MAKING THE RIGHT CALL

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YOUR ULTIMATE CAREER & TALENT RESOURCE
Do what you love
WE ALL NEED TO KNOW ‘WHEN’

We often say in Leaderonomics that leadership is about decision-making and not about specific traits. It’s inaccurate to consider characteristics such as being a listener or a talker, or being a big-picture thinker or a detailed person as “either-or” scenarios for leaders. This is because leaders should both listen and talk, and understand the big picture and details.

The key word is not “what”, it is “when”. When is the right time to listen? When is the right time to speak? When should leaders be concerned with details? When should the big picture be the focus?

The implications of answering the “when” question wrongly can be disastrous. Say someone decides to talk when the right thing to do in that moment is to listen. It gives the impression that we don’t care about what others have to say. What about conveying only big concepts to a team that needs details for execution? The result is a team stuck in the wilderness of big ideas and unsure of next steps.

I’m still very fascinated by Steve Jobs’ style of leadership. He wasn’t a perfect man, and not all of his decisions were right (including giving valuable screen time to Bill Gates at the 1997 MacWorld keynote, what Jobs terms his “stupidest stabbing mistake”). But some decisions he made were brilliant, including his decision to:

1. Trust Jony Ive’s ideas and give him the space to be creative. It’s widely known that Jobs has structured Apple in such a way to give unrestricted freedom to Jony’s creativity, and that the rule in Apple is for design to dictate engineering, not the other way around. Jobs didn’t display this level of trust with everyone, but with Jony, he recognised that he needed to make that decision to empower and to listen.

2. Be aggressive with Disney in pushing Pixar’s name to the front. Jobs was relentless in not allowing Pixar to merely play a behind-the-scenes role for films like Toy Story. His firmness on this point has resulted in Pixar today being a household name rather than a mere production company. Though the Pixar-Disney tension endured for years until Disney finally acquired Pixar, the entire time, Jobs was sure that being aggressive and not backing down was the right approach for Pixar.

As you’re reading this on this Saturday morning, I wonder what the quality of your decisions have been this week? Have you been empowering the right people, like Jobs with Jony? Been aggressive when you needed to be, like he was with the Pixar brand? Have we all listened when we needed to listen? Or have we been making the wrong decisions? Remember, it’s not about “what”, it’s about “when”.

This week’s pages are about decision-making, and I hope you’ll get interesting insights on how to be better at knowing “when” to do “what”. Have a great week ahead.

Regards,
LILY CHEAH
Editor, myStarjob.com

DECISIONS DECISIONS

By ZARA JAYNE
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EVER wondered how great leaders make good decisions? Decisiveness is one key skill that leaders must master as they often shoulder the responsibility of making decisions with far-reaching impact on their organisations, and at times the community at large.

Here are three things to bear in mind when making decisions:

1. LIMIT YOUR OPTIONS At times, you may find yourself with too many choices. Is that really a good thing? Not really. A good way to start is by limiting your choices. Having more than five or six choices, you may have a challenging time deciding.

But if you narrow them down to a few, you will be able to better examine those choices and their consequences.

2. CONTROL YOUR EMOTIONS Feelings like fear or anger will cloud your judgment. The ability to have emotional self-control is absolutely vital. “Great leaders are aware of their emotional state and are able to manage intense emotions so they can make smart decisions,” says cognitive behavioural psychologist Dr Larina Kase.

“A leader’s success is not a result of making the right decisions – it’s a result of making the good decisions.” – Bill Gates

“Leadership is taking responsibility for the decisions you make.” – V. S. Pritchett

“Great leaders do not make decisions based on fear and the possibility of what might happen.” – Michelle Obama

“It’s not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are.” – Ray Disney

“Inability to make decisions is one of the principal reasons executives fail. Deficiency in decision-making ranks much higher than lack of specific knowledge or technical know-how as an indicator of leadership failure.” – John Maxwell

According to Dr Larina Kase, a cognitive-behavioural psychologist, “Great leaders understand how to balance emotion with reason and make decisions that positively impact themselves, their employees, customers and stakeholders, and organisations.”

You can make decisions based on fear and the possibility of what might happen.” – Michelle Obama

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

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**E**very time I am invited to speak on leadership, I allude to the crux of leadership being decision-making. The best leaders always make great decisions.

Andrew Grove made a big risky decision to move out of memory chips and focus Intel on microprocessors. Jack Welch made numerous bold, somewhat controversial decisions early on in his tenure as CEO at GE which resulted in its amazing growth.

Washington, DC, is the home of any great leader and you will find that the outcome of their critical decisions made over many years.

However, if you study people, you will find that on the majority, people make really bad decisions. People make bad decisions about relationships, money and health all the time.

Levallo and Silbany surveyed 2,207 different business decisions and found that bad decisions were as frequent as good ones. People make bad decisions from time to time.

**WHY LEADERS FAIL?**

Bad decisions are generally the reason why leaders fail. Leadership and decision making are inextricably linked. Leaders rise to the top primarily for their ability to consistently make good decisions. Their tenure in office is short if the fall from grace hinges on one bad decision which possibly got compounded by more bad decisions made to mitigate that one bad decision. Leaders are only as good as their last decision.

Leaders, through research, studied that bad decisions are made not because of lack of analysis (most of the bad decisions had sound analysis) but because of a bad decision-making process.

They stated that “process mattered more than analysis by a factor of six.” Most of the time, we have data overload before we make decisions. Yet, these decisions may not be good ones. Let me start with my favourite reason why leaders make bad decisions – assumptions!

**BAD ASSUMPTIONS = BAD DECISIONS**

A few months ago, I had lunch with Sanjeev Nanavati, CEO of CitiBank Malaysia. Sanjeev is a fascinating leader.

Although he has worked in various countries including the United States and is extremely experienced, he has a child-like curiosity and displays this by constantly asking questions. I am equally inquisitive and our lunch discussion started to move into a discussion of assumptions.

Sanjeev started telling me a story of his two kids. (Great story-telling skills are another important part of great leaders – but that’s for another article!)

His story involved him asking both his children a simple math question.

He asked them a question about the number of minutes between the beginning of the year and the date 20140404.

Both kids answered the question in different answers. The question was simply this: If Mary had read 10 books a month and John reads five, he will catch up to Mary. That will only change if John starts reading 15 books (assuming Mary remains on 10 books a month).

This same anomaly happens in business. Many business leaders are looking for that “magic” product or service or process re-engineering that will enable them to “catch-up” with the industry leaders.

Many boards fire CEOs hoping that the right person will conjure up enough tricks to enable them to catch-up with the industry champions. But they forget an important element – they assume that the company in pole position will do nothing. And usually, these assumptions will cause us to make bad decisions.

