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AREN'T MALAYSIANS STRONG ENOUGH FOR MISTAKES?

DON'T fear failure!" we shout. "Just do it!" we quote Nike. But when push comes to shove, many Malaysians rather lean backwards to fall on familiar places, than fall forward into something new. This has direct implications on our ability to achieve. In a 2008 article published in the Asian EFL Journal called An investigation on the Language Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation among Turkish EFL Learners, Dr Selami Aydin writes that when foreign language students fear negative evaluation, there is a "significant" impact on their achievement.

This fear occurs when students feel "inadequate making the proper social impression" and want to avoid leaving an "unfavorable impression on others", he explains. As a result, students hold back on what they know, preferring to bite their tongue rather than risk making verbal errors in front of their teacher and peers.

So when we don’t make mistakes, we limit our achievements. But we all know this, don’t we? We’re highly aware of the tension between head knowledge of the value of mistakes and everyday decision-making, yet knowledge and reality often collide.

Commentators agree that this fear of mistakes and failure has a firmer hold on Asians than our Western counterparts. Mykolas Rambus, CEO of Wealth-K, a Singapore-based firm that studies ultra high net worth individuals, ties this back to the lack of Asian entrepreneurs. He is quoted in a 2013 CNBC article on Asian entrepreneurs as saying: “There are huge numbers of graduates in Asia and that’s fine. But entrepreneurs - individuals who have a like mindset and are prepared to take a risk to start a business? I’m not sure about that.”

"The price of failure in the United States is that you learn from your mistakes and try again – banks can be accepting of that, the community is ready to look at mistakes from a negative scenario where they need our protection, perhaps we overprotect, and then (and we) grow into adults that default to safe zones. As Alexander Graham Bell says, “when one door closes, another opens.”

In the end, it can be an opportunity." "What a big thought. In our workplaces, I wonder if we overprotect our children. "That’s not the right way!” “What are you doing!” While there are perfectly valid scenarios where they need our protection, perhaps we overprotect, and then (and we) grow into adults that default to safe zones.

Author Alina Tugend in her book Better By Mistake: The Unexpected Benefits of Being Wrong writes that overprotection deprives children of learning a very important lesson, that is, "mistakes are experiences from which to learn".

Quoting child-development experts Robert Brooks and Sand Goldstein, Tugend writes: “It also communicates another subtle or invisible message to the child, ‘Be correct. Your mistakes are my fault and it is my role to protect you and other’s expectations. That’s not the right way!’ What are you doing?” While there are perfectly valid scenarios where they need our protection, perhaps we overprotect, and then (and we) grow into adults that default to safe zones. As Alexander Graham Bell says, “when one door closes, another opens.”

There are huge numbers of graduates in Asia and that’s fine. But entrepreneurs - individuals who have a like mindset and are prepared to take a risk to start a business? I’m not sure about that.”

"There is so much more to learn each and every week. This is the thought I leave you with this Saturday. I hope you enjoy this week’s pages which delve deeper into the topic of mistakes."

Best wishes,

Lily Cheah
Editor, myStarjob.com

JOIN US!

THE SCIENCE OF BUILDING LEADERS

by ZARA JAYNE
zara.jayne@leaderonomics.com

ACCORDING to Erin Falconer, co-owner of Pick the Brain, “The fear of failure is perhaps the strongest force holding people below their potential.”

Although this fear can push us to succeed, it can also limit us from stretching our capacity. Instead of growing, we play it safe because we just cannot afford to make mistakes. Since fear has already been instilled in us and we can’t avoid it, how then can we overcome it?

Here are a few ways to embrace this fear of making mistakes so that we can further improve ourselves.

1 BE OPTIMISTIC

Develop a mentality of thinking positively. This mind set will boost your confidence to overcome the fear of failure. When your boss yells at you or oppurtunities for you close, train your mind to think that “it’s alright” Failure isn’t “the end of the world.”

There is so much more to learn each and every week. This is the thought I leave you with this Saturday. I hope you enjoy this week’s pages which delve deeper into the topic of mistakes.

Best wishes,

Lily Cheah
Editor, myStarjob.com

TUNE IN

Want practical tips for success on your way home from work? We’re on every Tuesday from 6pm to 7pm.

CAPITAL FM 88.9FM in the Klang Valley

EMBRACING MISTAKES

Are you a talented writer passionate about leadership development? Leaderonomics is looking to expand its editorial team! Interested individuals can write to mystarjob@leaderonomics.com

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MISTAKES ARE INVITABLE. As it is only natural to look at mistakes from a negative aspect, begin to see them as an opportunity for growth instead.

Warren Buffet, one of the world’s richest businessmen says, “You learn that a temporary defeat is not a permanent one. In the end, it can be an opportunity.”

Stop blaming others or yourself.

Instead look at how you can do something about your mistakes. What can you change or improve on?

1 HAVE PLAN B

Be proactive and prepare on things. By having a back-up plan, you can reduce mistakes. When things go wrong with colleagues or clients, your fear will lessen with a plan B by your side.

Dare to take that risk. What is the worst thing that could happen? If you don’t try, you won’t grow and learn.

4 KEEP A JOURNAL

To avoid repeating the same mistakes again, journal your thoughts and experiences in a notebook or diary. Then, look back at what you have written over the weeks, months or years and reflect on it. You will learn more about yourself and realise the mistakes you have made.

The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.

"There is no failure. Only feedback." - Robert Allen

"We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face... we must do that which we think we cannot." - Eleanor Roosevelt

"I failed my way to success." - Thomas Edison

Winston Churchill became the British prime minister at the age of 62, though he was constantly defeated in running for the role of a public officer.

According to Alina Tugend, “Many perfectionists fear challenging tasks, take fewer risks and are less creative than non-perfectionists.”

Warren Buffet was rejected by Harvard Business School.

