I AM, AM I?

MANY moons ago, my sister and I visited the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. We were young students geared up to learn all we could, and equip ourselves to change the world in our own ways. The visit to this building where Frank and family went into hiding in tiny concealed rooms for two years during World War Two before being betrayed and captured, left its indelible mark on me.

“Although I’m only 14, I know quite well what I want, I know who is right and who is wrong. I have my opinions, my own ideas and principles, and although it may sound pretty mad from an adolescent, I feel more of a person than a child. I feel quite independent of anyone.” – Anne Frank, The Diary of Anne Frank

It simultaneously shook my belief (albeit temporarily) that there was good in everyone, and affirmed my faith that anyone, even a teenage girl could continue to touch and transform lives long after she left us. It was a good trip with my sister, with a healthy dose of introspection (and a touch of bewilderment) to say the least! Upon reading more of the writings of Frank, I realised that she seemed to be very aware of who she was, and quite resolute in her introspection (and a touch of bewilderment) to say the least!

Upon reading more of the writings of Frank, I realised that she left us. It was a good trip with my sister, with a healthy dose of introspection. A quick glance at my calendar, and I realise that I am several times younger than she would have been 85 today had she lived. While I am several times the age of young Frank (oh yes!), I found these words to mirror where I was. A quick glance at my calendar, and I realise that I am still unaware of my own strengths and weaknesses. First things first. By knowing ourselves, we are able to maintain a balanced life personally and professionally because we will then know what motivates us, and what does not. Also, when we recognise our strengths and weaknesses, we tend to make better decisions in our daily choices as we are more focused on what we want to achieve.

So, here are a few simple tips on how you can develop self-awareness by identifying your strengths and weaknesses.

1. **Take Some Time To Write Them Down**
   Set aside at least 10 to 15 minutes to list down all your strengths and weaknesses. Strengths are your talents or innate abilities. On the other hand, weaknesses are something you need to work on to improve yourself.

2. **Name occupation (designation and employer)**
   Make it a habit to identify and reflect on your strengths and weaknesses, especially in professional skills that you may be lacking.

3. **Set Daily Mini-goals For Yourself**
   And intense situations. After writing them down, ponder and see them. They will then know what motivates us, and what does not. Also, when we recognise our strengths and weaknesses, we tend to make better decisions in our daily choices as we are more focused on what we want to achieve.

4. **Identify Your Reactions To Situations**
   They can also help you people you trust, they can also help you manage your weaknesses, especially in professional skills that you may be lacking.

**Knowing Yourself Better**

By ZARA JAYNE
zara.jayne@leaderonomics.com

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

IN search of your identity during your growing up years, the above were a few ‘normal’ questions you often asked yourself. Now that you’re a grown-up, do you still find yourself grappling with such questions? Many, at this stage of their lives, are on the journey of discovery. With that, they are still unaware of their own strengths and weaknesses.

First things first. By knowing ourselves, we are able to maintain a balanced life personally and professionally because we will then know what motivates us, and what does not. Also, when we recognise our strengths and weaknesses, we tend to make better decisions in our daily choices as we are more focused on what we want to achieve.

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   As you navigate some excellent pieces on techniques to develop self-awareness, I urge you to consider what self-awareness is:

3. **Set Daily Mini-goals For Yourself**
   A quick glance at my calendar, and I realise that I am still unaware of my own strengths and weaknesses. First things first. By knowing ourselves, we are able to maintain a balanced life personally and professionally because we will then know what motivates us, and what does not. Also, when we recognise our strengths and weaknesses, we tend to make better decisions in our daily choices as we are more focused on what we want to achieve.

4. **Identify Your Reactions To Situations**
   They can also help you manage your weaknesses, especially in professional skills that you may be lacking.

**Take Baby Steps To Work On Weaknesses**

After writing them down, ponder and see what steps you can take to improve yourself. Avoid taking unrealistic big leaps to change yourself as you may not stick to them. Instead, take small steps. For instance, set reminders on deadlines to improve your time management skill. Set daily mini-goals for yourself and you’ll find that you are capable of so much more!

**Keep A Journal**

A journal helps you reflect on your life. With a journal, you are able to look back and learn from your mistakes, and take proper steps for a better future. Constantly reflect and journal the good, the bad and the ugly. In due time, you will realise you are already becoming more self-aware!
What do these mean? I found these rather profound. As Mike Tyson sang the song Ben, in fact, I played Ben for my own little boy numerous times. However, one song always stayed with me – Man in the Mirror.