Likewise, if we are at the top, we make assumptions that the industry will always be the same and assume the competing factors will remain the same.

But these very assumptions dethroned airlines when Southwest Airlines and later AirAsia changed the key competing factors or when Google and later Facebook changed the Internet with extremely different competing factors.

**QUESTION EVERYTHING**

Another reason why we make bad decisions is that we trust the “experts.” Again, we assume the expert knows it all. Even doctors get it wrong amazingly often.

A study in the United States and Canada estimated that 50,000 people die annually in hospitals due to misdiagnosis.

For some reason, we all hate to challenge experts. But according to researchers at Emory University, this is normal.

In an amazing experiment conducted where an MRI scanner was used to gauge brain activity of participants while they made decisions with an expert and without an expert present, the independent decision-making process of many subjects’ brains pretty much switched off when an expert was present.

“Results showed that brain regions consistent with decision-making were participants when making choices on their own; however, there occurred an offloading of the decision-making process in the presence of expert advice,” says Jan B. Engemann, the first author of the study.

“This study indicates that the brain relinquishes responsibility when a trusted authority provides expertise,” claims Gregory Berns who led the experiment, adding “the problem with this tendency is that it can work to a person’s detriment if the trusted source turns out to be incompetent or corrupt.”

And in many cases, much to our disadvantage experts can be very wrong.

Why do we cede control of decision-making in the presence of “experts”?

Many times with experts around, we become lazy to keep asking questions and probing. Asking questions can become a very tiring affair especially for our brain, we so we shut off in the comfortable knowledge that someone else is making the big decision for us.

**DECISION FATIGUE**

Bad decisions happen more often when we are tired. In a landmark study on judges in 2011 (Danzinger, Levav and Avmaim-Fesson), researchers examined 1,112 judicial rulings over a 10-month period.

Most of us would assume judges would be influenced by the type of crime – murder, rape or theft. What they found was that the judges were affected by the time of their judgment.

At the beginning of the day and after lunch break (when the judge was fresh), a judge was likely to give a favourable ruling 65% of the time. However, when the judge was tired from making too many bad decisions (in the late morning and late afternoon), the probability of a criminal getting a favourable ruling dropped to zero! This trend held true for all cases examined regardless of the crime. Decision fatigue is a huge monster destroying us all the time (not just judges).

**OPTIMISM BIAS = BAD DECISIONS**

I am a naturally optimistic person. According to neuroscientist Tali Sharon, I am extremely susceptible to making bad decisions. Optimism apparently harms good decision-making. In fact, she estimates that 80% of people are like me – we are more optimistic than realistic. On average, we expect things to turn out better than they end up being.

According to her study, people hugely underestimate their chances of being robbed, losing their job or being diagnosed with cancer. We even over-estimate our life expectancy (some times by 20 years or more).

In Engemann’s experiments, volunteers were given information about the probability of dying of a disease that was better than they hoped or expected.

Immediately, they adjusted their bias up closer to the new risk percentage.

So, if you have a big decision to make, take some time to de-stress, unwind and be fresh.

Finally, another area I suffer personally from is optimism.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

So, what does this all mean? I’ve showcased four villains of decision-making – bad assumptions, lack of questioning (especially experts), decision-fatigue and optimism bias. There are possibly other factors but I think that if we can focus on enabling these areas of our lives to be optimally leveraged, we may just see the quality of our decisions soar to the skies.

One of the best advice I received regarding decision-making was to plan for minor decisions as much as possible. Making decisions drain us, so the best way not to exhaust yourself is to plan for them and decide quickly on “daily” decisions. Decisions such as what to wear to work, where to eat breakfast and other “daily” decisions should not consume and exhaust you. Better still, outsource some decisions. I try to let all trivial matters be decided by others. This enables me to focus on the key decisions that will add value to my business and will keep me fresh when I need to make them.

Decision fatigue, Management guru Peter Drucker once said that “whenever you see a successful business, someone once made a courageous decision.”

All great endeavors began as one as small decisions. Everyone starts making great decisions if not start making them. Your legacy will hugely depend on your decisions.

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Final thoughts on this topic that you have never heard before. Why do we allow our lives to be dictated by the decisions of others? Roshan Thiran has gone crazy studying the mind. His older believes it is the most important bodily function for leaders. He and his team at Leaderonomics, a social enterprise, is extremely passionate about transforming the nation by ensuring every child grows into a leader.

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By TERRY SMALL
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W e are all soft-wired to tell and respond to stories. Phillip Pullman said, “After nourishment, shelter and companionship, stories are the thing we need most in the world.” He’s probably right. Stories are a powerful organising tool for our brain’s neural network. A well-told, timely story can literally reshape the brain. Stories give people a chance, not to see who they are, but to see who they might become. Narrative is powerful. Stories allow our brain to see the world differently. They give us hope.

Neuroscientists are investigating the science of hope. It turns out that a feeling of hopefulness changes your brain. The science of hope. It turns out that a feeling of hopefulness can make a real difference! Times are difficult these days. A feeling of hopefulness can make a really big difference! What do I do for my brain? I feed my brain stories that paint a clear picture of hope. Stories are the No. 1 brain state changer on the planet! Stories do far more than entertain. Neuroscientists believe that our brains are wired for stories. Stories capture the brain. They release emotions that are inextricably tied to those of the story’s characters. Brain scientists call this “narrative transport”.

I believe storytelling has become a casualty of our busy, hectic pace of life. Parents, leaders, teachers... everyone should tell more stories. Remember, a story is not a story until it is told. So, here’s a story for teachers, except it’s not. It’s a story for all of us. Originally based on a magazine article by Elizabeth Unger called “Three Letters from Teddy” published in Home Life in 1976, the story has been adapted over time and shared by many. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did.

“AS she stood in front of her fifth grade class on the very first day of school, she told the children an untruth. Like most teachers, she looked at her students and said that she loved them all the same. However, that was impossible, because there in the front row, slumped in his seat, was a little boy named Teddy Stoddard.

Mrs Thompson had watched Teddy the year before and noticed that he did not play well with the other children, that his clothes were messy and that he constantly needed a bath. In addition, Teddy was unpleasing. It got to the point where Mrs. Thompson would actually take delight in marking his papers with a broad red pen, making bold Xs and then putting a big “F” at the top of his papers. At the school where Mrs. Thompson taught, she was required to review each child’s past records and she put Teddy’s off until last. However, when she reviewed his file, she was in for a surprise.

