every great leader and great company, they all began wanting to be different, outstanding, and be exceptional. And regardless of their size, they showed their commitment towards being great. They worked hard to make their businesses think, act and look different. And they soon beat the big boys. What was the issue with the big boys and giants? Many of them became average. They were big and had scale but their businesses and people had embraced average. Averageness is a disease that slowly creeps up on everything successful. It is easy to be average. It is comfortable to be average and being average has its “advantages.”

THE BUSINESS OF AVERAGE
The business of average is everywhere. From service at the bank, to being served at restaurants to speaking to a customer representative on the phone, average service is in abundance in Malaysia. Every day, people consciously choose to be average. Average products, average websites, average advertising. It’s everywhere and it’s accepted as norm. A couple weeks ago, I was browsing the newspaper with my wife and we saw a horrendous advertisement from a rather huge company. I showed it to my wife and she smiled and shrugged it off saying, “Yeah, big companies have no time to bother about little issues like their ads.” Average is a choice. And average leads giants to crumble. According to Malcolm Gladwell, the giant Goliath was fearsome not because he was a great fighter but simply because of his size. In fact, Gladwell goes on to claim that Goliath may have been partially blind. He was an average fighter who got away with victory because he was a giant. And we have seen so many big companies and organisations “win” not because their products and services are superior but because they have scale and size.

Along comes a “David”, who is a better fighter and also changes the rules of fighting by using a sling instead of a sword. An average Goliath stood no chance against a great fighter who is smart (yet small).

The same thing befalls big companies who play the game of “average”. When they meet a smaller foe who decides to be outstanding, different and deliver exceptionally, there is no way they will be able to win in the long-term.

ANATOMY OF AVERAGE
Months ago, I came across a nice “poem” on being average by AJ Leon. He called it the Anatomy of Average. I think it best describes what happens to average people:

“Average seeks validation from ‘experts’. Average avoids sufficient case study to prove that it’s worth it, and is therefore late to everything. Average avoids any and all risk, thereby avoiding both adventure and failure (two of the best teaching tools the world has given us). Average praises incremental change because it is afraid of revolution. Average has no courage. Average decision-making uses “playing devil’s advocate” as a way of masking fear and avoiding responsibility. Average service focuses on mitigating complaints as opposed to delivering extraordinary. Average teachers ensure their students never outgrow them. Average charities reach for your wallet instead of your heart. Average restaurants are forgotten before we leave the table. Average people are governed by fear, but convince themselves it’s prudence. Average finds comfort in standing for absolutely nothing in order to evade any possible attack. Average is scared to death of remarkable misfits, like you and I. Average never leads. And most importantly, average is just average and nobody will ever remember it.”

OVERCOMING AVERAGENESS
So, how do you avoid becoming an average Joe? Let us imagine that your goal is to bring up outstanding children. How would you avoid the “average trap of allowing your kids to become like every other” “average” child? Firstly, determine within yourself that you will not be an average parent. An average parent will bring up an average kid. Being outstanding requires you to be outstanding first. Secondly, write down your commitment to greatness. Commit to this goal and make sure you believe that you can bring up a child that is not only good but great.

Thirdly, write down what it takes to be world-class. List down all the aspects of greatness.

Finally, write out action items that will enable you to make point three become a reality. You can use the same process to ensure averageness is a thing of the past in your life.

HARD TO BE GREAT
Every day I work hard to make sure each person in my organisation is never satisfied with being average. Average is the reason why organisations start to falter and at Leaderonomics, I pray we never reach that stage. Being average is a trap that we can easily fall into. And once the “average” disease starts to spread in an organisation, it is extremely hard to eradicate. Part of the problem is also that being exceptional and different is extremely difficult. You will face numerous obstacles on your path to greatness. You will need to go through them and overcome them. That is a key reason why average is easy and greatness is so difficult. If greatness was something easily attainable, no one would continue thriving in mediocrity. Even if your past may be full of “average-ness”, there is no reason why you cannot change your future. Every morning you get an opportunity to choose to be great or average. Fight hard every day to be exceptional.

FINAL THOUGHTS
Don’t get sucked into thinking average is good. Average is for average people. You are better than average. You are exceptional. You are different. You are not an average Joe. Remember, average is a choice. It is not something we are genetically predisposed to. In fact, 95% of who you are is learnt. So, we can keep pushing ourselves to greatness. Roshan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise passionate about transforming the nation through leadership and youth development. He prays each day that he will never become “average.” To get resources to all of Roshan’s videos and articles, go to Facebook and Like www.facebook.com/roshanthiran. leaderonomics.
ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

By EVELYN TEH
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A quick look at the Malaysian Labour Law (Employment Act 1955) shows that we are entitled to at least eight days of annual leave for each continuous block of 12 months with an employer. So imagine my surprise when I was reading up Netflix’s “policy” on annual leave, summed up by the following sentence: “We don’t track hours per day or per week, so why are we tracking days of vacation per year?”