Man in the Mirror was released in the “Bad” album in 1988 and has a timeless message. The message is simply that if you want to change the world, you have to start with yourself.

The song urges us not to just look from afar and complain and lament, but to change who we are. All change begins with us. All change begins inside of us.

As I reflected on the song, I realised that there lies the secret to leadership – introspection and self-awareness.

WHAT SHOULD I BE SELF-AWARE ON?

1. Know your strengths
2. Know how you learn
3. Practice “feedback analysis”
4. Ask yourself tough questions often

The benefits of self-awareness

Truly understanding what makes us who we are requires great introspection and time. We sometimes see the mirror reflecting truths about ourselves. And it is easy to get lost in the fog of our own selves. We are easily blinded by what others see.

I'm going to make a change. For once in my life it's gonna feel real good.

I'm asking him to change and make a change – Man in the Mirror, Michael Jackson
The Asia HRD Awards 2014

By PREMA JAYABALAN
prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com

There is certainly no other people development awards ceremony like this. The line-up of previous recipients include Fidel V. Ramos, the 12th President of the Philippines (recipient of the Asia HRD Lifetime Achievement Award), and Tan Sri Tony Fernandes, founder and group CEO of AirAsia Bhd (recipient of the Asia HRD Contribution to Society Award).

Other recipients include Sheikha Lubna Khalid Al Qasimi, the UAE Minister of Development and International Cooperation (recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award) and Shri Shiv Nadar, founder and chairman of the Shiv Nadar Foundation in India (recipient of the Contribution to Society Award).

What started in 2003 to honour these outstanding individuals is now firmly established as one of the most prestigious awards honouring contributors to people development. The Asia HRD Awards has since recognised 145 men and women from 16 different countries for their tireless efforts.

The independent awards committee consists of illustrious and decorated individuals. They include:

- Tan Sri Haji Mohammad Monshidi Abdul Ghani, Sarawak State Secretary, Chief Minister’s Department of Sarawak, Malaysia
- Dr Ebrahim K. Al Dossary, former chairman of the International Federation for Training and Development Organisation (IFTDO) and Prime Minister’s Court, Bahrain
- Hamidah Nazadion, head of group corporate resources division, CIMB, Malaysia
- Robert Yeo, executive director and CEO of Singapore Training and Development (STADA)
- Rajeev Dubey, president (group human resources, corporate services and after-market) and group executive board member of Nahindra & Mahindra Ltd, India
- Ahmed Al Banna, chief executive of Origin Group, Bahrain

Leading this stellar cast is none other than Ramos, the current Asia HRD Awards Committee chairman.

Held in Kuala Lumpur, this event celebrating glamour and glitz of the corporate world. Instead, it was a night where initiatives were recognised and honour was accorded to those who tirelessly contributed towards people development and growth.

**LIFE TIME ACHIEVEMENT**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr Haris Silajdzic</td>
<td>Former chairman of the presidency and prime minister</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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**CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY**

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<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tan Sri Sulaiman Ali</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Petronas</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tan Sri Datuk Sri Leong Huy Kem</td>
<td>Group managing director/group chief executive</td>
<td>Mah Sing Group Bhd</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Datuk Wira Amree Ali</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
<td>Mydin Mohamed Holdings Bhd</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Datuk Ibrahim Ahmad</td>
<td>Director General</td>
<td>Majlis Amanah Rakyat (MARA)</td>
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**CONTRIBUTION TO ORGANISATION**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>PPM Institute of Management</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
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<td>Canara Bank</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>Dr Sulaiman Al Habib Medical Group</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td>Dutch Lady Milk Industries Bhd</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cegos Asia Pacific</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
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<td>LeapEd Services Sdn. Bhd.</td>
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**CONTRIBUTION TO HR COMMUNITY**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Said Sal Mohammed Ali Hashim</td>
<td>Manager of training centre</td>
<td>ORPIC</td>
<td>Oman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankar Nagalingam</td>
<td>Human resources director</td>
<td>DELL Inc.</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Vithya Vinoth</td>
<td>CED and executive director</td>
<td>Eikon International Holding</td>
<td>UAE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abdulghafir Al-Rumah</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>TAFE Arabia</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here Mia Lin</td>
<td>Chief executive officer</td>
<td>SEG International Bhd</td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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LEONG CONTINUES TO BUILD COMMUNITIES

According to Tan Sri Leong, winning an award is a responsibility and he ensures that Mah Sing will try its utmost best to live up to it. He is firm on his stand that Mah Sing will continue to contribute towards making the communities, within which it operates, better.