Teddy’s first grade teacher wrote, “Teddy is a bright child with a ready laugh. He does his work neatly and has good manners, but is a bit of a hyperactive child.” His second grade teacher wrote, “Teddy is an excellent student, well liked by his classmates, but he is troubled because his mother has a terminal illness and life at home must be a struggle.” His third grade teacher wrote, “His mother’s death has been hard on him. He tries to do his best, but his father doesn’t show much interest and his home life will soon affect him if some steps aren’t taken.”

Teddy’s fourth grade teacher wrote, “Teddy is withdrawn and doesn’t show much interest in school. He doesn’t have many friends and he sometimes sleeps in class.” By now, Mrs. Thompson realised the problem and she was ashamed of herself. She felt even worse when her students brought her Christmas presents, wrapped in beautiful ribbons and bright paper, except for Teddy’s. His present was clumsily wrapped in the heavy, brown paper that he got from a grocery bag. Mrs Thompson took pains to open it in the middle of the other presents. Some of the children started to laugh when she found a rhinestone bracelet with some of the stones missing, and a bottle that was one-quarter full of perfume. But she stifled the children’s laughter when she explained how pretty the bracelet was, putting it on, and dabbing some of the perfume on her wrist. Teddy stayed after school that day just long enough to say, “Mrs Thompson, today you smelled just like my Mom used to.” After the children left, she cried for at least an hour.

On that very day, she quit teaching reading, writing and arithmetic. Instead, she began to teach children. Mrs Thompson paid particular attention to Teddy. As she worked with him, his mind seemed to come alive. The more she encouraged him, the faster he responded.

By the end of the year, Teddy had become one of the smartest children in the class and, despite the lie that she would love all the children the same, Teddy became one of her “teacher’s pets.” A year later, she found a note under her door, from Teddy, telling her that she was still the best teacher he ever had in his whole life. Six years went by before she got another note from Teddy. He then wrote that he had finished high school, third in his class, and she was still the best teacher he ever had in life. Four years after that, he got another letter, saying that while things had been tough at times, he’d stayed in school, had stuck with it, and would soon graduate from college with the highest of honours. He assured Mrs Thompson that she was still the best and favourite teacher he had ever had in his whole life.

Then four more years passed and yet another letter came. This time he explained that after he got his bachelor’s degree, he decided to go a little further. The letter explained that she was still the best and favourite teacher he ever had. But now his name was a little longer... The letter was signed, Theodore F. Stoddard, MD.

The story does not end there. You see, there was yet another letter that spring. Teddy said he had met this girl and was going to be married. He explained that his father had died a couple of years ago and he was wondering if Mrs Thompson might agree to sit at the wedding in the place that was usually reserved for the mother of the groom. Of course, Mrs Thompson did. And guess what? She wore that bracelet, the one with several rhinestones missing. Moreover, she made sure she was wearing the perfume that Teddy remembered his mother wearing on their last Christmas together.

They hugged each other, and Dr Stoddard whispered in Mrs Thompson’s ear, “Thank you Mrs Thompson for believing in me. Thank you so much for making me feel important and showing me that I could make a difference. Mrs Thompson, with tears in her eyes, whispered back. She said, “Teddy, you have it all wrong. You were the one who taught me that I could make a difference. I didn’t know how to teach until I met you.” – Source unknown.

Remember, you don’t perceive a reality as it really is. You perceive a reality as it is constructed by your own mind. Try and give your brain one good story a day and watch the weather in your head change. Congratulations on learning something about your brain today.
**SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP 101**

**Q** What are the three key attributes people must possess to continually develop themselves as a leader? The three key attributes that are critical for continuous development as a leader are:

1. **Courage** — In order to develop themselves, leaders need to have the courage to ask for input on their performances and to listen to these inputs with an open mind. It is far easier to "hide from the truth" and pretend that everything is fine — even when it isn’t.

2. **Humility** — In order to learn, leaders should have the humility to admit that they need to improve. With each successive promotion, humility becomes more difficult for two reasons:
   - As we get more positive feedback — and feel better about ourselves — it becomes increasingly difficult to hear "bad news".
   - As we become more powerful, it becomes increasingly difficult for others to give us bad news.

3. **Discipline** — My research paints a clear picture. The leaders who develop themselves have the discipline to follow-up on their feedback and “stick with the plan.” The leaders that lack this discipline seldom achieve positive, lasting change.

**Q** What are three misconceptions of what it means to be a successful leader? Three key misconceptions of what it means to be a successful leader are:

1. **Always winning** — At the lower levels of the organisation, it may be necessary to prove that you are a “winner.” At higher levels of leadership, we need to make other people “winners” andquit trying to always prove that we are right. Winning too much is a major challenge at the top.

2. **Always adding value** — Effectiveness of execution is a function of:

   - The sincerity of a kind act is easiest to tell — the leader of the future will know how to tell the truth and pretend that everything is fine — even when it isn’t.

3. **Having all of the answers** — Achieving may be all about me, but leadership is all about them. It is very different to make the transition from being a great achiever to being a great leader. Peter Drucker noted, “The leader of the past knew how to tell — the leader of the future will know how to ask.”

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**NOT JUST ABOUT VALUES**

"directional strength" needed to guide us through tough and turbulent times. We can say all we want about values when times are good but when crisis erupts, do we see people being determined enough to stick to their guns or start shifting their commitment elsewhere?

**Question 1:** What am I willing to do for free and without recognition?

The sincerity of a kind act is easily doubted if there is promise of monetary reward attached with it. Do you have certain convictions that you will follow through on even if it means that nobody recognizes you for it?

**Question 2:** Who am I helping to be successful?

Do you notice that rich people start to set up foundations to distribute their wealth towards the sunset years of their lives? It dawns on them that all they accumulated in their younger years cannot be transported beyond their physical lives on earth. So, they begin to think in terms of significance rather than success — what they can leave behind rather than what they can take with them.

A more practical way is to ask yourself on a consistent basis — “Am I helping someone else be successful?” “Am I meeting the needs of others?”

**Question 3:** Do I speak hurtful and damaging words?

It is quite easy to spot the condition of one’s heart — listen to the words that proceed out of the mouth. In as much as a sweet spring cannot produce bitter waters, the consistent foul words from a person’s mouth only reveal an equally foul condition of the heart.

When confronted with tough times, a trying relationship, what is the tone and intonation of your speech? When under stress, do you “blow your top” or exercise self-control?

Without careful control of your tongue, you might as well throw all the cleverly designed slogans out of the window! That’s why the No.1 enemy of good values is not bad values — rather it is hypocrisy.

Values on their own are inherently confusing. They require personal conviction so that we walk the talk and talk the walk. Think about it.