Wait, people can take holidays as they see fit? No way! But it happens, at Netflix at least.

This was enforced as part of its talent management framework where everyone at Netflix is allowed to take leave so long as the employee follows certain guidelines (i.e. informing human resources should he or she takes 30 continuous days off).

Yet it is still a high-performing organisation, evident by its soaring stock options, two million new customers and market supremacy.

Naturalistically, the question that follows is, how did Netflix reinvent itself following multiple issues (such as the controversial 60% increase in subscriber price back in July 2013) and with such “disruptive” policies?

“Fast-changing”, “agile”, “unpredictable” are common terms we love to use in describing the economic environment today.

When it comes to organisational challenges, this form of environment proves to be more perplexing for those of us trying to solve these issues.

And if we agree on these premises, then I think we can all agree that we would need leadership that can help the organisation thrive in this unique environment.

Welcome to the concept of adaptive leadership, a concept thought and refined by renowned Professor Ronald Heifetz from Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government.

While there are many definitions of adaptive leadership, the core understanding is as simple as this: mobilising people for a set of creative experiments whose goal is to ensure the organisation thrives.

Here are some principles of adaptive leadership:

1. Adaptive change is not overhauling the organisations’ DNA. When Heifetz conceptualised adaptive leadership, he based it on our theory of biological adaptation, similar to how slight changes in our gene makeup contribute to evolutionary differences. This is in direct opposition to the concept of change propagated in organisations as “transformational,” which seems to imply grandiose shifts and overhauling history without respecting the accumulated wisdom that forms the current culture.

Change through adaptive leadership can be compared with the concept of tinkering, where mobilising small changes can lead to great impact.

Thus, it’s key that in times of change, an adaptive leader addresses the difficult task of choosing which part of their cultural DNA to keep, and which to discard.

How do you define change? What has been your experience in instilling change within your organisation, and what struggles follow this effort?


There are two broad-based categories of problems to solve in the world, Technical and Adaptive problems (there can be grey areas, but let’s keep it simple for now).

Technical problems have an obvious solution. For example, when a manager is unable to attend a meeting, the likely solution is to get his assistant to represent him.

It becomes an adaptive problem however, if this same manager is constantly absent whenever his or her presence is required at a meeting.

Now, the solution is no longer as simple as replacing the manager with an assistant because we may have a deeper problem, which can range anything from the manager’s personality to company policies encouraging such behaviour.

The point is, adaptive problems do not have one obvious solution and it becomes stressful for managers when they try applying a technical solution to the adaptive problem.

I am guessing the assistant manager will not be very happy if he or she was obliged to cover up for the manager all the time.

If you observe the current issues in your organisation both through empathy and as a detached third party, what is the nature of these problems – technical or adaptive?

3. Solutions don’t necessarily reside with the leader, or who we give authority to – they could be found within the collective organisation.

It is so easy to expect a person in authority to provide a quick magic bullet remedy that restores any situation to its optimal equilibrium just because we assume they are an expert.

Moreover, as people in positions of authority ourselves, it is common to feel both the external obligation and internal pressure to be that person who is the solver-it-all.

However, adaptive leaders seek beyond themselves in solving adaptive problems, they are more likely to shift the responsibility of solution generation to the collective intelligence (i.e. their team or even the whole organisation).

An adaptive leader is open to learning from people who challenge common expectations, discloses threats to people at an optimal level, manages resistance and then sustains everyone through the heat of generating solutions.

Who solves the problems in your organisation, especially those you identify as adaptive problems? Are these resources of collective intelligence you have yet to leverage on?

Remember the story on Netflix? Reed Hastings, CEO of Netflix and then chief talent officer Patty McCord were people for a set of creative experiments. Who were extremely focused on building Netflix as a high-performing organisation, hence their talent management approaches were aligned for this one goal.

Netflix has always positioned itself as an organisation with an innovative pursuit to change how we consume filmed entertainment.

Yet, as Patty McCord shared in her article on Harvard Business Review, the expectation was for her to default to standard operating procedures which were far removed from innovativeness.

Thus, when Netflix met challenges in obtaining IPO and subsequently had layoffs and operated with less than the optimal number of employees, the duo realised there needed to be a change in the way they run the organisation.

What keeps the story interesting is that these ideas of change did not originate from a 12-hour brainstorming session between Hastings and McCord. Instead, McCord credited two Netflix employees in inspiring this disruptive direction.

One was an engineer who used to manage a team but realised that he was better off taking a longer performance than with underperforming colleagues.

The other was a book keeper who had to be given a severance package as his functions were no longer applicable to Netflix’s organisational direction.

From these two cases, Netflix drew the conclusion that a high-performing environment is key to success.

It decided that it needed to let go of people who were no longer a fit, yet grant them a severance package worthy of a great contributor.

These findings formed the foundations of Netflix’s talent management approach.