“We believe that an award such as this spurs improved performance of the award winner. As a market-driven developer we not only build homes, offices and industrial lots, we also strive to build communities. “This achievement is a mark of distinction on our social contribution activities, not just at the corporate and investment levels but also in the eyes of the public.”

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

On people development, Tan Sri Leong says, “Mah Sing believes that it is our responsibility as a corporate entity to invest and nourish talents. Human capital is an integral part of every business’ success as it is the staff that supports and executes strategies.”

“We place high emphasis on teamwork as we believe the key to overcome challenging situations is to work together as a team,” Leong adds.

The Group’s culture focuses on its employees. By being employee-centric, its employees align themselves to the common goals of the company. They are encouraged to be innovative, creative, competent and, above all, loyal to the group.

Since Mah Sing is a fast-paced company, employees are provided with recreational activities after office hours in order to give them an avenue to unwind. Team-building activities and get-togethers are organised to promote a healthier environment and work-life balance.

The Group does not define career advancement only in terms of promotions, but gives emphasis to developmental opportunities through exposure to other fields of work.

With an open culture cultivated at Mah Sing, employees feel comfortable in voicing out whenever they are interested in trying out other jobs or functions within the company for the purpose of learning and development.

Commitment to Society

When asked what his immediate reaction was upon receiving the news of winning the Asia HRD award for contribution to society, this is what he said:

“I am honoured to have won the award. As a caring corporate citizen, Mah Sing’s corporate social responsibility is deeply embedded in our corporate philosophy.

“Beyond making donations to worthy causes, we further set up a charitable trust, Mah Sing Foundation, to receive and administer funds solely for medical, educational and charitable purposes, as well as to seek to raise more funds via annual fundraising activities and events. It is indeed gratifying to find that our efforts have been appreciated.”

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Self-Awareness: An ‘Umné’ That’s Perfectly Formed

Three key techniques to developing self-awareness

Barriers to developing self-awareness

Components of strong self-awareness

Leadership outcomes

Key techniques to developing self-awareness

Outcomes of self-awareness leadership

Barriers to developing self-awareness

Three components of healthy self-awareness

Components of healthy self-awareness

Barriers to developing self-awareness

Key techniques to developing self-awareness

Three key techniques to developing self-awareness

Self-Awareness: an ‘Umné’ that’s perfectly formed.
VER lunch, a manager tells a funny anecdote to his team about how he handled a difficult cus- tomer. Over the phone, Laura explains to her colleague how she saw their disagreement in that day's discussion. In a product launch, a chief executive officer shares a vision of what the organisation will look like in the future.

Each of these examples reveals the commonness of storytelling in our lives. We continuously create and share stories of what happened, why, and what might happen next, replete with a cast of characters, multiple plots and drama. Stories help us make sense of our past and under- stand the present.

Sharing experiences via storytell- ing is emerging as an effective way to exchange and consolidate knowledge at the workplace. Storytelling has been an ancient means of passing on wisdom. It builds trust, cultivates norms, transfers tacit knowledge, and facilitates unlearning and emotional connections.

THE POWER OF STORIES

In the 1980s, while looking for ways to boost the productivity of the Xerox field-service staff, Xerox launched a study of their work before deciding how to proceed. An anthropologist travelled with a group of tech representatives (reps) to observe how they actually did their jobs. The anthropologist saw that tech reps often made it a point to spend time not with customers but with each other; swapping stories from the field. Where a “re-engineer” would see this behaviour as unpro- ductive, the anthropologist saw the exact opposite.

The tech reps were not slacking off; they were doing some of their most valuable work. The tech reps were not just repairing machines; they were also co-producing insights about how to repair machines better. This discovery triggered a revolu- tionary change in how Xerox organ- ised and managed the tech reps – no longer as independent workers but as a social learning unit.

