This week, we welcome a new editor to Leaderonomics.com (our career and leadership development content website) and this career pullout in The Star, Karen Neoh.

Karen studied economics at the London School of Economics and began her career in a think tank, fuelled with the desire to address poverty alleviation and human development. Very early in life, she realised that health and not wealth alone is important. So she pursued an advanced degree in health policy and management at Harvard.

Since then, Karen has devoted much time and energy to healthcare, seeking answers with regard the efficiency, effectiveness and equitable distribution of scarce health resources.

Not only does Karen write well, she “forced” herself to sing, dance and act (her way of overcoming her fear of public speaking) culminating in a rock opera performance in Boston. She has worked in multinationals commanding leadership roles and lived in Belfast, London, Boston and Phnom Penh, in addition to travelling all over the world for work.

Which is why when Karen turned up at my office a few months ago insisting she wanted to work for a “poor” social enterprise like Leaderonomics, I was happy yet surprised.

A life-changing job at the Massachusetts SPCA Angell Memorial Hospital and working for an non-governmental organisation in Cambodia that ran three social enterprises intrigued her with the power of social enterprises. After a further stint working at Johnson & Johnson in a regional role, her heart was set on working at a Malaysian social enterprise, where her purpose and passion met.

So, join me in welcoming the highly talented and accomplished Harvard and LSE graduate, Karen Neoh as our new editor-in-chief of Leaderonomics.com and this career guide. She has promised me that our leadership content is going to be world-class, rivaling the Harvard Business Review and other prominent leadership journals. So, I am equally excited about incredible times that are ahead of us with Karen as our new editor.

Warm regards,

ROSHAN THIRAN
Advisor, Leaderonomics.com
**SPRINGBOARD INTO THE WORLD OF BUSINESS**

**BEING AN EXECUTIVE AIDE-DE-CAMP IS A GREAT CAREER CHOICE, SAYS CHICO FORCE**

By LILY CHEAH

*lily.cheah@leaderonomics.com*

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**WHO IS CHICO FORCE?**

Chico Force Sdn Bhd has been providing high quality security management services locally and overseas since 1995. Our clients include high-profile individuals, corporations and organisations, providing services for private/public as well as political functions.

**WHAT TYPE OF INDIVIDUAL WOULD BE IDEAL FOR THE ROLE?**

We are looking for individuals with at least a degree from any field because EADCs must be able to carry themselves in the business world. They must also be resilient and tough, with critical thinking skills and self-discipline to boot because they will be the eyes, ears, hands and legs of their principal. At the same time, they must be polished and have the charisma to form and build relationships. Given the breadth of their duties, they must be all-rounders and be individuals who stand out from the crowd. Attitude is also paramount for the role. Bad attitude is unacceptable.

**WHY IS CHICO FORCE INTRODUCING THE EADC ROLE TO MALAYSIA?**

When people think about security, many traditional aspects such as guard and patrolling services may come to mind. But security is not just about those facets, important as they are. “We protect your profits” is Chico Force’s motto, and the EADC role is in line with this mission. The role is a gap that we spot in the industry and something that our clients have already expressed interest in. We want to take the lead in formalising the EADC occupation in Malaysia. The EADC role meets a need of top business leaders, and we want to be proactive in making this happen. We have been in the security industry for a long time and are committed to continuously introduce new solutions to improve this industry.

**IS IT DANGEROUS TO BE AN EADC?**

Every job comes with a degree of risk, but the important thing to recognise about the EADC role is that averting danger is a fundamental part of the role. They are expected to be proactive and preventive, and this is the focus of their training. If a conflict situation does occur, then they will also have the skills to know how to respond to get themselves and their principal out of that situation. Their training will groom them to be individuals who are street smart, highly aware of their surroundings, and skilled in decision-making and leadership.

“Was very excited when I was informed of this mission by Chico Force to train up EADCs. Besides being excited for my fellow CEOs and corporate leaders, I am also very happy about how this project will help provide a stable career path for our many young, energetic and dynamic individuals. I am confident that it will be a much sought after profession. I can see the potential and as president of Hua Zhong, I could definitely do with the services of an EADC!”

— YBhg Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Pheng Yin Huah, president of Hua Zhong

“Certainly welcome this initiative by Chico Force to create the EADC. This venture portrays the growth of our security services industry and the importance of the business sector for the economy. Present-day needs of a corporate leader are multi-faceted, and we can soon look forward to being accompanied by an EADC – a ‘two-in-one’ personnel. And one CEO can hire more than one EADC, each specialising in specific tasks.”

— YBhg Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Tee Tiam Lee, managing director of Salcon Bhd

**WHY IS THE EADC ROLE REGARDED AS A GREAT CAREER CHOICE?**

Given the nature of the responsibilities, we recommend the role to both graduates and young professionals. This is a great platform for young talented people who are interested in getting hands-on experience in the business world.

EADCs work with high net worth individuals on a day-to-day basis, and will be able to learn directly from these leaders, with the situations that EADCs will be exposed to and the networks and relationships they will be able to build, EADCs would be in prime position to venture on their own business after five to 10 years in the role.

We are also offering a starting pay that is far above market rate and the training will be comprehensive. They will receive increments as they grow in skills and experience.

“I was very excited when I was informed of this mission by Chico Force to train up EADCs. Besides being excited for my fellow CEOs and corporate leaders, I am also very happy about how this project will help provide a stable career path for our many young, energetic and dynamic individuals. I am confident that it will be a much sought after profession. I can see the potential and as president of Hua Zhong, I could definitely do with the services of an EADC!”