This is one of the world’s richest and most successful businessmen.
RECRUITING EXECUTIVE AIDES-DE-CAMP

SECURITY CORPORATION CHICO FORCE LAUNCHES NEW ROLE IN MALAYSIA

By LILY CHEAH
lily.cheah@leaderonomics.com

Chico Force, a professional security corporation operating since 1990, is recruiting young graduates for a brand new occupation: the executive aide-de-camp (EADC).

The EADC role is the first of its kind in Malaysia. "Traditionally, ‘aide-de-camp’ refers to aides of high-ranking military officials or of heads of state, but ‘we want to improvise this in Malaysia,’ says Datuk Nik Ismail bin Nik Yusoff, chairman of Chico Force and former deputy commissioner of police.

While aide-de-camp function in political and military structures, EADCs are their counterparts in the corporate world. “They provide both protection services and serve as a personal assistant to a high-ranking individual, who may be CEOs, managing directors or presidents of companies,” explains the chairman.

Like a trusted super-assistant, the EADC gets involved in business affairs with duties such as organising and attending business meetings, and preparing business trip itineraries. At the same time, he or she is equipped with the know-how to oversee the personal wellbeing and security of the person they are assigned to (their ‘principal’).

For young graduates aspiring to accelerate their trajectory in the business world, the position of EADC could provide the ideal starting point: access to strong business networks and exposure to the inner workings of industries. There is also an attractive remuneration package.

Chico Force CEO Datuk Seri Junji Khoo explains that young graduates who have more than 20 years of experience in broadcasting and training. "After undergoing the intensive training that we have planned for new EADCs, we expect them to be capable of critical thinking and protecting the client. “Some of the qualities we’re looking to imbue into our EADCs would include responsibility, crisis management and analytical thinking,” he explains.

MODULE: Soft skills: etiquette, protocol
TRAINER: Raymond Goh, chief executive, Asia CSR Agency, TV news anchor

As the EADC role involves interaction with a wide range of people, soft skill training is included. “The training will cover etiquette and protocol, communication, spatial thinking and visualisation,” says Raymond Goh.

MODULE: Firearm handling and safety, tactical firearms training
TRAINER: Foo Kah Hin, chief instructor, Mas Shooting Club

With more than 30 years experience with firearms and 15 years experience as a firearms instructor, Foo Kah Hin leads the firearms module of the EADC training programme. “Firearms training is all about safety,” he explains. According to Foo, there are three parts to learning proper gun handling techniques: safety, accuracy and speed.

“The EADC must also learn to control stress, because being too stressed can be detrimental to his or her performance,” explains Foo, who also conducts courses for the police, the military, shooting associations and government industries.

MODULE: Defensive driving
TRAINER: Sean Khoo, chief instructor, Drive Wise Sdn Bhd

As travelling with the assigned principal is part of the EADC’s role, defensive driving skills are essential. “The essence of defensive driving is safety. We teach people how not to get involved in any untoward incidents,” says Sean Khoo.

MODULE: Close combat skills, armed and unarmed
TRAINER: Sonny Luke Chuan Sun, chief instructor, Yoshinkan Aikido Malaysia

According to Sunny Luke, a sixth dan instructor with a level one Yoshinkan aikido instructor certification, aikido harnesses the force of the opponent and redirects it to render it harmless.

“Aikido is a style of martial art that is defensive. When someone attacks us, we neutralise the attack and redirect it to the opponent,” says Sunny Luke.

"Unlike karate and taekwondo, aikido is defensive. When someone attacks us, we neutralise the situation and that’s the end of the story," he explains.

"This makes it ideal for smaller sized people if they go against who are physically stronger," says Luke.

FAQS

1. WHAT IS AN EADC?
An EADC is a personal aide to a top business leader who is responsible for the safety and facilitation of the leader’s daily routine.

2. CAN BOTH MALES AND FEMALES APPLY?
Both male and female applicants are welcomed, as male EADCs will be assigned to male principals, and vice versa for females.

3. WHAT TYPE OF PEOPLE ARE THEY LOOKING FOR?
- Degree holders from any discipline with active involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- Individuals who have a strong passion for entrepreneurship and are business-savvy.
- Individuals with strong communication, interpersonal and written skills.
- Creative problem-solvers, who perform well in a demanding environment.

4. HOW FIT DO YOU NEED TO BE?
Applicants will preferably have a good level of fitness. It will be an advantage if they possess martial arts skills. However, physical and soft skill training will be provided.
TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY

ConocoPhillips is the world’s largest independent E&P company based on production and proved reserves. Headquartered in Houston, Texas, ConocoPhillips had operations and activities in 30 countries. $57 billion in annual revenue, $18 billion of total assets, and approximately 17,100 employees as of March 31, 2013. Production from continuing operations averaged 1.55 MBOPD for the three months ended March 31, 2013, and proved reserves were $6.8 billion BOE as of Dec. 31, 2012.

Employees across the globe focus on fulfilling our core SPIRIT Values of safety, people, integrity, responsibility, innovation and teamwork. And we apply the characteristics that define leadership excellence in how we engage each other, collaborate with our teams, and drive the business.

In line with its growth and expansion in Malaysia, ConocoPhillips is seeking a highly qualified professional to join its team as:

PROJECT CONTROLS LEADER

The Job:
- Key contributor to long range plans, project execution & controls plans, field development plans and contract strategy development.
- Develop project controls framework and implementation strategy to support the needs of the Malaysia BU.
- Prepare project controls policies, standards, procedures and working processes for the Malaysia BU in alignment with ConocoPhillips Corporate Project Management System (CPMS) including integrated planning, cost estimating, budgeting, change management, risk management, benchmarking, cost/schedule forecasting, schedule reporting, monitoring, and audits.
- Coordinate project organization and contingency planning processes (creation of risk register and risk management process for Malaysia BU).
- Manage oversight of the Foreman/Supervisor team.
- Identify and assess the work content and operating issues related to all project controls activities.
- Responsible for internal and external project reports preparation.
- Responsible for development of early warning systems and monitoring risks and threats to project success.
- Manage cost estimating/forecasting activities including periodic project re-estimates and input to WIP/AC; chair monthly cost trend/change management meetings.
- Manage planning and scheduling activities including development of summary and detailed project schedules, progress and performance monitoring, interface reports, schedule deviations, contingency planning and workaround solutions; chair monthly integrated schedule management meetings.
- Act as project controls liaison on audits carried out by JV co-venturers and in-country regulatory authorities, as assigned.