Interestingly, through its telling and retelling to other companies, this story has prompted some thinking about the power of stories as a mechanism in management principles more suited for the knowledge age.

Stories can be a very effective way to represent and convey complex ideas. Well-designed and well-told stories can convey both information and emotion, both the explicit and the tacit, and both the care and the context.

In organisations, storytelling has been identified as a means to:

- **Share values**: Stories convey values effectively across generations within the organisation. Leaders should offer a compelling and robust vision through stories that emphasise the more empowering aspects of an organisation’s past and place them in context for the future, thus facilitating the identification of future opportunities.

- **Develop trust and commitment**: At work, stories of commendation or complaint about other people communicate their sense of reliability and trustworthiness to others. Similarly, stories about the organisation and management can convey information about the organisation’s trustworthiness vis-à-vis its employees, which can reinforce or undermine employee commitment.

- **Facilitate unlearning**: We need to unlearn practices and mental frames, which we do not even realise we rely on, that shape our whole perspective. Rational arguments are insufficient to accomplish change; stories can be effective to convince us of our tacit understanding.

- **Cultivate emotional connection**: Stories have the inherent capacity to engage our emotions because they are about the irregularities in our lives, about things and situations that catch our attention by being different from what is expected.

- **Seductiveness**: Stories can be so compelling, seductive and vivid that listeners absorb the whole ‘truth’ of the stories and are sidetracked from their real purpose.

- **Single point of view**: When told from a single perspective of an individual, it may be less directly relevant to the activities and concerns of many other individuals. Thus, the story loses its power to connect with them.

- **Static-ness**: The impact of a story is likely to vary depending on its delivery, who is the storyteller and whether it is shared in verbal or written form.

HOW STORIES ADD UP

There are also various other strategies or modes to achieve similar outcomes:

- **Storytelling**: Sharing of knowledge and experiences through narrative and anecdotes in order to communicate lessons, complex ideas, concepts and connections.

- **Modelling**: Sharing of knowledge and experience through exposure to the behaviour of others, e.g. through mentoring, apprenticeship, symbolic conduct, and specific demonstrations and opportunities for observation.

- **Simulations**: Sharing of knowledge and experience through simulations, e.g. case studies, role-playing and simulations.

- **Codified resources**: Sharing of knowledge through reference to formal, systematic and structured sources, e.g. manuals, standard operating procedures, instructions, memos or databases.

- **Symbolic objects**: Sharing of knowledge through access and exposure to images, diagrams or objects, which represent or illustrate the underlying knowledge or idea.

DuPont, an industrial chemicals manufacturing organisation well known for its safety record, deploys all the modes mentioned when con- veys the organisation’s norms and values regarding safe practices to new and existing employees.

Employees are provided with instructions for safe operating procedures (codified resources). They are also guided to appropriate behaviour by prominent signs such as “Hard hat area” or “Safety glasses required” (symbolic objects), or by observing their supervisors wearing the appropriate safety gear (model- ling). In regular “safety meetings”, the local workgroups review different aspects of their work and intention- ally explore better and safer ways to operate (simulations).

Accident analyses, documented, circulated both in the whole company in a narrative, describing the accident and its harmful outcome, the violated safe practice and the recommended response for similar situations (storytelling).

IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT OPPORTUNITY

Some situations lend themselves more naturally to stories and can therefore leverage their knowledge-sharing potential better, e.g. when:

- **Kick-starting a new idea**: When starting a new project, such as product launching, crafting a new vision for a group, or creating a new business unit, stories are concise ways to get things going.

- **Socialising with new members**: When new members enter a group or culture, stories are effective ways of communicating values and principles. Leaders might tell a story of their individual histories to set a tone of innovation.

- **Mending relationships**: Situations that call for the reparation of loyalty, trust or commitment are highly suited for stories. A research in “narrative therapy” demonstrates how the telling and listening to our individual stories, as well as the stories of others, can repair trust and commitments (White, 1995).

TIPS WITH STORIES

When designing and telling sto- ries, be clear on why you’re sharing them. Stories from colleagues give deep clues about tacit fears and “undiscussable” assumptions. Listening “between the lines” of complaints, challenges, successes and general anecdotes of others can reveal guiding principles and vital clues to leadership about employee attitudes and feelings. Sharpening one’s story-listen- ing skills can translate into a more accurate map of the collective understand- ing and commitment of others at the workplace.