What was seemingly disruptive (i.e. granting the autonomy to take vacation, allowing employees to benchmark themselves with peer organisations) actually resembled the process of adaptive change.

Hastings and McCord realised that bringing their organisation to the next level was an adaptive problem which required them to look beyond their scope of authority for solutions – through people who made up this collective.

Plus, they might have taken the other direction of usual talent management practices, but the change was still based upon the organisational value of being innovative; this was no revamping of DNA.

So the question that follows for organisational leaders is, would you lead adaptive change, which could mean going against the grain of best practices? Perhaps you can consider using the three aforementioned concepts as a starting point to instil adaptive change.

And if Adaptive Leadership sounds like a familiar concept re-bottled, maybe it is because 3,000 years ago, we have had such success stories when King Saul succeeded in solving an adaptive problem (Goliath) with an adaptive solution (David). As it goes, it is only impossible, until it is done.

Evelyn Teh is part of the Leaderonomics Talent Acceleration Team. For more information on our talent acceleration programmes, contact people@leaderonomics.com.
MALAKOFF Corp Bhd is well established in Malaysia and beyond our shores. MALAKOFF is a leading independent Water and Power producer with net generating capacity of 5,020MW from its six power plants. It is Malaysia’s largest independent power producer with net generating capacity of 5,020MW from its six power plants. Malakoff has power and water ventures in Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kuwait and Bahrain, and is making inroads into the fast growing South-East Asian markets.

By EVA CHRISTODOULOU
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ILY ZAFIRA SHAIRININ
Senior executive, human resources
I started my career with Malakoff five years ago after graduating from a local university. Job satisfaction is what makes me stay here. I’m doing something that I enjoy, perceive as valuable, and I am given enough responsibility to satisfy my desire to be “in control”.

The broad scope of work gives me the ability to work in areas outside of my bachelor’s degree. I’m very lucky, or perhaps I just made a wise choice to build my career in this area. I enjoy what I do as my field of work gives me exposure and helps me improve my soft skills.

Malakoff doesn’t allow flexible working hours, but it really does care about its employees’ work-life balance. We are given the flexibility to manage our own time as long as we can finish the tasks. Personally, I think this really improves the productivity of the employees.

I stay on because I am doing something that I enjoy and feel is valuable and that I have some measure of influence over.

NAZIATUL SHAFFENAZ NASRUDIN
Manager, human resources
I have been serving Malakoff for over two years under the umbrella of human resources, focusing on organisational development and recruitment.

In Malakoff, if you conceive a sound idea – be it an improvement or an innovation – more often than not, you will gain the support and resources to materialise it.

Malakoff believes in the concept of continuous growth and lives by that. We take small realistic steps that cumulatively over time breed sustainable success.

In terms of culture, when you walk down the hallway or pass through the pantry, you can certainly hear happy chats and bump into friendly smiling faces. Do not be misled, however, on how serious those friendly faces can be when they are at their workstations or meeting rooms. They champion harmony, but they place higher importance on excellence.

This is a committed group of people who have been deliberately equipped with functional and leadership skills to take charge in the battlefield. I am – without any reservation – very proud to be in their good company.

VINO DHAN GOPALAN
Senior manager, technical and commercial, ventures
As much as the organisation needs the employee to achieve his or her key performance indicators, the employee also relies on the organisation for the resources to grow as a person and a productive professional, on top of earning a decent living.

This partnership is something I have found in Malakoff in the 14 years I have worked here. At a time when I didn’t really know how to build my career, Malakoff gave me guidance and support to be the person I am today.

Through the various roles I have taken up working in the power plants and now in the headquarters, I believe I have undergone a balanced and structured development. Malakoff takes training and development seriously. The training opportunities provided by Malakoff are partly the reason why I was able to make smooth transitions between roles.

I am sometimes invited to host the Malakoff booth at career fairs and I tell the doe-eyed fresh graduates who visit our booth this: I still get up excited to go to work because I look forward to the fun that I experience in every aspect of my job.

NOR AZIZI MAZALAN
Manager, technical training, Tanjung Bin Power Plant
I have been working with Malakoff since May 2008. Malakoff is very flexible in terms of giving the freedom to its staff to carry out their responsibilities. On top of that, almost all bosses at Malakoff embrace an open door policy without any restrictions on lower ranking staff mingling with senior management.

In terms of people development, I consider myself very lucky as I was one of the participants of Malakoff’s leadership development programme back in 2011. That programme was an eye-opener for me as it educated me on the importance of being a good leader in the company.

Another factor that keeps me happy working here is the sports activities organised for employees. Every year, there is a Malakoff sports carnival organised for all staff. This annual activity fosters friendships, despite the competitive nature of the tournament.

I definitely recommend working with Malakoff as opportunities abound here.

Huang Tiong Yeong
Manager, enterprise applications
I have been with Malakoff for almost 3.5 years now. Malakoff’s working environment can be described as lively. It allows employees to network with everyone in the office, and it provides a family-like atmosphere.