Requirements:
- Bachelor’s degree in Science or Engineering. Construction Management or equivalent degree is preferred.
- 8+ years of major International project experience, especially offshore projects.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills in Malay and English.
- Knowledgeable in use of Primavera P6 and maintenance project management schedules.
- Experience in development of enterprise level project controls plans.
- Experience in preparation of integrated work plans and project documentation.
- Experience in the management of preparation of cost estimates and project schedules.
- Strong ability to integrate projects into existing project management systems.
- Excellent organizational, leadership and interpersonal skills.
- Willingness to travel at least 10-15 times per year for extended periods of time.
- Ability to work effectively as part of an integrated team of experts and to work independently.

ECONOMIST

The Job:
- Monitor and analyze the Malaysian economy and share findings in timely fashion with the leadership team.
- Assist senior leadership with preparedness for and implementation of key economic assessments.
- Participate in regular meetings with key stakeholders in the Malaysian and global economy.
- Assist in the preparation of reports and briefings for senior leadership.
- Review and provide analysis of relevant economic data.
- Collaborate with other key stakeholders across the business.

Requirements:
- MBA in Business Administration, Economics, or Finance.
- 3+ years experience in economics and/or government.
- Experience in recognizing and analyzing trends in the Malaysian and global economies.
- Strong ability to develop and present complex ideas in a clear and concise manner.
- Experience in using Microsoft Office products to develop reports and presentations.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Ability to manage multiple tasks and projects simultaneously.
- Ability to work effectively as part of a team.
- Ability to work effectively under pressure and within tight deadlines.

PROCUREMENT ASSISTANT

The Job:
- Support the Procurement Function in the acquisition of goods and services.
- Provide administrative support for various project activities.
- Provide organizational support for various project initiatives.
- Support the implementation of procurement policies and procedures.
- Assist with the preparation of tender documents (e.g. Request for Proposal and Request for Quotation).
- Support the review and evaluation of tender responses.
- Assist with the preparation of contract documents.
- Assist in the coordination of project activities.
- Provide support to the procurement team as required.

Requirements:
- Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration, Economics, or Finance.
- 2+ years of experience in procurement.
- Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- Ability to work independently and as part of a team.
- Attention to detail.
- Ability to work effectively under pressure and within tight deadlines.

ALL POSITIONS ARE BASED IN KUALA LUMPUR.

Interested candidates are invited to submit their application before April 12, 2014 to:
HRMalaysia@conocophillips.com

Only shortlisted candidates will be notified.

ConocoPhillips is an equal opportunity employer.
DEFINITIVELY MALAYSIAN

AmBank Group creates platform for inspiring Malaysian success stories

By Lily Cheah
lily.cheah@leaderonomics.com

On Oct 31, 2013, AmBank Group launched an initiative called Malaysia’s Résumé, a website that showcases Malaysians and their success stories. The website, malaysiaresume.com, has recorded more than 110,000 visitors to date and currently houses in excess of 500 success stories of Malaysian individuals. Think of it as a one-stop shop for profiles of successful Malaysians in the categories of the Arts, Business, Community, Entertainment, Environment, Fashion & Style, Sports and Technology.

From singer-songwriter Yunalis Zarai (better known as Yuna) to the likes of fashion designer Zang Toi, Culture Run founder Su Zen, the Genius Olympiad 2012 bronze medalist Sri Abirveys, artist Hong Yi and Muhammad Zhariff Affandi, who overcame his disabilities to be awarded 2011 Youth of the Year Award in the 2013 Perdana Youth Awards, the website houses stories of Malaysians from all walks of life.

“This is an important part of AmBank Group’s repositioning as one of Malaysia’s modern financial solution partners, a partner that understands Malaysian society and can connect with our customers,” says Tan Sri Azman Hashim, Chairman, AmBank Group. “The Group, which prides itself in being a people-centric organisation, believes in duly acknowledging individuals and celebrating successes. This depository is a reflection of that same commitment to their employees. To AmBank Group, Malaysia’s Résumé is but one example of its commitment to appreciate deserving individuals, a practice that also includes employees who are central to the success of the Group.

Praises for unsung Malaysian heroes

All Malaysians are invited to contribute stories to this growing repository, and AmBank Group stresses that it isn’t only for well-known Malaysians.

“Users can contribute articles about people they consider successful contributors to Malaysia,” says Ashok Ramamurthy, Group Managing Director, AmBank Group. “Malaysia’s Résumé somehow represents the success and achievements of Malaysians that the country can be proud of. We hope that through this platform, we’re creating an opportunity for those stories to be shared and heard.”

For AmBank Group, Malaysia’s Résumé represents the success and achievements of Malaysians that the country can be proud of. “We hope that Malaysia’s Résumé will be the one portal for everyone, Malaysian or otherwise, to visit when they need a good Malaysian story,” says Ashok.

Showcasing people and their achievements on malaysiaresume.com celebrates their success and their achievements, which is in line with AmBank Group’s mission of “Connecting, Growing, Outperforming”.

“It views this initiative as an opportunity to highlight valuable contributions that individuals have made to the nation that may otherwise go unnoticed. As for what the Group defines as ‘success’, it recognises that success has many measures, hence the creation of multiple categories. "As long as someone has created value that helps the country and inspires their fellow Malaysians, they should be featured on Malaysia’s Résumé," says Ashok.

“We want to put emphasis on the fact that it doesn’t take a successful entrepreneur or a celebrity to be considered as an inspiring individual on Malaysia’s Résumé. "Inspiring stories are all around us if we choose to see and recognise it. We hope that through this platform, we’re creating opportunity for those stories to be shared and heard."