Raina Radzai is a learning and development practitioner with a lead- ing Malaysia-based multinational corporation.

By RAINA RADZAI
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HOW STORIES ADD UP

There are also various other strategies or modes to achieve similar outcomes:

- **Storytelling**: Sharing of knowledge and experiences through narrative and anecdotes in order to communicate lessons, complex ideas, concepts and connections.

- **Modelling**: Sharing of knowledge and experience through exposure to the behaviour of others, e.g. through mentoring, apprenticeship, symbolic conduct, and specific demonstrations and opportunities for observation.

- **Simulations**: Sharing of knowledge and experience through simulations, e.g. case studies, role-playing and simulations.

- **Codified resources**: Sharing of knowledge through reference to formal, systematic and structured sources, e.g. manuals, standard operating procedures, instructions, memos or databases.

- **Symbolic objects**: Sharing of knowledge through access and exposure to images, diagrams or objects, which represent or illustrate the underlying knowledge or idea.
WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT DURING LIFE?
In life, we will be confronted with many moments where we will need to make very important decisions. In times like this, we will discover that there will be many people who will be more than ready and willing to give us advice even when we do not ask for it.

What is most important during such moments is for us to remember that it is up to us to lead our own lives and decide for us. That it is up to us to lead our own lives and decide for us. As an investor, Rogers advises, “Do not end up as someone who is always unhappy because you are stuck in a job you do not enjoy. You end up working just because you cannot afford to give up the monthly paycheck.”

Instead, seek to pursue a life where you do not “go to work” daily. Pursue something whereby you get up each day with a bounce to your step, knowing that you are living each day doing what you simply enjoy and love doing. You will be rich in satisfaction even if you are not rich in wealth. What is more important is that you will be a happy person!

LIFE LESSON NO. 3: GOOD HABITS FOR LIFE AND INVESTMENT
Having initiative makes a difference. Rogers advises his daughters to be self-starters. He learned this lesson in life at an early age of 14 when he was working for his uncle on Saturday mornings at a grocery store. His Uncle Chink used to tell him, “There is always something you can be doing. When there's nothing else to do, dust the shelves.” Rogers followed this advice and it has made all the difference in how he has succeeded in his life.

Being attentive is another attribute that separates success from failure. Give attention to details no matter how trivial it may seem to be because if you truly love what you do, you will naturally want to give it your best shot. Do not leave any stone unturned in your research. Learn to be thorough. As an investor, Rogers advises, “Do not invest unless you can say with absolute certainty that you are more knowledgeable about this particular firm than 98% of Wall Street analysts.”

Rogers believes that when investing heavily in a nation, one needs to start by checking the strength of that nation’s basic institutions. Questions one should ask are like “Does it have respect for the rule of law?”, “Does it crack down on corruption?”, “Does the legal system facilitate ethical corporate behaviour?” These, Rogers says, cannot be discovered by merely reading the newspapers or magazines. He suggests that one should visit the country personally to see with their own eyes and discover things first-hand.

What else is required to have a fulfilling vocation? Have a dream! Rogers discovered his dream when he began investing around the world and when he was exposed to a wide range of cultures and people. He realised his dream was to seek adventure and to keep learning about the world by seeing the world for himself as much as he could. As he continued to pursue with passion and worked hard at what he loved to do, he eventually lived his dream and at 37, he started travelling around the globe on a motorcycle!

Koh Earm Soo and his team take the best books and summarise them into shorter, readable content in the hope of inspiring people to read more and learn more. To read the rest of this summary and summaries of other bestsellers, subscribe to www.thebestbooksum-mary.com
W E swim in an ocean of feedback—not just from bosses, colleagues and customers, but also unwanted comments from family, life partners, friends and in-laws. Essentially, feedback is crucial for personal and professional development.

At work, it improves performance, develops talent, aligns expectations, solves problems, guides promotion and pay, and boosts the bottom-line. However, we dread feedback and often dismiss it.

Negative and neutral comments can spark emotional reactions in the recipient and inject tension into the relationship between the giver and the receiver. We might think that the person delivering the feedback has no credibility, or we might feel wronged and frustrated by the feedback. Also, we often hear “feedback” as apportioning blame rather than as a platform to grow and improve.