Apart from that, it has great benefits, competitive pay, and a unique corporate structure that sets it apart.

We are offered benefits such as long employment service awards, yearly bonuses, healthcare insurance and training courses to enhance skills. As long as employees are willing to learn, Malakoff is fully supportive of helping us achieve this.

As Malakoff is a leader in power production, people around the world workding up to join our group. We actively seek out the best students from around the world to join us.

The most exciting thing to work with Malakoff is the way the bosses bring out the best in us without us realising it. With their guidance, everyone in Malakoff has achieved a lot, and we are committed to provide the best service for Malakoff.

Leny Safinazi Smail
Executive secretary, chief operating office
At the beginning of my time here, I worked with the deputy CEO. Now, I serve three boxes of the group – the chief operating officer, MD and chairman.

I’ve been working in Malakoff for 20 years, and I really enjoy working here as I’ve grown both personally and professionally.

It’s a good company that offers a good variety of work, good bosses, opportunities, and benefits. The work environment is open and we are like a family unit; yet we are professional when it comes to our work. There is a sense of flexibility and that shows the trust that management has in us.

Malakoff is a good company to work in, and you will be working with amazing people, while getting support, encouragement and guidance. The working environment and opportunities to learn new things keep me excited and committed to working here.

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DANIL LIEW
Head of production, Pral Power Plant
The phrase “our people are our greatest asset” that is constantly uttered by the management is not just lip service. It actually walks the talk by consistently engaging with and adding value to employees, and encouraging employee empowerment.

In the context of adding value, Malakoff provides staff development programmes to strengthen their technical knowledge and soft skills. These span almost all levels of the organisation from the non-executive level to senior management.

Throughout my 13 years journey with Malakoff, I have benefited a lot from its culture of emphasising human capital, from personal development to actual rewards and recognition.

Malakoff’s core values and culture has moulded its employees into who we are today, and the employees are now steering Malakoff’s future. This thought has always been a source of inspiration and excitement for me, and it fuels the passion I have for Malakoff.

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What the people have to say about the company

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WHY DO UNDERDOGS WIN?

WHY DO UNDERDOGS WIN? 

By employing computer-generated analysis to the data, it was found that the underdogs were able to overcome the odds and win.

HOW TO BE THE “DAVID”

How to be the “David” and defeat the “Goliath”

The “David” in this context refers to a smaller, underdog team that is able to overcome the odds and defeat a larger, more established team. The “Goliath” is the larger, more established team.

Here are some tips on how to be the “David”:

1. Identify your weaknesses: 
   - Know what your weaknesses are and work on improving them.
   - Be honest with yourself about your weaknesses.

2. Develop an action plan: 
   - Create a plan of action to overcome your weaknesses.
   - Set specific, measurable goals.

3. Be prepared: 
   - Be prepared for any situation that may arise.
   - Have a backup plan.

4. Never give up: 
   - Keep pushing forward, even when things get tough.
   - Believe in yourself and your team.

In conclusion, by following these tips and strategies, you can become the “David” and defeat the “Goliath.”
DON’T SETTLE IN YOUR STRENGTH 3 THOUGHTS TO PONDER FROM THE GOOGLE JOURNEY

By LILY CHEAH
lily.cheah@leaderonomics.com

R ECENTLY Lycos, Excite, Ask Jeeves and AltaVista? These were just a handful of names that dominated the search engine landscape in the mid-1990s. But in 1996, the early beginnings of a new search engine called Google dawned in Stanford University. Students Larry Page and Sergey Brin began working on a search engine project with a difference.

On top of the capability to search for websites that corresponded with search terms, Page and Brin inserted a popularity mechanism that assessed the relevance of the pages via links from other websites, and ranked the results accordingly. This change meant highly relevant search results for users.

Google registered its domain name on Sept 15, 1997. A year later, it was operating out of a garage in Menlo Park and hired its first employee. In Dec 1998, just a few months later, PC Magazine recognised Google as the top search engine of choice.

Today the organisation hires over 40,000 employees throughout the world, under the mission “to organise the world’s information and make it universally accessible and useful”.

But what has it taken to sustain Google’s success as a business and how does it plan to do so going forward? The challenge with being on top is staying on top.

Though revenue for the company continues to grow, the growth rate of Google’s core business (advertising) has slowed, from 35% in 2011, down to less than 20% in the previous four quarters according to BGC technology analyst Colin Gillis.

Advertising is the bread and butter of the business, and mobile advertising, which is increasingly the method of choice for advertisers, commands lower ad rates.

Gillis, quoted in a Time article from Oct 2013 says, “We see the slowing core business as a one reason why Google is investing so heavily in new ventures as new products are needed to reignite revenue growth,” says Gillis.

At the end of the day, it’s all our long-term journeys that will be assessed. In spite of the raging success Google has had so far, in the long-term, where will it head?

Here are three simple thoughts to ponder from Google’s 15-year journey so far, with questions to ask yourself about your personal growth journey and that of your organisation.