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**THE LEADER OF THE PAST KNEW HOW TO TELL — THE LEADER OF THE FUTURE WILL KNOW HOW TO ASK**

**By JOSEPH TAN**

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As organisations start to realise that it takes more than profits to grow their reputation, there is this movement to emphasise on the need for strong corporate governance and the promotion of good values. All of a sudden, you see the resurgence of mission statements, catchy clichés and re-branding campaigns! Yet, most of what you see happening in the marketplace is only “skin-deep” and hardly addresses the real issues.

It takes more than just creative slogans to transform an organisation — in fact, slogans without substance will only create the backlash of doubt and scepticism.

Although values are important, they are not sufficient on their own because they are the outcome of something deeper, something which is rooted in a greater principle.

To have values alone can be insufficient on their own because they are the outcome of something deeper, something which is rooted in a greater principle.

**Values are the outward expression of an inner conviction**

Without the “engine” of convictions, values will not possess the strength needed to guide us through tough and turbulent times.

**By HYMA PILLAY**

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**ECO-NISE** as one of the Top 10 most influential business thinkers in the world and ranked top executive coach at the 2013 biennial Thinkers50 ceremony, Dr Marshall Goldsmith is without a doubt one of the most sought after speakers in the business world today.

In line with his upcoming Masterclass session on “Helping Successful Leaders Get Even Better: Developing Ourselves, Our Team and Our People” at the Asia HRD Congress in June, we asked Dr Goldsmith for his take on successful leadership.

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**Dr Marshall Goldsmith will be speaking at the Asia HRD Congress from June 9 to June 10 at the Shangri-La Hotel Kuala Lumpur. For more information please call Kim at +603 22969199 or email kim@smhrigroup.com**
By TIMOTHY KOK

Why makes a good leader? Should a good leader be strict or lenient? Authoritative or moderate? Sensitive or immune? If your answer is any of the above, you are probably right. But what makes a good leader great?

A great leader knows when to make no decisions or when to decide. When to act or not to act. When to keep secrets or when to share information.

Three-phase process:

1. **Preparation** – What happens before the leader makes the decision.
2. **The call** – What the leader does while making the decisions that make it right.
3. **Conclusion** – What the leader must look out for to make sure the decision transcends the right result.

**PEOPLE JUDGMENT CALLS**

Judgment calls about people are usually the most complex and critical ones that leaders have to make. People judgments are the basis for good strategic and crisis judgments. At the end of the day, it is the people that make things turn out to be a success or failure.

In an organization or team, the first priority is to always put the people on the team, then apply the strategy and hope for the best in making decisions.

Most of us are well known for our track record in hiring and developing thousands of leaders during his tenure as CEO at General Electric (GE). He estimates that when he started off as a manager, he only got about 50% of his people right. After 20 years the end of his career, he thought he still got as much as 20% wrong.

So how are the world’s best leaders make the right people calls? Can’t take A.G. Lafley’s hiring as an example. Within the first two years as CEO of GE, Lafley replaced more than half of the company’s top 50 leaders because he realized that many of them didn’t have the right mindset for getting tough calls that needed to be made.

So, he replaced them with those who were better suited to the task. The outcome was nothing short of uncanny. Lafley’s earnings per share price climbed more than 50%.

Lafley made his judgment calls Lafley made every other judgment call a priority. He placed the charge of the baby care business. His selection of Bob Heretto, someone with no expertise in the area of baby care, surprised a lot of people. Upon further research, it is clear that Lafley’s judgment call was made through the three-phase process.

In the preparation phase, Lafley had to sense and identify the problem that needed solving.

The problem was easy because baby care was one of P&G’s core businesses, and it was struggling. P&G’s Heretto was the married leader at GE, so he launched a new technology – shaped diapers.

Instead of using the technology on Pampers, it resulted in lawsuits, which not only created a huge success. Instead, it became a self-congratulating mistake. ‘Heretto’ market share dropped to 22%, while Luvs held above 30%. Lafley came right up in the middle with an improved shaped diaper Pampers’ dominance in the baby care market was dilut ed If it had been successful friends, but neither was as successful as Kimberley-Clark’s Huggies.

Once Lafley identified the need for a total transformation of the baby care business, he framed the issue as a leadership call. He took in all the advice he got, and made the best decision. ‘It doesn’t concern us directly and respectfully. As a result, those responsible for the decision to hire Heretto suddenly realized he didn’t like this man, so he fired him. He was replaced with a new leader with new strategies.

In the decision phase, Lafley had to make the call phase. He listened to all the advice he got, and made the best decision. ‘It doesn’t concern us directly and respectfully. As a result, those responsible for the decision to hire Heretto suddenly realized he didn’t like this man, so he fired him. He was replaced with a new leader with new strategies.

In the decision phase, Lafley had to make the call phase. He listened to all the advice he got, and made the best decision. Lafley was now into the call phase. The outcome was nothing short of amazing. When Heretto realized the pressure he was under, he made the decision that made it the right call. He stepped down.

One of the many critical roles a leader has is about people. A leader has to make the decision that makes it the right call. The leader has to make the decision that makes it the right call.

**CRISIS JUDGMENTS**

Bad calls during an organization’s early years are not any more or any less likely to be fatal to the organization than the bad people and strategy calls. A leader’s judgment in the world of crisis is antithetical to the environment in which he has to make a host of crucial judgment calls.

But bad judgment calls can be made at any time and at any other time. Crisis calls not only happen, they can happen at any moment in time. In March 1989, the Exxon Valdez, a huge oil tanker went aground in Alaska and spilled 11 million gallons of oil into the Arctic Ocean, wiping out an entire way of life, the village was abandoned.

The oil spilled over half a million billion kg of oil, 800,000 seabirds, 14 killer whales, and damaged other sea creatures in the region.

Lawrence Rainier, then CEO of Exxon, was the one who made very bad judgment calls during the crisis. Instead of taking ownership of the problem, he opted instead for the opposite. He did not call the courts and the media after the spill.

In fact, he even went on television to say that he was unforgivable for the clean-up because an EEO, it was not his responsibility to read up to the reports. Instead, he blamed the media for being too big of a deal to all the spill.

There was never an apology. As a result, it cost Exxon US$1.5 billion in lawsuits, the largest punitive damages ever assessed for corporate irresponsibility.

One case that exemplifies great crisis leadership is the Typhlosion crisis. It was during the crisis that caused the demise of the company. Guy Presto was faced with a decision that was to shape the future of the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its leader, James Burke, stepped in and took control of Johnson & Johnson (J&J), but the company and its 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GRADUAN® ASPIRE
CAREER & POSTGRADUATE FAIR IS BACK!

GRADUAN® ASPIRE, the two-day career and networking fair, will be taking place from May 17 to May 18 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre. It will be held in two halls this year, as more organisations have signed up to engage with graduates and jobseekers.