The good news is the skills needed to receive feedback well are learnable. They include being able to identify and manage the emotions triggered by the feedback and extract value from criticism even when it is poorly delivered.

**Six Steps to Become a Better Receiver of Feedback**

Receiving feedback well is a process of sorting and filtering. You need to understand the other person’s point of view, try on ideas and experiment with different ways of doing things. In addition, you may also need to discard feedback that is genuinely misdirected.

The six steps that follow help you discern whether to discard or accept feedback that comes your way (adapted from Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone).

1. **Know Your Tendencies**
   You have been getting feedback all your life, so you would know best how you respond to it.
   - Do you defend yourself with facts, argue about the method of delivery or strike back? Do you smile on the outside but harbour anger on the inside? Do you get teary or filled with righteous indignation?
   - Do you tend to reject feedback in the moment and then step back and consider it over time? Do you accept it all immediately but later decide it is invalid?
   - Do you agree with it intellectually but have trouble changing your behaviour? By knowing your tendencies and what you are inclined to in your thinking, you would have a more objective evaluation of the feedback rather than skewing it to be bigger than what it is.

2. **Separate the “What” From the “Who”**
   If the feedback is on target, it should not matter who delivers it. However, often times it does.
   - When we receive feedback, our feelings about the giver surface naturally, resulting in us sometimes detracting from learning. To keep that from happening, you have to learn to separate the message from the messenger.

3. **Lean Toward Coaching**
   Everyone needs feedback that is evaluative and coaching. Evaluations tell you where you stand, what to expect, and what is expected of you. Coaching allows you to improve and helps you perform better.
   - It is not always easy to distinguish one from the other. When someone makes a suggestion, we sometimes doubt if it was intended as helpful suggestion or veiled criticism. People tend to assume the worst and end up placing well-intentioned coaching into the evaluation bin.
   - My advice is, whenever possible, lean toward coaching. Work to hear feedback as potentially valuable advice from a fresh perspective rather than as an indictment of how you have done things in the past.

4. **Unwrap the Feedback**
   Often it is not immediately clear whether feedback is valid and useful. So before you decide to accept or reject it, conduct some analysis to understand it better.
   - Firstly, try to understand what the giver of the feedback really means. Even a simple advice to “be more assertive” can come from a complex set of observations and judgments. In this instance, you need to dig into the general suggestion and find out what in particular prompted the advice.
   - The second step is to understand where the feedback is going, i.e. exactly what the giver of the feedback wants you to do differently and why. When you set aside snap judgments and take time to explore where feedback is coming from and where it is going, you can enter into a rich, informative conversation about perceived best practices.

5. **Ask for Just One Thing**
   Finding opportunities to get bite-size pieces of coaching from a variety of people throughout the year. Avoid vague, unfocused questions like “Do you have any feedback for me?” Instead, make the process more manageable by asking a colleague, a boss, or a direct report, “What’s one thing you see me doing (or failing to do) that holds me back?” As such, that person may name the first behaviour that comes to mind or the most important one on his or her list regarding you.
   - Research has shown that those who proactively seek critical feedback tend to get higher performance ratings. It is so because someone who is asking for coaching is more likely to take what is said to heart and genuinely improve.

6. **Engage in Small Experiments**
   After you have worked to solicit and understand feedback, it may still be challenging to discern which bits of advice will help you and which ones would not. Designing small experiments to find out may help. When someone gives you advice, put it to test. By taking someone’s advice for change, you may actually find better and more effective ways of doing things. If it does not work, you can opt to try again, tweak your approach, or decide to end the experiment.

Feedback is sometimes not easy to take. Even when you know it is vital for your development and you trust that the person delivering it wants you to succeed, it can activate certain psychological triggers. You might feel misjudged, misunderstood and sometimes threatened to your very core.

On the other hand, your growth depends on your ability to extract value from such feedback despite your natural responses. It also depends on your willingness to seek out more advice and coaching from bosses, peers, and subordinates.

They may be good or bad at providing it, but you are the most important deciding factor in your own personal and professional development. If you are determined to learn from whatever feedback you receive, no one can stop you.

Amanda loves to work with the like-minded to create shared values and bring about social change. To get in touch with her, email her at amanda.chua@leaderonomics.com
DO YOU KNOW YOURSELF WELL?