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FEIGNING NAIVETY
EXPOSING MORE THAN INTENDED

By CHONG SOOK LENG
mystarjob@pleaderonomics.com

There are individuals who deploy the art of naivety to their advantage or disadvantage, whether they do so unwittingly or purposefully.

HERE is something about a child's curiosity that most adults would patiently and may, in fact, secretly enjoy. We go out of our way to feed the insatiable appetite for knowledge and understanding of our little ones. We can easily pardon young children who ask naive questions. Yet this is not the case with the older ones, and those of us who are parents can relate to this.

When a six-year-old asks the "why" question – why must I eat dinner at home, why can’t I get that toy, why can’t I go out with my friends – parents will respond to each question with patience. But when a 16-year-old asks the same questions, the teenager isn’t innocently seeking for an answer but rather seeking to enter into a negotiation with the hope of getting a favourable response.

A PLACE FOR NAIVETY AT WORK
When I asked myself whether there is a place for naivety at work, my initial reaction was "maybe." But upon checking with a few friends, all three of them gave a resounding "NO, are you kidding me?" stare. Being naive at work is akin to being gullible, foolish, ignorant and inexperienced; certainly not desirable descriptions if one is keen to build a career in the company.

From my experience and observations interacting with various kinds of characters, I am persuaded that there are individuals who deploy the art of naivety to their advantage or disadvantage, whether they do so unwittingly or purposefully.

Returning to my initial response as to why I said there might be a place for being naive at the workplace, I was being curious and wanted to explore the validity of being naive. This led me to reflect a little more on the various facets of naivety and its consequences.

NAIVETY OR IRRESPONSIBILITY?
Recently, I was asked by a good friend about disciplinary actions to be taken on two employees who slandered each other on their Facebook status updates. They should have known better than to belittle their colleagues in the social media space, where literally anyone online can view. Employers are wary of this sort of destructive behaviour and would not consider hiring such individuals.

Upon further checks, both perpetrators confessed their ignorance of the impact of their deeds. Both were 20-somethings, with first job experience. They didn’t know what they didn’t know. Were they naive and clueless because of their inexperience or were they plainly irresponsible?

REAL NAIVETY OR PRETENCE?
I once had a colleague whose junior employees would approach to seek advice and guidance from because of her seniority in tenure. At times, she would be accommodating but more often her response would be "I don’t know." Those three words made her appear like she was incompetent, but in reality she always knew how to get things done. Instead she was not willing to offer assistance and was disinterested to help others become successful.

This, I know because she admitted it to a few of us. In short, she was uncooperative and not a team player by pretending to be ignorant and naive.

NAIVETY OR PRIDE?
What’s your experience with individuals who profess to be knowledgeable or think that they are the smartest in the room because of their rank? I once had a manager like that and her team members gossiped about it across the office cubicles.

Everyone knew of her authoritative and uninspiring style, and she did not take feedback well. I found her amusing and annoying at the same time. Amusing because she truly believed that she was right as her methods had made her successful in her career. Annoying because any attempt to rebut her views was shot down as quickly as it was raised.

She was opinionated and self-righteous, and although at times her statements may not have been entirely accurate, no one got a chance to correct them.

Was she naive about her shortcomings or too proud to admit her deficiency?

NAIVETY OR CURIOUSITY?
Most of us would know of the famous speech by the late Steve Jobs. "Stay hungry. Stay foolish." From observation, Jobs seemed hungry for unchartered territories and tried out new ideas and experiments. And we can agree that he was by no means a fool.

He used his imaginative ability to look at complicated technologies devised by others and imagined ways to make them more accessible and more fun for ordinary mortals to use.

I suppose foolishness here means that we need to be curious enough to explore other alternatives. Not all innovations come from geniuses; one just needs to be a little naive.

NAIVETY OR SUSPENDING JUDGMENT?
I was recently on a phone call with a very dear family friend. At the end of her probation, she was told that her work did not meet expectations despite the "every-thing is fine" feedback she had received from her manager.

Her probation was extended and she was told to improve on her deliverables. No specifics were given. She genuinely thought that her manager was giving her a second chance and would help her to improve on her work.

She didn’t read the cues in his words and actions. She truly believed in his sincerity and even thought he was giving her another opportunity to prove herself.

Three weeks later, she was informed that her boss had a mis-take because she was overqualified and that he wanted a different profile.

An internal transfer was made and she was advised to look for another job.

On hindsight, if she had quizzed her manager more intensely pertaining to his expectations, she would not have had this shock. This is a very sad case of being naive or suspending judgment on others.

Naivety is definitely at our workplaces and regardless of status or personality, anyone can be naive whether intended or not. From my observations, the impact of being naive can be massive.

Imagine the reputational damage an individual can cause by disparaging the company’s strategies on Facebook or the number of innovations that are missed when senior leadership teams disregard their employees’ ideas and viewpoints.

Naivety is good when it makes us curious enough to experiment with new ideas and causes us to be open to possibilities for better prospects. These are essential behaviours to help us become more innovative and push our bar for excellence.

If naivety prevents us from becoming a team builder and we become ignorant of our actions on others, then it has no business to be at work.

It is well for the heart to be naive and the mind not to be.” – Anatole France

Chong Sook Leng is group human resource director of Paramount Corp Bhd.
5 REASONS WHY READING IS GOOD FOR YOU

1. SELF-DISCOVERY
   Reading puts us on a journey of self-discovery, more so when it comes to inspiring self-improvement books. Just think how the eight habits imparted by inspiring self-improvement books.