On top of learning more about companies, jobseekers can drop their curriculum vitae at booths and meet with human resources personnel to express interest and to interact.

For organisations, this is a chance to connect with potential hires to share job opportunities and to find out what the new generation of talent is seeking for in terms of employment and opportunities.

For individuals interested in pursuing post-graduate studies, they will find a wealth of information via the many university booths at the fair. Plus, you won’t want to miss out on this year’s GRADUAN® Apprentice Challenge where the winner gets the chance of a lifetime to be mentored by a top CEO. All this and more happening at the exciting GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2014.

AT A GLANCE!
WHAT TO EXPECT AT THIS YEAR’S GRADUAN® ASPIRE
DATE: May 17 to 18, 2014
Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre
THEME: Licence to succeed
This is for you if:
• You are a fresh graduate about to embark on your career.
• You are employed but would like to know about the opportunities available for you.

GRADUAN® APPRENTICE: “WHAT’S NEXT?” CHALLENGE
MAY 17, 2014 @ THE ASPIRE 500 CONFERENCE
The flagship event for GRADUAN® ASPIRE, the GRADUAN® APPRENTICE CHALLENGE will involve pre-selected teams in a final elimination round where they have to deliver a rousing pitch to CEO judges on how they can take their business forward.

It promises to be an exhilarating challenge as teams will have to outdo each other not only with their creative ideas but also in their presentation styles.

It will take a lot to impress the CEO judges, who will be grilling the teams on their ideas. Winners will be handpicked by each CEO for an opportunity to be mentored and to gain valuable industry insights.

WHO ARE THE CEO JUDGES?
• Dzameer Dzukifli, CEO of Teach for Malaysia
• David Teoh, CEO of Metrowealth International Group
• Joel Neoh, CEO of Groupon
• Aireen Omar, CEO of AirAsia
• Datuk Seri Shahril Mokhtar, CEO of Prasarana

Do you have what it takes to impress these tough guns?
• Datuk Seri Shahril Mohktar, CEO of Prasarana
• Aireen Omar, CEO of AirAsia
• Joel Neoh, CEO of Groupon
• David Teoh, CEO of Metrowealth International Group
• Dzameer Dzukifli, CEO of Teach for Malaysia

CEO judges at GRADUAN® Apprentice Challenge 2013.

GRADUAN® EMPLOYER BRAND AWARDS
What does it take for an organisation to attract top talent? Which companies are the most popular in the nation when it comes to hiring? The answers to these questions and more will be revealed as more organisations have signed up to engage with graduates.

All this and more happening at the exciting GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2014.

Springboard for GRADUAN® ASPIRE to advance their careers and find out more about other industries and opportunities.

COCUH CORNER
Want to get to know human resources (HR) practitioners better? The GRADUAN® ASPIRE Couch Corner is an interactive session for talents and HR practitioners to get to know each other. This is an informal space for both parties to share their perspectives on employment. Couch Corner takes place on both days of the fair.

Supported by: TalentCorp Malaysia

ORGANISING:
• Aeon Co. (M) Bhd
• Affin Bank Bhd
• Alliance Bank Malaysia Bhd
• Astro-MEASAT Broadcast Network Systems Sdn Bhd
• AUO Sunpower Sdn Bhd
• Auric Pacific Malaysia
• Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd
• Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Bhd
• BAT ASPAC Service Centre Sdn Bhd
• BDO
• Berjaya Corp Bhd
• Celcom Axiata Bhd
• Chatime
• CMB Group
• Continental Tyre Pi Malaysia Sdn Bhd
• Cyparis Resources Bhd
• Dell Global Business Center Sdn Bhd
• Deloitte Malaysia
• Digi Telecommunications Sdn Bhd
• DKSH Malaysia Sdn Bhd
• DRB-Hicom Bhd
• Dyson Manufacturing Sdn Bhd
• Eco World Development Sdn Bhd
• Employees Provident Fund
• Exod Modul Subsidiaries in Malaysia
• FY
• Financial Sector Talent Enrichment Programme
• Gamuda Bhd
• Garena Malaysia Sdn Bhd
• Genting Malaysia Bhd
• GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare Sdn Bhd
• Great Eastern Life Assurance (M) Bhd
• GRP 1000
• Hewlett Packard

Participants taking their seats at the Couch Corner.

LIST OF EXHIBITORS FOR GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2014

GRADUAN® IS 20! What makes GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2014 even more exciting this year? It coincides with GRADUAN®’s 20th Anniversary! For two decades, GRADUAN® has been the No. 1 and trusted career resource for Malaysian talents, connecting them with top Malaysian employers to facilitate an energetic workforce in the nation.

The GRADUAN® ASPIRE talent networking fair is one of the most successful fairs in the nation where participants get to take part in workshops, events and activities while visiting the booths of various top Malaysian employers.

This year, the fair has attracted more participation from organisations eager to connect with top talents in a fun and exciting atmosphere.

The fair is not just for fresh graduates looking for work opportunities; talents who are currently employed will also find it beneficial to check out GRADUAN® ASPIRE to advance their careers or find out more about other industries and opportunities.

UNIVERSITIES:
• Akademi Seni Budaya dan Warisan Kebangsaan (Awarra)
• Curtin University
• International University of Malaya-Wales
• Learning Port
• Multimedia University
• Putra Business School
• Segi University
• Taylor’s University
• The University Of Melbourne
• UniTur International University

Univestity of Malaya

Supported by:

• AUO Sunpower Sdn Bhd
• Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd
• Bank Pembangunan Malaysia Bhd
• Batu Kawan Industrial Park
• Celcom Axiata Bhd
• Chatime
• CMB Group
• Continental Tyre Pi Malaysia Sdn Bhd
• Cyparis Resources Bhd
• Dell Global Business Center Sdn Bhd
• Deloitte Malaysia
• Digi Telecommunications Sdn Bhd
• DKSH Malaysia Sdn Bhd
• DRB-Hicom Bhd
• Dyson Manufacturing Sdn Bhd
• Eco World Development Sdn Bhd
• Employees Provident Fund
• Exod Modul Subsidiaries in Malaysia
• FY
• Financial Sector Talent Enrichment Programme
• Gamuda Bhd
• Garena Malaysia Sdn Bhd
• Genting Malaysia Bhd
• GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare Sdn Bhd
• Great Eastern Life Assurance (M) Bhd
• GRP 1000
• Hewlett Packard

Participants taking their seats at the Couch Corner.
GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2013 proved to be one of the biggest and most successful talent networking events to date in the nation. Here are some highlights of what took place at the “Work Hard, Play Hard” fair last year.

