**GO A LITTLE CRAZY**

“START where the mad is obvious.” That was innovation expert Charles Leadbeater’s opening point at the recent Business of Innovation conference. If we truly want to be innovative as individuals and organisations, then we have to be okay with being mad, he said. In fact, if we follow Leadbeater’s advice, madness is not even what we build up to, but our starting point. Forget “Collect US$200 when you pass Go”. It’s US$200 when you pass “Mad” because that’s the kick-off point for the journey! That’s a mind-blowing thought.

I had some time with Leadbeater after his session, and here are two quick thoughts on innovation that I captured from my time with him:

1. **CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE YOU CAN BE MAD**

   Leadbeater shared the fantastic story about how the ice cream cone came to be so popular in today’s culture. At the 1904 Saint Louis Exposition in Missouri, the story goes that an ice cream vendor ran out of cups. Next to him was a waffle maker, and so he decided to use waffles to hold the ice cream instead! The concept of the edible ice cream cone took off, and here we are today.

   In that environment where a normal resource was lacking (running out of paper cups), an idea that wouldn’t otherwise be obvious (the waffles) became a natural option. Not having something became exactly what was needed to come up with an innovative idea. Pulling that thought along to our workplaces, while lacking resources can be frustrating, it could be the case that not having sufficient funds, or that particular programme or tool, is exactly the right circumstance for us to come up with madly better solutions.

   So embrace madness and scarcity. Apparently, they are good friends in our quest to become more innovative as individuals and as organisations.

   This week’s pages are all about how you can be innovative in the workplace. I hope you enjoy them. Remember, it’s okay to be mad! Have a great week.

   Regards,

   Lily Cheah

   Editor, myStarjob.com career guide

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**THE KEY TO STAYING AHEAD**

*By Zara Jayne*

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IN today’s marketplace, innovation is a much needed commodity. According to an article in *Entrepreneur.com*, “product life cycles are shrinking, global trade is leading to growing competition and the Internet has lowered barriers to entry in many industries.”

You need to know and understand that organisations do not innovate but people do. Let’s take a look at how you can be more innovative in your business today.

1. **EMBRACE THE FEAR OF CHANGE**

   While consumers constantly desire new things, it’s typically quite the opposite for businesses, who often have a fear of implementing new ideas.

   Consider the benefits of possibilities and create a culture where new ideas are encouraged.

2. **OBSERVE YOUR COMPETITORS**

   Look at what competitors are doing. Are their ideas fresh? What is so different about them? What can you learn from them?

   Pay attention to their strengths and see if you are able to apply these ideas to your own business, team or work. Look at their weaknesses and ask yourself how you would be able to do better.

3. **GET IT OUT THERE**

   Once you start to generate innovative ideas, don’t just sit and wait for it to happen. Make it happen! Get it out there and develop those ideas.

   Be bold and share them with peers, superiors and team members to get feedback. Ideas are never perfect to start off with, so keep refining them.

4. **LEARN FROM FAILURES**

   Failures are a part of life. We can’t run away from them. Learn from mistakes because they are much better teachers than successes.

   Failures reveal opportunities to improve and illuminate areas for potential growth.

   So, don’t be afraid to make mistakes because not all innovative ideas are successful at the very first attempt.

5. **RESEARCH AND STUDY YOUR MARKET**

   Go the extra mile to find out what your customers want, whether it’s a product or service. Study the market and analyze new trends. This is where your innovative ideas come in as you may be able to create something better with what you have observed.

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The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.
ORGANISATIONAL INNOVATION: NATURAL OR NURTURED?

By RAJ KUMAR

When you look at a smart individual, you can’t help but wonder if this person was born smart or whether his/her intelligence was nurtured. The same question applies when you look at great innovative companies such as Samsung, 3M, IBM, Volkswagen, AirAsia, GE, Google and many more.

You tend to ask yourself if such organisational innovation happened naturally or was it nurtured? Our research shows that more often than not, such organisational innovation can be nurtured.

The good news is that organisational innovation may look like rocket science, but in reality it is actually not. Companies can apply basic fundamentals to develop an innovative ecosystem and culture, regardless of the size or nature of their businesses.

Here are five essential tips (with examples) to kick-start your organisational innovation ecosystem:

**TIP NO. 1 – ESTABLISH INNOVATIVE HR POLICIES**

A core belief of 3M is that creativity needs freedom. That is why in 1974, the company introduced a programme called “15% time” in which employees are allowed to use a portion of their paid time to chase their own ideas and projects.

Employees can use resources from the company and build their teams in pursuing ideas and insights. Twice a year, six to eight of the most interesting ideas will receive grants that are called “Genesis Grants.” Genesis Grants are about US$30,000 to US$75,000 of seed money for 12 months of research.

This programme has produced many of the company’s best-selling products and has set a precedent for some of the top technology companies like Google and HP.

One of the products that has been created through this programme is the famous sticky note, which was born from an employee who thought that if he applied an adhesive to the back of a piece of paper, he could create the perfect bookmark. He called it the Post-It Note.

Google also has the rule of “20% time” where one day in a week, employees will work on projects that aren’t necessary in their job scope. During this time, engineers can work on something new or if they see something broken, they can spend that time fixing it.