For Malaysia’s Résumé somehow represents the success and achievements of Malaysians that the country can be proud of. “We hope that Malaysia’s Résumé will be the one portal for everyone, Malaysian or otherwise, to visit when they need a good Malaysian story," says Ashok.

By Malaysians, of Malaysians, for Malaysians

www.malaysiaresume.com hosts a wide array of stories of inspirational Malaysians. Two AmBank Group customers share their thoughts on the site:

Amir Faiz, 31

“I think www.malaysiaresume.com is a great platform for aspiring young Malaysians. They can go through the website and learn about other Malaysians who are successful in what they do. “These success stories are a source of inspiration and a unique hub that Malaysians can be proud of.”

Melissa Yeoh, 26

“Malaysia’s Résumé somehow attracts me to find out more about Malaysian success stories. “I find it inspiring and I’m proud that there is such a platform to publish the great stories of these talented individuals. “It is a source of encouragement to Malaysians who aspire to be successful, as well as those who are already successful. It reminds us that there is a lot to be proud of.”

Visit malaysiaresume.com
Register to create an account
Submit content in the form of written articles, photographs or videos.
All content will be screened before publication.
Contributions are open to all with a good Malaysian story.

For career opportunities with AmBank Group, please visit ambankgroup.com/amcareer
7 IMPORTANT MISTAKES TO MAKE IN YOUR CAREER

1. **The Unknown**

In fact, here are seven important mistakes you can make in the business world:...
MENTORING THOSE WHO HAVE FAILED
HOW LEADERS CAN HELP OTHERS BOUNCE BACK FROM DOWNFALL

THE JOURNEY TO CHANGE BEGINS WITH SELF-AWARENESS. A GOOD MENTOR SHOULD BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THEIR MENTEES’S BLIND SPOTS, ONCE IDENTIFIED, AUTHENTIC DIALOGUES NEED TO TAKE PLACE.

By ERIC LAU
mystarjob.com/leaderonomics.com

E very leader by default is a mentor. Whether we realise it or not, leaders are always mentoring, either through their words or through their actions. Some do it more directly while others more indirectly. Mentoring can be defined as a relational experience where one individual intentionally helps and guides another individual towards their development.

While leaders mentor others to help them become better, one of the more challenging situations is to mentor those who have experienced failure or non-performance. Let’s face it. Everyone fails. We are imperfect people living in an imperfect world. What is important is how we respond to failure.

In most work environments, failure is really inevitable. Remember the time you had that disastrous presentation in front of the management team? Or the time you made a mistake in the sales proposal resulting in the loss of a major account? What about the time you said the wrong thing at the wrong time and got yourself into trouble?

It is not a matter of “if” we will fail, but rather, “when” we will fail. The more critical issue is how people respond to failure. Our response to failure sets us on a trajectory. Our subordinates can either learn from their failures and use them to springboard to the next level of success or ignore the negative lessons failure can teach and spiral down to a life of foolishness.

Hence, it is imperative that every leader knows how to effectively mentor their people during and after their failures.

CAUSES OF FAILURE AND NON-PERFORMANCE

When mentoring others in their failures, we need to firstly identify the cause for the failures. This is critical so that we can approach the mentoring in a correct manner in order to bring about development. There are generally four causes of failures that may require different mentoring responses.

The first cause of failure can be due to them not knowing what exactly needs to be done, hence they’re “groping in the dark”, resulting in non-performance.

In this situation, the mentor needs to focus on his or her mentoring efforts in guiding the mentee towards the specifics of what is expected from them.

Take time to communicate specifically your performance expectations. To the best of your ability, leave out any form of ambiguity in what you expect them to do. Many leaders make the common mistake of assuming that their subordinates know exactly what needs to be done.

The second cause of failure could be because people may not actually know how to get things done.

Again, many leaders wrongly assume that the folks that they have hired know how to get things done according to their expected outcomes.

In such scenarios, the primary responsibility of the mentor is to provide training. Training can be done by the mentor himself or herself or can be out-sourced externally to training sessions according to the area of competency that needs to be developed.

Another cause of workplace failure is due to their lack of appreciation of why something needs to be done.

Because of this, they don’t fully dedicate themselves to the task at hand and “drop the ball” along the way. They usually end up doing something blindly without recognising how important their contribution is towards a bigger goal. In such situations, mentors need to take time to explain the “why” of what they were required to do.

For example, instead of just giving instructions to an employee to go through a process, the mentor should explain the reasons behind it and how it helps the organisation.

A skilled mentor knows how to lift up the mentee’s spirits, by providing hope and encouragement. The journey of change begins with self-awareness. A good mentor should be able to identify their mentee’s blind spots, once identified, authentic dialogues need to take place.

In such scenarios, the mentor’s role is to focus on motivating the employee to take responsibility for what is required of them. Open discussions need to take place to address attitude issues with the intention of helping them to change.

KEY MENTORING PRINCIPLES

In mentoring those who have failed, mentors need to deliberately provide leadership to enable change to take place.

Here are some key principles every mentor needs to take heed of:

1. DEVELOP A MEANINGFUL RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE

Those who have failed do not need a “disciplinarian headmaster” to threaten them with punishment or a “nagging mother” to keep breathing down their necks to keep them in tact.

A good mentor knows how to show empathy and provide encouragement. While they are clearly the one in authority, they should never play the “I am your boss, so listen to me” card.

Good mentors focus on building good meaningful relationship with their mentees. The logic is simple but profound: the stronger your rapport with your mentee, the more influence you will have on them to coach them back to success.

2. ENCOURAGE THEIR HEARTS BY PROVIDING HOPE

Hope is a powerful element in people’s lives. Hope is simply having a confident expectation that things are going to get better. When hope is absent, confidence is eroded and people become “lifeless” in their approach to everything.

When our people experience failure, we need to quickly and patiently instil hope in them. Don’t beat them up. They already know what they have done wrong and feel bad about it.

