DRIVING NEEDED CHANGE
RE-EXAMINING THE CULTURE OF MALAYSIAN WORKPLACES
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It starts at the top
The role leaders play in leading organisations through turbulent times. ➔ Pg 03

A HARMONIOUS TEAM
Grammy award winner Christian Gansch with lessons for companies from orchestras

THE PEOPLE’S BANK
AmBank Group commits to meeting the needs of modern Malaysia

PLAIN POISONOUS
Is your work environment toxic? What needs to change?
HOW WOULD YOU BREAK THE GLASS?

Here’s an interesting story about change by Wallace Ford. “Once upon a time there was a city under a huge glass dome. Generations of people lived under the dome and no one ever dared to step out. Everyone knew that if you ever went outside you would surely die a horrible death.”

“As a matter of fact, people feared it so much that no one ever committed a capital crime, because it would mean being placed outside the dome. Life inside the dome was difficult, at best. The single stream that flowed through the community was diverted to irrigate farm ground and provide drinking water. The rest of the land was arid and waste. It was always uncomfortably hot, but at least inside the dome, they were alive.

“Then one day, to the community’s horror, a man committed an unthinkable crime. His judgment was swift, and everyone gathered to watch. When the man was pushed out, they all pressed their noses to the glass to see him die. At first, he lay on the ground, face down, covering his head with his hands and shivering with fear. Nothing happened.

“After a while, he looked up, noticed the lush, green grass and the fresh, crisp air, stood up and began to dance. Sooner he was jumping up and down shouting to the others, ‘Come out and dance with me!’

“The people were filled with confusion and stress. All of a sudden someone ran away and then returned with a huge bucket of black paint. Then others followed.

“Soon they were all frantically painting on the dome from the bottom up. They painted every bit of it as high as they could reach, until no one could see the dancing man. Then they all breathed a sigh of relief and went back to the way things had been before.”

What an interesting reaction to an amazing discovery. The dancing man had just established that the world outside the glass dome wasn’t dangerous. Even better than that, he found that it was actually better than the world inside the dome! But instead of breaking the glass barrier down and embracing the possibility of an extended world, the people chose to remain within the dome and block out any reminder of this discovery. They chose to not to disrupt the established ways of their city and people. They gave up new possibilities for the sake of predictability. Do these dynamics sound familiar to you? This preference for the familiar and resistance to change is more common than we think.

Here’s a question I asked myself after reading this story. If you were the leader of the city and realised that the world outside was safe, how would you lead the people of the city to embrace a life beyond the confines of the dome? You recognise the benefit of changing old beliefs, but how would you lead the entire city to see the same thing? And then how would you go about breaking down the wall and settling people into the big wide world? I don’t think it’s as simple as attacking the glass dome yourself. Or is it?

It’s a thought I leave with you. Hopefully, our stories this week will help you as you ponder this. This week’s theme is change. We think that it is impossible to do certain things especially when it comes to changing circumstances. Take it step by step. You can start with just one person at a time. As the saying goes, “you can’t change the whole world but you can change the world of that one person.”

TRY THIS!

Do you have an opinion you’d like to share with us? Write to us at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com. Please provide your full name, occupation (designation and employer), and telephone number.

CHANGE IT UP!

By ZARA JAYNE
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As a man was walking along the beach, he noticed a young boy continuously picking something up and throwing it into the ocean.

He approached the boy and asked, “What are you doing?”

“Throwing the starfish back into the ocean. If I don’t, they will die,” the boy replied.

Then the man said, “You can’t save them all because there are thousands of starfish here on this beach. You can’t possibly make a difference.”

After listening, the boy bent down and picked up another starfish. He threw it back into the ocean and smiled. Then, he told the man, “I made a difference for that one.”

Most of us have heard this story. We refer it when we want to motivate ourselves and others to make a difference.
they don’t make plans; They don’t even solve problems; They don’t even organise people.

What leaders really do is prepare organisations for change and help them cope as they struggle through it.”

This is how retired Harvard Business School professor John P. Kotter puts it to the debate on the difference between management and leadership. He proposes that they are different, but complementary.

When it comes to managing change, the two cannot function on their own. Only organisations that embrace both management and leadership can truly thrive in turbulent times, he says.

Kotter argues that where managers promote stability, leaders press for change. Strong leadership with weak management cannot go very far.

He explains the difference between the two: “Companies manage complexity first by planning and budgeting – setting targets or goals for the future (typically for the next month or year), establishing detailed steps for achieving those targets, and then allocating resources to accomplish those plans.

By contrast, leading an organisation to constructive change begins by setting a direction – developing a vision of the future (often the distant future) along with strategies for producing the changes needed to achieve that vision.”

While management achieves its plans by organising and staffing, Kotter argues, leadership achieves its goals by aligning people. And it does so by communicating the new direction to those that are committed to its achievement.

“Defining the vision entails motivating and inspiring. This keeps people moving in the right direction, despite any obstacles that may be in the way,” by appealing to basic but often untapped human needs, values, and emotions.

The IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

“I have found that the most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of what has come to be known as emotional intelligence,” writes Daniel Goleman in his Harvard Business Review essay “What Makes a Leader.”

Could it be that emotional intelligence is the driving force behind leaders’ ability to drive change? Possibly so.

Joseph Grenny, a well-known consultant that specialises in the topic of change, argues that one of the three ways that effective leaders influence change is by connecting to people’s values.