Products like Gmail, Google News, and even the Google shuffle bus that bring people to work at the company headquarters are all products resulting from the “20% time.”

**TIP NO. 2 – TAP INTO COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE**

Crowdsourcing is the new paradigm of knowledge management. Tapping into collective intelligence is a great way to establish an innovative ecosystem.

HCL Technologies, an Indian IT services and software development company, experienced rapid growth since its foundation in 1998. But this rapid growth meant that it became increasingly difficult for senior management to give detailed feedback on hundreds of business unit level plans each year. As a result, the CEO and senior management team decided to turn the company’s existing business planning process into a live online platform, which involved a few hundred top executives.

The new process was launched in 2009 and was called “My Blueprint.” Three hundred HCL managers posted their business plans with an audio presentation and more than 8,000 employees were invited to review and provide input on the individual blueprints.

The inclusive nature of the process helped identify specific ideas for cross-functional collaboration and gave business leaders a chance to obtain detailed and actionable feedback from interested individuals across the company.

**TIP NO. 3 – EMPOWER EMPLOYEES WITH POWERFUL TOOLS AND METHODOLOGY**

The Value Innovation Programme (VIP) at Samsung Electronics is a crucial weapon in the South Korean company’s strategy for ensuring future and sustainable growth. Samsung Electronics has institutionalised the use of innovative management tools in its key business creation process by establishing the VIP in the early years.

The programme brings together engineers, designers, product planners and marketers early in the product development stage. To brainstorm ideas to make gadgets more user-friendly and to trim inefficiencies in the manufacturing and development processes, a systematic thinking process using systematic tools and frameworks:

One of the key successes of the programme was that within five years of entering the mobile phone market in 2003, Samsung has now become the top two players in the industry. Samsung VIP essentially has five steps:

1. **LOCK’EM UP**
   - Daily routines can interrupt the flow of great ideas, so Samsung isolates its development teams in the VIP centre and requires all members to work there for weeks on end, until the project is completed.

2. **GUIDING HAND**
   - Fifty specialists work at the centre. They help to stay focused on the problems at hand, develop various alternative solutions, and reach a consensus when it’s time to make a decision.

3. **MIX’EM UP**
   - Strategic thinking is most successful when a wide variety of perspectives are represented. So Samsung gathers teams of engineers, designers, and planners from across the company to develop new products.

4. **SET A DATE**
   - Deadlines force teams to make tough choices and overcome disagreements that can slow down progress. Each team is given a timeframe for progress and a fixed date for the project’s completion.

5. **DO THE MATH**
   - Team members draw “value curves” on strategy canvases that rank attributes such as sound or picture quality on a scale from one to five. These help the teams to focus and set priorities to differentiate Samsung’s products from its rivals.

**TIP NO. 4 – ALLOCATE BUDGET FOR CREATIVITY**

General Electric (GE) has been one of the most successful companies in the world for more than a century. The company has been admired for its products, culture and series of strong chief executives. One of the main reasons for GE’s success is due to strategic investment in research and development with an emphasis on “repeated, continuous innovation.”

GE has invested a large percentage of sales in R&D for the past 12 years and now has R&D centres in Brazil, China, Germany and India.

Throughout the long history of GE, it has only had 10 CEOs, all of whom shared a vision for growth that emphasised the “quality, speed and execution” of GE’s innovation efforts, which made GE’s product innovation possible.

In the 1990s, GE opened its first R&D lab and developed the strategy of product differentiation.

The company realised the power of research-driven innovation and the importance of being able to deliver such innovation to the market, which led to the creation of the ductile tungsten filament that made the lights more durable. Even during the depression years, the company managed to back its R&D efforts through several ways, such as creating GE Credit Corp in 1932, which also helped finance the sales of the company’s appliances.

Smaller or medium-sized companies should also consider investing at least 10% to 12% of their revenue for applied R&D initiatives because a “budget for creativity and innovation” is crucial in today’s dynamic business environment.

**TIP NO. 5 – CAPITALISE EXISTING TECHNOLOGIES**

One of the quickest and cost-saving ways to establish an innovative ecosystem is to capitalise existing technologies to foster crowdsourcing, collaboration and ideation in an organisation.

Such technologies do not necessarily require heavy investments, thanks to the available and affordable solutions in the market such as Google Plus and IBM Smart Cloud. Google Plus is a virtual meeting place, where colleagues can share ideas, info, and collaborate in real-time or on their own time. The ultimate goal is to bring people together to share knowledge. On Google Plus, associates can use a feature called “hang out” to have a video conference while sharing screens or Google Docs and even chat.

On the other hand, the IBM Smart Cloud provides easy-to-access integrated email, social business capabilities and third party applications. The service is based on cloud computing and is security-rich with an affordable price.

The benefits of the system for companies are deepening customer relationships, increasing effectiveness, optimising workforce, and reducing IT costs and complexity.

In conclusion, the tips above can be applied step by step or progressively according to the size, budget and nature of the business. However, at least one of the tips should be applied by organisations that are keen to pursue an innovative organisational ecosystem.