A skilled mentor knows how to lift up their hearts by speaking words of comfort and hope. Encourage them to gain a clear perspective that failure is common and it is not as detrimental as they perceive it to be.

3. SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Very often those who have experienced failure need to be corrected as well. While they may realise certain weaknesses that they may have, they will also have blind spots in terms of character or competency flaws that need to be revealed to them.

The journey of change begins with self-awareness. A good mentor should be able to identify their mentee’s blind spots. Once identified, authentic dialogues need to take place.

The mentoring conversations need to shift from merely bringing words of encouragement and comfort to revealing what may be painful truths to help the mentee see their flaws so that they can make adjustments.

These conversations will only become successful if the mentee recognises that the mentor is not judging nor condemning them but is lovingly guiding and nurturing them towards success.

Leaders are in the business of changing lives. Leadership is a privilege because leaders literally have the capacity to influence others by the way they mentor others, particularly those who have experience some form of failure.

Our people are looking to us to provide leadership and to empower them. So, rise up leaders. You can make a difference!

Eric Lau is a strategic associate of Leaderonomics. He is a strategic leader with a relentless belief in people and is passionate to help them rise to their full potential. To engage him for your organisation, email people@leaderonomics.com
THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY

INSIGHTS FROM DARING GREATLY: HOW THE COURAGE TO BE VULNERABLE TRANSFORMS THE WAY WE LIVE, LOVE, PARENT, AND LEAD

By IMRAN HASHIM

imran.hashim@leaderonomics.com

W

ould you be comfortable spending the entire day at work just reading a book? Honestly, when was the last time you saw anyone in the office spending an entire day just reading a book?

And if you were in that position, would you feel any tinge of uneasiness since you might think others might perceive you as slacking off? You might have a clue how it feels. Vulnerable. Almost shameful.

That was precisely what I felt as I spent an entire day at the office common area reading Daring Greatly. How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead by Brené Brown. But I was reading it with an additional purpose, that is, in order to write this article. Rather fittingly, I discovered how exposed it felt not to be in front of my laptop, but instead snuggled up to cozy sofa and oversized pillows all to myself (We have a rather next-gen workplace).

In a normal office setting, that would be unimaginable and downright unproductive. And a sure fire way for disciplinary action. But reading about vulnerability gave me the surprising courage to do it.

The gist of the book us that shame can only truly dissipate by being allowing yourself to be vulnerable. Slightly ironic, but it helps that there’s a happy ending to the premise: Vulnerability leads to happiness.

Here are some insights from the book:

1. BEWARE OF NEVER ENOUGH

“We afraid that our truth isn’t enough—that what we have to offer isn’t enough without the bells and whistles, without editing, and impressing.”

Observe your organisation. Chances are you can identify the ever achievers simply by their rigor and tenacity in getting things done. You might even be one yourself. It’s an elite status that can possibly harbour benefits. People generally look for you because you’re capable.

Be wary of the potential side effects. Though. Our desire to achieve more, often at all cost, can be a ticking bomb. We can never feel enough, and that is why we always keep going.

The same doggedness is a one way ticket to high pressure, rapid burnout that will eventually cause health complications and deteriorating quality of life.

Whether you realise it or not, there is a shift in the social climate, which Brown calls a culture of scarcity. It is a pervasive sense that enough is never enough.

Things like entertainment, mealtime shape and influence our perception of what is popular. Picture perfect celebrities make “normal” people feel inferior.

It is unfortunate that it leads us to compare our personal values with people who are not even remotely similar to us. Our fear of not being enough is what makes us model after people who we perceive as superior. We lose sense of ourselves, and it can be harmful to people around us. As a leader, a team leader, or a parent, we need to be okay when we fall short.

2. WHOLEHEARTED LIVING

Compassion, connection, and courage. These things are the epitome of wholehearted living as advocated by Brown. In essence, life can be better lived when you learn to manage vulnerability, a catalyst for courage and connection.

To achieve this, there are certain aspects in life that we need to work on:

Let go of what people think.
Let go of perfectionism.
Let go of nailing and powerlessness.
Let go of scarcity and fear of the dark.
Let go of the need for certainty.
Let go of comparison.
Let go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-worth.
Let go of anxiety as a life-style.
Let go of self-doubt and “supposed to.”
Let go of being cool and “always in control.”

Notice that all these address our innate human needs. This resonates even more if you put yourself as a parent raising children.

While there is the desire to provide and ensure your child will be or isn’t deprived in some way, the best tendency to shape the future of your child according to your own defined image can be less than helpful.

Similar inclination might occur at the workplace, in a personal relationship, or even life in general. The key to wholehearted living is to live authentically, not as a projection or expectation of others.

Self-worth and “wholehearted” living comes from accepting we need to have courage, compassion with ourselves and other people, and connection.

3. UNCOVERING VULNERABILITY SHIELDS

Growing up, we gradually learned to shield ourselves from being exposed, being vulnerable, projecting an armour of emotional guards. We think that it protects us from being hurt or disappointed. The fear of being shieldsed seems to justify this, but unfortunately it works only one way.

Brown asserts that there is a paradox in this: we do our best to hide our shame, but it is the very first thing we look for in others.

Our shields are a mere defence mechanism or expectation of others. Let go of anxiety, shame, guilt, comparison, powerlessness.

Vulnerability is a shift in the social climate which Brown deems as the world’s problem. She believes that the solution is to practise gratitude, to acknowledge and to celebrate the good things as they happen, and to allow the moment and silence the sceptics within.

Sitting for perfectionism all the time is another shield we put on. Not only can it be self-destructive, an addiction to it can put a considerable strain on everyone.

There is no shame in accepting that things may not turn out picture perfect all the time. Yes, public perception might paint you in a different light but you might want to take a pause and agree when it’s enough.

Previous experience of shame and anxiety can also lead us to block or disconnect our emotions. It is another form of shield, one that is damaging to our relationships as we lose touch of real emotions.

This type of numbing removes our ability to empathise with discomfort and deal with thoughts and behaviours. As humans, we need to feel our feelings.