Grenny argues that “people are willing to do tough, boring, routine, or even painful things if the things connect to their deepest values.”

Even with this knowledge at hand, leaders tend to ignore this aspect of their responsibility to ensure that people reflect on the moral implications of their behaviour.

If part of the job of the leader is to align people to a new “norm,” and this is often achieved through inspiration and motivation, it only makes sense that emotional intelligence plays a key role in this.

After all, leaders are dealing with people and have to appeal to their human instincts in order to get them to do the right thing.

CLEAR VISION AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Perhaps before emotional intelligence comes to play, there is a need for a clear vision. And this vision needs to come from the leader himself.

It must be expressed in a way that it is understood by all those involved, with the help of emotional intelligence.

The vision needs to be strong enough and indicate clearly how this will be better for the future. It needs to answer the question, “What problem are you aiming to solve?” and then, “What will the world look and feel like when you do so?”

The communication of this vision once again is the responsibility of the leader. And this is the part that often leads to the downfall of many leaders. If they cannot clearly communicate their vision, the people will be hesitant to follow.

Furthermore, if the vision is communicated in a way that does not let them understand its relevance to them (the people), they are less likely to want to be a part of it and contribute to its success.

CLEAR STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

It is not the role of the leader to come up with all the details for the implementation of a change. It is, however, their job to ensure that at least some initial strategies are set, to get the team started.

Strategies must, of course, be aligned to the vision, and who better to make sure of that than the person setting and communicating the vision. At the same time, these tactics must be designed in a way that they empower people, and that they can be amended along the way when necessary.

After all, in a journey of change no one knows what you might find along the way, and you should always be flexible enough to adapt and take in new information – bad or good.

MOTIVATE RATHER THAN CONTROL

Kotter argues that “being able to generate highly energised behaviour is important for coping with the inevitable barriers to change.”

“Motivation and inspiration energise people, not by pushing them in the right direction as control mechanisms do but by satisfying basic human needs for achievement, a sense of belonging, recognition, self-esteem, a feeling of control over one’s life, and the ability to live up to one’s ideals.”

He goes on to say that good leaders have a few ways of motivating people, including the way they articulate the organisation’s vision (in a way that resonates with the values of the people they are addressing) and the support they show to employees through coaching, constructive feedback and mentoring/role modelling.

Another way is through recognising and rewarding success, giving people a sense of accomplishment and pride.

Motivation is much stronger than control. Especially in a period of change. With so many things changing, the last thing employees need is someone breathing down their neck.

This is where the role of the leader becomes crucial – in ensuring that people are pushed and motivated the right way so that they stay committed to the task.

A CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP

In turbulent times of change and uncertainty, a leader is unable to oversee everything and review all things going on. That is why nurturing a culture of leadership in the organisation is an important part of a leader’s role.

“Recruiting people with leadership potential is only the first step,” writes Kotter. “Equally important is managing their career patterns.”

Interestingly, this is not a mentality that can be followed only in times of change.

It takes time to build leaders, and this is a task that needs to be ongoing in an organisation long before the time to “use” these leaders comes.

By providing potential leaders with ample challenges early on in their career where they are needed to lead, take risk and even fail, you equip them well for the rest of their career journey.

Similarly, by allowing them to try various posts so that people can understand how different components of the organisation work, it allows them to grow and obtain an overall picture of the organisation and the different parts that make it up. When it comes to a major change and reorganisation, this would be a godsend skill, as they will be able to foresee the ramifications of one action in various departments.

Kotter puts it nicely: “Just as we need more people to provide leadership in the complex organisations that dominate our world today, we also need more people to develop the cultures that will create that leadership. Institutionalising a leadership-centred culture is the ultimate act of leadership.”

Leaders are the key drivers for change within an organisation, and they have a few ways of doing this up their sleeves. Evidently, they have a huge responsibility on their shoulders, but that comes with the title.

They are the ones that need to steer the whole body of the employees towards the right direction for change, and, ultimately, it falls on them whether this is done successfully or not.

Eva Christodoulou wishes that all leaders, no matter their position, will be able to inspire and lead change in their organisations. To engage with her, email eva.christodoulou@leaderonomics.com
It is 10 times more active when you are sleeping... have the time... brain “takes out the trash”. Of Alzheimer’s. Essentially, while you sleep your brain “takes out the trash”. While you’re awake... do have a crew, but they may not be getting a chance to do their job.

Studies find that 54% of these could have been avoided. I think in the future this number will be higher. Prevention is key. What if you could hire a crew of janitors to keep your brain in good condition? You already keep your brain in good condition? You already... to learn is the most important skill a person can do. The lead author of the study Dr Maiken Nedergaard puts it this way,”You can think of it like having a house party. You can either enter- into your circulatory system, and then to the liver. Cerebral spinal fluid is pumped through your brain cells shrink 60%. This allows the fluid to move faster and more freely. The pumping of this fluid takes a lot of energy. Energy that doesn’t seem to be available when you are awake and engaging actively with your environment.

The lead author of the study Dr Maiken Nedergaard puts it this way, “You can think of it like having a house party. You can either enter- tain your guests, or you can clean the house.”

I am convinced that companies can learn a lot from orchestras in terms of soft skills. This is because a great orchestra recruits the best people from around the world under one slo- gan, “There’s no ‘I’ in ‘team’!” "Have you ever wondered why people sleep? Why do we need sleep? It is true that we need sleep to keep our brain healthy. When we sleep, our brain cells shrink 60%. This allows the fluid to move faster and more freely. The pumping of this fluid takes a lot of energy. Energy that doesn’t seem to be available when you are awake and engaging actively with your environment.