In reflecting on these, summon your self-awareness.

1 WHAT DO YOU DO WELL?

Search is Google’s strength, and as of August 2013, it held 66.9% of the Internet search advertising market.

This remains the core of its business, and will continue to be, even with declining ad rates. “It’s best to do one thing really, really well,” writes Google’s 10-point philosophy.

“Our hope is to bring the power of search to previously unexplored areas, and to help people access and use even more of the ever-expanding information in their lives,” the company writes.

What is your core strength and that of your organisation? This provides the bulk of the momentum for growth.

2 DO YOU NEED TO THINK BIGGER?

While search will remain the driving force of Google, the company has also been actively looking beyond to other possibilities.

While at times causing worry for investors as they could distract from the company’s core business, other commentators like Gillis say Google is building new revenue streams.

Google seems to be finding new ways to become a big part of people’s daily lives, whether it be in building driverless cars, launching balloonships into the stratosphere to provide Internet access to rural and remote areas (Project Loon), or its recent acquisition of Nest for US$3.2bil, opening doors for Google to enter into home automation.

“It isn’t difficult to understand Google’s motive for purchasing Nest,” writes Drew Hendricks in a Forbes article earlier this week.

“Consider a world in which one consumer has a home full of devices powered by an operating system, combined with a smartphone and car with the same O/S. Each of those devices could speak to each other, seamlessly learning a user’s preferences.

“A person’s home thermostat could begin warming the house up an hour before he gets up, with the coffee pot chiming in an hour later. Fifteen minutes before he ordinarily leaves for work, his car could fire up, ensuring the interior is comfortable and the windows clear for his drive in.

“There’s tremendous potential for technology more generally to improve people’s lives,” says Larry Page in a Google+ post announcing Google’s establishment of Calico, a biotechnology company focused on health and well-being.

“Some don’t be surprised if we invest in projects that seem strange or speculative compared with our existing Internet businesses.”

“And please remember that new investments like this are very small by comparison to our core business,” Page adds, surely to assure the nerves of investors.

Only time will tell the success of these projects, but if they go as hoped, Google could cement itself as a key entity in both our digital world and physical world, going far, far beyond the possibilities of just a search engine company.

Here’s the question for us. Are we dreaming too small? The danger of winning is that we focus too much on the strength that brought about that victory.

Looking forward, what are the future challenges? Bear in mind what won the battle last year may not win it this year.

3 DO YOU MAKE TIME TO DREAM AND BUILD DREAMS?

Google’s “20% time,” where employees get to spend one day per week on a side project, has birthed products like Gmail and Adsense.

Some controversy was sparked last year, with former employees telling Quartz that the “20% time” at Google was now dead, pummelled by bureaucracy and the need to keep up with productivity. But other Google engineers have stepped forward to label the claims as untrue.

Whatever the current reality with “20% time”, Google X is definitely a permanent fixture of Google operations today. The secretive hub is where new ideas like Google Glass are built, under the keen eyes of Sergey Brin.

Daily execution can take up all the time we have, but do we build in “dream time” to our schedules to keep our eyes constantly looking forward to other possibilities?

This could be by way of a time slot integrated into the schedules of all employees, or like Google X, be the core function of a team.

Do you make time to think about and work on new possibilities?

Google has had tremendous success as a search engine, but is gearing ahead for a future with many different possibilities.

It naturally requires an appetite for risk, which not all may have. But in order to remain a disruptor and game-changer, this exploration quest seems essential.

The danger, which is to sink into comfort and do what you’ve always been doing, seems a greater risk.

HERE’S THE QUESTION FOR US. ARE WE DREAMING TOO SMALL? THE DANGER OF WINNING IS THAT WE FOCUS TOO MUCH ON THE STRENGTH THAT BROUGHT ABOUT THAT VICTORY. LOOKING FORWARD, WHAT ARE THE FUTURE CHALLENGES? BEAR IN MIND WHAT WON THE BATTLE LAST YEAR MAY NOT WIN IT THIS YEAR.
NAPOLEAN BONAPARTE’S FATAL MISTAKE

By SHANE PARRISH
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RANCE of 1790 provided an ideal place for Napoleon Bonaparte’s unlikely rise to the top. In Napoleon: A Life, Paul Johnson explains: “It demonstrated the classic parabola of revolution: a constitutio- nal beginning, reformist moderation quickening into ever-increasing extrem- ism; a descent into violence; a period of sheer terror; ended by a violent reaction; a time of confusion, cross-currents, and chaos, marked by growing exhaustion and disgust with change; and eventually an overwhelming demand for ‘a Man on horseback’ to restore order, regularity, and prosperity.”

Bonaparte epitomised opportunism. He didn’t want a revolution. He wanted change. In a way, his rise, was a product of the revolution itself. Johnson writes: “Bonaparte would not have possessed the ruthless disre- gard of human life, of natural and man- made law, of custom and good faith needed to carry it through without the positive example and teaching of the revolution. The revolution was a lesson in the power of evil to replace idealism, and Bonaparte was its ideal pupil.”