RECORD-BREAKING!
More than 25,000 jobseekers and 70 organisations and institutions took part in GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2013, including Shell, Maybank, Petronas, Celcom Axiata, CIMB Group, PwC, Accenture, and many more.

THE FIRST-EVER GRADUAN® APPRENTICE CHALLENGE
For the first time in a career fair, individuals were invited to take part in an exciting challenge for an opportunity to win a chance to shadow CEOs from top Malaysian organisations.

Each talent had to make his pitch on why he deserved the coveted spot to a panel of CEO judges.

Six winners were handpicked by the judges, which included Dato’ Sen Mohammed Shazalli Ramly (CEO of Celcom Axiata), Ahmad Izham Omar (CEO of Primeworks Studios), Jason Lo (CEO of Tune Talk), Sajith Sivanandan (country manager of Google Malaysia), and Sridhara Nar (managing partner of PwC Malaysia).

“GRADUAN® ASPIRE – A career fair unlike any other. Fun and serious career advice combined, plus top employers with exciting opportunities to offer.”
Johan Mahmood Merican, CEO, TALENTCORP MALAYSIA

“With more than 70 of the largest Malaysian and foreign corporates exhibiting at GRADUAN® ASPIRE, I felt that this was an excellent opportunity to not only connect with prospective employers but also identify which of these corporates had dedicated employment programmes for talents. This allowed me to gauge what a company’s corporate culture was like and form a preliminary opinion on which company could potentially offer the highest value proposition in terms of a career, job fairs bring together a large number of corporates and allow prospective employers and employees to meet in an informal setting.”
Olivier Colin - Lim, associate, business credit, commercial banking, CIMB

“GRADUAN® ASPIRE proved to be one of the biggest and most successful talent networking events to date in the nation. The event was buzzing with the energy of talents hoping to find the right company to realise their potential. Likewise, recruiters like myself who participated in the event were presented with a multitude of high calibre talent, in the flesh, versus merely sifting through resumes. This increases likelihood of recruiting for fit.”
Nurulraswennel Ahmad, executive, communication & brand, talent sourcing and employee relations, PETRONAS

“GRADUAN® ASPIRE was the first time I participated as a recruiter instead of a fresh graduate. I know in depth why it attracts many big corporation and mingling with like-minded individuals. In much anticipation, I am looking forward to GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2014.”
Arvin Danial Hermien Herbert, executive, corporate responsibility, group talent management, AXIATA GROUP BHD

Don’t miss out on this year’s GRADUAN® ASPIRE, happening from May 17 to May 18, 2014 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre Malaysia. For more details, log on to graduanc.com/aspire or check out GRADUAN®’s Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/GraduanOfficial

Representatives from companies engaging with attendees at GRADUAN® ASPIRE 2013.
EMPLOYERS today are not just looking for graduates with strong academic achievements, excellent presentation skills and good command of English. Common feedback from interviewers is that candidates "lack the skills to do the job" or that they have "no relevant experience".

Responding to this, the average fresh graduate will often say, "How do I learn new skills and gain experience if I am not given the opportunity?" As a result, graduates often experience a sense of helplessness about their career prospects and what steps to take to meet the expectations of employers. Recognising this misalignment, TalentCorp is actively working with employers to help bridge this gap. It runs various graduate employability programmes, in collaboration with leading organisations, to raise career awareness among students and enhance their school-to-work transition, with the ultimate aim of giving them a great head start in their career.

TALENTCORP GRADUATE PROGRAMMES: UPSKILLING & GEMS

**AWARENESS**
- Raising Career Awareness
  - 1st - 4th year university students

**EXPOSURE**
- Structured Internship
  - Encouraging industry-relevant internship experience which leads to employment
  - Structured Internship Programme (SIP)
- Final Year Project/Competition
  - Enhancing knowledge and practical skill sets
  - Promoting more industry and university collaboration
  - Competitions

**EMPLOYABILITY**
- Employment/Upskilling
  - Post-graduation
  - After six months

**GEMS**
- Interfacing towards industry curriculum embodiment
- MBYG (Mysingapore) Outreach
- Virtual/Media Outreach
  - reach4work.my
  - Newspaper pullouts

**OBSERVED OBJECTIVES**
- Strengthening industry-academia collaborations
- Creating pool of local talent for high skilled jobs
- Enhance graduates’ marketability
- Provide industry-ready equipped talent for high skilled jobs
- Enable local graduates to access higher valued added & high income careers emerging under the ETP
- Create world-class workforce in Malaysia, especially in the context of ETP

**BENEFITS**

1. Develop skill sets required by the industry
2. Enhance graduates’ marketability
3. Create pool of local talent for high skilled jobs
4. Access to readily trained entry-level pool of talent with required skill sets needed in respective sectors developed in collaboration with relevant industries

For more information and updates on Upskilling and GEMS, please visit www.talentcorp.com.my or www.mygemsportal.com.my. You may also email us at upskilling@talentcorp.com.my.

For enquiries on GEMS 2.0, please email us at gems2.0@talentcorp.com.my.

**GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY**

**UPSKILLING PROGRAMMES**

- Provides industry-ready equipped talent for high skilled jobs
- Introduce fresh graduates to better meet evolving talent needs of priority sectors
- Enable local graduates to access higher valued added & high income careers emerging under the ETP
- Create world-class workforce in Malaysia, especially in the context of ETP

**GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY MANAGEMENT SCHEME**

- Incorporates classroom training up to two months, and six months attachment with host companies
- Provides specific training and exposure - Oil, Gas & Energy, Electrical & Electronics, ICT, Telecommunications, Biotechnology, FMCG, Hospitality, SME-focused/Entrepreneurship

**GEMS 2.0**

- Provides graduates with sector-specific training and exposure - Oil, Gas & Energy, Electrical & Electronics, ICT, Telecommunications, Biotechnology, FMCG, Hospitality, SME-focused/Entrepreneurship

**MAY**

- 20-21 May 2014
  - Universiti Malaysia Sabah (SFCF UMS)
  - Tourism, Agriculture, Oil, Gas & Energy, Accounting

- 27-28 May 2014
  - Universiti Perta Malaysia (SFCF UPM-ENCQ)
  - Entertainment, Communication

**JUNE**

- 17-18 June 2014
  - SFCF Nilai University (SFCF NilaU)
  - Engineering, Business Services, Science, Hospitality

- 24-25 June 2014
  - Universiti Teknologi Pelita Malaysia (SFCF UTP-TED)
  - Engineering, Oil, Gas & Energy

**AUGUST**

- 26-27 Aug 2014
  - Universiti Tenaga Nasional (SFCF UNITEN)
  - Engineering, IT, Business Services