The University of Rochester Medical Centre for Translational Neuromedicine released a study showing slumber gives your brain a chance to clear out potentially harmful waste that build up while you’re awake. This waste includes amyloid beta - a driver of Alzheimer’s. Essentially, while you sleep your brain “takes out the trash”.

If we cut back on sleep the janitors may not be able to do their job. The main focus of our work consists of anchoring the symphonic motto of ‘listening to each other – acting together’ in the awareness of companies. The development of inter-active, cross- departmental communications processes creates new operational impulses in a company,” says Gansch. "I am convinced that companies can learn a lot from orchestras in terms of soft skills. This is because a great orchestra recruits the best people from around the world under one slogan, “There’s no ‘I’ in ‘team’!”

When asked about the lessons learnt throughout his career, Gansch says that such moments take place all the time.

Calling Women on Career Breaks... CAREER COMEBACK

Attend our Career Comeback Networking event to connect with employers who are keen to meet women on career breaks!

www.flexWorkLife.my

Admission is FREE!

Venue
Impiana Banquet Hall, Impiana KLCC Hotel

Tips on Returning to Work
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Tickets available at the door
3:45pm - 10:30am
Flexibility in the Workplace
10:30am - 11am
Employer in Returning to the Workforce
11am - 12:30pm
Tips on Returning to Work
12:30pm - 3:30pm
Networking and Lunch

Meet participating employers:
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- Dell Malaysia
- DBS Malaysia
- Malaysia Banking Berhad
- PwC Malaysia
- Royal Selangor
- Shell Malaysia
- Sunway Group
- Taylor’s Education Group
- and more

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This process is called the glymphatic system. It is 10 times more active when you are sleeping than when you are awake. Also note:

- Lack of sleep seems to play a role in dementia and other brain disorders.
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He says that even the best processes and structures can ultimately fail because of individuals. “Only when management respects and values its employees can they be self-motivated and responsible for their collective success. This is the way to healthy corporate ethos, which ensures that each individual can identify with the company.”

For me, the perfect triad of leadership skills are to recognise, decide and act. If a manager just decides and acts, but doesn’t recognise the employees’ different characters and needs, then there are no leadership skills there. And they shouldn’t wonder why they have employ- ees who are unmotivated and working prag- matically by the book,” he says.

Christian Gansch will be in Kuala Lumpur on April 3. He will be speaking at the Business of Innovation forum organised by The London Business School. For more information, visit www.biofinnovation.com.my or call 03-23010988.

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By TERRY SMALL

mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

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AmBank Group has refreshed its brand to stay connected with both customers and employees. In its new tagline “Your Bank. Malaysia’s Bank. AmBank,” boldly asserts the Group as an integral part of Malaysian society, with a promise to understand and meet the diverse needs of modern Malaysia.

“As one of the largest banking groups in Malaysia we recognise that the financial services market is rapidly evolving.

“Customers have become far more sophisticated, with more complex and demanding expectations,” explains Group Managing Director, Ashok Ramamurthy.

With the launch of its brand repositioning in 2013, the Malaysian-grown bank is committed to growing its products, services and solutions according to the needs and expectations of Malaysia’s market.

“We needed to move forward to not lose our positioning in such a fast moving market. It has been seven years since our last repositioning exercise and we were probably seen as ‘traditional’ and ‘local’.

“We wanted to evolve our brand to ensure it is relevant, current, appealing and connected with our customers,” says Ashok.

**A BOLD APPROACH**

AmBank Group’s financial services offerings are wide-ranging, including retail, small business, commercial, corporate and institutional, investment banking, funds management, general insurance, life insurance and family takaful.

“Within our various businesses, we bank close to six million retail customers and a large number of business customers,” says the Group Managing Director.

“Malaysia is seeking to become more affluent, with a growing population of younger people, increasing use of social media and digital, and wanting to take a leadership position in the region in diverse facets.

“We want AmBank Group to reflect modern Malaysia’s aspirations. We want to connect with our customers and demonstrate the diversity of our offerings,” he explains.

According to Ashok, the Group is evolving into a more customer-centric organisation, placing priority on improving relationships, products and services, and providing financial solutions that meet customers’ needs.

The Group is investing in initiatives to make banking an easier and simpler experience, and the most visible change since the repositioning of their brand is in their look and feel.

From refreshed advertising templates, new colour treatments, visual transformation of brand elements at branches, to improved service levels, the Group has invested heavily to ensure its new brand proposition is reflected in every aspect of the organisation.

**MALAYSIA’S BANK**

As consumers and jobseekers are present with a vast array of choices today, Ashok acknowledges the need for AmBank Group to compete ‘high perceived value’.

For customers, “We are well known in the marketplace in various categories, such as funds management, Islamic banking, Islamic capital markets, retail banking and investment banking, particularly in debt capital markets.”

He identifies the Group’s international partnerships as one of its value propositions. We are the only local bank with tangible connectivity as seen in our strategic partnership with the Australia and New Zealand Banking Group, or ANZ, a super-regional bank,” he says.

“We also have insurance Australia Group (IAG) as our general insurance partner and have chosen MetLife as our life insurance and family takaful partner, subject to Bank Negara’s approval.”

But even after all this, “Malaysia’s Bank is a forward-looking statement, and the Group is building tangible proof points to deliver on this catchy tagline.