2. KNOWLEDGE AND EXPOSURE
   Reading broadens our horizons and stirs our train of thoughts. When we delve deeper into “serious” topics such as anthropology, sociology and politics, the knowledge gained from these fields help to shape our worldview. It opens up our minds for more mature and creative thinking skills that could prove vital when leaders steer an organisation’s direction in the corporate world.

3. EMPATHY
   Another study by psychologists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano concludes that reading fiction improves cognitive empathy, or the ability to understand other people’s emotions.

4. VERBAL INTELLIGENCE
   It is no coincidence that some of the greatest leaders possess the wisest and the most memorable of words. One common trait observed in them is that they can effectively articulate themselves and inspire others when communicating to a team or the entire organisation.

5. PERSONAL ENJOYMENT
   Reading sharpens our minds and helps us to de-stress after a long day at work. We keep our minds alert, fresh, and always in perspective by immersing ourselves in good reads.

By LIM LAY HSUAN
layhsuan.lim@leaderonomics.com

STEVE Jobs once said that “people don’t read anymore”. Closer to home, a 2010 survey conducted by the National Library Malaysia showed that Malaysians read between eight and 12 books a year, a slight improvement as compared with only two books in 2005.

In contrast, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies read an average of four to five books a month, translating to 48 to 60 books a year! Well, here are five reasons why reading is good for you:

1. SELF-DISCOVERY
   Reading puts us on a journey of self-discovery, more so when it comes to inspiring self-improvement books. Just think how the eight habits imparted by the late Stephen R. Covey have impacted many around the globe.

By being made aware of our own shortcomings, we can then take proactive steps to become a better person. We are, more often than not, transformed at a personal level first before we can become agents of change in our organisation.

2. KNOWLEDGE AND EXPOSURE
   Reading broadens our horizons and stirs our train of thoughts. When we delve deeper into “serious” topics such as anthropology, sociology and politics, the knowledge gained from these fields help to shape our worldview. It opens up our minds for more mature and creative thinking skills that could prove vital when leaders steer an organisation’s direction in the corporate world.

On the other hand, a 2013 Canadian study led by Maja Djikic at the University of Toronto suggested that reading literary fiction helps improve decision-making and make people more comfortable with uncertainty.

If that is the case, imagine how this applies to professionals in the market-place where we are now expected to lead the “VUCA prime” way, i.e. by vision, understanding, clarity and agility against a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world.

3. EMPATHY
   Another study by psychologists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano concludes that reading fiction improves cognitive empathy, or the ability to understand other people’s emotions.

We all know that people don’t buy products or services; people buy emotions. If we apply the same principle today, we are in dire need of caring leaders in high places.

In fact, a 2012 Towers Watson study showed that the greatest driver of employee engagement is whether they feel their managers have genuine concern for their wellbeing. This empathetic skill is indispensable when we are in the position of negotiating compensation during a payout or when dealing with employees who face unforeseen personal challenges such as death of a loved one or serious health issues.

By putting into practice what we read, we not only strengthen our memory and retention skills. Such healthy minds result in a more productive and purposeful life. This is further proven by scientific studies that show reading helps delay Alzheimer’s disease.

As the mantra goes, all leaders are readers. If you’re not an avid reader yet, why not kickstart the habit today? After all, it’s better now than never.
GLOBAL EXPOSURE

THE BANDWAGON: TO JUMP OR NOT TO JUMP

By KAREN NOHM

Karen@Cap Gemini.com

Many first setting assignment for Leadershipers. If you Create, who our readers know and love, suggested that we write a piece on global exposure. Thanks is no small part to our family, I have been blessed to have lived here and around US, Canada, Europe, UK, France, and across Asia. I am sure that working experiences would take volumes; however, one of the reasons for returning home to Malaysia was previously to bring back and share all I have learned and to contribute to building our nation’s people. I hope this brief summary on the topic of international exposure and mobility will be helpful. So let’s get down to business.

ON THE MOVE

For years, we have not only read about the growth and success of emerging markets, but we have lived through the changes it has brought with it. We all agree that mobility and exposure to other cultures are important; mobility and exposure to other cultures are important to us. As we work in an increasingly globalised environment, we need to adapt and constantly be challenging. In a different cultural setting, leaders with high CQs can quickly assess the situation and make appropriate changes. They can be measured and evaluated. Cultural Intelligence (CQ), which is a natural ability for some, is important for individuals and teams to be effective in the cross-cultural and cross-border operations of today.

WHAT TO PACK

In the context of an environment requiring more international experience and mobility, it is clear that mobility and adaptation are needed, preparing for the trip, and living diligently in what you bring back.

1. For the head

   a. For your chosen field and long-term aspiration, you need to stay in the future by researching and keeping abreast with the developments in your industry.
   b. With the knowledge of your needed skill set, you will need to identify exactly what you are capable of and develop a plan to upgrade your skills before and during international assignments.
   c. Keep in mind that in addition to technical skills, companies will focus on building communication skills and cultural awareness. As companies value the ability to build relationships across borders, there is an increasing emphasis on soft skills.
   d. Change can be good.

2. Change can be good.

   a. In the wake of skill shortages and changing business needs, companies may need to develop new forms of global mobility. Staying flexible may open up a world of unexpected career opportunities.
   b. Better yet, these international assignments with up to one year in duration to be chief executive officers of multinational companies. In an ideal situation, this international exposure is widely recognized as a total asset (Academy of Management Journal) and an integral part of career development.
   c. For Deloitte, international experience is an essential part of the interview process on cross-border projects and teams – a “must-have”.