**SEPTEMBER**

- 30 Sept - 3 Oct 2014
  - Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Melaka (SFCF UTMM)
  - Engineering, Oil, Gas & Energy, IT

**OCTOBER**

- 7-8 Oct 2014
  - Universiti Malaysia Selangor Kampus Antarabangsa Lahan (SFCF UMS-KAL)
  - Finance, Business Services, Shared Services & Outsourcing (SSO)

- 14-15 Oct 2014
  - Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (SFCF UTM)
  - Engineering

**NOVEMBER**

- 18 Nov 2014
  - Universiti Sains Malaysia (SFCF USM)
  - Engineering

**POST-GRADUATION**

- Coop & Work Experience
- GEMS 2.0 provides graduates with sector-specific training and exposure - Oil, Gas & Energy, Electrical & Electronics, ICT, Telecommunications, Biotechnology, FMCG, Hospitality, SME-focused/Entrepreneurship
- Provide industry-ready equipped talent for high skilled jobs
- Introduce fresh graduates to better meet the evolving talent needs of priority sectors
- Enable local graduates to access higher valued added & high income careers emerging under the ETP
- Create world-class workforce in Malaysia, especially in the context of ETP

**PROJECTS**

- STAR-INTERNATIONAL
- STAR-GEMS
- STAR-INTERNATIONAL 2.0
- STAR-INTERNATIONAL 3.0

**VIRTUAL/WEBOUTREACH**

- “Meet and Greet with TalentCorp”
- Join us on Facebook www.facebook.com/mygraduation.aspire.

**TWITTER**

- Visit and like us on www.facebook.com/sectorfocusedcareerfair2014 to receive updates on these events.
**MAKE THE CALL**

**BEST LEADERS MAKE GOOD DECISIONS, HOW CAN WE PRACTICE THIS AT A YOUNG AGE?**

_Sir, what is the secret of your success?_ a reporter asked a bank president.

_“Two words.”_

_“And, sir, what are they?”_

_“Good decisions.”_

_“How do you make good decisions?”_

_“One word.”_

_“Experience.”_

_“And, sir, what is that?”_

_“How do you get experience?”_

_“Two words.”_

_“And, sir, what are they?”_

_“Bad decisions.”_

- Unknown author

**DECIDE DAILY TO PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST**

One of my favourite habits in Stephen Covey’s book, _The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People_, is to put first things first – professionally and personally. I have learnt that leaders often focus on high-priority items before anything else. In their personal lives, a few have decided (with discipline) to prioritise good work habits.

Our office is located in the heart of Kuala Lumpur’s golden triangle and knowing the nightmare of our horrendous and infamous traffic jams, I know a leader who consistently researches the office as the sun rises and is making decisions when most of us are just getting out of bed. By evening as the sun sets, she would have made plans to have her kickboxing training as she knows that a healthy body represents a fit mind.

**LESSON:** You have to decide to set your priorities with your work and yourself before deciding on anything else.

**DECIDE TO BE POSITIVE**

People can be categorised as positive and negative. Positive people see opportunity as a challenge but negative people see it as an insurmountable challenge and may not even try to overcome it.

Our bank went through a process of restructuring recently. This means people would report to different bosses and there would be changes in who reports to our bank’s leaders.

Leaders who saw this change as an opportunity despite some challenges in restructuring took the change in stride. Through it, they found greater synergy and support for each other, avoiding silo work and duplication of tasks from the previous structure.

**LESSON:** There is an opportunity in every challenge we face. Decide to be positive about it.

**DECIDE TO SEEK FIRST TO UNDERSTAND THAN TO BE UNDERSTOOD**

One of the leaders recommended that I read the bestseller _The Art of Thinking Clearly_ by Rolf Debelli, consisting of a series of 99 chapters of common thinking errors.

One of it is “chauffeur knowledge”, which is knowledge from people who have learned to put on a show. It was named after a Nobel Prize winner’s chauffeur who could recite the same lecture on quantum mechanics by the professor, because he knew it by heart.

Although some leaders get away with “chauffeur knowledge”, leaders who make good decisions make sure they understand a report before signing it and understand a point of view before expressing theirs.

**LESSON:** Understand the subject matter before you make any decisions.

**DECIDE IF YOU HAVE TO, BY ASKING “WHAT IS THE WORST POSSIBLE OUTCOME?”**

The management trainees had an engagement lunch with a country leader once and a question was asked; “How do you make decisions in a regulated environment where one decision could affect thousands of clients who bank with us?”

The leader mentioned that more than 100 decisions are made in a day, from financial decisions to firing or hiring decisions. When a quick but important decision has to be made, ask this; “What is the worst possible outcome from this decision?” If the benefit (best possible outcome) of making the decision outweighs the cost (worst possible outcome), go ahead with it. Better a decision made than none at all. Leaders are defined by the decisions they make.

**LESSON:** To quote a leader, “a decision made on Monday is better than a decision made on Friday”.

**DECIDE NOT TO FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR DECISIONS**

Consulting firm McKinsey did a study on more than 1,000 business investments and found that returns on investment go up by seven percentage points when companies go through a checklist of 12 questions to reduce the effects of bias. One of it was, “Has the team fallen in love with their decision?”

I found that good leaders are open to feedback and constructive criticism. They may come up with the initial idea for a great investment product campaign but they are open and aware that if they fall in love with their decisions, they may unconsciously reject or ignore contradictory evidence or make inaccurate comparisons to suit their decisions.

**LESSON:** Be open to seek feedback even when you think you have made the best decision to do something.

**DECIDE TO HAVE TOUGH CONVERSATIONS**

I have observed that leaders are not afraid to point out issues that have not been resolved or mistakes that need correction. It might not be nice to point out someone’s mistakes but a leader must be able to initiate tough conversations in order to get things done.

If someone doesn’t pull his weight, don’t be afraid to breathe down his neck. Leaders who do not put their foot down will have their hands tied as they are answerable to the mistakes of their followers. The best way to conclude a tough conversation is to end by being specific in resolving the mistake and providing a deadline to fix it.

**LESSON:** If you made a mistake, don’t be afraid to admit it. If you spot a mistake, don’t be afraid to point it out.

**DECIDE TO MAKE WORK-LIFE CHOICES, NOT SEEK WORK-LIFE BALANCE**

The word “balance” denotes a 50-50 measurement but work and life are not ideally so. In my bank’s women’s initiative network lunch titled _Women in the Workforce: Breaking the Barrier_, one of the panel speakers shared that life is not about finding the right “balance” but making the right choices. A good thought-provoking idea mentioned was, “Have you made good work-life choices in your career, your family? Most importantly, yourself?”

Sometimes your career choices may include you choosing the right spouse who is supportive. There may be days when you will put in long hours at work while the work-life choice you decided to commit to can put you ahead of the game.