“We can only become Malaysia’s bank when we can clearly demonstrate our market knowledge and competencies, as well as a keen understanding of our customers, to establish a mutually stronger and more diversified relationships with them,” he says.

With this new proposition, the Group is increasing its focus on specific segments.

**GROWING WITH MALAYSIA**

These include the emerging affluent, and small business customers in retail banking and in specific industry segments that are key to the long-term growth of the nation, as envisaged in the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP).

As customers we keep our offerings to existing customers to ensure long-term and sustainable relationships, while continuing to provide offerings to new customers that are as attractive and differentiated.

“We serve a large number of Malaysia’s customers. Our market share of customers is significantly higher than our market share of deposits, loans, funds and financing.

“Our challenge is to convert our customers to an equivalent position in all these aspects,” says Ashok.

**EXTERNAL & INTERNAL CONNECTION**

Connection is seen as central to the Group’s success, and is the first element in its three-fold mission of “Connecting, Growing and Outperforming.”

“By becoming better connected to our customers, we will stand out. We will be able to identify products and financial solutions to attract new customers and engage existing customers more effectively,” he says.

“This not only benefits our customers but gives our employees a sense of pride in their work.”

Since the launch of this new brand positioning in September 2013, the Group Managing Director says there has been greater clarity in the Group’s strategic direction.

As a result, employees have been better connected in the achievement of these shared goals.

Strategic partnerships have also been leveraged for knowledge transfer and for employees to be better equipped to be competitive, and to outperform.

Employee career development remains a priority for the Group.

“Employees are consistently committed to and kept abreast of the progress of our business plans,” says Ashok.

“They are recognised for outperforming, and are provided an environment to innovate and learn, also leveraging our strategic partners.”

Acknowledging the need for strong internal connectivity to be a financial solutions group for modern Malaysia, the Group remains committed to providing employees with the opportunity to build a successful and rewarding career with AmBank Group.

For career opportunities with AmBank Group, please visit www.ambankgroup.com/amcareer

**WE WANT AmBank Group to REFLECT MODERN MALAYSIA’s ASPIRATIONS. WE WANT TO CONNECT WITH OUR CUSTOMERS AND DEMONSTRATE THE DIVERSITY OF OUR OFFERINGS.**

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**WE WANTED TO EVOLVE OUR BRAND TO ENSURE IT IS RELEVANT, CURRENT, APPEALING AND CONNECTED WITH OUR CUSTOMERS.**

Ashok Ramamurthy, Group Managing Director, AmBank Group.

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**BANK OF THE YEAR 2013**

AmBank Group was awarded Bank of the Year in Malaysia 2013 by UK-based magazine The Banker, a monthly international financial affairs publication.

AmBank Group sees the award as a testament to its strong management, sound business model and prudent risk approach.

Group Managing Director Ashok Ramamurthy received the award in London in November 2013.

“We are honoured to be recognised by such an esteemed publication as The Banker,” he says.

“The award is due to the good progress we have made on executing a well-articulated strategy and delivering consistent financial performance, being able to successfully integrate two acquisitions that are already making positive contributions, and striving to improve and break new ground for the customer-centric way.”

The Bank of the Year Awards is an annual awards event recognising the top financial institutions that have excelled in the global banking community.

Entrants were asked to provide comprehensive data on their earnings, assets and Tier-1 capital numbers and returns on equity.

The Banker’s editorial team also looked for evidence of innovation and standard-setting in local markets, from deploying new technology to boost efficiency or providing new services to customers, to expanding business lines, customer numbers and product portfolios in a sustainable and responsible manner.

The Group completed two acquisitions in the past 18 months – Kurnia Insurans (Malaysia) Bhd and MBF Cards (Wisa) Sdn Bhd. Both are on track to provide greater contributions to the banking group as a whole.

In recent months, the focus of the bank has been building economies of scale from these acquisitions and cross-selling to the new customer base.

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**ANCHORING VALUES**

Five shared values underpin this new leg of AmBank Group’s journey, known as “P’ACE.” The Group defines them as values that they “need to embrace and be known for.”

“Our P’ACE values direct us in our undertakings of all of our business,” explains Ashok.

“As long as we understand and deliver against these values on a daily basis, we believe we are striving towards being better connected with all of our customers,” he adds.

The P’ACE values are:

**PRINCIPLED:** “Integrity and professionalism remain the thrust of all we do, and we take accountability for all our actions.”

**PROACTIVE:** “We approach every challenge positively, take change responsibly, and always anticipate the needs of all our colleagues, customers and our community.”

**APPRECIATIVE:** “We value and recognise everyone’s role and contribution, and always provide support to our customers and colleagues.”

**CONNECTED:** “We are connected in everything we do, as part of an organisation that fosters teamwork and open communication.”

**EVOLVING:** “We strive to seek new and relevant ways of growing ourselves, our customers, our business and our community in a sustainable manner.”

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**BY LILY CHEAH**

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It’s More Than Just Doing Things Differently

Change management is a structured approach for ensuring that changes are thoroughly and smoothly implemented. It is vital, therefore, when it touches individual’s lives, to understand what changes are taking place and how they are going to be managed in order to realise desired business benefits.

Leadership or Sponsorship:

Select the right group of leaders and advise and guide them accordingly (Table 1) to improve your results. This, for example, can be quantified through focus groups or a targeted survey asking the right questions. Setting realistic expectations is just some of the fundamentals that companies can do to manage employee involvement.