3. Make the most of your international exposure

   a. In addition to the hard knowledge you will gain from the new environment you will be living in, you may have the opportunity to be involved in key projects and access to training that you wouldn’t ordinarily have had. Stay engaged with your teammates, listen and learn.
   b. Capitalise on the region- and industry-specific exposure you have been given, and be sure to match this up with the needed set of skills identified for yourself.
   c. In choosing how to spend your time there, be sure to match the needs of the company to your personal and career goals.
   d. Before embarking on a life-changing career trajectory, one of the worst things that can happen to you is to acquire the wrong job upon your return.
   e. Whether you plan to return home, or keep trying the glasses; be prepared to articulate all the different skills you have developed from your international assignment, be it demonstrating your newfound adaptability to new cultures and fluency of a foreign language, or your readiness to embrace new ways of working and your understanding of local business practices.
   f. In a different cultural setting, leaders with high CQs can quickly assess the situation and make appropriate changes. They can be measured and evaluated. Cultural Intelligence (CQ), which is a natural ability for some, is important for individuals and teams to be effective in the cross-cultural and cross-border operations of today.

4. Network of international contacts

   a. One of the greatest gifts of having extensive global exposure is the opportunity to forge long-term and build networks. As the nature of business evolves, so will the need to forge such networks and global business relationships; however, with a network of international contacts, you would also have a sounding board to test business ideas in different countries and setting.
   b. Different, but not the same: Connecting with geographically distant stakeholders on projects, working towards a shared goal or addressing a common threat has a strong unifying force, not bound by culture or language. While some caution that cultural differences can be so important that success in business could hinge entirely upon it, I would argue that partnerships can still be cultivated when stakeholders have a shared vision and common values.
   c. Three cross-border interactions open a window into different ways of thinking, and broaden the perspective of what is possible.

   "Nah it can’t be done!, "Sure it can!"

CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE AND PERFORMANCE

HAVING a regional role with significant exposure to colleagues and external stakeholders in 35 countries, give or take, gave me an insight richly enjoyed on my short trips or vacations. The impression I had when visiting countries on a tour was significantly altered when I started making connections with local stakeholders.

The strong corporate culture we shared was a thread that kept discussions and decision-making aligned. This was by no means effortless, and results were sometimes shaky depending on the cultural intelligence (CQ) of people around the table.

Mauritian accents being the most enchanting!

"When you have lived through the changes it has brought with it. We all agree that mobility and exposure to other cultures are important; mobility and exposure to other cultures are important to us. As we work in an increasingly globalised environment, we need to adapt and constantly be challenging. In a different cultural setting, leaders with high CQs can quickly assess the situation and make appropriate changes."

Karen is the editor of Leadersonomics.com and a keen follower of any new developments in the field of teleportation. She looks forward to hearing and learning from you and can be reached at karen@leadersonomics.com.
OEL Barker, recognised as one of the best known futurists in the world, is legendary for being the first to popularise the concept of paradigm shifts in 1975. His best-selling videos on the future, the first entitled “Discovering the Future: The Business of Paradigms” released in 1986 and the second in 1989 entitled “The Power of Vision”, have been watched by more than 100 million people. They were recognised by Industry Week Magazine as one of the most influential series of programmes in the business world.

His book on paradigms is a standard text in more than 100 universities and has been translated into 20 languages with Future Edge being listed as one of the most influential business books of 1992 by the prestigious Library Journal.

Describing a futurist to be someone who is paid to help people think about the future, Barker clarifies to The Leaderonomics Show that there are two categories of futurist. A “content futurist” tells “what” the future might be, while a “process futurist” is a person who talks about “how” to think about the “what”, and imparts ways to think ahead that enable people to see a broader vision of the future.

Quoting his programme entitled Innovation at the Verge as an example, he shares how we should go to a specific location where innovations happen but is underscored to discover innovation and big ideas to create our own future.

“It is about innovations that are a combination of something and something different meeting at the verge. Once people understand this, they begin to see opportunities and realise that what you’re looking for may currently be so far apart, you wouldn’t think about them coming together as a package. But once they do, you will go ‘Oh sure!’ he enthuses.

Barker quoted an example of a German robot company that manufactured a robot with one powerful arm which could be used in a manufacturing plant for moving parts around. As the company was not offered very much, they wanted to sell it to a market that could pay them more and eventually pitched it to the roller-coaster businesses in theme parks.

“As soon as you put two unlikely things together, you will think ‘that makes sense!’ and realise that putting two unlikely things together can be an incredible breakthrough and produce inconceivable opportunities,” he quips. Innovation has become much talked about due to the ability of an innovative society to replace old jobs with new jobs, Barker stresses.

The former director of the Futures Studies Department of the Science Museum of Minnesota reveals that his other focus is on how to access innovations early for its long-term implication. Sharing on a set of strategic exploration tools he developed to identify the long-term implications of change, he explains, “The tool called ‘the implications wheel’ creates and shapes the conversation. So you can, in a disciplined way, explore those implications and discover a larger area of negative or sometimes positive consequences that you had never thought about. Unless you have done the exploration, you wouldn’t be ready for it.”

ANSWERING QUESTIONS WITH PARADIGMS

Being one of the most sought-after speakers in the world on the topic of change and vision, and having spoken to almost one million people around the world, Barker reveals that he was getting about 1,000 requests for 100 speeches within a few years after discovering the concept of paradigm while working with visionary thinkers in North America and Europe.