■ Raj Kumar is vice-president of Global Consulting for UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre which provides strategy and innovation consulting for organisations around world. Follow him on Twitter @rajkumar77
By TERRY SMALL
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TOO much stress, over a long period of time is not good for your brain. Stress raises cortisol levels in your brain which, given enough time, can lead to cell death.

Richard Saunders puts it this way, “Brain cells create ideas. Stress kills brain cells. Stress is not a good idea.” Indeed.

There seems to plenty of stress going around these days. And, you can blame it on the watermelon. At least that’s what Judith thought.

Stress is often the result of an overloaded, hurried brain. This article is a timely reminder that brains benefit from “down time”.

During summer in Vancouver I took some time off. I noticed an immediate uptick in my health, vitality, and happiness. I also thought better and my memory improved.

Here are some suggestions to try:

1. Unplug more often. Try and go tech free for one hour a day.
2. Get out into nature more. Walk, hike, bike. Sit in a park.
3. Deal with “stuff” directly. Focus on finding a solution.
4. Stop complaining. Change it, or change the way you think about it.
5. Breathe deeply. Especially when you notice you’re stressed.
6. Stop complaining. Change it, or change the way you think about it.
7. Spend time with co-workers away from work.
8. Listen to calming music. My favourite is baroque.
10. Drink more water. Dehydrated brains don’t do well.

One more thing:
Did you know that a 20-second hug causes your brain to release oxytocin? (Oxytocin helps your mood by suppressing anxiety and depression.)

Hey, “you can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.”
— Jon Kabat-Zinn

Congratulations on learning something about your brain today. The Brain Bulletin is committed to help to do just that.

Always remember: “You are a genius!” Enjoy your brain.
If you’ve never heard of someone working as an executive aide-de-camp (EADC), that’s because it’s a brand new role introduced by Malaysian security company Chico Force Sdn Bhd. While its name draws inspiration from the more familiar military occupation called “aide-de-camp”, EADC’s function in the world of business, working as super assistants to high-ranking business leaders.

While traditional assistants look after work-related aspects such as planning itineraries and assisting in meetings, EADCs go one step further and also look out for the safety of the client they are assigned to (called “principal”).

As a result, on top of skills usually required of assistants, EADCs are equipped in areas such as close combat and defensive driving, and are trained in close protection in order to better coordinate the principal’s security team. It’s a job that’s not for the faint-hearted, but for those looking for an exciting career, this could be the ideal role.

Here are three things you need to know about being an EADC:

1. **They are trusted assistants who look out for the business interest and the safety of their principal.**

As the role of the EADC is essentially to be an effective right-hand person to a business leader, his/her role encompasses the duties of an executive assistant. Examples of tasks include planning meetings and preparing itineraries on behalf of the principal.

Due to the trust placed in EADCs, they are also tasked with looking out for the personal safety and interests of the principal. This may entail supervising other personal staff such as secretaries, bodyguards and drivers.

Chico Force emphasises the uniqueness of the EADC role. “An EADC isn’t a bodyguard,” explains Niho Khoo, head of the EADC project. “Just observe an EADC and it becomes very obvious. They are dressed in business attire, and they walk with the bosses, not behind them.”

“They are an integral part of the principal’s core team. They fly on the private jet with the boss and accompany them in the meeting rooms. They are brought into the boardroom and get to listen to conversations because they are trusted.”

As all responsibilities of the EADC hinge on his/her relationship with the principal, both are carefully matched with one another according to profiles, and what the company terms, “chemistry.”

Given the breadth of the role, “the most successful EADCs are patient, flexible yet highly disciplined and systematic. They are people of accountability and high integrity, and are individuals who stand out from their peers,” says Niho.

2. **Extensive training is provided to equip EADCs with the skills they need.**

“Training is essential to equip EADCs with the skills necessary to perform their job well,” explains Khoo Nee Keong, director of Nation Preventer and the EADC close protection instructor. The training that EADCs receive include soft skill training in etiquette and protocol, firearm handling and safety, defensive driving and safety, close protection training and any other skills required by the client.

“Training is also customised according to the requirements of the client, for instance, needing a helicopter licence,” he says.

Though the EADC works closely with the principal’s existing personal security team, he explains that it’s still important that they themselves have security-related skills.

“Before the EADC can protect others, he or she must be able to protect themselves. One advantage of this is that the EADC will then also have skills to protect people in their personal sphere, such as their family.”

Due to the nature of the role, full dedication is essential. “EADCs must be committed because they’ll be protecting the lives of others and their own. You have to fully commit before you try. With any other job, you can just give it a go. Not this one,” he says.

3. **It’s a springboard for individuals at the beginning of their careers who are interested in business and want to learn from high-ranking leaders.**

As EADCs shadow their principal closely, they are given access to business dealings and discussions that their principal is involved in. Since the EADC also functions as an executive assistant, he or she is allowed through doors that customarily open only for individuals at senior levels.

“They will be able to be a part of major meetings between leaders that many will never have the chance to be a part of,” explains Niho Khoo. “And all this at the beginning of their careers.”

This access to key individuals and relationships present the opportunity not only to learn, but to build networks.