Communication:

Involve both the right people in the design and implementation of changes, to make sure the right changes are made. Value any feedback you get from changes that do not happen in isolation — it impacts the whole organisation (systematic and individual) around you, and the people touched by it.

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Involvement:

It’s important to ensure there is clear expression of the reasons for change, and how the sponsor communicates this. For example, communication could be postponed to non-business hours, or even the following Tuesday, or the first week of each month. We all hear the ‘what gets measured gets done’. Involvement is key to successful change management.

Many HT practitioners are in arms trying to balance traditional systems and processes of managing people with new norms and preferences of the younger generation and the results are sometimes painful.

Buying:

Gaining buy-in for the changes from those who are affected, directly or indirectly.

Impact:

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MUCH has been said about change. We are often reminded that change is inevitable, necessary and painful. Dictionary definitions point towards change as the act, or instance, of mak-
ing and becoming different.

It’s a movement of something shift-
ing from one state to another – be it yourself, organisations or even a na-
tion. Change itself is neutral, but can bring about positive or negative con-
sequences.

In the field of leadership and change management, a fascinating subset of change is transformation. While change is neutral and can be a process or a singular incident, trans-
formation is an intentional, internal progression towards betterment.

In leadernomics, we run corporate simulations designed to incite a trans-
formational shift in our participants’ minds. On our very popular simulations pushes small groups of participants to plan a turnaround strategy and trans-
form a failing business, whilst being subject to stressful “interventions” such as loss of inventory, a public rela-
tions disaster, and sinking employee morale.

It’s an intense situation crafted to thrust people out of their comfort zones, kindle greater self-awareness, and progress along in their leadership journey.

For us, it’s also an incredible privi-
elge to witness our participants reflect and realise – Albert Einstein

“Changing our thin King.”

- Albert Einstein

or control the major things that impact your company – the economy, SARS, the competitive environ-
ment.

On a personal level, this could be the case of sacrificing lengthy baking lessons, at least until the ACCA exams are completed. Jala cautions that where transfor-
mation is needed, enforcing your pri-
orities “needs to be very brutal”.

In your own transformation journey, were there activities that were not critical to your direction in life? For an accountancy professional, it could be the case of sacrificing lengthy baking lessons, at least until the ACCA exams are completed. Jala cautions that where transfor-
mation is needed, enforcing your pri-
orities “needs to be very brutal”.

ENFORCE DISCIPLINE OF ACTION

Similarly, enforcing discipline of action is another key to success. If you have a plan for transforma-
tion, but do not act on it, nothing will come to pass.

In the same vein, if you change sporadi-
cally and without discipline, you have a problem altogether.

Innovation has to be sup-
ported by rigorous implementa-
tion to achieve transformational results.

CREATE A WINNING COALITION

Another transformation key is to create “winning coalitions” – stake-
holder partnerships that augment your leadership efforts.

As a leader trying to drive change and transformation, every ounce of support counts and leaders should always be open to collaborative oppor-
tunities. Jala believes you should collaborate with competitors in the team. And the par-
ties know exactly where the bounda-
ries are. He cites the example of oil compa-
nies collaborating to develop the most cost-effective output from oil wells and refineries, while competing at the oil stations for customers.

EXERCISE SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Great leaders understand not only the how of leadership, but also the why. Should a leader speak, or listen? Be humble or assertive?

Many leadership traits are polar.

opposites of each other, but that doesn’t mean they are in conflict. A transformational leader needs to be highly directive at the start of any journey of change, to reinforce discipline of action and focus on the fundamentals. As the team becomes increasingly competent and confident, the leader adapts to become more empowering.

Empowerment exists when compen-
terence exists within the team. And that is when the seemingly impossible can transform into reality.

BY HUI YI-WEN

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THE SCIENCE OF DOING NEW THINGS

With a reputation for engineer-
ing business turnarounds in Shell Sri Lanka and Malaysia, Jala took on the role of transforming the ail-
ing Malaysia Airlines in 2005, with a RM3.7bil loss and less than four months’ cash flow. With him at its helm, MAS posted astonishing record annual profits of RM858mil by 2007. In 2009, Jala was appointed CEO of the Finance Performance Management and Delivery Unit (Pemandu) in the Prime Minister’s Department, charged with monitoring the implementa-
tion of government Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Jala defines transformation as fun-
damental changes in the way a person or organisation does things (its doing) and its character, or being.

“Acting your way into a new way of being” – changes one’s thinking and doing, then drives transformation of character and being.

This way of thinking was triggered during his stint in Shell Sri Lanka. It was a tough period when many typical management tricks didn’t work, and he was faced with asking himself, “What do I need to do differ-
dently?”

Jala had to change his mindset, throw away previous beliefs and dis-
cover new paradigms of thought and acting. And it was doing this new thing, was in itself transforma-
tional.

ALLOW FOR DIVINE INTERVENTION

In MAS, Pemandu and in an inter-
view with The Leaderonomics Show, Jala shares on a subject people don’t talk about in the corporate world – teaching in business school – “divine intervention.”

Divine intervention is underpinned by two experiential human para-
digms. Firstly, when we think about it, most major things in our lives occur out of our control. For top leaders, it means you can’t control the major things that impact your company – the economy, SARS, the competitive environ-
ment.

On a personal level, this could be meeting your future spouse to an unexpected job offer.

We can control approximately 40% of life incidences through our own decision-making, but have very limit-
ed influence on the remaining 60%.