In all honesty, the book dives deeper than what is explored in this article. The research on vulnerability and shame is difficult, and Brown has done a terrific service to anyone and everyone looking to face their inner demons, or “gremlins” as she put.

Instead of silence, “shame resilience” is important to fully engage in life, relationships, and enthusiasm for our work.

Daring Greatly is a timely reminder of the need to talk about shame. Above all, it offers valuable insights on how we deal with shame in society, relationships, families and at work.

It is well researched and gives guidelines for how we can manage shame and develop shame resilience by identifying the difference between shame and guilt, and finding ways to realise when we are shaming ourselves or others, or when others are shaming us.

Imran Hashim is a talent acceleration manager at Leaderonomics. In the course of writing this piece, he experienced great vulnerability, but for good measure. Luckily, the advice in the books helped him to open up and be comfortable with it. To learn more about Leaderonomics, contact people@leaderonomics.com.

Daring Greatly by Brené Brown is distributed by Penguin Books Malaysia and is available in all leading bookstores.

KUALA LUMPUR CONVENTION CENTRE RISING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

By STEPHANIE HO

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KUALA LUMPUR Convention Centre (the Centre) which opened its doors in June 2005 is a nine-year-old establishment with a strong team of 320 employees. Striving to be an “Employer of Choice”, it is constantly pushing barriers with various employee initiatives and platforms.

These include an open-door communication policy, internal focus groups aiming to refine practiced policies and procedures, and a culture of recognition and performance incentives deeply ingrained in the organisational fabric. Perhaps due to all these initiatives, the organisation enjoys an employee turnover rate of less than 2% annually.

The Centre encourages training and development so employees can grow both professionally and personally. Last November, it launched its Talent Acceleration Programme (TAP), an 18-month fast-track programme for high potentials individuals at the managerial, assistant managerial and senior executive level.

The talent acceleration programme for the Centre has been specially crafted with the objective of accelerating the growth of high potentials in line with the leadership pipeline. The first cohort consists of 25 team members across various functions within the organisation.

The programme places priority on developing people leadership skills, with elements of strategy and business acumen also infused. It aims to develop the readiness and leadership capacity of upcoming centre leaders.

Though only four months into the programme, general manager Datuk Peter Brokenshire already observes increased energy levels in the participants, and an enhanced ability to grasp opportunities at the workplace.

“The overall, the TAP participants have embraced the programme enthusiastically, and management has high hopes for them and expects them to succeed and move towards greater heights,” he says.

“I truly believe that our team is our most valuable asset. Without them, our achievements would not have been possible. Moving forward, they must continue to deliver value to our clients through innovative product offerings and world-class service, an approach that has kept them at the forefront. Our team is committed and continues to give them that competitive edge,” says Brokenshire.

By IMRAN HASHIM

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mystarjob.com, Saturday 29 March 2014
WHAT DOES SUCCESS MEAN TO YOU?

By EVA CHRISTODOULO

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Do you define success with a list of objective rewards, it may not be realistically attainable, or nearly satisfying for that matter. DEFINING SUCCESS FOR YOURSELF. Success is generally defined as having a great job, material possessions, and a good family. This idea of success, however, is a social construction—an image sketched due to the perceptions and expectations others have for us, and much of it relates to what we do for a living, or, our career (and what material benefits we get from it—i.e. compensation). Philosopher Alain de Botton refers to this as job snobbery—we live in a society where people judge us on the basis of what we do for a living—hence the dreaded question “What do you do?” at dinner parties or any social occasions for that matter.

And because society in general is so obsessed with what we do, that is why we care so much about our careers, and go through so much career-related anxiety, argues de Botton. He goes on to say that expectations are set so high, by others as well as ourselves, which forces us to have many high hopes of our career—and therefore envy (towards others, more successful individuals), and anxiety set in.

De Botton explains that envy is linked to the spirit of equality that is so embedded and expected in today’s societies (at least in the West). We expect that everyone has equal opportunities, and we believe in a system of meritocracy that should, in theory, allow everyone “worthy” to become “successful”. But while we believe that “worthy” individuals—the ones that are smart, talented and of course work hard deserve to be at the top of the success ladder, we also believe that the “unworthy ones” (the lazy, less smart, less talented) deserve to be at the bottom.

That is what makes failure so much more crushing, he explains. It is our belief that failure, as well as success, come to those who somehow deserve it. Hence, our fear of failure and of making mistakes.

De Botton takes this example. In the middle ages, people at the bottom of the success ladder, if there is such a thing, would be seen as “unfortunate”. In today’s world, the same people are seen as “losers” due to our belief in this meritocratic system. This has led to the fear of failure, or fearing the judgement and ridicule that would evade from others.

De Botton concludes that his theory of success is that you simply cannot be successful in everything. Any vision of success, he argues, has to admit where the element of loss is. And that is why it is all the more important to find out what our own idea of success is, and own that.

Since the people around us shape us so much, we should be able to distance ourselves from their ideas of success, and see what we feel is success for ourselves.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS. Richard St John, marketer and success analyst, explains that success is an ongoing journey, in the shape of a circle. It is not a one-way street. We cannot think that once success is attained, it will be present from then on forever. Once you get there, you cannot stop trying. He explains that there are certain steps that we need to take in order to reach success, and maintain that state of success. These include passion; if you do something that you love, the money and the success will come from it.

Another is work; you need to work hard to ensure you leave nothing to luck, but at the same time, since you love what you are doing, you should have fun doing it. Next on John’s list comes focus, being focused on your end goal and where you want to get will ensure you keep moving towards it.

Then is the push. You need to keep pushing yourself, and surround yourself with people that are willing to push you towards your targets as well. Ideas are a crucial element. And these do not necessarily need to be ground-breaking. Sometimes the simplest of observations can lead to the most brilliant of ideas about doing something phenomenally useful. Improvement is another key element that leads to success. It involves observation, and continuous practice and tweaking.

Another step is serving—giving something of value to others, something that people are willing to pay for.