“Young degree holders are ideal for the role of the EADC as they are teachable,” she says, emphasising the benefits especially for individuals who want to get into business.

“The reality is that to be a businessman, you must really understand the environment. Degrees only give you limited experience. Internships are short, and not long enough to prove you can work with people.”

“EADCs get to shadow top leaders, and this is the ultimate university of hard knocks. You normally have to pay to learn, but you get paid for this, and paid well too. You’re taking notes in the boardroom where the action is. This is the ultimate practical exposure.”

“Training is also customised according to the requirements of the client, for instance, needing a helicopter licence,” he says. Though the EADC works closely with the principal’s existing personal security team, he explains that it’s still important that they themselves have security-related skills.

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**By Lily Cheah**

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**Are you interested to be an executive aide-de-camp?** Visit www.mystarjob.com/chicoforce for more information or email eadc@chicoforce.com.my

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**Contact:**

Niho Khoo, head of EADC project, Chico Force.
LEADING WITH INNOVATION

LEADERSHIP WITH INNOVATION

BY SHAHRAN MASOOD
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Innovative organizations require innovative leaders. Effective leaders create the right conditions for innovation to thrive. For more information, email people@leaderonomics.com

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LEADERSHIP WITH INNOVATION

Create a Culture of Innovation

1. **Start with the End in Mind**
   - From the onset, by focusing on outcomes and results, every conversation and activity is guided by a path to the best available solution. Leaders can start the process by painting a picture of the future and then have their teams accountable for the “how” to get there. Clearly, one of the ways innovation is cultivated is by leading teams who make sure everyone is involved and made committed. The best outcomes are aligned with the desired outcome and timeframes.

2. **Trust in the Process**
   - By having teams aligned for the end result, there is nothing else to do except to give themselves to the process and have complete confidence in one another.
   - In this approach, managers also trust the process, and make way for “the trials and terrors.” What this means is project teams are empowered to take calculated risks, by “killing” things. There is no stigma on an adventurous fable into a big Leap. It can have a purpose.

3. **Challenge Others**
   - In the workplace forum of innovation, all ideas and justifications must be put to open scrutiny because there is no ego or personal attachment to an idea, everything is on the table to deconstruct, remove or modify. A culture of challenging others allows people to remain objective to the task by keeping the big picture in mind: “How can we do this better?” By putting honestly away for a moment, people in companies can be truly valued for their contribution, and not just for their authority.

4. **The Spirit of Innovation**
   - For teams that seek success, there needs to be an inspiration, a desire to create something great—other than for personal pleasure the people around you, or for the improvement of community. The energy poured into a task becomes a labor of love, if purpose, instead of leading a pay check. Leaders must create an innovative culture, and encourage both with their teams.
   - When people feel inspired by a leader they are more inclined to give more effort and go the extra mile on a project. That extra effort and commitment is often what produces innovation.

5. **Think Like an Artist**
   - Given that innovation is about creation or recreation, it’s no surprise there is value in approaching innovation with the mindset of an artist.
   - Personally, after having heard high school band practice, art, and graphic design classes, my brain has somehow connected itself to a neurological pathway for creativity. It’s probably worth mentioning, my logical human resource vocationality has probably compartmented this effect: Which is why it’s so difficult to come up with a “breakthrough” idea for a new product or service. This is the hallmark of an artist’s brain is that it is not just the right brain, it is the whole brain—right and left, for new possibilities. The more left-sided the idea, the less creativity is involved. When art students are learning how to draw, their brains are stimulate in both the brain’s hemispheres, and a real artistic feeling is experienced. Business people can enhance their brain like an artist, it’s possible that their body of work would be more valuable if they were trained in the process of using their left brain to be more creative.

6. **Innovation Management**
   - Successful innovation management does not mean only for tech companies or the spirit of continuous improvement. It is a concept reserved for tech companies or the “conventional inputs” and resource limitations to be innovated and new habits to be formed. According to Soren Kragh, author of “The Power of Surprise for Business Breakthroughs”, disruptive innovation capacity is the key to outdoing emerging markets (affordance) and to developing current and new markets (offense).

7. **Frustrating Innovation**
   - Frustration is part of innovation. As there is a clear displacement of what was once considered normal for most of us, but the most successful organizations are aligned for the end result, there is nothing else to do except to give themselves to the process and have complete confidence in one another.

8. **Decide to be Coached**
   - In “the world of innovation,” all ideas are on the table to be dismantled, deconstructed, or modified. What this means is project teams are empowered to ask questions with purpose.

9. **The Spirit of Innovation**
   - Start with the end in mind. By setting an internal climate whereby ideas and principles are cultivated and readily deployed to market. And by setting an internal climate whereby ideas and principles are cultivated and readily deployed to market. By having leaders who make sure everyone is involved and made committed. The best outcomes are aligned with the desired outcome and timeframes.

10. **On Innovation**
    - For leaders that are taking the first steps into innovation, you’d be cleared to have many tried and tested innovative tools to improve company culture and your value proposition to your customers.