Hence, life is a continuous reduc-
tion of options, as our decisions and chance factors funnel us through increasingly specific paths.

Divine intervention allows us the peace of mind that it is all right to fail, even when we have given our best.

We may tick all the correct boxes on the checklist for success, but recogn-
ising this 60% uncontrollable factor means there is no need for self-flagel-

ation when we do fail.

As a leader, it is Jala’s key to setting the heartbeat of his organisation; when he appears unflustered, his troops remain calm through the storm and continue giving their all.

OBTAINING DIVINE INTERVENTION

Whether we believe in God, luck, feng shui, karma or otherwise, how do we obtain favour from divine interven-
tion? Jala believes that this rests on three things:

Firstly, reaping what you sow from your values and actions. Being a good human being will attract good people to you, and allow positive chance occurrences.

Secondly, follow the right eth-
ics on the basis of your conscience. With white, grey and black areas, it should be straightforward to make the “white” choice. However, when faced with “grey” areas issues with no option of white, Jala strongly cautious never to make these decisions alone, but with some form of accountability group.

With “grey-area” decisions, your conscience is compromised, and over time, the grey creeps into the white.

And thirdly, the crucial need for self-renewal. Take some time out for solitude and reflection, and give grati-
tude for what Jala calls his “Theory of Enough.”

With this anchor of divine interven-
tion to guide our perspective and char-
acter, there are five additional keys for transformational success.

AIM FOR THE SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE

Those that succeed have something different from those who fail. Jala calls this the “game of the impossible” – wanting to do what everybody says cannot be done.

The center of all great leaders is their conviction that the “seem-
ingly impossible” can be achieved. This unshakeable sense of conviction can-
not be allowed to survive alone, but must be fed by the leader’s ability to harness people and give their best.

FOCUS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS

In our Leaderonomics business simulation, the “turnaround manage-
ment” is advised to look hard at the core assets of the business – such as human capital, intellectual property, or even the intangible brand.

When rescuing and transforming a crisis, the core assets are priority; all else must go.

WHEN RESCUING AND TRANSFORMING A CRISIS, THE CORE ASSETS ARE PRIORITY; ALL ELSE MUST GO.

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Byst Hi Yi-Wen

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THE WORLD AS WE HAVE CREATED IT IS A PROCESS OF OUR THINKING IT CANNOT BE CHANGED WITHOUT CHANGING OUR THINKING.”

- Albert Einstein

GET THE STAR MOBILE APP NOW!
**W**HETHER you are a chief executive officer or a general worker, there is a deep cry for appreciation. Our job satisfaction is more dependent on being appreciated and being valued for the tasks we do than our compensation. We would just be working to put food on the table if we did not feel appreciated at work.

Everyone is wired differently. Therefore, the language of appreciation is different for each individual. Gary Chapman and Paul White’s goal in The 5 Languages of Appreciation in the Workplace is to help us understand the languages of appreciation and identify our primary, secondary and least meaningful language of appreciation.

**FOUNDATIONS: MOTIVATING BY APPRECIATION - THE CONCEPT**

While most workers seek appreciation from their bosses and superiors, feeling appreciated by our colleagues still makes life more pleasant. Everyone (paid or unpaid) will enjoy their work, do better and last longer when they are appreciated.

However, for appreciation to be effective, it firstly needs to be tailored and delivered individually. A general appreciation campaign will have very little impact.

Secondly, for it to have an impact, the recipient must view it as valuable. Each person has a different primary language of appreciation in the work setting; therefore, our actions of appreciation must be individualized.

If we were thirsty and someone offers us a chair to sit, it is nice but it does not satisfy our thirst. In the same way if someone does not communicate to us in our primary language of appreciation, we are not really encouraged.

For example, Ellen excels in her sales and customer service performance. Often, she is asked to receive an award at her department’s quarterly meeting. What is meant to be a show of appreciation is actually torture for her. She does not like public attention and showing a of appreciation is felt as an embarrassment.

**WHY EMPLOYEES LEAVE**

Close to 50% of managers believe employees leave for better pay. But in reality, only 12% leave for money.

The reasons are mainly psychological including not being valued and trusted. “They couldn’t pay me enough to stay here. The lack of support is depersonalizing,” was how one discouraged manager put it.

Researchers have found that the communication of appreciation has a positive impact in any organization, in any profession, in any industry and in any part of the world.

**JOB SATISFACTION**

Studies have found that one of the major reasons for falling productivity and decreasing morale in public and private workplaces is staff turnover.

Besides that, most managers are not equipped to dislike hunting for, engaging and training new staff.

And unfortunately, the people who are most likely to leave, are the most capable, most experienced, well trained and who contribute positively to the organization, as they are also the most employable elsewhere.

It is estimated that staff turnover costs the US economy at least some US$3 trillion a year. Yet if organizations can hold on to their good talent, they gain an edge over the competition by keeping costs down, maintaining good and continuous relationships with their clients and vendors.

Low job satisfaction is directly linked to high job turnover.

A warning sign is when an employee starts thinking about looking for another job. And job satisfaction is greatly affected by how much employees feel appreciated by those around them.

This is true irrespective of position or industry. An interesting finding is that co-workers, more than managers, greatly value knowing how to communicate appreciation to their team members well.

Employees’ job satisfaction translates to better customer service. And customer satisfaction is often the distinction between a successful and failing business.

In short, motivating by appreciation can be an effective tool to help increase job satisfaction.