But as remaining successful requires you to operate in a circle, once you take these steps and attain the success you always wanted, you need to go back and start all over again, revisiting these steps and working even harder on each of them.

WHAT IS HOLDING YOU BACK

I recently revisited a Ted talk by Larry Smith, professor of Economics from the University of Waterloo. His talk was about why you will fail to have a great career. It’s a pessimistic way of approaching the topic, but what he had to say was very powerful. The simple reason you will fail is that you are scared of failure.

He explains that we all tend to make a lot of excuses about not having the dream career we want. We tend to think that having a great career needs a lot of luck, that only geniuses have the ability to attain this “luxury” that we are “normal” human beings that would rather fit into an ordinary job than follow a “utopian” dream, and that if we work really hard we’ll end up having a great career anyway, without risking too much.

With all these excuses, we end up putting our dreams on the side and following a “safer” option, ending up maybe, hopefully, in a good job, but not having the great career we always wanted for ourselves.

Smith’s remedy is look very hard for your passion. And passion does not equate to an interest. You might not find 20 different interests before you find your true passion, then, you need to focus on that and follow your dream.

When you settle for something that is not really your passion but you are merely interesting, you are missing out an opportunity for something great.

You need to dare to follow your dream, you need to dare to do something you are passionate about, and put your fear of failure aside, rather than doing that to your dreams instead. That is when mistakes are actually worth making—which because at least you can say that you tried.

So what does success mean to you? What does you perceive as a successful, wholesome, all-encompassing life? Define it for yourself, be realistic with what you can achieve, but never be scared to fail or make mistakes, if that is the way to move closer to your state of success.
STOP MAKING THESE MISTAKES!

I’m sure all of us have experienced bottling up our feelings inside especially when we feel hurt or angry. We usually say statements like “I’m fine” or “It’s alright” to cover up how we really feel. Well, that’s a big mistake. Stop doing that! Share your feelings or even your ambitions in life. Don’t be afraid to dream big.

According to Tara Wagner, an organic life coach, “It – whatever it is for you – does matter. It matters that you have a dream to start a business. It matters that you want more than what everyone else is settling for. It matters that you are upset or unsettled or craving expansion in your life. When someone says something nasty to you, be bold in saying that you are absolutely not fine with it. You need to make a stand and speak up about how you really feel. Start letting it out before you explode one day.

As we grow, more responsibilities are piled on us. For instance, having a car or getting a job in the future. Have you ever felt like you want to go back in time to your childhood?

We have lost that joy that was once there. We have to make space for more growth! Growth requires time and energy so make that effort to grow, and you can inspire others with what you have learnt.

According to Tara Wagner, growth requires space – actual physical space, as well as space in your schedule. We tend to limit ourselves from really developing due to fear, too many responsibilities or perceiving certain things as just impossible.

Stop being comfortable with where you are now. This is one mistake we always make in life.

Be willing to learn new skills or knowledge like taking up an art class, reading more non-fiction books or start watching the National Geographic channel.

There is always more to discover and the new information could be useful for you one day.

We have not fully lived yet so don’t stop growing! Growth requires time and energy so make that effort to grow, and you can inspire others with what you have learnt.

We naturally feel guilty after making a mistake especially when we know it is our fault. We feel guilty when we have lied or hurt someone with what we have said or did. We feel guilty when we have lied or hurt someone with what we have said or did.

We feel guilty after making a mistake. Fear is such a powerful one that we do not want to make in the future. We fear many things, from our future, our success, to even our past at times. Such fear will eventually restrict us and therefore are unavoidable.

Fear is so powerful that we can easily succumb to it.

Don’t let it conquer you. Only you have the power to control it.

Move on from your mistakes. Guilt will have no hold on you if you let go and move forward. Mistakes are a part of life and therefore are unavoidable. However, if we put our mind to it, we can overcome them and learn from them.

Stop making these mistakes and make the right decisions from now on. Decisions determine your journey in life so step out of your comfort zone and do something to make sure you are on the right track in life.

DIODE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP

Wondering what to do during the upcoming June school holidays? Want to do something fun and productive and explore how to lead like a superhero? Discover your potential in DIODE Camp! DIODE Camp is designed to help youth aged 14-16 build the foundations of leadership and allows youth to explore their skills and talents in a safe environment through experiential learning sessions.

Sign up for the DIODE Youth Leadership Camp at leaderonomics.com/diodecamps/ or e-mail us at diode@leaderonomics.com to find out more! Hurry! Early bird discounts ends on 2 April.

DATE : 2 – 7 June, 2014
VENUE: Starfresh AgroPark, Seremban
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.

**TOPIC OF THE WEEK**

**HR TALK**

**“SOMEONE WHO DOES WELL IN AN INTERVIEW MAY NOT NECESSARILY BE THE BEST PERSON FOR A ROLE. WHAT ARE THE KEY THINGS YOU LOOK FOR WHEN YOU’RE INTERVIEWING SOMEONE FOR A JOB?”**

**DATIN BADRUNISSA ABDUL HANAN**

Group chief talent officer

Axia Bhd

There are a few dimensions that should be considered when interviewing someone for a job. These would be different for different roles and levels of management. In general, three aspects are key:

- Functional or technical competence.
- Leadership competencies, appropriate to the level of management.
- Cultural fit.

And if you are hiring a person for a longer-term career in the organisation, as opposed to only filling a job or project for a limited time, then a fourth aspect needs to be checked out too, which is a prediction for a successful career progression in the organisation.

The most used term for this would be potential or headroom. Unfortunately, a job interview, no matter how well it is done, does not provide a complete view of a candidate. This is because when someone answers questions thrown at them, it is very human to put up filters so that you tell only what you think the other person wants to hear.

An expert interviewer will be able to probe for evidence to validate the answers but it is still quite tricky as the setting is one of “selling one’s self to the interviewers” and not do anything to help validate what the interviewee says.

Also, some organisations run assessment centres where candidates are expected to carry out certain tasks in a controlled setting and behaviours observed in the process.