By YASIR OSMAN
yasir.osman@leaderonomics.com

Practical Steps Towards Self-Awareness

How am I? It is probably the most important question a person can ask.

Whether we admit it or not, the world and the people around us often dictate how we should dress, speak and behave. Parents, teachers, friends, co-workers, celebrities, advertisements and even politicians are strong influences that shape our thinking and being.

How can we really be who we are when we are bombarded from every side on how we should conduct ourselves? To be different is to stand out in the crowd; to be the same is to conform.

Can we even tell when we are moulded by society to act and behave in a certain way?

The answer is actually quite simple, but it can be a challenge to put into practice. It is the art of self-awareness. It all starts with acknowledging that people are different and everyone has his or her own story, personality and character.

I work as a camp coordinator for a programme called DIODE Camp. At this camp, there is an important session called “Discovering I” which is created to help campers aged 14–17 years to discover and explore who they really are.

Our main objective for this camp is to help and guide young people to fulfil their fullest leadership potential.

One of the most important elements of being a leader is to know oneself. Self-awareness is an important journey every individual must take in order to grow himself or herself to become the best person he or she can possibly be.

Isn’t that what makes our lives more meaningful? That we grow and learn to be a better person each day.

In simpler terms, self-awareness is a concept of how people see themselves. As it is, everyone in this world is unique and has different perspectives. As it is, everyone in this world is unique and has different perspectives.

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WHICH SHAPE ARE YOU?

A SIMPLE SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE TO UNDERSTAND YOURSELF BETTER

THE PYRAMID
the results person

YOU are driven by success. Achieving results are very important to you. You set goals, and make it a priority to make sure you reach them.

You tend to move in fast paces and sometimes jump to decisions too fast before considering all the facts affecting it. It would help for you to look at the analytical side of things before you jump into action.

You also like to be in control of the things you are involved in. You may need to loosen up a little and take things slow.

THE WAVE LINE
the idea person

YOU are the person who is always full of energy, excitement and enthusiasm for life. You are often referred to as the light of the room, the one who always brightens up the atmosphere.

You often find yourself coming up with a lot of ideas. However, you do not always follow through those ideas because you do not focus long enough to make them work. In fact, you find yourself bouncing from one idea to another very quickly. If you slow down and pay attention to details, and learn to be more focused and persevere on the task at hand, you can actually achieve a lot of things, especially with your brilliant ideas.

THE CUBE
the systems person

YOU are an analytical person. Your greatest strength is your knack to think things through, analyse in detail and avoid fatal mistakes.

However, this can also be a weakness because you can be held back when you analyse too much. You tend to hold back any decision-making up till you have all the facts. It is also unnatural for you to take risks without the facts.

Mistakes are not an option in your books, and as a result, you are prone to limit opportunities that come your way. You are a task-driven individual. You should learn to sit back, relax a little and let things work themselves out once in a while.

THE BALL
the people pleaser

BASICALLY, in everything that you do, you just want to make people happy. You are usually the first to volunteer whenever someone needs help.

However, while getting caught up taking care of others, you tend to overlook yourself. You very often take on more than you can handle.

You are stubborn and carry a great deal of pride, which prohibits you from sharing your feelings in a meaningful way. You would do well by learning how to be more assertive and, most importantly, saying “no” and meaning it, especially when asked to take on tasks you cannot handle.

There are many personality tests available for you to take.
Some of the well-known ones are:

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)
- The Big Five Personality Traits test
- The NEO Personality Inventory Revised (NEO PI-R) test
- The Rorschach test

This article is adapted from Jacqueline Wales’ Do You Know What Shape You Are?

Hyma Pillay is operations leader for the myStarjob.com career guide team and the Leaderonomics content team. You can email her at hyma.pillay@leaderonomics.com

By HYMA PILLAY
hyma.pillay@leaderonomics.com

HERE is a simple exercise which could help you identify your strengths and see what works best for you.

Step 1 – Think of these four shapes, i.e. a cube, a pyramid, a wavy line and a ball.

Step 2 – Choose the shape which resonates with you the strongest. List down the shapes in the order starting from which appeals to you most, right to the one which appeals to you least.

Once you are done with Step 2, read the following for an explanation of each shape and the personality associated with it.

Also next week

Making your business world-class

Zero to hero lessons from football giants

A chat with leading lady Nicol David

Leadership lessons from Sir Alex Ferguson