11. **Innovation Management**
    - Leadership with innovation requires new mindsets and new habits to be formed. According to Soren Kragh, author of “The Power of Surprise for Business Breakthroughs”, disruptive innovation capacity is the key to outdoing emerging markets (affordance) and to developing current and new markets (offense).

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THOMAS EDISON: THINKER, DOER AND MARKET DISRUPTOR

By SU-ANN CHENG
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EAR the name Thomas Edison, and you think “light bulb”. What many do not realise is that Edison did not create the first light bulb (it was invented by English chemist Humphry Davy in 1809), but invented the first commercially practical incandescent light bulb. What Edison did do was improve on Davy’s (as well others’ subsequent attempts) work and eventually, in 1878, discovered a carbon filament that could burn for up to 14 hours. Edison’s success with the light bulb was but one of his many great innovations that revolutionised the world. His forward-thinking discoveries shook up numerous old industries and created almost as many new ones.Dubbed as a market disruptor in his time, the prolific American inventor holds over 1,000 patents in the United States alone.

What set Edison apart from his contemporaries was not only his ingenuity, but also his gumption and perseverance. Many of Edison’s successes were achieved through imagination, patience and hard work. One of his famous quotes was, “Genius is 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration.”

INVENTING HIS OWN FUTURE

In 1868, Edison received a patent for his first invention on the electric vote recorder, a device meant for legislative bodies to speed up the voting process. However, it was deemed inefficient and was sent to the political graveyard. The following year, Edison moved to New York City and got his big break when he improved the way the stock ticker machine worked. His improvisation allowed the machine to receive up-to-date stock price information from the stock exchange and displayed it at various locations.

The Gold and Stock Telegraph Company paid him US$40,000 for it, which Edison used to set up a small laboratory in Newark, New Jersey in 1871. In 1874, after numerous attempts, Edison struck gold when he managed to greatly improve the telegraph. Hired by Western Union, he invented the quadruplex telegraph that could send up to four messages at once, two in each direction.

THE AGE OF EDISON

In 1876, Edison moved his work and family to Menlo Park and established a new facility with all the equipment necessary to work on any invention. This first-of-its-kind laboratory was often considered one of his greatest inventions and Edison was nicknamed the “Wizard of Menlo Park” as it was here that he changed the world, creating some of his greatest works. In 1877, Edison invented the tin foil phonograph, the first machine that could record and reproduce sound. The phonograph played cylinders, rather than discs, and had two needles, one for recording and one for playback.

Edison’s first recorded words to himself were “Mary had a little lamb”. The phonograph brought the 30-year-old fame as he toured the country for demonstrations, including a visit to the White House to demonstrate the fascinating contraption to then-President, Rutherford Hayes.

Following that, Edison did not slow down as he undertook his next greatest challenge: the development of a practical, electrical light bulb. By then, the concept of electrical lighting was not new as several inventors and innovators alike had been working on it. However, there was nothing available that was practical for home use.

After about one and a half years of work, failing over 1,000 times, Edison finally perfected the concept of the incandescent light bulb, using a filament of carbonized sewing thread. His first public demonstration was in December 1879, when the Menlo Park laboratory complex was electrically lighted. Within the next few years, Edison further developed the electric industry and even designed a system of power plants to provide light and power to households in a practical, safe and economical way.

Edison also envisioned a device that “does for the eye what the phonograph does for the ear”, and this was to become motion pictures. In 1881, he did just that, with the kinetoscope that made it possible to capture, reproduce and project moving pictures. Edison always had an interest in automobile and owned a number of them that were powered by gasoline, electricity and steam.

In the late 1890s, Edison embarked on a difficult project of developing an alkaline battery, which only came into fruition after about ten years. By this time, electric vehicles were becoming less popular, but Edison’s alkaline battery was nevertheless useful for lighting railway cars and signals, maritime buoys and miners lamps.

EVEN A GENIUS HAD HIS SHARE OF FAILURES

Edison’s career was not without his ups and downs. Many of his inventions may have been useful, even up until today, but may not have been as popular or life-changing as some of his more famous discoveries.

Edison was the man behind the ancestor of the tattoo gun; the pneumatic stencil pen. He was also the mastermind behind the electric power meter (in his quest to revolutionise the electric system), the method of fruit preservation (while working with vacuum tubes in the development of the incandescent light bulb), the talking doll (placing a mini phonograph inside a doll’s chest), the carbon microphone used in telephones as well as concrete homes. In many ways, some of his ideas suffered the same problem he was ahead of its time.

HOW EDISON TRANSFORMED THE WORLD

Re-defining the entertainment industry

No doubt, Edison’s phonograph and motion pictures paved the way for the multibillion-dollar industry it is today. Prior to these, the only things used for recording history were the written word and paintings (or fixed images with the camera). Edison allowed sounds and sights to be recorded, preserved and replayed. People no longer need to travel long distances for entertainment. In addition, the subsequent introduction of records, discs and tapes allowed audiences around the world to enjoy entertainment, be it music or movies.

Let there be light

Edison’s incandescent light bulb was a giant leap forward for mankind, giving birth to the electric age. People suddenly had light available 24 hours a day and their activities were no longer dictated by the rising and setting of the sun. It also revolutionised the commercial and industrial sectors, with businesses all over being able to dramatically improve production with extended working hours.