“As I was losing 90% of my clients who wanted to be my clients, I decided to make a film about paradigms to enable more clients to listen to this topic.” It turned out to be and still is one of the No. 1 business films in history.

Barker offers: “Paradigm is all about a shift in thinking. When I got into the film, I wrote down a couple of issues I wanted to address.”

“One is on why smart people make dumb decisions about the future. This can be answered with a paradigm. We all learn to see the world through paradigms, through rules and regulations that are in our minds and which influences our physiology,” he remarks.

“The reason why smart people are making bad decisions is because they are using old paradigms to try to see the new world, hence blocking their filters. Understanding this gave forgiveness to ‘smart’ people by making them aware of the real factor behind the erroneous decision.”

Another focus of his film was to open up space for paradigm shifters to be treated appropriately and attention to be given to their opinions, perceptions, ideas and decisions. Barker opines that many countries are caught in the same web where they need to make a paradigm shift in order to get out of the rut.

“So long as you are aware of what you can do, it releases you. You would be able to claim that – OK, when I say what I was saying it was because of my paradigm, not because it is absolutely true. And then, you move on to explore another way to view a matter.”

In 2006, Barker was named one of the 100 most distinguished educators in the past 100 years by the University of Minnesota’s College of Education. He expresses his admiration for Malaysia and is impressed with the willingness of the people to keep trying things. Describing Malaysia as “an innovative nation”, he adds: “I use Malaysia’s Vision 2020 as a model and I can’t name you another country that has been so specific and willing to put it on the line. That’s really courageous”, comments Barker.

IMPORTANCE OF VISION

Subsequent to his revolutionary discovery of paradigms, Barker embarked on a corporate discussion on the second crucial component for organisations and individuals: the importance of vision.

Emphasising its importance, he says, “There’s an old saying – if you don’t know where you’re going, anywhere is alright to be.”

“Corporations and individuals without vision can’t measure the rightness of their action, except with one element – values,” Barker elucidates.

“Values are wonderful, but a person with values and no vision can still go around in circles. People with vision tend to be much more efficient in their use of energy and time.”

When you have a vision, the choice is in your hands to change it. “So even if you change direction, it’s part of the choice activity,” Barker muses.

Professing to be a strong believer that people who live their life by choice hold more power than people who “just wait and see”, Barker says that the latter hands off all power and capacity to the exterior, hoping someone cares about their future.

So, generate a vision about your future, even if it is wild and crazy, because that gives some directions and focus, Barker advises.

BARKER’S NUGGETS OF WISDOM

For a fresh graduate

Read more broadly than everyone else, as the future comes from interaction. Opportunities arise in places that you least expect. Once every three months, go to the magazine store, grab some magazines in areas that are not your area of studies.

Read and learn. You’ll be surprised that often, there is information in there that is actually in your field of interest, or a possibility to be used on the verge.

Advice for a CEO/business leader

You need to develop a powerful discipline to understand the potential long-term implications of the actions before taking them. It is going to be a huge separating skill in the 21st century, as the CEO would move into the future with more intelligence.

Without spending time on envisioning the long-term repercussions of an action before embarking on it, “you better hope what’s over the horizon is good for you”, he concludes.

For the full interview and other Leaderonomics Show interviews, find us on YouTube at leaderonomicsmedia.com

BY CINDY YAP
myStarjob@leaderonomics.com

Putting two unlikely things together can be an incredible breakthrough and produce inconceivable opportunities.
LET'S be honest — no one likes to admit failure. In fact, no one likes to fail at all. The simple fact is that in business or in our lives, people are rewarded or praised only when they succeed...

What happens to those who have failed then? As it is, you hardly come across someone who is rewarded for failing. So then, is it always bad when one fails?

In Megan McArdle’s latest book, The Upside of Down — Why Failing Well is the Key to Success, she writes about how we can all learn to fail a little better, and how to harvest the incredible power of failure.

ADMIT FAILURE
Firstly, let’s define what failure is. Failure is when something that we were trying to accomplish fell short of what was required or expected.

Ask any person if he or she has ever failed in any way and the odds are you will find that everyone has encountered failures before. There is no shame in failure. The reality is that all of us do “fail” to reach some of our expectations in our lifetimes. Failure is fundamental, and it provides the best avenue for learning as long as we admit our failures.

The problem arises when we try to “avoid” failure by not admitting it. The issue with us avoiding failures continuously is that we can never learn from them. As a result, we run the risk of making the same mistakes that led to the failure.

The inability, sometimes stubbornness, to admit failure can lead to loss aversion. Take the example of gamblers. One of the main signs of a compulsive gambler is that after he loses, he wants to go back to the casino as soon as possible to win back his losses. Gamblers know that statistically, chances of redeeming losses are close to zero, and yet, they keep going back to the casino.

It’s even tougher to admit failure when you’ve lasted success before. That is why we see so many examples of once-successful companies having such a tough time changing course.

The case of Kodak is an excellent example. Kodak was once one of the most successful imaging solutions companies but went bankrupt in 2013 because it simply did not innovate.

ACCEPT FAILURE
Some perfectionists will argue that failure is unacceptable. Words like “failure” and “mistake” are not in their vocabulary. However, the fact remains that there is no way of guaranteeing zero failure.