In his first invasion of Italy in 1796, an “imaginative and symbolic” success he set the tone for his relationship with his troops. Naked and ill-fed he gave them hope with the spoils that awaited them. The troops.

Naked and ill-fed he gave them hope with the spoils that awaited them. The troops.

Part of Bonaparte’s success resulted from the difference between him and his enemies. The Duke of Wellington, who would ultimately be victorious at Waterloo, pin- pointed Bonaparte’s advantage: “I can hardly conceive of anything greater than Bonaparte at the head of an army – especially a French army.

“Then he had one prodigious advan- tage – he had no responsibility – he could do what he pleased, and no man ever lost more armies than he did.

“Now with me the loss of every man told. I could not risk so much. I knew that if ever I lost 500 men without the clearest necessity, I should be brought one my knees to the bard of the House of Commons.”

Before Bonaparte, Wellington had only seen delegated power in the field. Now he was facing direct power. Bonaparte, for example, appointed his own subordinates whereas Wellington often had generals foisted upon him. This reminds me of Malcolm Gladwell’s new book, David and Goliath, in terms of how the battle is won.

Often they don’t appear to play by what we consider the “established rules”.

When underdogs choose not to play by Goliath’s rules: they win more than the underlying statistics would indicate they should.

Bonaparte enjoyed a freedom to take risks that his adversaries wouldn’t or couldn’t take for political or other rea- sons. These risks fit perfectly with “his general strategy of swift aggression and offensive battle seeking.”

Soldiers, of course, like this high-risk approach. They viewed the odds of death the same regardless of whether their commander employed a defensive or offensive strategy. The offensive approach at least gave them a shot at some loot.

Ultimately Bonaparte’s most useful weapon was fear. “It was this one,” Johnson writes, that “he employed most frequently. In his aggressive strategy, it gave him a head start – it was as though an inviol- able army had softened up the enemy’s defences before a French shot was fired.”

When fighting campaigns, Bonaparte, with few exceptions, was usually vastly outnumbered. Often the other side was a coalition of nations.

Rather than wait for his opponents to become organised he struck quickly and divided them before they could join together. By dividing and conquering he defeated them separately. Bonaparte also showed a great understanding of his era by aligning his instructions with his strategy.

Johnson writes: “‘No matter how well drilled and disciplined, a unit was likely to lose formation if ordered to carry out complicated movements over distances. Hence, the simpler the plan the better, and the simplest plan: as attack’.

‘Generals, for their part, preferred sim- ple plans. Often these instructions had to be carried by hand to the front line and innumerable things could go wrong. In the end Bonaparte’s main advan- tage was also what caused his failure. His subordinates, almost without excep- tion, were eager to please and thus obey. They wanted to do as he instructed. They wanted his praise. They wanted promotions.

When things changed, as they often do on the battlefield and in business, they were left to act on their own. Having rarely faced problems without explicit instructions, they were ill-pre- pared.

If you’re hiring men and women who, while they can carry out instructions lack a general ability to think, who makes you think your results will be dif- ferent?”

There is not a single thing I’m doing these days that is not as a direct result of someone helping me.

Some showed up to do specific tasks that I’m no good at – like accounting. Some take specific responsibility for things that I don’t excel at – like developing systems.

But the vast majority of the help that I’ve been given comes from people who have introduced me to someone they think could benefit from my message and from whom I could benefit from their platform.

In other words, mutually beneficial intro- ductions, introductions that are good for the community.

The more willing I am to ask for help, the more I am able to help others. I’ve trans- formed from working for myself to working for others which, ironically, has helped me grow as an individual more than I ever imag- inged.

Offer your strengths to others and you’ll be amazed how many people offer their strengths to you.

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.
INTERNAL OBSTACLES

PRACTICE: OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

STEP ONE: QUESTION ALL YOUR CURRENT BELIEFS

Think back to when you were growing up and reflect on all the things that you were taught by your parents, siblings, teachers, and so on. These should pop into your mind quite easily, because they were ingrained into your conscience at an early age. They have most likely become things that you believe to be the truth today. Here are some possibilities:

- You must work hard to get ahead.
- You won’t succeed in life without an education.
- Be respectable of your elders.
- Beauty is on the inside.
- It’s important that others like you.
- Expressing emotion is bad.
- Be true to yourself.
- Save the best for last.
- Don’t get too excited, or you’ll be disappointed.
- Help those in need.
- You must earn a lot of money to be successful.
- It’s important to have fun in life.
- Live each day as if it’s your last.

Some of these may seem ridiculous when put down on paper, but somewhere in your subconscious you still believe them to be true. Others you may have already let go of, and others still are more valuable now than ever before.