Powering up automobiles

Edison invented an improved electric storage battery, which he spent many years and money on. It turned out to be worth it, as this became Edison’s most profitable product, which was widely used to power electric cars and even submarines. The comeback of electric cars in the 21st century would not even be possible without Edison’s attempts in the first place.

A master of marketing

While Edison was arguably one of the best inventors ever lived, many of his principles and virtues prove to be found in modern marketing wisdom. Some of his famous sayings include “I have not failed (but) found 10,000 ways that won’t work”, “I never did (nor invented) anything by accident; they came by work”, and “Anything that won’t sell, I don’t want to invent; its sale is proof of utility, its utility is success”. All these are testaments to his work ethic that promotes determination, passion, business acumen and good old hard work.

Market disruption opens up new opportunities

Edison was a true market disruptor although he may not have intended to be one. He was not afraid to think big and change the basic paradigms of industries. Many of his disruptive technologies were results of his entrepreneurial drive to bring new entities into the market for a profit. After all, Edison said it right, “I invent, so I can make money and keep on inventing”.
READING BETWEEN THE LINES

BY WENDY LEE

SK any girl, or guy for that matter, on what vertical lines can do to a person, the common and sometimes only answer you get is, ”To make one look slimmer.” If asked to elaborate on what vertical lines are, then the reply you typically get is, ”wearing stripes.”

But is that so? Are lines just stripes? Are they meant only to make one look leaner?

Think about this – a woman choosing a jacket over a cardigan, a guy wearing a collared shirt versus a Polo-T. They have all unconscious-ly chosen straight lines over curled lines. In terms of professionalism, the clothing choices they made have also sent out different messages.

Another example – a gentleman with a round face wearing wide spread collars compared with wearing button-downs. Or a petite lady wearing a long A-line skirt compared with long pants. It is also a choice between different lines in the outfits. And within their choices, therein lies a difference in the level of their attractiveness.

Lines and designs are the foun-dations of any garment. They communicate visual meanings, send out important messages and display underlying moods.

Understanding the importance and functions of different lines and designs will help us all make wiser decisions when selecting and pur-chasing our clothing.

VERTICAL LINES AND DESIGNS

Again, it’s not just about stripes. There are other ways in which vertical lines exist:

1. Details or embellishments that appear vertical
2. Clothing seams
3. Vertical panel of fabric
4. Blocks of colours

Vertical lines draw the eye up and down rather than side to side. The phys-i-cal effect is that it elongates and slims, making them a girl’s best friend as the wearer will look leaner and taller and leaner when you wear long pants as opposed to long skirt.

Psychologically, straight lines convey a message of power, professionalism and strength.

Here are some principles for you to ponder upon when using verticals:

1. More than one vertical line can cause the eyes to move from left to right, so two vertical lines close together will make you thinner while two vertical lines far apart make you look wider.

When picking stripe shirts, remember to look at the distance, width and colour contrast. The greater the dis-tance, the wider the stripes and the higher the colour contrast, the bigger you will look. Plus, if it’s a men’s shirt, the lower your hierarchy will go when it comes to your professionalism.

2. The most powerful vertical design line is one that runs down the centre of a garment or body, as it effectively slices the garment into two equal halves.

This explains why single breasted suits are more favourable as compared with double breasted ones. Or why you will appear taller and leaner when you wear pants as opposed to long skirt.

So, choosing a dress with design lines or embellishments that go down the sides dividing the body into unequal parts, will definitely look bigger as our eyes tend to concentrate on the larger area.

3. The more ver-tical influence you have in your garment, the more power you convey.

Think about V-necklines instead of round ones; peak lapels instead of shawl collars; diamond shaped designs on ties instead of dotted ones. You get the idea.

A word of caution:

Vertical stripes are not necessarily slimming in stretch fabrics; in stretch fabrics they may exaggerate curves and bumps by dis-torting as they stretch over an area. So avoid placing vertical lines at unflattering point, such as your hips or thighs.

Horizontal lines

Horizontal lines lead our eyes from side to side. Think about watching the sunset on the hori-zon. It slows down our vision, mak-ing everything appear slower and wider.

Therefore, the physical effect of horizontal design lines is that it shortens and widens. Wearing hipster belts for instance, would naturally emphasise your hips. Or choosing ankle strap shoes will visually shorten your legs.

Psychologically, horizontal lines signify flexibility and informality. In other words, it also gives us a relaxed, quiet and restful mood.

Again, apart from stripes, move-ment in the lines of dress can also be created by the use of details, such as ruffles and lace, different blocks of colours or an addition of accessories such as a belt.

Here are some principles for you to ponder upon when using horizontal:

1. A single horizontal feature draws attention from side-to-side thus emphasising the width on where it is placed.

Sleeves for example, which end at the same point as the bust line, will increase the apparent size of the bust. By raising or lowering the sleeve hem, you will then create the opposite effect.

With narrow shoulders, yokes, shoulder pads or a wide boat neckline will visually balance them, making your shoulders look wider and your hips, smaller.

2. Dressing in multiple horizontal blocks of colours, horizontal lines or features can decrease apparent height by breaking up your length.