**LESSON:** Know where you want to head in life. Make it your choice.

The best leaders make things happen through effective decision-making. You cannot run away from making decisions as a leader of an organisation or in leading yourself.

As Jim Rohn aptly puts it, “It doesn’t matter which side of the fence you get off on sometimes. What matters most is getting off. You cannot make progress without making decisions.”

Jason Lee is part of Standard Chartered Bank’s international graduate programme in Kuala Lumpur. He believes that making good decisions as a leader or an organisational leader is the key. 

[As Jim Rohn aptly puts it, “It doesn’t matter which side of the fence you get off on sometimes. What matters most is getting off. You cannot make progress without making decisions.”]

**DIODE YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP**

Ever wondered how you can be a hero and a leader in your community? Find out more by joining the DIODE Camp this coming school holidays! The DIODE Youth Leadership Camp is a specially designed programme for youth aged 14-16 to enrich their leadership journey. The camp encompasses a wide range of activities to provide campers with a unique camping experience and at the same time to grow and build themselves into great leaders.

Discover your potential as a super-leader by signing up for the camp at leaderonomics.com/diodecamp/ or e-mail us at diode@leaderonomics.com. Sign up now! Seats are limited!

**DATE:** June 2-7, 2014

**VENUE:** Starfresh AgroPark, Seremban

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**What is the Art of Thinking Clearly?**

_The Art of Thinking Clearly_ by Rolf Debelli is a collection of 99 common thinking errors. It provides a framework for leaders to evaluate their own thinking processes and make better decisions.

- **One of the key chapters** is “chauffeur knowledge,” which is knowledge from people who have learned to put on a show. It was named after a Nobel Prize winner’s chauffeur who could recite the same lecture on quantum mechanics by the professor, because he knew it by heart.

- **Leaders** who understand the importance of thinking clearly and make decisions based on evidence or make inaccurate comparisons, are open to feedback and constructive criticism.

**How can we apply the lessons from the book in our daily lives?**

**Lesson 1:** Decide to make good decisions. This means understanding the subject matter before you make any decisions. Better to make a decision than none at all.

**Lesson 2:** Decide daily to put first things first. This means prioritising work and personal lives. Leaders who consistently make plans in the morning are more likely to be successful.

**Lesson 3:** Decide to be positive. People can be categorised as positive and negative. Positive people see opportunity as a challenge but negative people see it as an insurmountable challenge and may not even try to overcome it.

**Lesson 4:** Decide if you have to, by asking “What is the worst possible outcome?” Leaders who make good decisions make sure they understand the report before signing it and understand a point of view before expressing theirs.

**Lesson 5:** Decide not to fall in love with your decisions. Consulting firm McKinsey did a study on more than 1,000 business investments and found that returns on investment go up by seven percentage points when companies go through a checklist of 12 questions to reduce the effects of bias. One of it was, “Has the team fallen in love with their decision?”

**Lesson 6:** Decide to have tough conversations. I have observed that leaders are not afraid to point out issues that have not been resolved or mistakes that need correction. It might not be nice to point out someone’s mistakes but a leader must be able to initiate tough conversations in order to get things done.

**Lesson 7:** Decide to make work-life choices, not seek work-life balance. The word “balance” denotes a 50-50 measurement but work and life are not ideally so. In my bank’s women’s initiative network lunch titled _Women in the Workforce: Breaking the Barrier_, one of the panel speakers shared that life is not about finding the right “balance” but making the right choices.

**Conclusion:** By applying the lessons from _The Art of Thinking Clearly_, leaders can make better decisions, lead more effectively, and achieve greater success in their personal and professional lives.
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.

**WHAT ARE THE TOP FIVE SKILLS YOU NEED TO WORK IN HUMAN RESOURCES?**

**HR TALK**

**DATIN BADRUNNISA MOHD YASIN KHAN**
Group chief talent officer
Axiata Group Bhd

1. **You must like people**
   - Talking to them, discovering their inner motivations, understanding their aspirations, capability, potential, challenges and developing them to their full potential.

2. **Know the business**
   - You must know the business or make time and effort to understand it. Where is it heading, its targets, core purpose beyond the financial, skills and capability requirements and challenges from an organisational performance perspective.

3. **Be skillful at the HR toolkit**
   - Learn the HR toolkit as much as possible i.e the labour laws of the country, how to design, analyse and size up a job, how to design and structure an organisation, a pay scheme (understanding the market forces that determines the pay levels), manage performance through rewards and incentives, the different ways someone can be assessed to understand him or her better (as per the dimensions listed in point one).

4. **Facilitation, Engagement, Communication**
   - Facilitation and engagement skills, as well as communication skills (I know there are three skills on this list, so this is not going to be strictly five skills) — e.g. in order to be able to run an employee-focused group to understand what the people want, to deliver a simple learning programme, engage with line management on their people requirements, present to a group of employees and negotiate when dealing with the union.

5. **Human resources**
   - Last but not least, be genuine about wanting to know people in your organisation. If you don’t know them, you may create HR solutions that are not helping them to give their best to the organisation and if the organisation is getting the best from its people, implementing an organisation culture and how to manage industrial relations if there is a worker’s union.

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Besides all the general HR technical skills one should have to be a good HR leader, the following are some of the critical skills that are necessary currently:

1. **Business Acumen**
   - HR must be a critical business partner in any organisation. And for any HR leader to be an effective HR partner that will add value to the business, we need to have or develop strong business acumen. Only by understanding the dynamics of the business and industry one is in, can a HR leader develop and execute people strategies, interventions, engagement and benefits that are relevant and effective for the organisation and its people.

2. **Relationship building skills**
   - An obvious skill to have is the ability to build strong relationships. This is crucial as HR leaders deal with many “people” concerns in the organisation and having strong relationship building abilities, would help resolve “people” concerns more effectively. This is a fine skill which some really good HR leaders have whereby they are able to be the bridge that ensures a “win-win” situation between employer and organisation.

3. **Project management skills**
   - Ask any HR leader and he or she will tell you just how many projects, programmes and initiatives he or she has at any given time. With more and more focus on people development, interventions and initiatives, HR now has to also put on the project manager hat and manage several projects or sponsor projects that are company wide and has huge impact on the overall company performance.

4. **Change management**
   - With the pace of change, HR also need to develop critical change management skills to not only adapt to changes happening in the organisation, but to help facilitate and create an environment and change acceptance culture in the organisation. Any change has people impact. Any people impact involves HR.

5. **Creativity/innovation**
   - Being in HR today requires a lot of creativity and innovativeness. This is true especially in engaging the new generation of talent.

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