In 1985, The Coca-Cola Company embarked on a secret project known as “Project Kansas” because its competitor, Pepsi-Cola, was “drinking” into its sales. The project could have taken the entire company down with it, had not the executives with us avoiding failures continuously seen market research than anyone else in the country for a job are options that you can consider to solve your state of unemployment, i.e. you keep looking for a job. The harder you look, the more likely you are to land yourself a job.

Arguably, you may not find your dream job, but at least it serves as your source of income. Lowering your expected dream job is key to rebuilding the trust we work with is key to rebuilding the trust in the workplace.

So, the next time you think you’ve reached a point of failure, remember that all hope is not lost. Treat failure as a new learning platform and learn how to achieve success from those failures. Learn to forgive those who have caused you to fail, and also learn to ask for forgiveness when you are the one who caused the failure.

Dr Frederic Luskin, head of The Forgiveness Project at Stanford University also spoke about the importance of forgiveness from failure. His research shows that “as people learn to forgive, they become more hopeful, optimistic and compassionate. People who learn to forgive report significantly fewer symptoms of stress.” Forgiving the people who caused you to fail.

In the end, another movie, or spend our time doing something else that was more fun. From that day on, I learned the lesson of remaining optimistic and compassionate. People who, with jobs. On the other hand, for some, being unemployed was probably the best thing that ever happened to them. It is actually fairly simple to solve the problem of unemployment, i.e. you keep looking for a job. The harder you look, the more likely you are to land yourself a job.

Arguably, you may not find your dream job, but at least it serves as your source of income. Lowering your expected dream job is key to rebuilding the trust we work with is key to rebuilding the trust in the workplace.

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The inability, sometimes stubbornness, to admit failure can lead to loss aversion. Take the example of gamblers. One of the main signs of a compulsive gambler is that after he loses, he wants to go back to the casino as soon as possible to win back his losses. Gamblers know that statistically, chances of redeeming losses are close to zero, and yet, they keep going back to the casino.

It’s even tougher to admit failure when you’ve lasted success before. That is why we see so many examples of once-successful companies having such a tough time changing course.

The case of Kodak is an excellent example. Kodak was once one of the most successful imaging solutions companies but went bankrupt in 2013 because it simply did not innovate.

ACCEPT FAILURE
Some perfectionists will argue that failure is unacceptable. Words like “failure” and “mistake” are not in their vocabulary. However, the fact remains that there is no way of guaranteeing zero failure.

In 1985, The Coca-Cola Company embarked on a secret project known as “Project Kansas” because its competitor, Pepsi-Cola, was “drinking” into its sales. The purpose of the project was to conduct more market research than anyone else in the world, prior to launching the new Coke.

Within three months after the launch of the new Coke, it became a major marketing failure, resulting in the return of the original classic Coke to the market. The new Coke project could have taken the entire company down with it, had not the executives at Coca-Cola accepted the failure of the campaign and immediately pulled the plug.

The famous basketball player Michael Jordan once said, “I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 100 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game winning shot and missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.”

Unemployment can sometimes be viewed by today’s society as a major failure. It is even worse for those who have been through long-term unemployment.

Speak to anyone who has been unemployed for a long time and he will tell you that being unemployed was probably one of the worst things that ever happened to him. Most unemployed people withdraw from social relationships because they find it painful to be hanging around those who with jobs. On the other hand, for some, being unemployed was probably the best thing that ever happened to them.

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**DISRUPTION OF DAILY ROUTINES**

Humans are creatures of habit. Even in the most random person, you will find a pattern of living. We seek to structure and create orderliness in our lives as it brings about certainty. Much of people's eating, sleeping, working, interactions, thinking and even feeling are mostly routine. Not all routines are bad though; we need a level of certainty in order to lead a safe life. The more important question is, who is in the master of our lives? We or our routines? We don't handle hard times well because we have made routines the master over their lives.

How do we know if routines are mastering our lives? It's simple and we only need to ask ourselves this question: Do I have other things to do if I stop to daily routines. Many people say that they have made routines the master over their lives.

When a person leads a routine life, the autopilot mode creates an environment where the brain is not required to think actively outside the box. This softens or weakens a person's ability to handle change. As such, when change comes, the person is ill-equipped to manage it.

To create pockets of uncertainties, we can begin by examining why we do the things we do everyday. We will find that behind routines there are objectives. List down our daily routines and also the objectives behind them. More often than not, we will find that a single objective will be clustered with a few routines. Take a look at the examples below.

**Objective:** Make a living.

**Routines:** Work, read industry-related articles, network with industry people and attend conferences.

When we face adversity, our brains are wired by nature to survive. The brain's function is to scan for danger and look for ways to avoid it. A simple example is when we touch a hot kettle; there is an instant response whereby we pull our hands away - even without us actively thinking about it. When someone hides in a corner and scares us, we are startled - our hearts beat faster, adrenaline enters our system, our senses pick up, our muscles go into a tensed state - all at the brain's command to get the body to fight or run. This is what we call primal instinct.

When we face adversity, the brain takes on a similar thinking pattern. The brain will look for the easiest and fastest way to end the difficult situation. There are two time-proven strategies – avoid the problem or quit to stop the problem. While these strategies may help us survive, is that what we want to do with our lives? Merely survive?

Leaders would want to win and not just survive. As such, there is a need to switch our thinking from reactive (primal instinct) to responsive (primary thinking).