Wide horizontal design lines or features have the greatest power to give width to the body and shorten the apparent height. This is very helpful for tall women with boyish frame who want to soften their overall appearance.

3. Hemlines are one of the most important features of an outfit to get right, as all garments contain hemlines, which are often horizontal.

Hemlines that end in line with a figure challenge, will make that area appear heavier through the added visual width.

Therefore, for women, a short jacket with a hemline that ends on a full hip-line, or a wide belt on a thick waist will make the wearer look flumpier.

A gentleman’s shirt sleeves that hit above the wrist bone, will result in the wearer appear unusually lanky. All these subconsciously send a message that you are someone who don’t pay attention to grooming.

Lines and designs have the ability to make or break your look. Chosen well, they work miracles in complementing your overall appearance, sending a mes-sage that you look able, well and attractive!

Next month, we will talk about their cousins – the diagonals and circular lines and how they influence our dressing and image.
Malakoff announces that 22 promising undergraduates from Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN) have completed the Malakoff-UNITEN Talent Acceleration Programme (MUTAP), recently. The programme is a part of its commitment to nurture young Malaysians to become future leaders.

The talent development effort, initiated by Malakoff and UNITEN in collaboration with Leaderonomics, offers students a year-long experiential learning programme, enabling them to develop new skills including critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, communication, creativity and innovation through hands-on experience as well as coaching sessions.

Siti Hajar Mohd Dahlan, vice-president, corporate services division of Malakoff said at the event held early this month: “At Malakoff, we proactively engage with local universities and contribute to the development of young talents through efforts including MUTAP, in line with Malaysia’s vision to invest in human capital as a key enabler to build a knowledge-intensive and high-income nation.”

“Through MUTAP, we hope to nurture our bright graduates for leadership roles with hands-on job experience and ample opportuni- ties to develop their potential.

“This is part of our commitment to work with local universities to ensure a sustainable pipeline of talent for the industry,” she added. Nineteen students from the faculty of engineering and three from faculty of information technology of UNITEN had the opportunity to work with an NGO on a community project and visit Malakoff’s Lumut power plant to have a closer look at the working environment.

The ceremony also saw 25 students from the leadership club graduating. The club, initiated by Malakoff, comprised of students from various faculties and age groups, pledging to spearhead youth leadership at the university.

The MUTAP graduates worked with Free Tree Society, an environ- mental NGO, to build nurseries and bird houses to aid environ- mental preservation in the heart of Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur. Meanwhile, the leadership club graduates lent a helping hand to Rumah Keluarga Kami in Kampung, Selangor, by raising funds for the orphanage and beautifying the home to make it more comfortable for its inhabit- ants.

Prof Datuk Dr Shairi Md Nor, deputy vice-chancellor, Sultan Ahmad Shah campus, UNITEN said, “We take pride in promoting lifelong and continuous learn- ing in our students as we firmly believe that we need to be con- stantly exposed to new skills and knowledge in order to remain competitive in today’s economic environment.”

“I applaud Malakoff’s long-term commitment and collaboration in ensuring that our graduates are well equipped with the neces- sary skills to excel in their careers through various efforts including MUTAP,” he added. Over and above MUTAP, Malakoff initiated the “Share Up Your Love” programme in 2010 as a platform for UNITEN students to conduct a motivational and self-development camp for the children of Rumah Jagaan Siraman Kasih.

The following year, the compa- ny partnered with the graduates again for the project and helped mento- r over 200 students from Sekolah Agama Rakayat Al-Ansar, specifically on self-development and religious education.
By JASON LEE
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J ust a few months back, I had the opportunity to speak at the Global Forum on Management and Entrepreneurship in Cebu, Philippines. The room was filled with more than 200 students who were studying “entrepreneurship” as a subject in their undergraduate studies.

The theme was Embracing Creativity and Innovation in conjunction with Global Entrepreneurship Week Philippines. Then, I shared on the power of how ideas have changed the world and all it takes is for one to think of ways to do things differently. To quote Apple’s mantra, think different. How do we do that? Through creativity and innovation.

Creativity and innovation, what are these words and how do they relate to you as an individual or as someone who is starting young in the working world?

In the book The Innovator’s DNA, a six-year study was conducted by Harvard Business School professor Clayton M Christensen, Hal B Gregersen, professor of leadership at INSEAD and Jeff Dyer, professor at Brigham Young University, to find out what lies behind the creative and innovative mind.

They concluded the study by identifying five key skills after interviewing more than 1,000 executives and 500 people who are inventors or founders of innovative companies:

1. Questioning allows innovators to challenge the status quo and consider new possibilities.
2. Observing helps innovators detect small details — in the activities of customers, suppliers and other companies — that suggest new ways of doing things.
3. Networking permits innovators to gain radically different perspectives from individuals with diverse backgrounds.
4. Experimenting prompts innovators to relentlessly try out new experiences, take things apart and test new ideas.
5. Associational thinking — drawing connections among questions, problems or ideas from unrelated fields — is triggered by questioning, observing, networking and experimenting and is the catalyst for creative ideas.