Another way to validate further is to do referral checks with previous managers to understand further the candidate’s “capability in action.”

In my opinion, cultural fit is not to be underestimated. An organisation is almost like a living organism — it will reject a foreign object. Hence, the ability to suit or someone is able to fit into the organisation’s culture, and embrace it, would be a crucial element in the selection process.

Sometimes when I ask people how they did in interviews they say “It went well,” only to learn later on that they did not get the job. This is obviously disappointing, but at the end of the day, with many candidates applying for the job, it is important to be prepared and to understand what recruiters are looking for when they meet candidates. This, however, is no guarantee to secure the job, but it will help individual candidates understand how to enhance their chances of success.

**CLAUDIA CADENA**

Director, strategic human capital management

President & group CEO’s office

SapuraKencana

The following are the three most important things I look for when I interview a candidate.

**1. EXPERIENCE VS POTENTIAL**

The curriculum vitae (CV) itself will give a good indication of the skills and experience that a candidate has, and that in itself is probably the reason why that individual was shortlisted to attend the interview.

However, once the individual is in that interview, the CV is nothing more than a reference guide. During the interview, the candidate needs to be able to clearly articulate what he/she has actually done, what have been the tangible contributions/outcomes achieved and what learnings have come out of what he/she has undertaken in the past.

This is just one part of the equation. The other part, which is a bit more complex and complicated to ascertain is the potential for growth.

Hiring in is most cases not just a matter of finding someone to fill up a current need.

We are managing careers, therefore it is important to try to understand how far the individual wants to go, whether he/she has what it takes to progress, and if the organisation has the ability to offer those desired opportunities to the candidate.

**2. VALUES AND TRAITS**

Individuals come into organisations with their own value system which will dictate how they behave, interact and inter-relate with colleagues.

Diversity in most cases is critical to business success, but a common set of values is the one single most important common factor that individuals are expected to exhibit and abide by in organisations.

But how can we be sure that the individual shares the organisation’s values? It is not enough that individuals describe themselves as team players, results-oriented, honest and open-minded.

Recruiter need to uncover these traits within the way the candidate describes how he/she interacted with colleagues, resolved a problem, participated in a working team, managed a project or achieved results.

I don’t want to hear candidates giving theoretical answers of how they will manage a problem, or how they will react to a situation if faced with it, or how they will behave if they were faced with a challenge. I want to hear how they have done it in the past.

By understanding what they did in the past, will enable me to ascertain if they displayed the type of values and behaviours that the organisation values and expects its people to display, and will be a positive indicator of the individual’s ability and likelihood of displaying those traits in the future.

**3. PERFECTION VS IMPERFECTION**

We all have our strengths and areas for improvement. However, many candidates I meet are speechless when I ask them to describe their areas for improvement or their weaknesses. There have been times when candidates have said to me they don’t think they have anything they should improve on.

This is a strong warning signal that the candidate does not know himself/herself well or is not aware of relevant developmental needs. We are not looking for supermen/superwomen.

We are always looking for the best fit, and in most cases there is no 100% fit. We want someone who can do the job, who can be a contributing member of the working community and someone who is willing to grow, team and improve along his/her career with the organisation.

All of this can be uncovered through an interview. In my opinion, nothing beats the ability of a team of recruiters from human resources and the hiring department to debate the answers given by a candidate to validate perceptions and come to a conclusion of his/her suitability for the role.

**UMASUTEN KARISNAN**

Talent delivery and acquisition manager

Intel Malaysia

We extensively use behavioural interviewing as a starting point to spot the talent that is needed in our organisation. The intent is to assess how the candidate acts or behaves in a specific employment-related situation. And the logic is that how you behaved in the past predicts future performance.

We would have also pre-determined a set of skills that we need in our organisation, and the interview is used to rate the candidate on these skills. The technical competencies may vary by business units but the soft skills are pretty general.

The first and most important aspect that we look at is communication skills. We will ask candidates to explain about himself/herself or a given situation. The intent is to see how the candidates are able to articulate clearly to an audience as they will be required to do a lot of presentations during their work time.

The next skill that we look at is how well the candidate works in a team environment.

With globalisation, most organisations will have a global structure that requires the candidate to work with people from different cultures and backgrounds. This will determine if the candidate is able to prosper in a diverse environment.

The other skill we look for is the ability to use logic or data to solve a problem. In today’s challenging environment, the key to speed in making decisions is based on compelling data.

The candidates will be assessed on how they use data to support and substantiate their ability to drive solutions for a business problem.

Another skill is influencing without authority — the ability to convince stakeholders to make the right decision.

Having said all this, we are also very mindful of the first impression the candidate makes. A firm handshake, being well dressed and how well the candidate knows the company shows that the candidate has done some homework and is eager to join the company.

**BY INVITATION ONLY. EXCLUSIVE HR EXECUTIVE NETWORK, BROUGHT TO YOU BY LEADERONOMICS.**

Welcome to the 1st exclusive HR network, a platform for senior HR leaders to come together to share knowledge and benchmark with peers. Our dream at Leaderonomics is to strengthen the HR community through communal interactions. Our first of the series will be as below:

- **DATE:** 11 April 2014 (Friday)
- **TIME:** 8.30am to 12.00pm
- **VENUE:** Achieve Higher Level of Performance

**Venue:** Journal by Plan B, Publika Solaris, Dutamas, KL.

There will be sharing by consulting experts on sustainable leadership development models and strategies which directly correlate to higher levels of performance.

Please RSVP to Stephanie to confirm attendance by 15th April 2014. Call her at 012 3027623 or email stephanie.ho@leaderonomics.com

**Also next week**

**The kind of leadership needed in this new era**

**New leaders wanted! The changing demand for leadership styles**

**Using microsolutions to transform your life**

**Are you a leader that takes risks?**

**For advertising and advertorials, contact ian.kee@leaderonomics.com - 016 974 7087**

**myStarjob.com, Saturday 29 March 2014**