To do this, we need to train our brain to do a few things:

1. **Stop – don't do the first thing that comes to mind. Do not react.**
2. **Think – analyse the situation, remove emotions to get objectivity and get wise counsel for a third party perspective.**
3. **Respond – pick the course of action that will meet your objectives of winning as opposed to surviving.**

It's easier said than done to do the above. We are constantly being pushed to make decisions as fast as possible with little information and by just relying on gut instincts. The combination of these three things is a recipe for disaster.

As much as we try to find it hard to believe, there is always time. Use that one day wisely to think. Use that one day to think and make a proper decision and not rush a decision that can cost you one year's worth of time.

A CHANGE FROM KNOWN TO UNKNOWN TERRITORY

Hard times are frightening because it brings us from what we know to what we don't. We fear what we don't know. Many people get paralysed by this fear and go into the primary instincts to either avoid or quit the situation. Now it is not what we feel that is important but how we respond to those feelings that make us a leader.

Firstly, we need to accept that fear, anxiety and all the other emotions that come with adversity are perfectly normal. In fact, they are beneficial in the sense that you are aware of the problem and that the brain is priming you for the situation.

However, if you continue to focus on fear – the problem will always become bigger even when it is not. You fall deeper into a sense of hopelessness and despair. Don’t focus on fear. Focus instead on the positive outcome of what to achieve. This does not take away fear, but instead manages it with the right perspective.

As we continue to focus on the outcome, what happens is that our brain starts to feed off positive emotions instead of negative ones. This makes a world of difference on how we make decisions. So when we face the unknown, acknowledge our fears but don’t focus on them.

So the next time we face hard times, remember we can choose to be on a list of leaders or on a list of nameless people.

By ANDREW LAU
andrew.lau@leaderonomics.com
You’re Never Too Young to Network

By HUI YI-WEN
yiwen.hu@leaderonomics.com

Young OU may remember one of our recent writers, Zara Jayne. She contributed a number of excellent articles, from diversity to creativity, and even writing on the coaching and mentoring relationship. Zara was all set for a job interview at a marketing agency, when serendipity came calling and she landed herself in Leaderonomics, writing for our editorial team. How did that happen? Well, all because of two “aunties”.

One fine Sunday morning, I reluctantly followed my mum to a community event. The aunties in charge were slightly short-handed and needed some extra help with preparation and setting up. Filial daughter that I am, I agreed to forge a couple of hours’ beauty sleep to help them out. As with most situations where ladies are gathered, there was a certain amount of chatter in the air. Inadvertently, I overheard one of the “aunties” talking to her friend about her daughter who was not so sure about a job opening. I slipped naturally into the conversation and was soon chatting with the auntie about her daughter and her career aspirations. By the end of our event preparation, we had talked on a variety of topics from “young people nowadays”, the current job market, and an opportunity at Leaderonomics. I met Zara herself during the event; we clicked over some food, she sent in her curriculum vitae a day or so later, and soon started working with us.

Ask any businessperson or leader, and they will tell you that skillful networking has been one of the vital keys to their career success. Think networking – and immediately, images of well-dressed adults at posh conferences and serious business meets come to mind. Without a doubt, networking is a valuable working skill for business and career opportunities, especially among entrepreneurs and brokers. However, many young people will usually start networking when they begin looking for a job, or after a job loss. General networking is often seen as the exclusive domain of older working adults. Yet, why should this be so? What is networking, anyway?

Quite simply, networking is the exchange of information between you and other people, in order to build personal and professional relationships that will yield long-term mutual benefits. These can come in the form of information, recommendations and referrals, or simply the pleasure of building relationships with like-minded people. Career-wise, it makes great sense for college students and young adults to plan forward and amplify their marketability through strategic exposure to different industries and professional contacts, including human resources folks. But more than a hunting ground for job opportunities, networking broadens your horizon and worldview, exposes you to different people, challenges your perspective and mindset, and can open doors to opportunities beyond your anticipation.

Establish your ‘whys’

Networking is not hustling your parents’ friends, stockpiling up your Facebook friends’ list, or even giving out stacks of name cards at as many seminars and workshops as you can attend. A simple Internet search will provide you with great tactical networking tips such as joining student societies (AIUEC, student unions, university clubs), developing your LinkedIn profile, and participating in youth events and forums such as TEDxYouth@KL, Microsoft YouthSpark and Young Entrepreneurs’ Conference 2014 (organised by Alliance Bank). However, before you plunge head first into networking, think about your whys. Why do you want to network? Why should you be networking, anyway?

Take a step back and look clearly at yourself. What are my aspirations? What do I enjoy doing? What is my communication style – do I feel most comfortable in large or small group settings? Leverage on your strengths and preferences, and over time, you will develop a purpose-driven networking style that is uniquely you.

Not being particularly entrepreneurial-minded, I do not network for the aim of gaining a wide net of contacts and seeking out untapped opportunities and business. What I do thrive on is broadening my worldview through conversing with diverse people, understanding wonderful varieties of experiences and perspectives, and generally keeping updated on market trends.

Through this, I have had the privilege of conversing with genuinely interesting people in many different fields, and broadening my knowledge horizon. In their own ways, this string of people have educated me, challenged me, kept me from being a lajak di bawah tempurung, and shaped me into the person I am today.

Leverage your influence

If you have never thought of building your networks before, you do not have to look too far to start. Family, friends and even your academic lecturers are great people to start conversing with to build long-lasting relationships beyond their functional roles. Do not see your older relatives – uncles, aunts – and even your parents’ friends as boring dinosaurs. These are the people who have made their way through life, each with a unique worldview and a set of experiences. They are also potential databases, where a casual word or a written referral from them could open doors for you.