Many years ago, someone questioned, why not connect the phone with the Internet? The Smartphone came to being.

Back in 2004, a university student named Mark experimented on a website to see who was “hot or not” for Harvard students. Facebook users who spend an average of 18 minutes per visit, according to Facebook’s research on Jan 1, 2014, close to home, we have our very Tan Sri Tony Fernandes who decided that “now everyone can fly” and brought AirAsia, now being named the world’s best low-cost airline to greater heights.

In 2009, Facebook users had an average of 80 friends and now that’s more than 400 friends on average. According to Statista, Facebook has 1,310,000,000 total number of monthly active Facebook users.

The centre was looking for clients to just sit back and reflect on some of your thoughts. Best times are when you commute to work, just before you sleep or early in the morning after a good night’s rest. My personal favourite is shower time, when no one can disturb you!

Step 1: Identify your target. Find out how and what you can innovate on.

Step 2: Think about addressing the situation with the five skills from the Innovator’s DNA: questioning, observing, networking, experimenting and associational thinking.

Step 3: Take action. Apply the skills and set a goal to address the situation.

Step 4: Don’t give up! Continue innovating and let this be a perpetual process to make the world a better place!}

Step 3: Take action. Apply the skills and set a goal to address the situation.

Step 4: Don’t give up! Continue innovating and let this be a perpetual process to make the world a better place!
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**

**WHAT IS DIVERSITY? DOES IT POSE MORE PROBLEMS THAN STRENGTHS?**

**HR TALK**

**SARAH MUBARAK**
Senior manager, human capital advisory
PwC

When I think of diversity, a hot fluffy orange chiffon cake comes to mind. It is composed of various ingredients – eggs, oil, flour, sugar and orange juice. It’s not easy to make, especially when you are a novice baker, you can’t just dump it all in a shiny Kitchen-Aid mixer and hope that it will come out perfect.

There are techniques that you need to apply to each ingredient; making sure the eggs are at room temperature, beaten till they reach soft peak, the flour must be sifted and mixed and stirred in the right way. Sounds complicated? Yes but it is all worth it once it’s out there, sitting lavishly beside a pot of peppermint tea.

The same way, most organisations consist of various ingredients – people from different genders, education background, personalities, cultural influences, race, beliefs, sexual orientations and the list goes on. Does this mash-up sound exciting? Surely. But does it create more problems? Maybe.

Professor Ron Burt of University of Chicago in his study on diversity concluded that when you have a diverse group of people coming together to solve a problem or create a new line of service or product, voila – innovation sparks, brilliantly ideas are shared, infusing the “light-bulb” moment in some.

However, there is more to just having a great mash-up that results in innovation. Firstly, diversity may not be for everyone. If preserving the tradition is important, if following a set of protocols is imperative, diversity can create problems. Secondly, organisations must avoid jumping on the bandwagon of diversity because it is trendy. It’s not cool to want to be cool.

We have heard of managers not being open to a group of new hires who aren’t similar to themselves. If organisations are not ready to give space, take suggestions, and accept differing views, diversity will then definitely become a recipe that doesn’t work.

There are also techniques in dealing with diversity. Ask a baker and you will be told that if you don’t know how to tend to these different ingredients, it can cause great chaos in your oven and result in a depressing outcome, the same works with your organisation.

So ask yourself – Does your organisation need the outcome of diversity? Are you ready to be open? And do you have techniques in place to have a hot fluffy chiffon cake like of an organisation?

**SHANKAR NAGALINGAM,**
Human resources director, South Asia and ANZ Dell

Diversity is in Dell’s DNA. We embrace diversity as part of our people strategy to develop inspiring leaders, to win together and to develop entrepreneurial spirit amongst our team members.

Diversity is not about erasing differences. It is about how we bring together and connect the diversity of our global team members and customers from different backgrounds, cultures and thinking styles. It is about providing remarkably different talents, perspectives, life and career experiences to help people everywhere grow and thrive.

By embracing diversity, we also adopt inclusion. We believe that to do our best work, our commitment to a culture of inclusion is essential. Inclusion creates an environment where people feel valued, supported, respected, involved and engaged. This environment encourages us to do our best work.

Diversity and inclusion help us to build enduring relationships and create a welcoming workplace for our team members. In Malaysia, we have four employee resource groups that promote diversity and inclusion:

(i) Women in search of excellence (WISE), which creates a platform for women team members to network, have ongoing learning and exchange of ideas. WISE creates connections and provides leadership and expertise to develop our women team members.

(ii) GenNext that provides a sense of community among like-minded individuals who share a common experience and a focus on social responsibility and business readiness. GenNext mainly caters to our young professionals.

(iii) True Ability, which educates, drives awareness and serves as a resource for our team members, impacted by disabilities or special needs.

(iv) Planet that encourages an environmentally responsible culture that increases employees’ awareness by partnering with Dell business groups to implement relevant environmental solutions and leading our communities as sustainable stewards.

Our diversity and inclusion thrust is a continuous journey, with our people strategy as the foundation. We are sensitive to local laws and local cultures, thus we continue to consolidate our diversity and inclusion framework and adopt sustainability in continuing with our diversity and inclusion practices.