In turn, this leads to lower staff turnover, less absenteeism, better productivity, higher customer satisfaction, and more positive relationships and better morale within an organization. The costs to an organization are minimal and the return on investment is manifold.

**APPRECIATION NO. 1: WORDS OF AFFIRMATION**

Let’s look at one of the five languages of appreciation: Words of affirmation.

Verbally praising a person is one way to express appreciation. However, for it to be effective, it has to be specific rather than just a general – Well done! Good job!

It can be very encouraging for the recipient.——“I like how you answered the phone in a cheerful tone and offering to solve the customer’s concern.” – is far more valuable.

While praising for specific task is valued by some of us, others prefer other dialects. Affirming someone’s character is a dialect that speaks most deeply to some individuals.

“I value that.”

“For the good work.”

“It is much harder to do. It looks beyond per-

formance and focuses on the person’s inner character. “You’re creative. You have a special talent for making people laugh.”

“Good job and well done.”

**FOR APPRECIATION TO BE EFFECTIVE, IT FIRSTLY NEEDS TO BE TAILORED AND DELIVERED INDIVIDUALLY**

A general appreciation campaign will have very little impact.

It is very important to know the preference of the person that we wish to affirm. Some people are not shy and like the spotlight, others would be embarrassed to receive public praise.

A handwritten note of appreciation is still valued by many and is seen as personal. And the recipients value the time and effort taken to write the note.

Becky volunteers to help with single mothers. She is always encouraged by thank you notes from the women even though most are written in poor grammar and spelling, and hardly legible.

Words of appreciation must be sincere. If we are not able to express them genuinely, we are not able to say them with sincerity and positivity.

Koh Earn Soo and his team have taken the best books and summarise them into shorter, readable content in the hope of inspiring people to read more and learn more. To read the rest of this summary and summaries of other bestsell- ers, subscribe to www.thebestbooksummary.com
THE TOXIC WORKPLACE: WHAT’S IT REALLY ABOUT?

By MARILYNN KENDALL
mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

Moving back to those initial conver-
sations, once we started to talk about what kinds of behaviours are seen in these types of environments, invariably everyone I spoke to knew someone who had been impacted or touched by a toxic workplace: a friend, colleague, spouse, partner, sister, mother, brother or father. The purpose of this article is to pro-
vide you with some concrete, helpful information through a simple question and answer format that will inform, and assist you in identifying a toxic workplace.

What types of behaviours create a toxic workplace?
The most common one seen is that of bullying among employees. We’ve all heard of the unfortunate stories of this happening in schools and seen and heard of the negative impact it has had on our children.

Unfortunately it can and does also happen in the workplace: in the form of gossiping, the deliberate exclusion of people from their team, the office, and/or departmental network by peers or colleagues.

It may include the use of various kinds of intimidation by those with higher levels of expertise, seniority, and/or include the use of aggressive behaviour verbally or physically.

What are the behaviors displayed by a toxic leader/manager?
A toxic leader is one who typically thrives on controlling their surroundings and the people that work for and with them. They tend to micro-manage all aspects of work within their locus of control, display a lack of trust and con-
fidence in the abilities of others, fail to recognise the work of their subordinates, take credit for the work of their subordi-
nates, and use disrespectful communica-
tion styles.

In some instances there can be an abuse of power as evidenced by the story shared with me by one individual whose supervisor ruled through fear. This supervisor constantly set them up to fail by refusing to supply them with the resources they needed to do their work, attempting to discredit them at meetings by making snide comments covered up as jokes, the use of obviously disrespectful body language, making flippant comments about them to other leaders behind their back, and recruiting another person within their own depart-
ment to replace them while they were still in their position.

When confronted with their actions, these types of leaders tend to display emotionally insensitive attitudes accom-
panied by a lack of insight into their behaviour ranging from denial and/or attempts to cover them up.

What is a toxic organisation?
This is an organisation in which toxic leaders and toxic managers are com-
monplace, they exist from the CEO level down to the frontline supervisors.

In this type of organisation rather than being terminated from their position the leader’s behaviour is ignored and may even be rewarded.

The work environment experienced by the employees is one of intense pressure, unrealistic demands, and ruthlessness.

Consequences to the organisation are significant as these high levels of employee stress lead to increased sick time, increased numbers of stress leave, and decreased employee engagement as people’s commitment to their work falters under the pressure.

Ultimately there is an increase in employee turnover as the negative emo-
tions displayed by the leaders infiltrate at all levels.

Peter J. Frost, a leading authority on toxic work emotions in the workplace said it so eloquently:
“Emotions tend to be contagious, toxic ones leak out into the workplace affect-

ing more than just the person afflicted. It can poison a team, a workplace, an organisation.”
Chaos Is Nothing

By Divya Chandy

Listen to the way we use the word chaos: “Everything was in total chaos.” “After all that, the chaos was over.” “I’m so glad to be out of that chaotic relationship.” There is something embedded in the word “chaos” that makes it a negative word. At all cost, we avoid it like a plague. We work to ensure chaos never happens. It’s right there with words like “confusion” and “disaster.”

We are obsessed with order. We like things to be as is, as we hope or intend it to be. We very much prefer peace, and rightly so. Yet we also know that change is not always a bad thing. Change requires a better understanding of where we’ve been, where we are and where we intend to go. But the notion of order is linked to a sense of predictability. Ever since Newton introduced the motif of determinism in the 17th century, it has become a major tenet of our culture.