Once you’ve completed your list, start questioning each of these beliefs. Is this still my truth? How does it make me feel? Ask yourself probing questions to determine whether they’re all truly your own or if they belong to someone else. This will help you determine which ones you want to keep around and which ones you want to replace. Here are some more questions to begin with:

- Do I really believe this, or is it something that I’ve just been taught to believe as the truth?
- Does this even make sense?
- Does this even make sense?
- Does this belief scare me?
- Do I really believe this, or is it something that I’ve just been taught to believe as the truth?
- Does this even make sense?
- Does this belief scare me?

Try to be completely honest with yourself when you answer these questions, and record your answers as they come up.

STEP TWO: SUBSTITUTE NEW “FEEL GOOD” BELIEFS

For all of the beliefs above that you identified as no longer making sense, no longer holding truth, or no longer making you feel good, it’s time to find replacements that feel better. Here are a few examples to get you started:

Old belief: Expressing emotion is bad.
New belief: It’s important and empowering to express my emotions in a healthy way.

Old belief: Money makes me successful.
New belief: My success is determined by many things — most important, how I feel about myself.

Old belief: Save the best for last.
New belief: As I enjoy all the good things in life, more good things will come to me.

Picture your life is like a tree. The roots of that tree are the foundation and they hold everything in place and very rarely will the tree grow in a different direction if the roots stay as they are. These roots are like your beliefs. The trunk is your thoughts, the branches are your words, the buds are your actions and when everything blooms, that becomes your life experiences. So, if you want to continue to have the same thoughts, words, actions and experiences — then don’t change a thing. But, if you are not satisfied in any way with your life — the first place to look is at your beliefs as they are the root of all creation in your life. The more you work on changing your beliefs and letting go of the ones that are holding you back, the more liberated and empowered you will feel to create the life you have always dreamed of!

Michael Eisen is a passionate and charismatic inspirational speaker, author and social entrepreneur. He is also the founder of the Youth Wellness Network (YWN), an organization dedicated to inspiring and empowering youth across the globe to live happier and more positive lives. For more information, email mystarjob@leaderonomics.com.
overcoming adversity

Lessons from David and Goliath

By HUI YI-WEN

I AM small. Small even for an Asian girl. All the way through school, I never had to think twice about where to stand whenever the teacher told us to arrange ourselves in height order. My twin cousins used to walk on either side of me, the running joke being that I was the “valley between two mountains”. Even now, as a working adult, I’m the little “Hobbit” amongst graceful Elves and lumbering Orcs!

But lame jokes aside, my small size meant I stood out as an irresistible beacon to teases and, on occasion, actual bullying.

The ancient story of the shepherd boy David and the giant warrior Goliath is one that I remember from childhood. It’s a story familiar to most of us – a small, brave underdog takes only his slingshot, faces the monster of a warrior, and triumphs.

The story of how David defeated Goliath has many lessons for us all.

**FEAR CAN PARALYSE YOU**

In the original story, the Philistine army had gathered for war against Israel. The king at that time, Saul, was known to be the tallest man in Israel and he had gathered his army to defend his nation.

Every day, a huge man called Goliath came out from the Philistine camp wearing full armour, shouting, mocking and challenging the Israelites to settle the fight, man-to-man. Terrified of Goliath, Saul and his army sat there for 40 days.

Saul and his army remind me of a cat or small animal that stops in the middle of a dark road, body rigid with fear and eyes shining back at the oncoming car’s headlights.

Whether you’re facing up to the school bully, or having to tackle something huge you’ve never done before, having fears and doubts is inevitable. Because fear is a very real thing – tangible, visible, and yet only understandable by the person actually experiencing it.

So, why didn’t David freeze when he faced Goliath? The one single thing you can do in any fear-filled situation – and this is the choice that can change everything – is to recognise it. Recognition and self-awareness of the fears you hold, will empower you to work to overcome it.

**DO NOT WEAR SOMEONE ELSE’S ARMOUR**

The story goes that after David volunteered to fight Goliath, King Saul personally dressed David with his own royal armour and helmet. David tried on his sword and walked about in the armour, and then promptly took them off.

“I cannot go in these,” he said to Saul, “Because I am not used to them.” The shepherd boy then took up his stuff, sling, and five stones in his bag.

Saul’s offering of armour to David symbolises two key things the world gives us: expectations and solutions. If David had worn Saul’s armour into battle, everyone watching would have expected him to behave and fight like a king.

But David was just a lad, too young even to qualify for the army, let alone bear the weight of a king’s armour and wield a grown man’s sword.

David analysed the situation from his own perspective – not as a king, an army general or a warrior. He saw that Goliath was too huge to fight, too well-protected to stab with a sword, and even too tall to run away from.

So he used his own solutions and approach to tackle the problem, without fearing what others would have thought of him.

**KNOW YOURSELF**

Even before he challenged Goliath, David knew exactly what his strengths and weaknesses were. As a shepherd, David must have spent a lot of time perfecting his slingings skills, even telling Saul that he had killed a lion and a bear in defence of his father’s sheep.