Not sure what to study and what career to pursue? Conduct a reverse interview with your parents’ friends and find out more about their careers, daily work and what it takes to excel in their respective industries. Beyond the staple Asian careers of doctor, lawyer, engineer and accountant, there are countless exciting careers out there, and there is no better way to explore than with someone who has already paved the way. The older folk you meet could one day be your boss or mentor.

Giving to get

Whether you are interacting with a senior, a peer, or even a junior, remember that networking is at its best in the form of a mutual, two-way relationship. Be the first to offer assistance – a favour, influence, or information, and return favours as soon as possible. Ask for advice, perspectives, opinions and be generous with your knowledge too.

Building a lifetime’s worth of personal and professional networks is about giving to get. Not only will you benefit from others without exchanging anything in return, but more than a hunting ground for job opportunities, networking broadens your horizon and worldview, exposes you to people and new opportunities.

Enjoy the adventure

I hope I have not scared you off networking for life. It really is not that complicated – figure out your purpose for networking so you do not drive yourself to networking fatigue. Develop your unique networking style, build meaningful relationships, and always be open to new people and new opportunities.

Most of all, have fun!
From the moment I first watched the movie trailer on the big screen, I could not wait to catch X-Men: Days of Future Past. X-Men was one of my favourite cartoons as a child... well, actually it still is. To me, it was always about the action, and all the cool superpowers each mutant possessed. I always thought of how amazing it would be if I had superpowers because then I could go out and save the world, just like the characters in X-Men did. So when I finally did catch the movie, I was expecting a massive adrenaline rush from all the action scenes. Instead, I came out feeling a little overwhelmed by the lessons embedded in the movie, especially from the characters of Professor Charles Xavier and Wolverine. There were so many meaningful moments and lessons on leadership to take home from the movie, and I would like to share some of them with you. Warning, spoiler alert!

**FAILURE IS NOT A DEAD END**

“Just because someone stumbles, loses their way, it doesn’t mean they’ve lost forever. Sometimes, we all need a little help.” – Charles Xavier

In our roles, we are bound to deal with different types of people. Among those under our leadership, there will be those who are achievers, who are brilliant at what they do. These are the people who make things very easy for us. They are fast learners, and get everything done efficiently. On the other hand, there will be those who are a little slow, who seem like they can’t get things done right, those who can’t produce work matching up to the standards of the organisation. What can we do with this group? It is always easier to push them aside, terminate them, or get them replaced. Sometimes, all they need is a little help, a little push for them to see their potential. Failure is not final. We have the privilege to offer people second chances, and help them up when they fall, instead of giving up on them.

**EVERY DECISION HAS AN IMPACT**

“Countless choices define our fate... Enough ripples and you change the tide... For the future is never set.” – Charles Xavier

We are faced with many decisions to be made on a daily basis. We must acknowledge that all our decisions, whether big or small, have some form of impact, and that we are responsible for the impact. The choices we make today can determine a lot of things in the distant future for our career path, our team, or even our organisation.

When you look for the good in people, you bring out the best in them.

“You showed me what I could be.” – Wolverine

Leaders play a key role in unlocking the potential in their people, especially those who are unaware of what they have. A leader’s role is to have a vision and to believe in their people in order to bring out the best in them, even when they are unaware of their own potential. Even leaders need help sometimes.

“I was a very different man. Lead me, guide me, be patient with me.” – Charles Xavier

As much as it is important for leaders to play the role of a teacher, it is also essential for a leader to be teachable. A good leader is one who is humble enough to learn and accept guidance from others as well. Know your limitations and weaknesses.

“Patience is not my strongest suit.” – Wolverine

If you ask most people out there to name their top strengths, they would probably be able to name them quite effortlessly. But try asking them to name their top five weaknesses and you might find them struggling. It is equally beneficial to know your weaknesses as it is to know your own strengths. By understanding your weaknesses, you can either choose to work on them, or choose to leverage your strong points to make up for what you lack.

All you need to do is give your best.

“Your best is enough. Trust me.” – Wolverine

It is easy for us to get carried away wanting to achieve great things and do big things for our organisation or for the people around us. We also get discouraged when we compare ourselves to our colleagues and the work that they do. Each of us is unique in our own way, and we all bring different things to the table. We may not share the same strengths or skills as others, but the important thing is that we always give our very best in all that we do.

**TRUST YOUR PEOPLE**

“I’ve been trying to control you since the day we met, and look where that’s got us. I have faith in you.” – Charles Xavier

When we are in the position of heading a team or a project, it is only natural that we want the best possible results. This sometimes causes us to micro-manage our people. When we hover over people as they work, we make them feel inadequate of their work, as they are constantly being monitored.

Once you have delegated and assigned a task, trust them to take charge and let them own the assignment, but assure them that you are available if they have questions or need guidance.

**DON’T WASTE YOUR STRENGTHS**

“Use your power. Bring the X-Men together!” – Wolverine

As a team, every one of us has different strengths. Know your strengths and how you can use them to contribute to your team, especially when they are most needed.

From the X-Men movie, I learned that there is a hero in each of us, and we do not need superpowers or special abilities to be impactful and inspiring leaders. Let me end with my favourite quote from this movie.

“The greatest gift we have is to bear their pain without breaking and it comes from your most human part, hope.” – Charles Xavier

Hyma Pillay is operations leader for the myStarjob.com career guide team and the Leaderonomics content team by day, and a part-time superhero wannabe by night. You can email her at hyma.pillay@leaderonomics.com