One example is knowing that you move from Standard One to Standard Two in primary school, and from Standard Six to Form One.

Chaos on the other hand brings us to the brink of either meaning or madness, a make or a break. It is the absence of predictability and for most people, this is outright daunting.

What happens when you complete Form Five? What happens when you complete university?

Sometimes life’s transitions or crises present chaos in the form of an illness, death, job loss or even a break-up and it feels like the rug you have been standing on was pulled from beneath you and you free fall until you manage to grab on to something.

You probably can see where I am going with this. That chaos is the first ingredient to new things. It is an ambiguity and uncertainty but it is also an opportunity for the new. It is an opportunity to be creative.

The Need for Chaos

The most innovative changes stem from a form of chaos. When Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, was too tired to give up her seat on the bus to a white man, chaos erupted and the civil rights movement was catalysed. She was later known as “the first lady of civil rights”.

As people of perspective and leaders in our own fields, we know deep inside that chaos itself is not a problem. It is the response we have to a problem that is more important. How effective are we in deciding how quickly we figure out what to do to regain our stability. Are we resilient enough? This takes creativity.

But to take this a little further, I would like to suggest that it is not about bouncing back up. The suggestion is that chaos is not the enemy of life and creativity. It is a necessary ally.

Real stability is not a result of the elimination of chaos. Rather, it comes from the creative structures that emerge out of chaos.

In hindsight we know this. If we look back at chaotic times in our lives, we see that new things come as a result of a chaotic season, not in spite of it.

Yet we still tend to hurry towards order and structure. To quote Pablo Frassan, “the chief enemy of creativity is good sense”. I believe he was referring more to the mindset that we tend to have. We always feel a need to quickly solve a problem and move on to other things.

We want to know we have control. We want to know that we can regain stability. My housemate always talks about how we like to obsess about having answers to questions. She does not mean to say this is wrong. She is merely suggesting that if we do this, we might miss the point or miss the opportunity to better solve our problems.

But embracing chaos means that we live with the questions and the ambiguity a little longer than we care to.

Embracing the Unknown

Gilda Radner, a comedian from Saturday Night Live, seems to have captured this concept in her reflections on her bout with ovarian cancer, which later took her life.

“I wanted to be able to write on the book cover: ‘Her Triumph over cancer’ or ‘She wins the cancer war.’ I wanted a perfect ending.

“Now I’ve learned the hard way that some poems don’t rhyme and some stories don’t have a clear beginning, middle, and end. Like my life, this book is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what is going to happen next. ‘Delicious ambiguity’ as Joanna said.

Real stability is not a result of the elimination of chaos. Rather, it comes from the creative structures that emerge out of chaos. In hindsight, we know this. If we look back at chaotic times in our lives, we see that new things come as a result of a chaotic season, not in spite of it.

Order and Chaos work together.

It is necessary to have intervals of order and chaos. Both are important in transformation and moving on to new. Order and chaos work together to bring about good changes.

To relate, I had too many ideas about what I wanted to do after Form Five. From being a journalist, to a doctor, to an interior designer, to an engineer then a lawyer all in intervals of two weeks, each time more confident than the last that THAT was what I was going to do with my life.

I felt my Seven As for SPM could take me to a lot of places. But doors kept shutting in my face and I had no choice but to do Form Six. Chaos.

Academically, my grades took a steady decline. But with so many other external factors, I grew as a person.

I wrestled with many issues but I noticed my ability to relate to people because of my struggles. I liked the fact that a number of friends were confiding in me and seeking advice on different struggles they faced. I’d like to think my advice was sound.

Unfortunately there was no grading for this because I scraped through SPM. But being still eligible, as order would have it, I applied for various degree courses in various public universities. My whole application was rejected. Chaos again.

By divine grace, I appealed and got a place in a course I never, in all my imagination, thought I would do.

All in all, I had a wholesome campus experience. I learned to enjoy my course and took each day as it came, growing in depth and a little bit of width.

But I graduated knowing that what I had studied would hardly have anything to do with my livelihood in the future.

By this time, chaos and I had become acquainted. I lingered for a couple of months in the uncertainty of the question by trying out different things, to finally arrive at my new order. A job that I intended to build my career upon. And so it will modulate. Chaos is in every corner.

But learning to foresee that order will come around as well, in a bigger and transformational way, is probably one of the biggest lessons I have learned to date.

* When she’s not wasting calories eating chocolates, Divya Chandy runs a youth inspiration center in PJ Old Town called DropZone. During the school holiday season, she helps her team in Leaderonomics run the DIODE Leadership Camps Series for youths aged 12 to 21 by encouraging them to explore their individual leadership potential. Drop Divya an e-mail at divya.chandy@leaderonomics.com to sign up today!
In HR Talk, we pick one human resources (HR) related topic each week, and gather a few HR experts to share their opinions on it. If you have any questions about the HR industry, send them to us at mystarjob@leaderonomics.com and we will get our panel of experts to answer them.

1. DRESS CODE - Style is a very personal statement and job seekers should always try and find out the culture of the firm they are applying for.
2. LESSON no. 1: If the lack of interaction patterns still persists, the interviewer will mark the candidate down. In this instance, this is what I did.
3. TOPIC OF THE WEEK: HR TALK - What are some of the worst interview experiences you have had with candidates? Can you share specific examples?

Also next week

How to manage conflict at the workplace
Ten techniques to quickly build rapport with people
What lessons can we learn from the United Nations on conflict management?
Competition is a good thing if you know how to handle it