If David had fought Goliath with a sword, it’s highly unlikely we would have this famous tale. Although the sword was a weapon of choice for King Saul and many warriors, it was clearly not the right decision in this situation.

Similarly, David knew his enemy and correctly analysed that Goliath’s strength was not speed. He did not waste time formulating different battle strategies, but ran quickly towards the battle line with his sling and stones.

In any situation, remember that what worked for others may not work for you. It’s a human response to take the “tried and tested” route, especially when we are bound by the expectations of those around us. For David, he chose the solution that would work according to his unique skills, in the specific situation that required it.

**HAVE FAITH!**

When David told Saul he would go and fight Goliath, Saul tried to stop him, saying “You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.”

Many others may say the problem is too big to handle, the giant too terrifying. Yet David went forth into battle just as he was – a young shepherd boy with a sling. He didn’t wait to be fully-grown in the eyes of the world, or equipped as a famous fighter capable of leading armies.

Instead of seeing Goliath as a frightening giant, David must have seen him as a nice big target to hit because of his large size! But more than that, he was willing to try, fail, and try again.

Sources record David picking five stones from a nearby stream – clearly, he was prepared to fail a number of times before defeating Goliath.

**FACE THE GIANT WITHIN**

Did David fear, when he faced Goliath? We will never know. Many will say that David was brave, courageous, fearless, a man of great faith. I will say, that David was a man of love.

His love for his nation, people, family, and king was far, far greater than whatever fear he might have had of Goliath. In the end, it was out of great love for what he believed in, that was driven to fight and conquer the giant.

Discover for yourself then, what you will love and believe in, then conquer the giants on the outside and inside.
Talent shortage has been a topic frequently raised over the years. It's becoming more and more challenging. The market landscape drives the need for companies to continuously grow at a faster rate whilst delivering quality and innovative products and services. In order for companies to progress and sustain growth, new capabilities need to be built. A few competencies that are in high demand raised over the years. It's becoming more and more imperative that whilst companies aggressively acquire new competencies from the market, they are also strengthening the development of the internal talents. The hope is for these initiatives to enhance the capabilities of the people and drive towards having an engaged workforce, one that has a sense of pride and belonging to the company.

**SUKIYAH ABDULLAH HAMID**  
HR consultant and executive coach

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**CHUA CHAI PING**  
Human resources director, Accenture Malaysia

Talent shortage is a perennial issue that will always be an area of focus. Hence, talent supply mapping, planning and strategising is crucial. HR practitioners need to work closely with business leaders to help address the organisation’s skills requirement, paradigm shifts and mindset transitions. Only then can the right talent be acquired for the organisation’s competitive advantage.

Predicting what new skills are required in the new world will help academia decide on the syllabus’ new content or revamp. Many companies today including Accenture are partnering with local universities at an early stage to help create a learning curriculum that can help bridge the skills gap in Malaysia. One of our latest initiatives is the Accenture Future Technology Leaders Programme which addresses the technology talent shortage.

At the same time, talent constantly needs to evolve and change in a volatile market-place. It is therefore very important to ensure employees are re-skilled and up-skilled to meet current workforce demands. It is important for HR to focus on learning curriculums to cater to the ever-changing demands of their respective businesses and ensure that their talents cater to the needs of the business.

Accenture employees are continuously engaged throughout their career journey, through career counselors, global training and development programmes online, on their mobile devices or even at our learning centres.

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**SUGUNAH VERUMANDY**  
Human resource director  
GE global growth and operations Malaysia/Brunei

It is undeniable that the topic of talent shortage has been a key focus area for HR practitioners for many years now in Malaysia. However, moving forward especially in Malaysia, it would be a key imperative that the topic on talent should be a leadership agenda rather than human resources only.

Secondly, it is also imperative that key attention is given to talent development as an integrated approach in addressing the needs of capabilities building in Malaysia. This combination of leadership agenda and the thirst to develop talent would, to a large extent, reduce the concerns about talent shortage in Malaysia towards becoming a high income nation by 2020. It is crucial that leaders invest considerable resources in developing their best bets to take on the toughest challenges. There are numerous ways an organisation can approach talent development. A proven way is certainly a combination of both on-the-job experience and formal training.

In GE, for example, we use a guideline of 80% on the job and 20% formal training. On the job training constitutes providing talents with challenging job assignments, stretch opportunities, visibility and accountability underpinned by candid assessment and feedback. At the same time, formal training involves leadership programmes, functional training and business skills. Leaders know their team members best and they play a key role in taking high performers and stretching them to take on bigger jobs, providing them with the support they need to be successful and accelerate their development. HR can play a facilitator role to make this happen.

A culture of “leaders developing other leaders” helps address talent shortage in an innovative way where senior leaders thoughtfully mentor and stretch them to take on bigger jobs, providing them with the support they need to be successful and accelerate their development. HR can play a facilitator role to make this happen.

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